



THE WRITERS' BLOCK

Spring 2018

The Newsletter of the English Department of The College of Saint Rose

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EVENTS

- April 5 Poetry and Performance (+ Friends) featuring English 218 students, Commuter Lounge, EAC, 7-8 PM
- April 19-21 Saint Rose Theatre production of *Vanya & Sonia & Masha & Spike*, Campus Theatre
- April 21 Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society Induction Ceremony, Hubbard Sanctuary, 1-3 PM
- April 25 English Symposium, Carondelet Symposium, Lally, 11:50 AM-5:30 PM
- April 25 Talk by Distinguished Visiting Scholar Dorothy Kim, Carondelet Symposium, Lally, 6:30 PM

Right: Photos from Dr. Ken Krauss's recent research trip to Venice, Italy.

AFTER 28 YEARS, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND DRAMA DR. KEN KRAUSS TO RETIRE

By Meghan Kelley, '18

Since 1990, Dr. Ken Krauss has been a familiar face in the Saint Rose English Department. However, that time is soon coming to an end. At the end of the spring semester, Dr. Krauss will be retiring after teaching for 28 years at Saint Rose.

A professor of English and Drama, Dr. Krauss spent his years inspiring students of all majors. His wit and sarcasm were as much an essential part of his classes as the readings and assignments. Of all the English and Drama classes he taught over the years, he had a few favorites, particularly ENG 577 – a Proust seminar – and ENG 379: Studies in Film. But, Dr. Krauss said, it is hard for him to pick a favorite since he loves all the drama classes he has taught in his years here.

His favorite plays from his years directing the college's dramas are numerous, including *Offending the Audience* by Peter Handke and *Cabaret* by Kander and Ebb. His least favorite is easier to pinpoint, due to the limitations of the script as well as the production: *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill.

"I will always cherish memories of the good times, particularly with my talented students whom I got to watch grow and develop and go on to lives that clearly benefitted from their time in theatre here," Dr. Krauss said.

Dr. Krauss noted that the Saint Rose theatre program is unlike any other program in the area. "Ours remains a truly unique program: We do scholarly, literary, and historical work through classes as well as offering wonderful workshop courses in acting and performance, and we also have open casting for any student who wants to participate in a production—unlike any other college in the area."

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PEOPLE

FACULTY

David Morrow
Chair

Douglas Butler
May Caroline Chan
Eurie Dahn
Kenneth Krauss
Kathryn Laity
Jennifer Marlow
Daniel Nester
Vaneeta Palecanda
David Rice
Ronald Shavers
Eileen Sperry
Brian Sweeney
Barbara Ungar

SIGMA TAU DELTA English Honor Society

2018 Inductees

Hannah Rose Deetz
Maja Birgit De Garay
Malcolm Brownell
Ashley Richardson
Jessica Werner-DeLong
Jinessa Velez

2017 Inductees

Liz DeSantis
Sarah Bosworth
Danielle Epting
Meghan Kelley
Olivia Spicer Boylan
Scarlet Veras
Helen Young

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Brian Sweeney

Departmental Honors

Five English majors were among the Saint Rose students recognized for academic achievement at the annual Honors Convocation at the Massry Center for the Arts on Saturday, March 24. The honorees were:

Carolynn Bruni — Outstanding English: Adolescence Education/Special Education Major

Derek Bushnell — Outstanding English: Adolescence Education Major

Danielle Epting — Professor S. R. Swaminathan Award for outstanding senior English major with plans to attend graduate school

Meghan Kelley — Outstanding English Major

Christiane Lee — Senior Writing Award

In addition, Jennifer O'Keefe, a double major in Special Education and Elementary Education with a concentration in English Language Arts, was honored for her essay "A Place for Sympathy within the Law," which she wrote for ENG 223: Sympathy and the Early American Novel, taught by Dr. Brian Sweeney. The essay was one of five chosen for publication in the 2017 Saint Rose *Journal of Undergraduate Research*.

English faculty members Dr. Eurie Dahn, Dr. David Morrow, Dr. Dave Rice, and Dr. Sweeney were in attendance to congratulate honorees and their guests.

DR. KEN KRAUSS TO RETIRE

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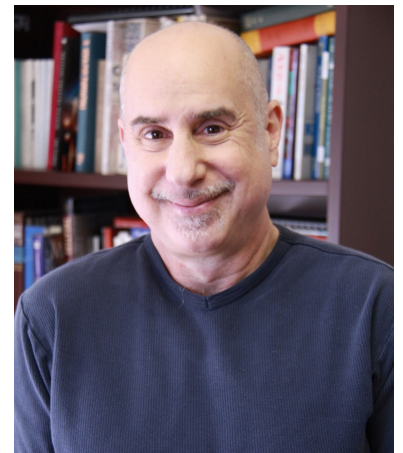
As Audrey Couture, one of Krauss' former students, recalled, "I will be forever be grateful for Dr. Krauss. Had he not believed in me and had he not cast me in the 5 shows I performed in at Saint Rose, I don't believe my college experience would have been so memorable. My fondest memories of college were the time I spent with Dr. Krauss in the tiny black box theatre."

Dr. Barbara Ungar, Professor of English, worked with Dr. Krauss for the majority of his years at Saint Rose. "I was always amazed at the quality of production he achieved on a shoestring budget and the performances he elicited out of CSR students," she said. "He is not only a stellar director, but a wonderful actor, as well as professor, playwright, scholar. He will be impossible to replace."

In addition to being a great professor and artist, Dr. Krauss is one of the department's most recognized scholars. His seven books include *The Drama of Fallen France: Reading 'La Comédie sans Tickets'* (SUNY Press, 2004), which looked at plays produced in Paris during the German Occupation. More recently, *Male Beauty* (SUNY Press, 2014) examined the depiction of masculinity in postwar theatre, film, and physique magazines.

Looking towards the future, Krauss is working on a book about what Giacomo Casanova's *History of My Life* has to say on gender and queer issues. "I recently came back from two weeks in Venice, where I retraced [Casanova's] footsteps and visited many of the places he knew," Krauss said. The project is a huge undertaking: the twelve volumes of Casanova's memoir total 1.2 million words.

"Ken is multi-talented—a triple threat, as a scholar, creative writer, and man of the theatre" stated Dr. David Morrow, Chair of the English Department. "Ken is also very funny. I value the insights of his sharp, cynical eye—which I've enjoyed spoken, written, and in multimedia format. Ken has very good politics. I admire him, and I'll miss him."





A TARGET OF THE ALT-RIGHT, VASSAR MEDIEVALIST DR. DOROTHY KIM TO SPEAK AT ENGLISH SYMPOSIUM

By Robert Van der Werken, '19

Last August in Charlottesville, Virginia, crew-cut white men donning medieval apparel with shield and sigil entered Emancipation Park. These were no harmless role-players but white supremacists who gathered for a Unite the Right rally to protest the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. In their choice of costume, the demonstrators rooted their racist views in an idealized medieval past that scholars of the medieval period dismiss as completely imaginary. Events like this one have made the misappropriation of medieval iconography by the emergent alt-right the subject of heated debate in medievalist circles.

The English Department welcomes one of the central figures in this debate, medievalist Dr. Dorothy Kim, as this year's Distinguished Visiting Scholar. Assistant Professor of English at Vassar College, Dr. Kim has argued that the current political context places new responsibilities on medievalist scholars. "The medieval western European Christian past is being weaponized by white supremacist/white nationalist/KKK/Nazi extremist groups who also frequently happen to be college students," says Dr. Kim. In an open letter addressed to fellow medievalists entitled "Teaching Medieval Studies in a Time of White Supremacy," Dr. Kim emphasizes the importance of political commitment and action: "What are you doing,

medievalists, in your classrooms? Because you are the authorities teaching medieval subjects in the classroom, you are, in fact, ideological arms dealers. So, are you going to be apathetic weapons dealers not caring how your material and tools will be used? Do you care who your buyers are in the classroom? Choose a side."

Dr. Kim's call for political commitment has drawn fire from within and without academe. Dr. Rachel Fulton Brown, Associate Professor of History at the University of Chicago and a fellow medievalist, has publicly disagreed with Dr. Kim, advocating a position of political neutrality: "We are creating a fear that is unnecessary," she claims. Yet it is this neutral stance that Dr. Kim protests: "Doing nothing is choosing a side. Denial is choosing a side. Using the racist dog whistle of 'we must listen to both sides' is choosing a side."

The back-and-forth between Dr. Kim and Dr. Fulton Brown soon expanded into an internet sensation. Dr. Kim criticized the latter for her contributions to *Breitbart* and articles such as "Three Cheers for White Men," and Dr. Fulton Brown responded with blog posts such as "Why Dorothy Kim Hates Me." Dr. Fulton Brown also enlisted the help of notorious right-wing personality and former *Breitbart* editor Milo Yiannopoulos, who wrote an article praising Dr. Fulton Brown and belittling Dr. Kim on his website, sparking a barrage of inflammatory remarks and threats aimed at Dr. Kim from his supporters.

In response to these attacks, Dr. Kim has received an outpouring of academic support from the medievalist community. Dr. David Perry, a medievalist and Associate Professor of History at Dominican University, writes, "Dr. Kim is a brilliant scholar and one of the foremost leaders in ongoing efforts to confront both the shameful legacy of racism in medieval studies and the current appropriation of medieval symbols and stories by modern-day white supremacists."

Saint Rose medievalist and Associate Professor of English Dr. Kathryn Laity echoes this view. "I admire Dr. Kim for her stellar scholarship and for her good humour despite constant attacks from both outside and within the academy," she said. "I am scandalized by the attempts of neo-Nazi groups to vilify Dr. Kim and other scholars who have been instrumental in transforming the field of medieval studies to bring out the wonderful variety of experiences beyond the tired tropes conveyed in a lot of modern popular culture."

Dr. Kim's talk, "Medieval Studies and the Politics of Fascism," is largely fashioned in response to the demonstrations in Charlottesville: "In August 2017, the alt-right rallied at the University of Virginia," says Dr. Kim of her talk. "Not only did they murder Heather Heyer, but they did so carrying symbols, dressing up as, and organizing themselves in relation to images...and touchstones imagined as part of the medieval past. This talk will discuss the politics of fascism and the centrality of medieval studies in how the current alt-right frames its cultural and political agenda." The presentation will take place at the Carondelet Symposium in the Lally School of Education at 6:30 PM on April 25.

SAINT ROSE STUDENT THEATRE 2017-2018 SEASON

By Leah Hyldelund

The Saint Rose Theatre production of *The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society's Production of A Christmas Carol* drew enthusiastic audiences to the Campus Theatre in November. Under the direction of Professor Angela Ryan, each member of the five-person student cast played multiple, quirky roles in the production, which included fourth-wall-breaking, entertaining cast-audience interaction.

This April, Christopher Durang's Tony Award-winning *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* comes to the Campus Theatre. A spoof of the work of Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, the comedy runs April 19-22. Tickets available at the door. For more information visit facebook.com/SaintRoseTheatre/.



Alumni Snapshots: Abbey Barker, '15

By Christiane Lee, '18

Abbey Barker, 24, graduated from the College of Saint Rose with an English degree in 2015. She started college as a Communications major with a Journalism concentration, but switched into English at the beginning of her freshman year. She moved to Brooklyn after four years of traveling between Albany for school and Manhattan for her internship, but has since returned to the Capital Region for work. She loves writing creative non-fiction, literary criticism, and journalism. As an upcoming graduate, I took the opportunity to ask her some questions about her experiences as a humanities major after leaving Saint Rose.

What do you work in now? Do you use the skills you learned as an English major in this work?

Barker: I am currently the Field Director for Paul Tonko's 2018 re-election campaign. Being an English major instilled in me the critical thinking skills and tools for thoughtful discourse that I use every day.

What kinds of jobs were you looking for after you graduated?

Barker: I interned every summer throughout college and, thankfully, was offered a full-time job before graduation. I started as the Administrative Director and Social Media Assistant at Bob Mackie Design Group at the beginning of 2015 and left as Social Media Director in 2017.

What difficulties did you face in the job hunt?

Barker: I started working at Bob Mackie when I was eighteen and before I knew it, I had been there for 5 years. What I wanted professionally and creatively began to shift. When I started looking for jobs and seeing what was out there, there were a lot of moments of feeling I wasn't qualified to do anything combined with the insecurity of knowing there are 40 other people going for the same job I was. I say all that to say, be kind to yourself. It is hard to be young and unsure and searching for the job of your dreams or even the job that pays your rent. Be patient with yourself and with the process.

Have you thought about graduate school?

Barker: I have looked at CUNY Hunter and Emerson College's MFA in Creative Non-Fiction/Creative Writing programs. Grad school is something I've been going back and forth on since my junior year of college. My approach has revolved around needing everything to fall into place perfectly: the timing would have to be right, the creative energy would have to be all but overflowing, and the funds to support myself would have to be available. In the three years since undergrad, I've been close to applying, but it never felt right.

If you could give one piece of advice to new and graduating English majors, what would it be?

Barker: You might think you know everything, but you actually know nothing. Let life happen so you can learn something.



Alumni Snapshots:

Christopher Surprenant, '14

By Kristina Golden, '19

Over the past few months, the Academic Success Center at Saint Joseph's Hall has been swamped with anxiety-ridden seniors. Some have their eyes set on the job market, while others are frantically submitting last minute applications to graduate programs. During an interview with Christopher Surprenant, '14, who is currently pursuing his MA in English at Northeastern University, I got some insider tips for when it's time to apply to your dream school.



Were you an Albany local before attending The College of Saint Rose? What attracted you to our campus?

Surprenant: I'm from the Utica area, about 90 miles away from Albany. I wanted to be somewhere relatively close to home. I visited SUNY Oswego and LeMoyne, and finally Saint Rose with my mom in the fall. After we parked and left the car, we walked along Madison Avenue. I loved the idea of being able to get out of class and walk five minutes to grab some groceries or get a coffee at Tierra Coffee Roasters. I felt like I would have a little slice of home with me because the campus gave me a close-knit, connected vibe and that was really comforting.

Did you know as a high school senior that you wanted to become an English major? If not, what did you previously envision studying? What ultimately led you to pursue a degree in the humanities?

Surprenant: I was fairly certain that when I went to college I would major in English. I had always loved reading and writing, so the thought of being surrounded by others who did that for fun and not just for class was really appealing to me. I had excellent English teachers in high school that made the subject fun and made me think about the world around me in ways that I had never before considered.

I feel English majors get a lot of flack for our degree because of the stigma that it is unprofitable. Did you ever have friends or family in a STEM-oriented field question you about your future career possibilities as an English major?

Surprenant: I've never had anyone outright question my choice of major. I have always been very confident in my choice since the time I was a freshman. I respect the ways that STEM fields help their students to grow and develop. Humanities majors grow and develop in a different way. I hate seeing a divide between the two fields because they actually have a lot to learn from each other. Going into a field just for the money or the sake of a job doesn't make much sense if someone isn't particularly good at what they hope to do someday or they aren't that invested in the subject.

Were there any classes at Saint Rose that you wish you could have taken, but you never got the chance?

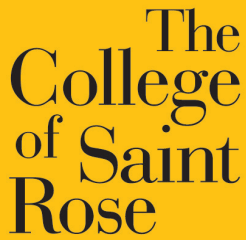
Surprenant: I did want to take Dr. Sweeney's 19th-century periodicals course, but it never fit into my schedule. I also wish that I had taken some more Communications courses like Comm Law or Film Production. That was definitely one of my favorite parts about academics at Saint Rose. There were so many courses to choose from and we had so many talented professors who cared about the success of their students.

How was your experience getting into Northeastern? Is there any advice you can give to students who are thinking of pursuing a graduate degree in English (or any field)?

Surprenant: I decided to take two years off between undergrad and grad school, and I think it was one of the best choices I made. I was able to work at a newspaper for two years and get some real experience, save money, and reflect and think about whether or not I should pursue another degree. The process of applying can get really overwhelming sometimes. I remember putting off the GRE and the [GRE English] subject test for as long as I could. The personal statement is what was most difficult for me. What helped me the most was reaching out to several former professors and asking them for feedback. While I do know people who wrote their personal statement in a week and successfully got into grad school, the majority of people I've spoken to about it spent many, many drafts perfecting it. While it takes time, a good personal statement feels like quite an accomplishment once it's completed.

Stop what you're doing right now and read _____.

Surprenant: *Is It Just Me?* by Miranda Hart. If you love goofy British humor, Miranda Hart will have you rolling—and definitely watch her show, too!



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

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strose.edu/english/
stroseenglish.wordpress.com/

PLACE
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FALL SENIOR SEMINAR PROJECTS

Carolynn Bruni, *Falling in Love With Language*

Derek Bushnell, *A Comparison of the Critiques of the Religious Institution in Wise Blood and Light in August*

Carly Dunne, *The Formidable Function of Footnotes in Junot Díaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Danielle Viana, *I Got this Feeling, Inside My Bones*

Ashanti Young, *Junot Díaz's Incorporation of Magic Realism in The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*



Above: Dr. Dave Rice talks with Senior Seminar students (from L to R) Ashanti Young, Derek Bushnell, Carolynn Bruni, and Danielle Viana.

DR. KEN KRAUSS TO RETIRE

VASSAR MEDIEVALIST DOROTHY KIM TO SPEAK AT SAINT ROSE

ALUMNI SNAPSHOTS: ABBEY BARKER AND CHRISTOPHER SURPRENANT

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