

Inside this issue:	
2014 Cohort	p. 2
Activities & Awards	pp. 3-4
Dissertations	pp. 5-6
Alumni	pp. 7-10
Remembrance	pp. 11-15
Special Thanks	p. 16

# Dimensions and Directions

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

Volume 21

Fall 2014

## From the Chairs

One of the great pleasures of our work as co-chairs is sending graduates off to take up the professional opportunities for which the Program has prepared them. This past year we watched Steve Engel take a faculty position at Marygrove College in Detroit; Anne Porter at Providence College; Christie Toth at the University of Utah; and Crystal VanKooten at Oakland University. They are all already beginning to make significant contributions within their new academic homes and to teaching and learning communities more broadly. We look forward to following their careers in the coming years.



Anne Curzan and Anne Gere

As the several pages of JPEE Alumni activities show, our newest graduates have excellent models to follow. We take pride in all the accomplishments of former students who have published books, articles and poems; won teaching awards; taken up administrative positions; created software; made presentations at conferences; been tenured or promoted; developed new courses; won fellowships or grants; and received other forms of recognition. Our alumni are impressive people who are making important contributions to teaching, scholarship, and research in many different contexts. We take special delight in the fact that a number of JPEE alums work together on projects, speak on one another's campuses, or get together for fun. Many of these collaborations began during graduate school, within the closely knit community of the Program.

The students currently on campus are also an impressive group. They are publishing articles, books, and poems; contributing to online conversations; giving conference presentations; and taking part in various research projects in addition to teaching, taking courses, and writing exams and dissertations. Be sure to look at the list of their individual accomplishments on page three. We were delighted to welcome two new students this fall. Both Ryan McCarty and Elizabeth Tacke bring rich experiences as teachers as well as solid academic preparation. They have already become part of the social and intellectual life of JPEE.

As a program, JPEE regularly meets new challenges and changes. This year Rackham has instituted a new requirement that all graduate students who enter in 2014 or thereafter must complete eight hours of training in Responsible Conduct of Research and Scholarship. Working in collaboration with the Department of English, we have developed a series of 16 hours of training to be spread over a two-year revolving cycle. Students will have an opportunity to discuss such topics as the ethics of writing letters of recommendation, the vagaries of plagiarism, and responsible use of social media.

This year JPEE is also undergoing a review conducted by Rackham. These reviews, which are conducted every five years, give us an opportunity to find new ways to strengthen and improve the Program.

(continues on next page)

## Recent Dissertation

*In Your Own Words:  
Ideological Dilemmas in  
English Teachers' Talk  
about Plagiarism*  
- Steven John Engel, Ph.D.

*Distributed Agency and the  
Rhetorical Work of Essay  
Contests*  
- Anne E. Porter, Ph.D.

*Locally Responsive Composition  
Pedagogy: A Tribal Col-  
lege Case Study*  
- Christina M. Toth, Ph. D.

*Developing Meta-Awareness  
about Composition through  
New Media in the First-Year  
Writing Classroom*  
- Crystal L. VanKooten,  
Ph.D.



After the last review for example, we received some additional funding that enables Program Co-Chairs to involve students in ongoing research projects. Student responses on surveys conducted by the review also gave us ideas for providing better mentoring for students in their early years in the Program, and we look forward to further learning from this year's review.

Another change in the life of the Program is the passing of its former Chair, Jay Robinson. During his years on the faculty, between 1965 and 1996, Jay served in many roles—as Director of the English Composition Board (now the Sweetland Center for Writing), as Co-Director of the Middle English Dictionary, as Chair of the Department of English, and, from our perspective, most importantly, as a leader of JPEE. Thanks to Cathy Fleischer, many of Jay's former students have had an opportunity to write about the ways he helped to shape their careers and their lives. We think you will enjoy reading their accounts.

Despite the various changes, the essential nature of JPEE remains constant. It is a capacious yet highly connected community in which emerging and more established scholars enrich one another's ideas and work during their Ann Arbor years and beyond. We count it a privilege to be part of this community, and we send everyone best wishes for the new year.

### Fall 2014 Cohort

---

**Ryan McCarty** grew up in Bay City, MI and has been meandering along an out-bound path for the last dozen years or so, earning an MA in English Lit and Theory at the University of Kansas along the way, then teaching in the Bronx for six years where he also earned a Masters of Education from Hunter College. He's very interested in the way this path eventually brought him back so close to home. Pedagogically, his focus for the past several years has circled questions of reading and reading instruction for students who have been designated as struggling readers, along with the connections students make while reading and writing at the same time. Besides teaching, his great loves are his family and activism so he will likely treat you to pictures of his amazing kids while talking up his wife's community acupuncture practice and the potential buried in most current teacher unions.



**Elizabeth Tacke**, after finishing her English degree at New York University, realized that she wanted to take her love of literature and writing and apply it to educating others. She earned her Masters and credential at Seattle Pacific University before moving to Oakland, California to teach in Oakland Unified. As a middle school English teacher, she enjoyed watching students expand their writing skills, experiment with their own forms of literacy, and learn to love reading. She also saw many of the struggles that come with working in large urban public schools — for students and teachers alike. These experiences led her to questions about best literacy practices for all students, particularly those practices that could foster academic identities and writing proficiency. Although she may not be ready for Michigan weather, Elizabeth is excited to come to Michigan in August to begin investigating some of her interests, which include examining how students form identities in literacy. She is also interested in autobiography, gender studies, urban education, teacher education, and composition and rhetoric.

## JPEE Current Student Activities

---

**Ann Burke** published the article “Locating Stakeholders Within the Technocratic Frame: A Rhetorical Analysis of Achieve, Inc.,” *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 29: Iss. 2, Article 5. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.2009>

**Ann Burke** and **Liz Homan** ran in the Detroit Marathon: Ann’s first marathon, and Liz’s 5th!

**Ben Keating, Anna Knutson, Ryan McCarty, and Bonnie Tucker** are working for the Sweetland Center for Writing leading Admissions Essay Workshops in Detroit for high school students preparing to apply for college.

**Ann Burke, Merideth Garcia, Gail Gibson, James Hammond, Anna Knutson, Christopher Parsons, Molly Parsons, Aubrey Schiavone, Bonnie Tucker, and Chinyere Uzogara** contribute to the Policy Research Briefs that appear in each issue of the National Council of Teachers of English’s quarterly *Council Chronicle*.

**Anne Gere, Norbert Elliot, Gail Gibson, Christie Toth,** and Carl Whithaus collaborated on a CompPile.org annotated bibliography on Automated Writing Evaluation.

**Liz Homan** accepted a position with Boston Public Schools as a Digital Learning Specialist, where she is designing blended professional development opportunities for teachers while finishing her dissertation. She recently published an article for the *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education* titled “The Shifting Spaces of Teacher Relationships: Complementary Methods in Examinations of Teachers’ Digital Practices” and a book chapter with co-author Dawn Reed entitled *Learning From Digital Students and Teachers: Re-Imagining Writing Instruction and Assessment for the 21st Century*. She continues to write online for GradHacker as a guest blogger and on her own website, Gone Digital.

**Liz Homan, Christopher Parsons, Ruth Anna Spooner, and Chinyere Uzogara** with **Anne Gere** published an E-book for NCTE, *Text Complexity: Supporting Student Readers, Grades 9-12*.

**Elizabeth Hutton** presented a paper on Louise Rosenblatt and Wolfgang Iser at a Graduate Student Conference at the University of Virginia. Her poetry was featured in the anthology *Poetry In Michigan/Michigan in Poetry*, and a poem, “Piety,” will appear soon in *Tupelo Quarterly*.

**Elizabeth Hutton, Ben Keating, and Sarah Swofford** presented at Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference (CWPA) in June on the design of Sweetland’s Directed Self Placement.

**Elizabeth Hutton, Ben Keating, Anna Knutson, and Sarah Swofford** continue their work as Graduate Student Research Assistants in the Sweetland Center for Writing, where they work on a wide variety of projects ranging from longitudinal research on undergraduate writing development to supporting student writing in large science courses and the effects of writing on the acquisition of content knowledge.

**Ben Keating, Anna Knutson, Justine Neiderhiser, Melody Pugh, and Sarah Swofford** serve as the coordinators for the Language and Rhetorical Studies Interdisciplinary Workshop, and they were thrilled to host the 4th biennial Graduate Student Conference, featuring keynote speaker Shirley Brice Heath on November 20. Lang/Rhet also welcomed Rebecca Nowacek last spring and regularly sponsor a wide variety of scholarly activities for its members. They are pleased to have Anne Curzan continue in her role as faculty sponsor, and they welcome their new faculty sponsor, David Gold.

## JPEE Current Student Activities continues...

**Anna Knutson** has recently joined the Mentoring Committee for the Writing Program Administrators Graduate student Organization (WPA-GO). In this position, Anna is contributing to the development of Research/Writing Groups (RWG), which is a graduate research forum that was debuted at CWPA 2014 in Normal, Illinois. She is involved with several research projects on online writing instruction at the University of New Mexico. She has contributed to a study that compares student learning in online and face-to-face writing classes with Tiffany Bouelle, Andy Bouelle, and Stephanie Spong, which was presented at CCC 2014 in Indianapolis, and is forthcoming in *Computers and Composition*. Anna has also contributed to a project exploring methods of teacher training for online writing instruction with Tiffany Bouelle, Andy Bouelle, Stephanie Spong, Natalie Kubasek, Emilee Howland-Davis, and Zoe Speidel, which will be presented at the Western States Rhetoric and Literacy Conference 2014 in Reno, and is currently under review for publication. Finally, Anna is working with Tiffany Bouelle, Andy Bouelle, and E&E alum **Beth Davila** on a study that explores the efficacy of employing a language/linguistic diversity-focused curriculum in online writing classes. This study will be presented at CCC 2015 in Tampa.

**Danielle Lillge** and **Justine Neiderhiser** are currently supporting instructors in the English Department Writing Program as a Graduate Student Mentors for 2014-2015.

In March, **Joanna Want** presented initial findings from her dissertation study at the Conference on College Composition in Indianapolis in a presentation entitled "Open Access Through Pedagogical Hospitality: What Unique Insights Can Students Veterans Offer?" Joanna's poem "Translation" appears in *Spillway 21* and her recent poetry reviews can be found online at [www.arts-louisville.com](http://www.arts-louisville.com).

## JPEE Awards

---

**Elizabeth Hutton, Becca Manery, Christopher Parsons, Ruth Anna Spooner, and Chineyere Uzogara** received Rackham Graduate Student Research Grants.

**Justine Neiderhiser** was a recipient 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.

**Justine Neiderhiser, Sarah Swofford, and Christie Toth** were awarded English and Education Research Grants.

During 2012-2013, the following students were awarded a Rackham One-term Dissertation Fellowship: **Justine Neiderhiser, Ruth Anna Spooner, and Joanna Want**.

**Melody Pugh** and **Ruth Anna Spooner** were awarded Rackham Graduate School Humanities Fellowships in 2014.

**Crystal VanKooten** was selected to be the recipient of the Linda Pinder Fellowship for 2013.

**Joanna Want** was recognized in *Inside Higher Ed* for her dissertation research on how writing instructors consider issues they face when teaching veterans.

## 2013-2014 Dissertations

**Steven John Engel, Ph.D.**

***In Your Own Words: Ideological Dilemmas in English Teachers' Talk about Plagiarism***

**Chairs: Anne Ruggles Gere and Lesley Ann Rex**

In Steven Engel's dissertation, he investigates high school English teachers' talk about plagiarism. Although the popular discourses surrounding plagiarism tend to reduce it to a simple criminal act, the teachers in his study drew from a number of distinct, and sometimes contradictory, ideologies. Rather than seeing these dilemmas as ineffective teaching, he posits that these dilemmatic positions offer productive sites for conversations about students' interaction with text. The findings from this project reveal the complex social, literate, and digital practices that are constructed through teachers' talk about plagiarism, all of which could serve as meaningful starting points for introducing students to academic discourse communities and literacy practices.

**Anne Porter, Ph.D.**

***Distributed Agency and the Rhetorical Work of Essay Contests***

**Chair: Anne Ruggles Gere**

Anne Porter's dissertation focuses on the ways in which writers exert rhetorical agency in contemporary essay contests. Essay contests have received little attention in the scholarly literature, despite the fact that many libraries, schools, newspapers, civic organizations, literary societies, and corporations regularly sponsor such contests. Porter's project draws attention to this previously unexplored cultural literacy practice and to the social relations of writing that are relevant to it. Her dissertation highlights the key role that institutional sponsors play in shaping writing subjects and the production of knowledge. Ultimately, she shows how such contests reveal the distribution of agency among writers, sponsors, and an array of other actors who participate in writing tasks.





## Dissertations continue...

**Christina Toth, Ph.D.**

***Locally Responsive Composition Pedagogy: A Tribal College Case Study***

**Chairs: Anne Ruggles Gere and Scott Richard Lyons**

Christie Toth's dissertation is an ethnographic case study of locally responsive writing pedagogy at Diné College, a tribally-controlled college serving the Navajo Nation. It draws on analysis of longitudinal interviews with four writing faculty and sixteen of their students, weekly classroom observations conducted over a semester-long period, and course documents, as well as Christie's participant-observation as a part-time writing instructor at the college. She argues that Diné College writing faculty respond to several dimensions of "the local" in their teaching: the student population they serve, the unique institutional mission, and the communities of varying scale in which the college is situated. Furthermore, she argues that these students and their communities are more diverse and more globally engaged than previous literature on Native student writers has tended to suggest.

**Crystal VanKooten, Ph.D.**

***Developing Meta-Awareness about Composition through New Media in the First-Year Writing Classroom***

**Chairs: Anne Ruggles Gere and Bump Halbritter**

In her dissertation, Crystal VanKooten investigates "meta-awareness about composition" through new media, providing empirical evidence of learning outcomes for students who compose with video in a writing course. Through analysis of video interviews, class observations recorded on video, and student-authored documents, Crystal argues that meta-awareness involves a student's ability to move consistently between enacting compositional choices and articulating how and why those choices are effective or ineffective within a rhetorical context, and she identifies four indicators of movement toward such a meta-awareness. Her study also reveals that audiovisual composition is particularly suited for developing meta-awareness, and that moving toward meta-awareness is a messy process centered on problem-exploring.



## JPEE Alumni

**Laura Aull** ('11) is back in the classroom at Wake Forest University after research leave and is enjoying teaching an upper-level course Structure of the English Language (with Anne Curzan and Michael Adams' excellent textbook *How English Works* and a first-year writing seminar called "Slang to Schoolbooks: Arguments about Language and Language in Arguments." Spring 2014 was an exciting time for Laura for collaborative publications with other E&E alumni, which included an article with **Christie Toth** in *Assessing Writing* on Directed Self-Placement (DSP) questionnaire design and one with **Zak Lancaster** in *Written Communication* called "Linguistic Markers of Stance in Early and Advanced Academic Writing: A Corpus-Based Comparison." During the summer months, Laura enjoyed completing some of her writing at the lovely Cayman home of E&E alum **Randall Pinder** and honorary alum Paul Pearson. Laura's article "Linguistic Attention in Rhetorical Genre Studies and First-Year Writing" will come out in the forthcoming November 2014 Genre Special Issue of *Composition Forum*, and she plans to keep exploring the role of corpus linguistic analysis and combined rhetorical and applied linguistic genre studies in first-year writing.

**Stephen Bernhardt** ('81) continues to provide campus leadership at University of Delaware (UD) in problem-based learning, writing in the disciplines, and science and math education. He's also happy to report that his online help system, "Writer's Help," from Bedford, is doing well, with major program or university-wide adoptions at Illinois, Georgia, Florida, Colorado, and Washington, all flagship universities. It's also popular at many other universities and community colleges. "Writer's Help," with coauthor Nancy Sommers, is based on the content of Diana Hacker handbooks from Bedford. If you'd like to know more, google [writershelp.com](http://writershelp.com). Steve will teach for a final term this coming spring and then plans to retire from UD.

**Jeff Buchanan** ('02) was promoted to Professor of English and Teacher Education this year. His essay "Teaching as Writing, Teaching as Reading: Teaching Teaching" appears in the most recent issue of *Reader* (65/66 (Fall 2013/Spring 2014)). He continues to coordinate the English education program at Youngstown State University and co-chair (along with JPEE alum **Gary Salvner**) the YSU English Festival. The 2015 Festival will feature YA author Gary D. Schmidt and Assistant Professor **Jennifer Buehler**, another JPEE graduate.

**Jennifer Buehler** ('09) was recently elected President of ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE). She will serve a 3-year term from 2014-2017, and she will chair the 2016 ALAN Workshop in Atlanta.

**Heather Thomson-Bunn** ('10) is an Assistant Professor of English and the Director of First-Year Writing at Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA. She teaches rhetorical theory, advanced composition, professional writing, first-year writing, and language theory. Her most recent article, "Are They Empowered Yet?: Opening Up the Definitions of Critical Pedagogy," appeared in *Composition Forum*. A book chapter, entitled "Empirical Hybridity: A Multimethodological Approach to Studying Religious Rhetorics," will appear in *Mapping Christian Rhetorics*, which is due to be published by Routledge in November of this year.

**Moisés Perales Escudero** ('11) now directs the MEd at UQRoo. His research on critical and rhetorical reading with ESL learners has been published in international journals such as *Intercultural Education* and the *Brazilian Journal of Applied Linguistics*. He continues to collaborate with **Anne Gere** on researching discourse patterns in undergraduate writing. An example of this line of inquiry is their recent publication in the *Conference on College Composition and Communication* (CCCC) with **Laura Aull** and **Zak Lancaster**, "Local Assessment: Using Genre Analysis to Validate Directed Self-Placement." He is co-editor of the upcoming special issue on genre analysis of the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*.

**Amy Carpenter Ford** ('10) has been awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of English Education at Central Michigan University. She co-authored an article with English teacher candidate Inga N. Dietlin "Preparing for Urban Teaching through Place-Conscious Inquiry" in the *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* and is coaching teachers in implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for literacy with support from a Title II grant from the Michigan Department of Education.

## JPEE Alumni continues...

**Benjamin Gunsberg** ('12) is currently in his third year at Utah State University, where he teaches courses in English Education and Creative Writing. One of last year's teaching highlights was being joined (via Skype) by E&E's own Lizzie Hutton as students in his graduate poetry writing class discussed her exquisite collection, *She'd Waited Millennia*. He is grateful for the opportunity to publish in two areas. He has an article forthcoming in *Computers and Composition* that examines the turn toward multimodality by presenting findings from a semester-long ethnographic study of an upper-level college English course that required students to compose websites texts using Adobe Flash Professional. On the creative writing side, he has seventeen poems published or forthcoming in literary journals, including *The Southeast Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly Review*, *Permafrost*, *Pacific Review*, and *South Carolina Review*. Another highlight from last year was serving as a judge for Utah's Poetry Out Loud competition. What an honor it was to witness high school students reciting poetry so beautifully. Best wishes for a happy and productive year!

**Ted Lardner's** ('91) chapbook *We Practice For It*, , was selected by Mark Doty as the winner of the 2013 Sunken Garden Poetry Award and was published by Tupelo Press in July 2014.

**Stephanie Moody** ('13) is in her second year as assistant professor at Kent State University (KSU). At KSU, Stephanie teaches undergraduate courses in writing and English Education; she also teaches graduate courses for the Literacy, Rhetoric, and Social Practice doctoral major. This fall, Stephanie is on research leave and working on her book manuscript which, examines non-mainstream romance fiction, non-traditional publishing venues, and the readers and writers who traverse these sites.

**Matt Nelson** ('08) is Associate Professor of English at Francis Marion University, where he teaches composition courses, coordinates the secondary English teacher licensure program, directs the local National Writing Project site, and serves as Co-Director of the newly created South Carolina Center of Excellence for College and Career Readiness. This Center will coordinate the state's efforts to work with middle school, high school, and college teachers to consider ways of preparing students for their lives after high school.

**Thomas Phillion** ('93) has been promoted to Dean of the College of Education of Roosevelt University in Chicago, IL. In September, the college faculty approved a new five year strategic plan, and now they are focusing on creating a "New Deal Teachers Academy" (one of several ongoing projects). By Fall 2016, they hope to have in place a new admission process for teacher preparation programs, and redesigned curricula and field experiences that put school partnerships at the center of their work. It feels like the culmination of the journey he started at U of M almost 30 years ago.

**Randall Pinder** ('11) was awarded Professor of the Year in the School of English Studies at the College of The Bahamas for 2013-2014, based on his end-of-year performance reviews. This is his second year in a row winning the award. In March 2014, he presented "College Writing and Technology: Student Writers' Digital Literacy, Access, and Engagement at the College of The Bahamas" at the CCCC in March 2014 under the theme, "Open/Source(s), Access, Futures" during the Research Network Forum. He will present "If Not Me, Then Who?: Addressing Digital Literacies in First-Year Writing Courses" at CCCC in Tampa in March 2015. Randy began his first year as Head of Department, and as Writing Programme Coordinator/HOD, he oversees the writing courses at the College. He serves on the Professional Leave Committee, co-chairs the Sidney Pottier Film Festival, and co-chairs the Anatol Rogers Memorial Lecture series (ARML). This year, ARML will feature Dr. Anne Curzan in January 2015. Paul and Randy continue to live and move between The Bahamas and the Cayman Islands. Their new place in Cayman should be fully renovated in time to have Christmas there and to welcome visitors in the New Year.



## continues...

**William Craig Rice** ('91) writes from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) that he hopes fellow E&Eers will alert colleagues to the 2015 slate of NEH Summer Seminars and Institutes and Landmarks of American History & Culture Workshops. Bill's latest efforts at the NEH have focused on Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, leading to support for *Standing Down*, an anthology from the Great Books Foundation, and the Warrior Scholar Project, which convenes "academic boot camps" taught by faculty at Harvard, Michigan, and Yale. Bill has recent creative and scholarly publications in *The American Oxonian*, *National Review*, *The New Criterion*, *The Road Not Taken: A Journal of Formal Verse*, *The Satirist*, and the *Southern Classics series of University of South Carolina Press*. On the K-12 front, Bill has supported the founding of two high-performing charter schools in the District of Columbia—Washington Latin Public Charter School and BASIS DC—and was recently invited to the board of the Orme School in Arizona. In 2013 he was one of three fellow former presidents attending the inauguration of Susan Henking, the 14th president of Shimer College in Chicago, and was given a Lifetime Achievement Award for Contributions to the Humanities by Utah Valley University.

**Sarah R. Robbins** ('93) is currently serving as Acting Dean of the J. V. Roach Honors College at TCU. During the past year, she published "Commodities and Celebrities: Textual Ownership and Authorial Role-playing by American Novelists, 1870-1940," *The Oxford History of the Novel in English: The American Novel 1870-1940*, as well as two co-authored essays for *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*. She delivered invited talks—on Little Lord Fauntleroy's transatlantic identity and on the writing partnership between Elaine Goodale Eastman and Charles (Ohiyesa) Eastman—for American Studies programs at universities in Trier and Saarbrücken, Germany, respectively. At Baylor University last fall, she gave an invited lecture on the transatlantic friendship between Jane Addams of Hull-House and Henrietta Barnett (co-founder of Toynbee Hall in London). This fall, she is excited to be co-presenting for the first time with her daughter Margaret, a doctoral student in literacy studies at the University of Georgia, Athens.

**Kelly Sassi** ('08) was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor of English and Education at North Dakota State University in Fargo. She received two SEED Grants this year from the National Writing Project: one for Professional Development in a High Needs School and another for Teacher Leadership Development. Kelly became the director of the Red River Valley Writing Project on March 1, 2014. Her book, *Writing on Demand for the Common Core State Standards Assessments*, co-authored with **Anne Gere**, was published in March 2014. Her book chapter, "Feminist-Indigenous Rhetorics of Survivance and Discursive Spaces in S. Alice Callahan's Wynema: A Child of the Forest," was published in *Feminist Challenges, Feminist Rhetorics: Locations, Scholarship*, also in—you guessed it—March 2014.

**David Schaafsma** ('90) is Professor of English and Director of English Education at The University of Illinois at Chicago, where he has now been for 15 years, working with **Todd DeStigter**. He published, with co-author Ruth Vinz (and with Randi Dickson, Sara Brock, and Nick Sousanis also writing chapters), "On Narrative Inquiry: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research," New York: Teachers College Press, 2011. It took him close to ten years to complete this book, and it couldn't have been accomplished without Ruth asking if she could help him finish it, which was thrilling for him. From the time he had committed to doing it till the time the book came out, lots of life intervened: the death of both parents, divorce, remarriage, FIVE (yes, 5) kids, two with disabilities, and a pretty serious writing block that can't simply be chalked up to the life challenges that came. In those years he put a lot of professional energy into teaching, and editing *English Education* for five years. This fall, his next book was finished, *Jane Addams in the Classroom*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014. This book is an edited collection in part developed out of a reading group on Addams, and a class he taught on her work that took place at Chicago's Hull House. He and Todd wrote the introduction, Todd has the first essay, and David has one of the concluding ones in it, entitled "Manifestations of Altruism: Sympathetic Understanding, Narrative, and Democracy." **Sarah Robbins** was one of their supportive reviewers.

continues...

**Aaron M Schutz** ('98) has a new book coming out on February 15, 2015 from Vanderbilt University Press: *People Power: The Community Organizing Tradition of Saul Alinsky*. This is an edited volume of classic and mostly unpublished writings about organizing along with interviews with key community organizers in the Alinsky tradition. The book focuses on the years 1955-1980, when some of the most creative work in organizing was going on, and when most of the key community organizing groups were created, including the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), as well as when the shift to church-based organizing by National Network - Unlocking the Power of People (PICO), and the Industrial Areas Foundation occurred. The volume includes overview chapters that lay out the history of this period. Aaron's co-editor worked with Alinsky, was a field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and is a well-known organizer nationally. Aaron spent three years of intensive work on this one. Currently, Aaron is doing case studies of different approaches to neighborhood organizing in America that work on this book uncovered, and working on a book on Hannah Arendt and civic education, among other projects. As he notes, what is nice about being a professor is that you can keep following your interests as well as what you learn the field needs to understand into areas you could not necessarily have imagined focusing on when you were a graduate student. He has a great deal of archival data about organizing, including extensive and unique tape recordings of organizer trainings from the 1970s that he would love to work with someone on if they were interested.

**Ebony Elizabeth Thomas** ('10) has settled into Philadelphia as Assistant Professor of Reading/Writing/Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania. In the spring of 2014, she won two awards: the AERA Language and Social Processes SIG Emerging Scholar Award, and a National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship. This fall, she's chairing her first-ever doctoral dissertation committee, and undergoing the mid-tenure and reappointment process. She looks forward to catching up with E&E alumni, faculty, students, and friends at NCTE this November in Washington, DC.



## 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 Laubenthal, Joint Ph.D. Program in English & Education, 610 E. University, 4204 SEB, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259.

## *Remembrance Of Jay Robinson,* *Former Director of the Ph.D. program in English and Education*

---

*Throughout his life, he remained committed to, and lived by, ideals that rose from a deeply held belief that all humans should be honored regardless of difference. A teacher to the end, he showed those of us left behind how to face death with dignity, peace and humility.*

### **Tributes to Jay Robinson**

What follows are memories, stories, and glimpses into the life of Professor Jay Robinson, a former Director of the Joint Program in English and Education, written by some of his many devoted students from the program. Jay passed away on October 5 and will be sorely missed by all of us.

As the remembrances collected here testify, Jay Robinson was a teacher who made powerful differences in the lives of his students. I was privileged to be both a student and colleague of Jay's. I can still visualize his neat handwritten questions in the margins of my dissertation, questions that pushed me to think harder about the nature of literacy. Jay was settling in as chair of the Department of English as I was heading to my first job at the University of Washington, but it was already clear that he was restoring what had become a badly frayed department. JPEE was fortunate to benefit from Jay's leadership after his term as Department Chair, and it was Jay who recruited me to return to UM as a colleague and co-chair of JPEE. Working with Jay was both an honor and a pleasure. He gave me space to grow and at the same time offered memorable lessons in kindness, courage, and grace. I am very grateful to Cathy Fleischer for organizing and to all those below for contributing to this tribute to Jay.

—Anne Ruggles Gere

I remember Jay as soft-spoken and fierce, which was a sort of daunting combination! In his rhetoric seminar, which culminated in a day-long presentation of our seminar papers in a conference in a beautiful room in Rackham Hall, I felt like we were all creating a praxis of literacy and a sense of identity as teachers and theorists. On my proposal, submitted about midterm in that semester, Jay wrote two words that changed my world: "Add Sledd." In reference to James Sledd, his old friend from Northwestern University, Jay's notation set me off on what became a sort of tour of an alternate history of the profession of language arts circa 1969. (Can you imagine seeing an article like Sledd's "Bi-dialectalism: The Linguistics of White Supremacy" being published in English Journal today?) Because of Jay's work in the Saginaw, MI, schools, everything he claimed about liberatory pedagogy and ideology and schooling came with the authority of first-hand, "in the trenches" experience. He was brave. At the front end of what has become a tidal wave of accountability regimens, Jay's response, defending the alternate pedagogy he developed in collaboration with teachers in Saginaw, was essentially to say, bring it on; our students are more than prepared to excel on those tests. I still tell my students about that today. Because liberatory literacy far surpasses Common Core assessment standards, teachers committed to such a pedagogy—teachers like Jay was—are the ones who are truly raising the bar, expecting excellence especially where others might too readily settle for status quo.

—Ted Lardner, Cleveland State University

## Remembering Jay continues...

I don't have a story, just fond memories of a genuinely kind-hearted, student-centered professor. It meant a lot to me to discover that writing, language, and literacy studies were valued at Michigan. Jay offered his big heart and wise ways to students in English, English Education, and the Doctoral program. I was honored to work with him through the initial years of the English Composition Board.

— Steve Bernhardt, University of Delaware

Jay Robinson helped me pursue my vision through the slalom of graduate school, not least by challenging that vision—often deeply, but never antagonistically. Jay was inspired by the liberatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire and other Marxists; I found merit in E. D. Hirsch's case for core knowledge. This made me “a mistake” in the English and Education program. But for all our differences, Jay and I shared dissatisfaction with the status quo in academia. He held that the universities were shirking their duty to literacy education; I agreed. I held that the universities were shirking their duty to the reading public; he agreed.

Like the best educators, Jay didn't see his job as fitting up professionals for ready service to the professions; he wanted to breed rebels, even rebels on the wrong side, like me. And Jay Robinson was no parlor Marxist. He drove up to Saginaw and spent countless days in urban-minority classrooms. The English Department seminar room seemed to annoy him as an affront to Sartre's precept that existence emerges through action in the world.

Our final bond was struck when I was bringing thesis chapters to Jay, L. S. Berlin, and David Hollinger. Jay was curious to learn that I relied on piano music to sustain my drive. Would I lend him something? I brought him Youra Guller's final two sonatas of Beethoven and Ivan Moravec's Nocturnes of Chopin. These recordings are like séances. Jay said he could hardly stop listening to them. Would I buy him the same CDs? I hope that in his final years this and other music still gave Jay Robinson such absorbing pleasure.

— William Craig Rice , National Endowment for the Humanities

I count among the gifts of my life having had the opportunity to study, work, and write with Jay Robinson. Teacher and colleague, Jay was one of the most generative thinkers I've ever had the privilege of knowing. I've written in other places about the impact of Jay's scholarship and program building on the fields of English education, composition, and literacy studies, but here in the academic community where we knew him personally, I'm moved to speak about Jay, the friend I will always admire. I recall an observation that Bea Ugartechea, a much-respected English teacher, with a reputation for being as tough as she was terrific, made to Jay after a number of meetings of a teacher-research study group in which I was a participant. Jay had just described what he'd noted in a piece of student writing we were examining when Bea addressed him across our crowded room. Speaking with obvious respect, she said: “You always see what is good in students' work. I've always looked for what was wrong.” Bea was right. Jay always saw the promise, the potential in everything and everyone. Shortly after I first met Jay almost thirty years ago now, another remarkable teacher and friend, Dan Fader, said something to me after a session in which the three of us and others were working on a project in Michigan's newly-established English Composition Board. Dan's words ring in my ears these many years later: “If you push a finger straight through Jay Robinson, you'll never meet anything but good.” Dan had that right. Jay Robinson saw goodness, inspired goodness, was goodness personified.

— Patti Stock, Emerita Michigan State University

## Remembering Jay continues...

I remember with great pleasure taking a seminar from Jay my first semester in the program. The course centered on literacy and democracy, but we spent most of our time discussing the public sphere. What I loved most about the class was the way it enacted the democratic potential of the public. Jay nurtured a strong and vibrant learning community, and he demonstrated each week the potential for action when people gathered together around a common subject. His enthusiasm and care will be missed.

— Jennifer Sinor, Utah State

Although it may seem strange to say so, my favorite “Jay story” is about the only time he got visibly angry with me. We were in his office discussing my dissertation, which was then in its early stages. I told Jay that I was worried that my research had too narrow a focus on the literacies of Latino students, that maybe I should expand my work to make myself more broadly marketable to prospective employers. Jay leaned forward in his chair and cut me off. “Todd,” he said, “you’re asking the wrong questions.” He went on to insist (and I remember his words pretty clearly) that this project wasn’t about me, but it was about contributing to conversations that had the potential to make a positive impact on the lives of students like those I was presuming to work with. Although I was squirming at the time, I remember this exchange as a beautiful example of Jay’s relentless insistence that we devote our intellectual energies – and our lives, really, as he did – to fostering literate communities that, as Jay himself put it, “create and then nourish development and maintenance of a just and democratic society.”

—Todd DeStigter, University of Illinois at Chicago

Although I do not have a story as such, I have a deep and abiding respect for the scholarship, teaching and graciousness of Jay Robinson. I had the privilege of taking courses with Jay and then working with him as my dissertation chairperson. Looking back, the time that Jay gave to each of his students was extraordinary. He had that rare ability to work across disciplines; by introducing us to his colleagues in other departments, we learned by example what it meant to work within the interdisciplinary field of English education. His fine intellect, a keen sense of humour and the ability to draw students together from diverse backgrounds enabled him to develop a community of teachers and scholars that decades later stay in touch. We will much miss Jay but know that his vision for democratic education lives on through the work of his students.

—John Lofty, emeritus, University of New Hampshire

My meetings with Jay Robinson—one of my JPEE mentors and dissertation director—provided many fond memories. He shared his generosity of spirit—at Chalk and Cheese, in class, during professional conferences, at a Michigan Stadium football game, with stories of his time in the Marines and his degree work, and even while window shopping on East U. His many specific kindnesses also remain with me—introductions to literacy experts, hospitality at JPEE parties with Machree at their home, and time he allowed for considered responses at my oral defense. I wish I had accepted more of his invitations both during and after my time in Ann Arbor. Nevertheless, when I recall Jay, I do so most clearly during two of our one-to-one conferences. Jay relaxed (pressed dress shirt and tie, but no jacket or glasses) behind his Haven Hall desk: The first memory begins with his swiveling to the bookcase behind him and ending with his turn back to lay before me—from both hands—a spread, like playing cards, of recent books on composition theory to jump start part of my research. The second memory is his leaning back in his chair (hands behind his head and a cigarette in the ashtray) gently releasing rings that floated and dissolved in the air between us as I answered his just-asked question about a critical point in my dissertation draft. These essentially wordless, understated gestures exemplify for me the quiet directness of a truly learned—and most literate—man who honestly, truthfully, and compassionately inspired his students.

—Bill Knox, Western Illinois University



## Remembering Jay continues...

Near the end of his essay “Wanderings: Misreadings, Miswritings, Misunderstandings” (an essay I first encountered in a class taught by Jay Robinson), David Bartholomae writes of the “most dramatic educational experience” he had. That experience, Bartholomae reports, was driven by a desire “to read and speak and write like” Richard Poirer, the strongest teacher he had encountered. Bartholomae’s story is common, I think. My version centers on Jay Robinson, in Bartholomae’s words, “a teacher . . . whose presence cannot be ignored . . . whose writing a student cannot help but imitate and whose presence, then, becomes both an inspiration and a burden.” An enduring presence for which I am grateful.

—Jeff Buchanan, Youngstown State University

I first met Jay when I was a graduate student at EMU and was giving my very first paper at a conference. Jay came to my session and complimented my work! I was ecstatic and went on to the Joint Ph.D. Program in English and Education, where I took an independent study from Jay. He left me completely alone, but he was the kind of person who caused me to do my very best work. During that semester, I took almost 100 pages of dense notes on my computer and wrote 2-3 page “conversation papers” to Jay every week—not required by Jay but required by my respect for him and my gratitude that he was allowing me the opportunity to dig so deeply into my topic. I am so grateful for having known him.

—Anne Berggren, former lecturer, University of Michigan

Jay was an amazing and inspiring teacher in seminar, bringing us into conversation with each other, never lecturing, bringing us into contact with so many ideas, especially through one seminar in particular, with its focus on Narrative and Literacy, which had a lifelong effect on me and others, and is still having ripple effects on dozens of us and our students all over the country. When Jay retired I wrote for that occasion about the strength of his teaching, which was his listening. He began as a lecturer in medieval literature, turned to linguistics with Dick Bailey and Bernie Van’t Hul, and to sociolinguistics in particular, then to English Education, and I like to think of it as a kind of progression from literature to literacy, and from lecturer to listener, though all of what he knew about language from his early days was always present through all the work in Saginaw and in his seminars.

There’s a moment that comes to me as I think of Jay. I had sent Jay a draft of my second chapter of my dissertation, wherein I was trying to weave theoretical discussions into my stories of a Detroit community-based writing project. Just before I went to bed, about midnight, I got an email from him that floored me: “David, I have no idea what the !#@&\*^\$ you are trying to do in this chapter!!!” I knew Jay to be a quiet, reserved person, and though I had seen him swearing at E.D. Hirsch in the margins of his copy of *Cultural Literacy*, I had never heard him swear at anyone else, much less me! I thought I had known him well! What did it mean? I tossed and turned and fretted that night, but most importantly emailed my best friend Cathy, who called me early the next morning to discuss the implications of the message. We decided, after many minutes of heightened talk, some of it involving nervous laughter, that Jay was in a sense honoring me with the email, inviting me to see myself as a colleague, no longer in any sense a student, and that is how I decided to view it, and I got back to work! That was the spring of 1989 and I still have that email on the wall in my office.

--Dave Schaafsma, University of Illinois Chicago

When I think about Jay Robinson, I remember conversations. Conversations in his office—where he was a listener who tended to wait patiently through the fumbling musings I brought there until, at just the right moment, in his quiet voice, he would synthesize and focus everything I’d been wandering around in my befuddled language and wondering about. Conversations in his classes—where he modeled guide-from-the-side stance by putting students at center stage, enabling lively dialogue and promptly it only with the

## Remembering Jay continues...

most incisive of questions, seemingly never making any “teacher-ly” pronouncements. Conversations on and around papers—in assignments he literally called “conversation papers,” where his yellow sticky notes avoided “marking up” anything we’d said and instead posed more questions to keep us thinking.

Jay mentored many. He leaves a powerful legacy in his former students, so many of whom have gone on to try to emulate his vision and his generative pedagogical strategies. When I read their writing now, or listen to their presentations at a conference, or reconnect in informal conversations of our own in spaces like NCTE, I hear Jay’s voice anew. Now that, undoubtedly, is teaching at its best.

—Sarah Robbins, Texas Christian University

For almost thirty years, I’ve known Jay Robinson. He introduced me, virtually and actually, to the minds that have shaped me: Maxine Greene, Richard Rorty, James Boyd White, Alton Becker, Lil Brannon and Cy Knoblauch, Mike Rose, Henry Giroux, among others. His journey from medievalist to reflective practitioner bridging between K-12 schools and universities was strikingly unusual, and caused many of his students, including me, to consciously select lifework at the confluence of those worlds.

At his best, as a teacher, he elicited his students’ engagement with complex intellectual work. He orchestrated learning almost as if he was throwing a great dinner party. He selected fantastic readings, then pressed his students to make sense and make connections, inviting them to speak their minds, and to imagine that they were conversing with each other and with the authors as equals—as compassionate, thoughtful people making sense of our shared commons.

In the years beyond my completion, I only saw Jay occasionally, for a lunch now and then. I’m not sure I said and did enough to communicate my gratitude—for his probing questions, for his generosity with time, attention, and energy, and most important, for the example he provided, of living in the world sensitively, caring deeply about human beings far outside of his immediate sphere.

—Laura Roop, University of Pittsburgh

On the first day of my first class at U-M, Jay posed what I thought at the time was a simple question: What is literacy? I scribbled something about reading and writing, thinking to myself that this graduate school stuff was going to be a breeze. What followed from that question was, first, five years of amazing study with Jay and, subsequently, a lifetime of thinking hard, reading widely, questioning honestly, and conversing sincerely—all approaches to scholarship (and life) that Jay taught me. Whenever I think of Jay, I think of conversation: whether in a classroom when we read complex and sometimes surprising books and articles from a variety of disciplines, or after class at Dominc’s when we continued our discussion over beer and pizza, or with a group of teachers at Saginaw High School as we searched for ways to talk about uncomfortable issues of race and class and literacy. Jay taught me that it’s always better to hash out those ideas that we most struggle with in honest and frank conversation with others—a belief that continues to impact me as a scholar, a teacher, a wife, a mother, and a member of many communities. Jay also taught me that conversation depends on deep listening, a sincere belief in the good will of others, and a gentle spirit—notions I continue to strive toward every day. What all of us who were his students would say, I believe, is that our time with Jay changed our lives and continues to change the lives of those we teach and those they teach. When I posted on my Facebook page about Jay’s passing, one of my former students—a thoughtful and gifted high school teacher—wrote that she felt so sad, because, even though she had never met Jay, she had just lost her intellectual grandfather. That’s a pretty impressive legacy.

—Cathy Fleischer, Eastern Michigan University



Angell Hall

The mission of the University of Michigan is to serve the people of Michigan and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art, and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future.



School of Education

## A Special Thank You to Contributors:

Timothy P. Anderson  
Sandra Balkema  
Paula Barnes  
James and Brita Beitler III  
Anne G. Berggren  
Stephen Bernhardt  
James and Julie Bradford  
Judson and Catharine Bradford  
Thomas and Kathryn Bradford  
Charles and Suanna Breed  
David West Brown  
Martha K. Burnstein  
Jeffrey Buchanan  
Jennifer I. Buehler  
Michael and Heather Bunn  
Anne L. Curzan  
Ken and Bette Davis  
Todd D. DeStigter  
Lahna F. Diskin  
Rollin G. Douma  
Edward W. Ducharme  
Lindsay M. Ellis  
Edmund and JoAnn Farrell  
Paul and Bayan Feigenbaum  
William and Janice Feigenbaum  
Cathy A. Fleischer  
June Ferrill  
Harold and Greta Foster  
Gail Schaefer Fu  
Susan Gardner  
Anne Ruggles Gere  
Jeanne W. Halpern  
Victoria Haviland  
Harold & Lynne Henderson  
Christine Hult  
Marion L. Huyck  
William and Virginia Knox  
Barry Koops  
Carlton & Pam Lancaster  
David F. Lardner  
Pamela Larmee  
John S. Lofty  
Ann B. Loveland  
Elizabeth A. Masciale  
Lawrence J. McDoniel  
Virginia Monseau  
Emily Nye  
Francis & Melinda McBee Orzulak  
Lee Odell  
Paul Pearson and Randall Pinder  
Thomas R. Phillion  
Margaret B. Pigott  
William Craig Rice  
Sarah Robbins  
Gary and Kathy Salvner  
Enrico and Kelly Sassi  
John C. Schafer  
Suzanne B. Spring  
John & Sharilyn Steadman  
Patricia Stock  
Richard E. Templeton  
Ebony E. Thomas  
Margaret K. Willard-Traub  
Carla L. Verderame  
Alisea Williams  
Morris Young

---

We're on the Web: [http://www.soe.umich.edu/academics/doctoral\\_programs/ee/](http://www.soe.umich.edu/academics/doctoral_programs/ee/)