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Dimensions and Directions

The Joint Ph.D. Program in English and Education
of the University of Michigan

Volume 17

Fall 2010

From the Chairs

This has been a year of transitions, and we feel fortunate that these transitions have been remarkably smooth. And one of them has emphasized some interesting symmetries. Anne Curzan has moved into the role of Co-chair, replacing Lesley Rex, who retired last spring. For students in the program, this transition in the program's directorship means that we now more often use "Anne G" and "Anne C," or students can send an email to both Co-chairs beginning "Dear Anne" and see which Anne responds first! The two Anne's share not only the spelling of their name but also a strikingly similar career path: they both completed Ph.D.s at the University of Michigan; they both then took faculty positions in the English Department at the University of Washington in Seattle; and then they both returned to the faculty at Michigan.



Anne Gere and Anne Curzan

Anne Curzan is Associate Professor of English and also holds appointments in the School of Education and in the Department of Linguistics. Her research interests include the history of the English language, language and gender, corpus linguistics, historical sociolinguistics, lexicography, and pedagogy. Her publications include *Gender Shifts in the History of English* (Cambridge, 2003), *First Day to Final Grade: A Graduate Student's Guide to Teaching* (2nd edition, Michigan, 2006), and *How English Works: A Linguistic Introduction* (2nd edition, Pearson Longman, 2006), as well as a number of articles. Among her most recent articles is "Says Who? Teaching and Questioning the Rules of Grammar," which appeared in *PMLA* (2009). Because Anne has worked regularly with JPEE students in a variety of contexts—as an instructor in courses, as a reader of examinations, and as a committee member on dissertations—she is very familiar with JPEE, its procedures, and its students. Needless to say, Anne Gere is delighted to share Program leadership with her, and Anne Curzan is excited to be able to be involved in the Program in this capacity.

Chandra Alston has also joined the faculty this year. A new Ph.D. from Stanford's School of Education, Chandra has a Post Doc position for 2010-2012. Her dissertation "It Goes Without Saying: The Importance of Creating Space for Writing Talk with African American Students," offers insights into the ways teachers can learn to be more effective in teaching writing. She is currently working on transforming her research into publications and learning more about JPEE as well as the UM School of Education more generally.

As is true every year, students have also transitioned in and out of the Program. Our newest students—Elizabeth (Liz) Homan, William (Will) Hutchinson, Rebecca (Becca) Manery, Justine Neiderhiser and Sarah Swofford—have already begun to contribute to Program life, and you can learn more about each of them in the following pages. The third-year students have taken on the scheduling of our weekly Chalk & Cheese meetings, and we have already had the chance to talk over lunch about writing conference abstracts, teaching with technology, how to balance work and "life," and much more. Our most senior students have moved on to take positions elsewhere: Heather Thomson Bunn, Pepperdine University; Michael Thomson Bunn, University of Southern California; Amy Carpenter Ford, Central Michigan University; Staci Shultz, Wesleyan College; and Ebony E. Thomas, Wayne State University.

Continued on page 4.

Fall 2010 Cohort



As a born-and-bred Midwesterner, **Elizabeth (Liz) Homan** has a strong attachment to this portion of the country. She earned her B.A. in English, with a minor in secondary education, from the University of Illinois in 2007 and her M.S.Ed. from Purdue University in 2009. While working on her master's degree, Liz taught in rural and semi-urban public schools in central Indiana, where she worked with students who ran the spectrum from the rural underprivileged and poverty-stricken to the privileged and gifted. This experience has guided her towards interests in the formation of gender and sexual identity in adolescent writing and in teacher preparation for literacy instruction across the content areas.

William (Will) Hutchinson grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, and completed his B.A. in English and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He then began his career in education as a writing tutor and English teacher in the Boston Public School System. Hopelessly entangled in the work of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, he left Boston for Dublin, Ireland where he earned his M.A. in Anglo-Irish Literature and Drama from University College Dublin. While in Dublin, he continued his work as a teacher in a number of English language schools throughout the city, working primarily with non-EU nationals from South America. His academic interests are born out of his positive and negative experiences on both sides of the Atlantic and include literacy studies, public space, and writing instruction inside and outside of formal institutions.



Rebecca (Becca) Manery returns to her native Michigan after living in Chicago and New York City for more years than she cares to say. As a literacy specialist at the Chicago Teachers' Center of Northeastern Illinois University, Becca provided professional development and classroom support to teachers in high needs Chicago public schools, developed and taught literacy curricula to middle and high school students, and taught in NEIU's graduate program in reading. A former Arts in Education Director and dramaturg for numerous theatres, Becca has co-taught teacher professional development programs for Steppenwolf and Chicago Shakespeare Theater. She holds a B.A. in English and Journalism from Michigan State University, an M.A. in Reading from NEIU, and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Literature from Bennington College. Her interests include poetry and poetic theory, teacher preparation in writing instruction, and issues of access and diversity in creative writing programs.

Justine Neiderhiser completed a B.A. in English at Millersville University and then moved from her home state of Pennsylvania to Raleigh, North Carolina. There she earned her M.A. in Rhetoric and Composition from North Carolina State University and gained her first experience teaching in a first-year writing program. From this experience, Justine developed an interest in writing programs and more specifically in the preparation of writing instructors. In addition to her pedagogical interests, Justine's research interests include visual rhetoric, digital writing studies, discourse analysis, and linguistics.



Sarah Swofford grew up in South Carolina, where she completed her B.A. in English at Anderson University. She spent an "in-between" semester traveling with a non-profit dinner theatre across Canada (practice for a Michigan winter, perhaps?), before beginning her MS.Ed. at Baylor University in Waco, TX. Sarah taught for three and a half years in rural middle and high schools in South Carolina and Texas and for one semester in a middle college for at-risk students. Through her experiences in the classroom, Sarah discovered her developing interests in composition and rhetoric and teacher education, and she is very excited to be exploring these interests in the JPEE.

JPEE Awards

Laura Aull, Beth Davila, and Hannah Dickinson were recipients of this year's David and Linda Moscow Prize for Excellence in Teaching Composition. This award is given to instructors remarkable for the energy, passion, insight, pedagogical skill and creativity, and commitment they bring to the teaching of writing.

Bethany Davila was a recipient of the Harold and Vivian Shapiro/John Malik Award.

During 2009-2010, the following students were awarded a Rackham One-term Dissertation Fellowships: **Beth Davila, Christopher Gerben, and Melinda McBee Orzulak.**

Hannah Dickinson has been awarded a four-month Community of Scholars fellowship at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender.

Hannah Dickinson and **Moisés Perales Escudero** were awarded Rackham Graduate School Humanities Fellowships in 2010.

Hannah Dickinson, Moisés Perales Escudero, Christopher Gerben, Stephanie Moody, and Staci Shultz received Rackham Graduate Student Research Grants.

Timothy Green and **Anne Porter** received a Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) grant to study generation 1.5 undergraduate writing at the Sweetland Center for Writing.

Ben Gunsberg is a recipient of a Michigan Graduate Fellowship at the Institute for the Humanities for the 2010-2011 academic year.

Zak Lancaster will join the Sweetland Junior Fellows in 2011.

Randy Pinder and **Melinda McBee Orzulak** were awarded mini-grants from the Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) of the School of Education

Stephanie Moody received a Women's Studies Thevenet Summer Research Award.



Moscow Award Winners

**This year's David and
Linda Moscow Prize
for Excellence in
Teaching
Composition (L-R):**

**Bethany Davila,
Nathaniel Mills, Laura
Aull, and Hannah
Dickinson.**

Continue From the Chairs...

Several students have moved into positions of leadership. Beth Davila is serving as Graduate Student Mentor in the English Department Writing Program, following Chris Gerben and Randall Pinder, who filled this position during the 2009-2010 academic year. Melinda McBee Orzulak is a student representative on the Executive Committee of the School of Education, and several students are participating in research projects with faculty. These projects include:

- Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis of First Year Writing: Working with some 5000 essays written by entering first-year students at the University, this study employs both qualitative move analysis and corpus linguistics to identify language features that characterize the writing of more and less successful students.
- Policy Research: Students help to produce the Research Briefs that appear in the Council Chronicle published quarterly by the National Council of Teachers of English.
- Assessment of Writing: Directed self-placement, an assessment of writing currently employed at the University, is the subject of multiple studies of undergraduates' development as writers as well as transfer from high school to college writing.
- Language Study: The iterative development of modules to support teachers' engagement in exploring language and meaning in text with English language learners.

Anne G and Anne C feel very fortunate to be part of such an intellectually lively community of scholars, who are pursuing exciting projects both individually and collaboratively—projects that promise to transform critical aspects of English education at all levels.



School of Education Gathering

JPEE Current Student Activities

The book *Taking Initiative on Writing: A Guide for Instructional Leaders*, came out this summer, authored by **Anne Gere, Hannah Dickinson, Melinda McBee Orzulak, and Stephanie Moody**.

Laura Aull continues to collaborate with researchers at the English Language Institute, and this fall, she is working with John Swales on a project that explores rhetorical uses of quotation marks (e.g., "standard" English) in upper-level student papers. She is finishing her dissertation project and looking forward to defending in January, 2011. Her dissertation explores discursive positioning and disciplinary narratives in the editorial genres (prefaces and introductions) of composition textbooks and American literature anthologies.

Over the summer, **Laura Aull, Moisés Perales Escudero, and Zak Lancaster** worked with Anne Gere on a corpus analysis of incoming students' directed self-placement (DSP) essays.

Laura Aull, Tim Green, Anne Porter, and Christie Toth continue to do research with the Sweetland Center for Writing, working with Anne Gere on theorizing a nuanced, genre-specific way of conceptualizing student writing abilities.

Chris Gerben is working as a Graduate Student Consultant (GTC) and IT-GTC for the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT), and he is a Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC) Scholar for 2010-2011. This past year, Chris presented at NCTE, RSA, and Computers & Writing.

Liz Homan, Will Hutchinson, Danielle Lillge, Becca Manery, Justine Neiderhiser, Melody Pugh, Sarah Swofford, Christina Toth, and Crystal Vankooten contribute to the Policy Research Briefs that appear in each issue of the National Council of Teachers of English's quarterly *Council Chronicle*.

JPEE Current Student Activities continues...

Zak Lancaster presented, along with **Beth Davila** and **Moisés Perales Escudero**, at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCCs) in Louisville. Their talk was on "Revisiting Identity, Critical Analysis, and Composition Theory."

Zak Lancaster presented part of his dissertation project at the International Systemic Functional Linguistics Congress in Vancouver. He also joined the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC) scholars program.

Melinda McBee Orzulak presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Assembly for Research, (NCTEAR), "Now I'm Speaking to You As: Theorizing Language and Research Relationships," and at American Educational Research Association (AERA), "But That's Racist: Co-constructing and Operationalizing Views of Language," last spring. She was selected to be an NCTE/NCATE English Education Program Reviewer and the graduate student representative for the SOE Executive Committee.

Randy Pinder presented at the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) conference. The title of his presentation was "They Say/ We Say: What Adult Learners and Sponsors Expect from Literacy and Each Other." He is the JPEE member on the Graduate Affairs Committee. Also, he is a tutor with Washtenaw Literacy, an adult literacy support program serving Washtenaw County.

Anne Porter presented two talks: "The Rhetoric of U.S. Environmentalists on Immigration" at the graduate student conference on "Making Meaning: Language and Rhetoric in Real World Spaces" at the University of Michigan, and "Dilemmas of Feminist Critique" at the Conference on "Feminisms and Rhetorics" at Michigan State University. Anne joined the English Language Institute (ELI) conversation circle this summer. Also, she is serving year as an editor of *Michigan Feminist Studies*, an interdisciplinary graduate student feminist journal published at the University of Michigan.

Welcome JPEE's Newest Faculty Member

Chandra L. Alston joined our faculty this Fall as a Postdoctoral Fellow in Educational Studies and JPEE. Her area of specialization is English education and her dissertation work investigated the writing instructional practices of high-impact middle school English Language Arts teachers in urban schools. She completed her graduate work at Stanford University this past June, where she also taught English methods and Classroom Management in Stanford's Teacher Education Program. Chandra is originally from Chapel Hill, North Carolina and is therefore an ardent Tarheel basketball fan. After completing her MAT at Carolina, Chandra taught high school English and co-taught mainstreamed English classes with a special education teacher. She also worked closely with UNC's MAT program as a consultant. These experiences sparked her interest in graduate work that focused on supporting literacy among struggling adolescents.



An Update from Professor Emerita Lesley Rex

Lesley's retirement is proceeding as she had hoped. Thanks to Skype and other Internet amenities, she remains professionally active doing what she loves: mentoring students and chairing dissertations while writing for publication and editing her book series. By keeping consulting and travel to a minimum, she has time to work on her new book project and on family ties and social causes.

2009-2010 Dissertations

Heather Thomson Bunn *When God's Word Isn't Good Enough: Exploring Christian Discourses in the College Composition Classroom*

Chair: Anne Ruggles Gere

This study is a hybrid project that blends empirical research traditions from the social sciences and composition studies to examine how discourses of Christianity and composition operate in college writing classrooms. Conducted at a large, public, midwestern university, this qualitative study analyzes surveys and interviews of writing instructors and Christian students, providing new insights on how religious discourses shape perceptions and behaviors of both students and instructors—including instructors' feedback on student writing, the student-instructor relationship, and students' rhetorical choices. By putting student and instructor voices into conversation, this study offers a more expansive view of how religious discourses can affect composition classrooms than has been available to scholars and instructors up to this point.

Michael Thomson Bunn *Reconceptualizing the Role of Reading in Composition Studies.*

Chair: Anne Ruggles Gere

This dissertation identifies several reasons that the field of composition studies has largely neglected the issue of reading, and it builds upon conceptions of reading and writing as connected activities to argue that it is insufficient to teach writing without also attending to reading. Drawing on surveys and interviews of writing instructors at the University of Michigan, this project compares how these instructors define and describe various reading approaches with the definitions and descriptions found in scholarship, thus offering a more complete picture of how reading is theorized and taught in first-year writing courses.

Amy Carpenter Ford *Constructing Authority across Racial Difference: A White Teacher Signifyin(g) with African American Students in a High School English Classroom*

Chair: Lesley A. Rex

This case study of classroom interaction describes how a White teacher and African American students built and maintained authority relationships that were productive for teaching and learning. By analyzing episodes of classroom interaction, it renders visible how teacher and students used Signifyin(g), a culturally-grounded African American discourse practice, to negotiate the legitimacy of language, literacies, identities, subject matter knowledge, culture, and behavior across their racial difference. As the teacher legitimized Signifyin(g), African American students authorized her to engage them in learning. Illustrating how race matters in classroom interaction, this study distinguishes between culturally congruent and culturally responsive or relevant pedagogy and argues that teachers need not only to validate students' culturally-grounded discourse practices, but also to cultivate understandings of their political and cultural significance.



Ebony Thomas "We're Saying the Same Thing": How English Teachers Negotiated Solidarity, Identity, and Ethics Through Talk and Interaction

Co-Chairs: Lesley Ann Rex and Mary J. Schleppegrell

This study explores discourse conflicts in schooling and society through an investigation of the ways that teachers and students negotiate literate identities, social solidarities, and ethical issues within the complexity of early 21st Century secondary English classroom interaction. Three case studies tell the stories of seven English Language Arts teachers as they learned how to analyze conflicts in their own and their colleagues' classroom discourse. Multiple perspectives are represented, including that of selected teacher-participants, the researcher-facilitator, and the collective group. The study reveals that the English teachers negotiated solidarity with their students and colleagues through tactical and strategic temporary alignments of actions and discourse. Teachers drew upon linguistic repertoires derived from their identities, social subjectivities, and lived and intellectual ideologies in order to negotiate solidarities with their students and each other.



Hill Auditorium Spring 2010



School of Education

The Thurnau Professorships are named after Arthur F. Thurnau, a student at the University of Michigan from 1902 to 1904.



Rackham Graduate School

The JPEE is Proud to Announce **Anne Gere Selected as Arthur F. Thurnau Professor**

Anne Ruggles Gere, Gertrude Buck Collegiate Professor of Education and Professor of English Language and Literature, has been named an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor in this year's competition. This program is designed to honor those tenured faculty whose exceptional commitment to and investment in undergraduate teaching has had a demonstrable impact on the intellectual development and lives of their students. In the Regents' citation, Anne is named as a consummate teacher-scholar and praised for her accomplishments as a teacher of writing, as director of the Sweetland Center for Writing, and as designer of Teachers for Tomorrow. The citation continues: "Colleagues and students remark on the immense personal attention Professor Gere devotes to helping her students improve their writing, especially in how she designs course assignments and comments extensively on essay drafts. She is noted as an enduring mentor who continues to affect students long after they have left the classroom and even the university." JPEE Co-chair Anne Curzan is also an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor.

JPEE Alumni

Jennifer Buehler ('09) was the recipient of the Stanley E. and Ruth B. Dimond Best Dissertation Award in the School of Education, *Words Matter: The role of discourse in creating, sustaining and changing school culture*.

In addition to earning tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of English and African American Studies at Wheaton College in Norton, MA, **Shawn Anthony Christian** ('03) is the new director of the Summer Institute for Literary and Cultural Studies, which the College hosts. Shawn is also completing a book-length manuscript on African American readership during the Harlem Renaissance and has published "Between Black Men: Artistic Collaboration and the Harlem Renaissance in *Brother to Brother*" in *The Harlem Renaissance Revisited: Politics, Arts, and Letters* (Johns Hopkins).

Cathy Fleischer ('90) continues to teach at Eastern Michigan University and to serve as Editor for NCTE's Principles in Practice Imprint. Her latest book, *Reading & Writing & Teens: A Parent's Guide to Young Adult Literacy*, has just been released.

Vicki Haviland ('04) is continuing her work supporting English education at the University of Michigan School of Education (SOE) and is also stepping into a new role at SOE: she is leading the exploration of developing a close working relationship between the School of Education and four schools in Detroit that would complement the changes being made to the SOE teacher education program.

Zandra Jordan ('06) was invited to organize a featured panel for the CCCCs on writing at HBCUs. The title is "What HBCUs Can Teach Us About Writing Instruction." Her presentation is entitled, "Writing Institutional Identity: Transformative Literacies at Spelman College."

Matthew Nelson ('08) is Assistant Professor of English at Francis Marion University where he teaches writing and English Education courses and also serves as Co-Director of the Swamp Fox Writing Project. He is President-Elect and 2011 Conference Chair for the South Carolina Council of Teachers of English. His recent publications include, "Stars Hollow, Chilton, and the Politics of Education in *Gilmore Girls*," which appeared in the collection *Screwball Television: Critical Perspectives on Gilmore Girls*, published in March by Syracuse University Press.

JPEE Alumni continues...

Anne Reeves ('01) is head of the Education Department at Susquehanna University and she has a book in press with ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).

Sarah Robbins ('93) has given two presentations recently in connection with a forthcoming edition of writings by a missionary teacher who worked in Angola in the early twentieth century. One was "Remixing Sources, Rethinking Discursive Gaps: Tales from Research on a Missionary's African Service," CCCC, Louisville, KY, March 2010. More recently, with her co-editor, historian Ann Pullen, Robbins presented at a conference arranged to mark the 200th anniversary of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions: "Nellie J. Arnott, Angola Mission Teacher, and the Culture of the ABCFM at 100." Sarah is currently on the faculty at TCU in Fort Worth, TX, where she holds the Lorraine Sherley Endowed Chair in American Literature. This semester, with Addie Levy Chair Linda Hughes (a specialist in 19th-century British Literature), Sarah is co-teaching a course on 19th-century transatlantic culture, with support from an instructional development grant. She is also serving on a task force that is revising the graduate program in English Studies, including looking for ways to interface that program with a new doctorate in writing recently launched at TCU.

Kelly Sassi ('08) is in her third year as an assistant professor with a joint appointment in English and Education at North Dakota State University. In May 2010, she was part of a team that won the NDSU President's Impact Award for the development of a Dakota Initiative that resulted in the hiring of a Dakota professor to teach the language for the first time on campus. The Dakota team will be a featured session at the 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication. Kelly also completed the Red River Valley Writing Project this past summer and will co-direct the project with Kim Donehower at the University of North Dakota in future years. For the past year, Kelly worked on a grant proposal to redesign the Teacher Education Program at NDSU. The \$5 million dollar grant was awarded by the Bush Foundation. Kelly also received an internal instructional development grant to study and improve the college's Cultural Immersion Field Experience from which she collaborated on an article titled: "Guideposts and Roadblocks: Charting the Path to Transformation in an Immersive Field Experience." Kelly became an NCATE reviewer this past spring and also reviewed proposals and manuscripts for AERA, CCCC, and English Education. Kelly is especially pleased that her work on the work-life balance task force last year resulted in the University's first child care leave policy.

Aaron Schutz ('98) has two books coming out from Palgrave Macmillan: *Social Class, Social Action, and Education: The Failure of Progressive Democracy* (2010), and *Collective Action for Social Change: An Introduction to Community Organizing* (2011). He is also working on developing a community organizing campaign focused on jobs in the black community around his mostly African American church in what is now the fourth poorest city in America. More long term he is seeking funding to develop a black/brown coalition between the two largest African American and Latino organizations in Milwaukee.

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas ('10) published "Applying Toulmin: Teaching Logical Reasoning and Argumentative Writing" with JPEE Professor Emerita Lesley A. Rex and doctoral candidate Steve Engel in the July 2010 issue of *English Journal*. Her next article, "Landscapes of City and Self: Place and Identity in Urban Young Adult Literature" will be forthcoming in the Winter 2011 issue of *The ALAN Review*. She will be presenting her current research at NCTE 2010 in Orlando and AERA 2011 in New Orleans, and has been invited to deliver an encore guest lecture on African American children's and adolescent literature in November 2010 at St. Catherine University, St. Paul, Minnesota.

This past summer marked ten years of living in northern Utah—twice as long as **Jennifer Sinor** ('00) has lived anywhere else in her life. It's hard for her to even believe. She continues to teach in the creative writing program at Utah State University, mostly classes in memoir and personal essay, though occasionally fiction. Recently an essay of Jennifer's was chosen for the next edition of *The Norton Reader*, both the longer and shorter editions. The piece, entitled "Confluences," first appeared in *The American Scholar*. If interested, you can find it here: <http://www.theamericanscholar.org/confluences/>. Other than that, she spends her days teaching and writing and wrangling two young boys.

Morris Young ('97) will be a featured speaker at the 2010 Thomas R. Watson Conference on Rhetoric and Composition, the 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication Annual Convention, and the 2011 Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition. Last December, he and his co-editor, LuMing Mao, were recognized with an Honorable Mention for the 2009 Mina P. Shaughnessy Prize for their collection *Representations: Doing Asian American Rhetoric*.

Stephen Dunning Student Support Fund

As you think about your end-of-year charitable contributions, please consider a gift to the Stephen Dunning Student Support Fund. This is the fund that supports special events, provides Chalk and Cheese refreshment, and, when monies permit, supplements research-related expenses for graduate students.

Contributions of all sizes are most welcome. Write checks to the University of Michigan E&E Gift Account and send them to Jeanie Mahoney Laubenthal, 2014 School of Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259.



Lesley Rex and Anne

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