

Literature is my
Utopia. Here I am
not disenfranchised.
No barrier of
the senses shuts me
out from the sweet,
gracious discourses
of my book friends.

— HELEN KELLER

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erudition

English Department Receives Generous Gift from the Perrine Family

Last spring, the SMU English department received a remarkable gift. Catherine Perrine, the wife of late SMU English professor Laurence Perrine, established a \$3.3 million bequest to Southern Methodist University. The donation will support many exciting additions to SMU. Of Mrs. Perrine's gift, \$1 million will create the Laurence and Catherine Perrine Endowed President's Scholarship Fund. President's Scholarships are the highest award for academic merit at SMU and cover four years of tuition for Dedman College students.

The majority of the bequest will be allotted to the English department. The funding will enable the English department to establish the Laurence and Catherine Perrine Endowed Chair in English. This position will support a full-time, senior faculty appointment in creative writing. English department chair Ezra Greenspan said that when the faculty met to discuss the needs of the department, "We agreed that a primary wish was to enhance and augment the creative writing program." The English department plans to recruit for the endowed chair position in the 2009-2010 academic year. "We will conduct a national search," says Greenspan, "for candidates of national distinction and reputation." The goal is for the new faculty member to assume his or her appointment in August 2010. The money also will enable the English department to create the Perrine Endowed University Scholarship Fund, which will create eight scholarships for undergraduate students majoring

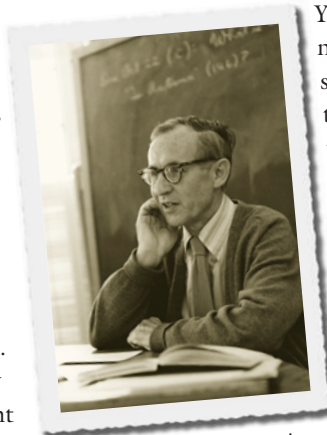
in English. The endowment and these scholarships add to the Perrine family's notable legacy at SMU.

Before coming to SMU in 1946, Laurence Perrine received his B.A. and M.A. at Oberlin College and his Ph.D. at Yale. He taught in SMU's English department for nearly 35 years before retiring in 1980. His one-time student, Marsh Terry, now Professor Emeritus, explains that Perrine was dissatisfied with all of the poetry textbooks on the market when he began teaching. To remedy this situation, Perrine wrote *Sound and Sense*, which he used as the textbook for his own class.

Sound and Sense became the best-selling textbook in English departments across the country in the 1950s and for many years after. Following the success of *Sound and Sense*, Perrine wrote *Story and Structure*, a textbook that introduces students to the major elements of fiction. The clear examples of poetic techniques in *Sound and Sense* helped students practice careful and subtle interpretations of poetry.

Perrine's approach made the "complex simple but not simple-minded," says Terry, "it also made Larry millions of bucks." Above all, Perrine's intense love of poetry is what Terry remembers most vividly.

Terry was one of Perrine's first students at SMU. Encouraged by Perrine, Terry pursued an academic career, which eventually led him to become Perrine's colleague at SMU. A life-long friend of Laurence and Catherine, Terry recalls Perrine as wise and



Professor Laurence Perrine

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Perrine Bequest *continued from page 1*

gentle, kind and tough: “He had a sense of justice and moral authority that was Gandhi-like.” After the first test, Terry scheduled a meeting with Perrine about his grade; he had received a 92.57. Terry exclaimed, “How can you grade like that?” Perrine explained that there were certain aspects in each answer that he looked for and that he graded accordingly.

Catherine Perrine was just as involved in the community and as socially conscious as her husband. She dedicated herself to solving water rights problems in the state of Texas. Terry recalls when he would visit their home, he often noticed that her desk was piled high with books. “She was very supportive of Larry but she was her own person,” says Terry, “a good ole’ Texas gal.”

In 1949, Perrine helped found SMU’s Phi Beta Kappa chapter. Each year the chapter selects one outstanding faculty member for the Perrine Prize, the person “who embodies the ideals of Phi Beta Kappa and the tradition of excellence fostered by Professor Perrine.” Perrine also served on the SMU faculty senate and worked on the University’s curriculum. After he retired, he received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from SMU.

Even after his retirement, Perrine stayed actively involved with SMU, both academically and socially. Every Friday, Terry remembers, he would join Perrine and several other professors at Perrine’s house for one hour of fierce ping-pong matches followed by one hour of intellectual discussion. In fact, stories about those matches still circulate among the longest

serving members of the English Department.

Perrine passed away in 1995, but his legacy lives on. As Terry says, “Sometimes you come across someone who is just himself – he was real.”

by John Evans, Ph.D. candidate in English



Popular professor Laurence Perrine taught in SMU’s English department for nearly 35 years.

aim for me

Even covered in smoke, whiskey, and red lipstick
I couldn’t bring myself to touch your crayon colored skin
So you moved to Tennessee.

I wrote you a letter and it said, “Meet me
In Georgia right at the border
'cause I’ve got this knife and it needs to be used.”

So I drove for fifteen hours while the ghost
That was born inside my head, bloomed inside of my coffee
And when I arrived at the border the only thing
There were thieves stealing copper
From the lights nearby.

So I became a pawn shop where I could buy
The things that were stolen because I wanted to
Know what it felt like to be you opening your
Mouth and trying to pull out all of your miracle.

It’s been ten years since, and all I am now is a
Beaten down cement floor waiting to be covered up
by something softer like the rubber of a broken wheel chair

And the only thing I’ve learned is how to smoke cigarettes
Again and lift them high like candles to the heavens begging
God to open up his mouth, pull out all of His miracle and
Aim for me.

– JESSE SMITH, *Junior English Major at SMU,*
Minoring in Photography

*(Inspired by the lines, “Moving your
mouth to pull out all your miracle,
aim for me” from Neutral Milk Hotel’s
“Oh Comely” written by Jeff Mangum)*

Professor Wheeler Assumes Presidency of Academic Organization

Sitting down in Dr. Wheeler's office, we caught ourselves staring at a rusty, honest-to-goodness, centuries-old chain-mail shirt hanging ominously across a huge spear on the wall. "I know, it's fabulous, isn't it?" Wheeler asked us. And it really was. When we asked if she has any hobbies, Wheeler laughingly explains, "the Middle Ages are my hobby!" Outside of all things medieval, however, she admits that she loves to read about work being done in other people's fields. This is perhaps one of the major factors inspiring Wheeler and her fellow members of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ).



*Dr. Bonnie Wheeler,
Associate Professor and
Director of Medieval Studies*

Associate Professor of English, Director of Medieval Studies, and editor of the journal *Arthuriana*, Bonnie Wheeler will assume the presidency of the CELJ for the 2008-2009 term, adding to an already impressive resume that spans nearly 30 years at SMU. We recently spoke with her about her new role at the CELJ, the changing face of academic journalism, the future of *Arthuriana*, and the experience of teaching a graduate seminar to the new Ph.D. class this semester.

CELJ began as a forum for editors of academic journals to share issues, problems, and possible advancements involved in the editing and publishing process. In the last forty years, the organization has grown more inclusive. While the organization is funded by the Modern Language Association, its content is not limited to literary journals; it has ties to a variety of humanities disciplines. Right now, its focus is geared toward exploring how journals function in a time of economic retrenchment and technological advancement.

CELJ is on the cusp of a new age of journal life since most journals now exist electronically, which can alter everything from the way people search for information in specific journals to the way those journals are organized, though peer review and revision remain integral parts of the process. As president of CELJ, Wheeler explains, "I will seek to provide ways to stabilize electronic journals so that they can become and remain as useful as hard copy journals. I am primarily interested in helping journals manage changes in the editorial profession. I also want to expand the range of disciplines involved in CELJ. I think organizations like the American History Association, the American Psychology Association, and others represented by the American Council of Learned Societies can benefit from a closer relationship with CELJ."

Wheeler brings to CELJ her own experience as editor of *Arthuriana*, the official journal of the North American branch of

the International Arthurian Society. The long-running journal began in 1968, when it was called *Arthurian Interpretation* and resembled a combination of a journal and a newsletter. Wheeler took over the journal in 1994, changed the name to *Arthuriana*, and reorganized it as a standard peer-reviewed journal.

Arthuriana was one of the first in the humanities to be available online, and it has just been picked up by Project Muse, an online repository of academic journals.

Currently, Wheeler is preparing to hand over the editorial reins to Dr. Dorsey Armstrong at Purdue University. "She has worked on *Arthuriana* with me for the last several years," Wheeler explains, "and I feel like it's time for the journal to get an infusion of fresh blood. Purdue is committed to housing the journal. They will provide resources and support that will allow *Arthuriana* to continue to grow, and Prof. Armstrong will of course be able to put her own stamp on it. I will remain executive editor for the time being."

Along with her work on CELJ and *Arthuriana*, Wheeler is also teaching an undergraduate course on Chaucer and the English department's graduate seminar this semester. The seminar on Malory, comprised of students from the Medieval Studies Program, and the new English Ph.D. program meets once a week in the little cottage behind Wheeler's home, which contains a library of medieval sources. Wheeler explains her approach to teaching a graduate seminar: "the expectation is that [it will] start you on an intense move toward both your dissertation and entry into the professional level of our profession." For Wheeler, assuming the presidency of CELJ is another opportunity to shape the direction of that profession.

*by Michael Anderson and Jennifer Boulanger,
Ph.D. candidates in English*



Dr. Wheeler and the students in her graduate seminar "Malory's Morte Darthur and Its Medieval Chivalric Contexts." (from left to right) Jennifer Boulanger, Kayla Walker Edin, Austin Johnson, Dr. Bonnie Wheeler, Mike Anderson, Katie Arnold, and John Evans

English Department Announces Graduate Seminar in Taos

A week-long, intensive workshop in Taos, New Mexico, is the latest innovation that sets the new Ph.D. program in English at Southern Methodist University apart from typical graduate programs.

This summer the inaugural class of SMU's English Ph.D. program will spend a week at the university's scenic Fort Burgwin campus for an intensive literary seminar. Located among the *Sangre de Cristo* Mountains in Carson National Forest, SMU-in-Taos offers an ideal environment for the kind of distinctive experience the department hopes to create. For the English faculty, setting up a graduate student retreat seemed like a natural extension of existing programs at the Fort Burgwin campus. Says department chair Ezra Greenspan, "It occurred to us that we might take advantage of the beautiful setting and wonderful facilities. [The retreat] was also a way of thinking about how we could expand our curriculum not simply by teaching another course but by doing it in a different kind of format, something that suits us well and also that is just extraordinary in terms of graduate curricula in the U.S. It is something no one [else] does or can do."

The graduate workshop will become an annual event, open to first and second-year Ph.D. students. Topics will vary by the year. Guest scholars with national reputations in their fields will

It will be exciting to take our close working relationships with our professors and fellow students outside of the Dallas environment to the unique setting of Taos.

—MIKE ANDERSON, *Ph.D. candidate in English*

be invited to lead workshops. This summer, students will dig into the field of critical race theory under the guidance of Jacob and Frances Mossiker Chair in Humanities Dr. Steven Weisenburger.

Students attending the seminar will examine work across a range of different literary periods. Workshop participants will read Montaigne's "Of the Cannibals" (1580), Melville's "Benito Cereno" (1855), and Faulkner's "The Bear" (1943) among other books. Secondary texts will include the works of such authors as Hume, Kant, Jefferson, Foucault and Agamben. Weisenburger notes that his objective in designing this transatlantic study is for



the students to "read *race* across four centuries, and across the Atlantic. We want to turn critical eyes on the ways that *race* came to define human differences geographically, nationally, culturally, and biologically. Also, on the ways differences were understood hierarchically and thus, eventually, oppressively."

Weisenburger hopes the unique workshop will allow students "to explore *race* as part of western metaphysics, engaged fundamentally with the question of a boundary between Man/Animal." He looks forward to involving other faculty as "key contributors to our seminars."



It occurred to us that we might take advantage of the beautiful setting and wonderful facilities.

—EZRA GREENSPAN, *English Department chair and Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Chair in Humanities*

Taos *continued*

The workshop format opens up a number of possibilities that Weisenburger plans to make good use of. The week-long retreat will feature a rigorous course of reading and discussion requiring extensive advance preparation. After an intense week of scholarship, Sunday will be set aside for exploring the numerous trails, museums and historical sites in the area. Greenspan states, "While we're planning on a day of fun in the sun, we also envision a day to explore the ethnically diverse heritage of the American Southwest.

As the department looks forward to leaving Dallas behind for the cooler climate of Taos, the first-year Ph.D. students anticipate an intellectually vigorous immersive experience that will strengthen the already close-knit community of faculty and graduate students. As Ph.D. student Mike Anderson says, "It will be exciting to take our close working relationships with our professors and fellow students outside of the Dallas environment to the unique setting of Taos."

by Austin Johnson, Ph.D. candidate in English

Weisenburger hopes the unique workshop will allow students "to explore race as part of western metaphysics, engaged fundamentally with the question of a boundary between Man/Animal."



Students at SMU-in-Taos enjoy the resources available at SMU's Fort Burgwin library.

did you know...

- *prehistoric evidence suggests that the site of the Taos campus was occupied dating back to 3,000 BC?*
- *Pot Creek Pueblo, the largest prehistoric site north of Santa Fe, is located on the Fort Burgwin property and has been the focus of intermittent archaeological excavation since 1957?*
- *Fort Burgwin was named for Captain John Burgwin, who was killed in the the Taos uprising of 1847? The Fort was established on August 16, 1852.*
- *archaeologist and SMU's Department of Anthropology Professor Emeritus Fred Wendorf helped re-discover the remnants of Fort Burgwin? After excavating and rebuilding fort structures, Wendorf helped to redesign Fort Burgwin to function as an educational site.*
- *in 1964 SMU began to acquire the Fort Burgwin property with support from the Rounds Foundation and the Honorable William P. Clements, Jr., then-chair of the University's Board of Governors and Texas governor from 1979-83 and 1987-91?*
- *in 2004 a state-of-the-art computer facility and library, the Fred Wendorf Information Commons, was constructed on the Fort Burgwin campus? The new library houses over 6200 books and a small collection of journals and maps. The collection, closely tailored to the Taos curriculum, focuses on the history, literature, cultures, and environment of New Mexico and neighboring states in the Southwest.*

On the Writing Road: Teaching Travel Narratives in 1302

After I left the August winds of Hungry Ghosts Month in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and landed in Dallas, a city as hot but not as smoky, two American students from Singapore greeted me in my rhetoric classroom. This surprise was the first of many that revealed to me the lifelong learning process that stems from traveling for six weeks in 2005 along the rivers of Borneo, on the island of Singapore and over the streets of Kuala Lumpur. To propel my knowledge of their countries, friendly Malaysians and Singaporeans tapped rubber trees, showed me proboscis monkeys, knelt over sun-drying anchovies, introduced me to Form V students in drama, shared sharksfin soup and *nasi lemak* (a coconut-flavored rice dish) and explained the proper way to greet a Muslim Malay.

I shared these memories with my Singaporean-American students during informal conversations in my office, painfully conscious of a looming deadline to send a new course plan, developed from my trip, to the Fulbright-Hays office in Washington, D.C. As we swapped tales, my "Travel Spaces" course emerged from cluttered notes and thoughts. They praised the freedom to walk,



Newton rides a boat down a river in Sarawak, Malaysia, on the island of Borneo.

unmugged, through pristine Singaporean streets at night, and we marveled at the law that prohibits the buying or selling of DoubleMint gum, a crime that results in severe caning.

As the Fulbright-Hays staff pored over my course plan, I rolled out the beta version for my English 1302 course at SMU. My 1302 students and I deciphered ways in which attention to audience and arguments emerge in travel writing. I described to my students the political role of rhetoric and Singlish in Catherine Lim's "Taximan's Story." My students asked me about the meaning of Sal Paradise's "IT" in *On the Road*. We critiqued the ethos and pathos of Elisabeth Bumiller's travel-journalistic

pieces, which she hoped would extinguish India's bridal burnings. And we discussed and wrote about director Sean Penn's script-revising strategies in developing the film version of Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild*.

In turn, my students revealed their travel tales. Two survived the tsunami in Thailand. One shared the growing chill that crept up his spine as he learned about the disappearance of his high school classmate, Natalee Holloway, while leaving Aruba. Yet another seized the opportunity to aid the Jewish community in Cuba, armed with crucial prenatal medicine,

which the Cuban government promptly seized at customs. And one sought to carve her own travel space in Dallas by reflecting on the late-night Oak Cliff shooting of her uncle.

Such narratives, whether crafted by a classmate or by a famous author like Krakauer, offer students a rich venue for developing analytical thinking and writing skills; furthermore, looking at these works as travel pieces offers an innovative perspective on literary legends such as *On the Road*. And even if students haven't hitchhiked on Kerouac's "raw land" or followed Chris McCandless's footsteps into the Alaskan wild, such works offer an incisive insight into the adventures and writing struggles that professional writers, like students, often face.

Pauline T. Newton, Ph.D., teaches rhetoric 1301 and 1302. In 2005, she published Transcultural Women of Late-Twentieth-Century U.S. American Literature: First-Generation Migrants from Islands and Peninsulas (Ashgate Publishing) and "Collecting Seeds of Destiny in Li-Young Lee's The Winged Seed: A Remembrance" (Southeast Asian Review in English). She also has two poems forthcoming in The Texas Review and The Journal of the American Studies Association of Texas.

aubade

We're awake when the daybreak
tastes like potato chips, then
suddenly you smell sour.

How unseemly your
sincerity seems as sunbeams
suffuse the city.

And it's no use crying, I know,
but still, I'm always unfulfilled
once the milk's spilled.

— BEAU RICE, *Sophomore English Major
at SMU, specializing in Creative Writing*

Footnotes : A New Feature from an Undergraduate Pen

Peter Pan and I have a strange relationship. As a graduating senior in the English department, I needed a topic for my independent study project. Peter gave me that topic (“The Creation and Loss of Childhood and Masculinity in *Peter and Wendy*”), but I really, really resented him for it. I had never written something so long or so detailed or so researched before in my life. I had to re-learn how to write. I had nightmares about Peter: he’d fly around in green tights and screech, “You’ll never graduate!” If not for the support and guidance of my advisor Dr. Beth Newman, Peter Pan would’ve done me in.



Amanda Wall

Peter frustrated me so much, in fact, I decided to take a break from English classes during my last semester of college and try out something new. I had been thinking about applying to graduate school to get a Ph.D. in English, and if I was going to spend the next five or six years immersed in studying literature, I needed to know whether I really *loved* English, whether it would leave a void in my life if I chose to pursue something else. Someone once told me, “If you can be happy doing anything else, *don’t* go to grad school.” So I decided to find out.

My plan was to spend my last semester finishing up my Spanish degree and dabbling in Italian. By focusing my study on foreign languages, I would find out if I could go without English. I conjugated Italian verbs. I read 19th century Spanish drama. I didn’t get any of the plays’ jokes, but then, I wasn’t expected to. I wasn’t expected to analyze the language in the way I would in English, because it wasn’t in English. Despite excellent professors and intensive language instruction, there is something about foreign languages that will always be foreign.

I had nightmares about Peter: he’d fly around in green tights and screech, “You’ll never graduate!”

It turns out I missed Peter. He was a brat, to be sure, but I missed him. I missed thinking about his perplexing masculinity: an über-manliness that exists both despite of and because of his childishness. I desperately missed studying literature written in my native language. I did not miss writing the essays, but I missed *having written* the essays. I missed the crisp, final drafts.

Spanish has been my fun aunt. At times, I like her lot better than English, and I resent her a lot less. But English is my

mother. Without her, I would not be the same. Without my training in literary analysis, I would not be concerned that calling English “my mother” could be considered sexist and melodramatic. It would be easier not to worry about such things. It would be easier not to see Peter Pan and his maniacal grin in my dreams. But they have made me a particular kind of person, and I cannot be happy being anyone else. I decided I *must* go to graduate school to study literature. It’s the only way I’ll figure out what’s going on between Peter Pan and me.

Amanda Wall hails from Dangerfield, Texas. She is a senior at SMU, double-majoring in English and Spanish. After graduating from SMU in May, she plans to pursue a Ph.D. in English.



Illustration from “Peter and Wendy” by James Matthew Barrie, published 1911 by C. Scribner’s Sons, New York

untitled

The scent of pale flowers	So would the smell of you
Such a familiar smell	Always you
A resurrection of my hope for you	Hang by the roots of my hair
Petals that linger	Sink between my fingernails
Holding their breath	Burrow in my skin
Until gravity	You grew on me
Plucks them off the stem	And in me
And sends them diving	—MARTHA HARMS, <i>Senior</i>
Into dirt	<i>Theater Major at SMU and</i>
To be buried	<i>creative writing student</i>
In the wet and ready earth	

Parting Shots

Housed in the Department of English, the First Year Writing Program prepares students to read and write at the college level. Prof. Diana Howard's Rhetoric II course, composed of students from the Hilltop Scholars Program, meets in Perkins Dormitory. The small class size and unique location foster a strong sense of community and contribute to the interactive classroom dynamic.



(Top, from left to right) Megan McLelland, John Seitz and Rob Farrell work in a small group analyzing ads as "texts" in preparation for an oral presentation.



Prof. Howard's class recently wrote about their experiences observing the cross-cultural dynamics of locations across the country from their favorite local coffee shop to popular theme parks.

Erudition is published for alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends of the Department of English.

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LATE NOVEMBER 2008

DeGolyer Library
Marcus Reading Room,
6:30 p.m. Lecture, Stanley
Room, DeGolyer Library
6:00 p.m. Reception, Texana
Scott Casper

OCT. 16, 2008

DeGolyer Library
Marcus Reading Room,
6:30 p.m. Lecture, Stanley
Room, DeGolyer Library
6:00 p.m. Reception, Texana
Linda Hughes

SEPT. 18, 2008

Calendar

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