

The English Department

S U N Y F R E D O N I A

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Writers Ring meets Monday and Wednesday at 6pm in Fenton 127
- Eduardo C. Corral's visit will be in next month's issue!
- English works Internship/career event to be held April 30th, 12:00pm to 3:00pm! Contact Christina Stock for more information at stoc7590@fredonia.edu

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**ZWEIG LECTURE
"FOCUSED ON PEOPLE"** *By Jordan Reed*

On March 19th, SUNY Fredonia had the privilege of hearing Professor Robert Kelz at the Second Biannual Stefan Zweig Lecture. University of Memphis Professor Kelz is a scholar specializing in German studies who presented a



unique look into Stefan Zweig's 1936 visit to Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Considered in his time as "the most translated writer of the 20th century", Stefan Zweig, born in 1881, was an Austrian-Jew. Living his young adulthood through the trauma of World War 1, the already famous author deeply felt the pain of that war, and it led him to display an empathy with the afflicted in much of his writings. When Hitler's Third Reich arose in Germany and began

its persecution of minorities and anti-Nazis elements, Zweig was forced to leave the country, and his writings were banned from being read or sold in his native German.

Kelz explained that in 1936, the wildly popular writer had already fled the oppressive regime in Nazi Germany. Zweig had been invited to the prestigious international writers meeting in Buenos Aires called the PEN Club. Kelz illustrated that Zweig hoped to find a "spiritual solidarity which had been lost in Europe." Unfortunately, the situation in Argentina was not as calm as Zweig would've hoped. A struggle had ensued between the Fascists and anti-Fascists in the then neutral



nation. Using a slide show with numerous articles and pictures, Professor Kelz illustrated the debate that dominated the press of Buenos Aires. Complicating matters was the fact that there was a very large German speaking population in Argentina. This population founded German speaking schools, and these schools began conforming to the Nazis ideology. Just one blatant example presented by Kelz that illustrated the infection of Fascist sentiments was a picture of a document where one principal had signed with a "Heil Hitler!" In fact, by the time of Stefan Zweig's visit only the Pestalozzi school had not succumbed to Nazi influence. It was in this school that Kelz sought out information on Zweig's visit.

Kelz went on to demonstrate using archival evidence that it was in the middle of this tumult that Zweig attended the PEN Club's meeting. The country's competing press seized upon the droves of incoming celebrity writers as an opportunity to further their own

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ALUMNUS OF THE MONTH KRISTEN CROUSE

Interviewed by Katharine Carney

Kristen Crouse (also known as Kristen Orser in her writing career) teaches at UCSC in Porter and Crown colleges. Her collection of poetry titled *Squint* is described by Juliet Cook as "A bittersweet and delightfully quirky romp through some creative (mostly inner) landscapes."

Could you give us a brief summary of what you do and what made you want to go into this type of work?

I fell into teaching at Fredonia before it became my work. The Philosophy department invited me to TA two classes, with Dr. Dale Tuggy and Dr. Stephen Kershner; both experiences nurtured a particular empathy toward the students by facilitating ways of listening to the students, meeting the students where they were, and enabling the students to flesh out their ideas instead of asking them to change their perspectives or telling them what to think. In graduate school, I continued teaching (this time writing) and took on arts administration work too. It wasn't until moving to Santa Cruz, CA, after five years of teaching writing and poetry in Chicago, that I had the opportunity to ask myself about the choice to teach. Here, in Santa Cruz, I teach writing, ethics, and poetry at UCSC and I'm fortunate enough to be able to audit a class with fellow teachers as well, letting me explore the value of writing, the importance of teaching

writing, and the classroom that I've worked to establish. I'm learning, right now, why I do what I do. This might be why I teach: teaching is a reflexive act that requires persistent attention to the details of the classroom, the material, the students, and the teacher herself (among many other things). It's a



way of staying instinctively eager and joyfully curious. In addition to teaching, I do keep up an active writerly and publishing life. I'm currently pregnant, so this year has been less "product productive" since I'm experiencing the process of becoming a mother and it's been more challenging to keep up with deadlines and time management.

What do you feel was the most enriching experience you've had at Fredonia that has impacted your career?

At Fredonia, I met mentors. I still have many in my life: James Thomas Stevens and Dr.

Malcolm Nelson. These two teachers are an everyday reminder of Fredonia and the privilege that comes from attending a school where the faculty show you how enriching it can be to dedicate yourself to textual material, continual pursuit, and processes of consistent revision. I remember

Dr. Ramsey, who always had a pot of tea to share in his office, looking out the window during a reading of Virgil—needing to look out the window because he was lost in the words. The faculty I met at Fredonia, in both English and Philosophy, helped me rework the ground I stood on, helped me see a way into writing and thinking that celebrates slip-pages and ruptures. They let me read and imagine and

didn't ask for more utility. It was kind of like learning a series of spells, learning that it was enough to be a creative and critical thinker. Of course, the most enriching experience, for me, was developing a friendship with Dr. Albert Dunn. Robert Duncan, the poet, used to draw an ideal reader who wore many different hats (very adorable drawings), and Albert is always my ideal reader because he is the first person who taught me—by way of Wordsworth, Keats, and more—that poetry is a verbal

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EUGENE CROSS VISITS FREDONIA

By Shelby Converse and Katharine Carney

Eugene Cross was constantly smiling throughout the Mary Louise White Visiting Writer's event in McEwen 202, glad to be close to his hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania. It's hard to imagine that such a cheerful and bright person is the author of *Fires of Our Choosing*, which opens with the promise of a dead dog and children being beaten on the playground.

At a glance, one would not suspect the young and vibrant man to be capable of writing stories rich in conflict and violence, yet Cross assured his audience that "by the time you are thirteen, you experienced everything you need to know to be a writer." Cross was a very captivating reader,

beginning his reading by joking about the cafeteria's chicken wings and by comparing the cover art of his collection to a "commercial for athlete's foot." Following the reading, students could ask

Cross questions, and he was surprised by the amount of "good questions" ranging from questions about his content to his actual writing process.

Cross is known for his dark style of writing by the way he often turns a completely

harmless scene (for example: a teenage girl babysitting two girls, much to the horror of

our professors who have children) into a scene of devastating terror. Despite this, the characters are relatable and realistic, even with their author plotting

away on the next page. Eugene Cross encouraged the use of setting and atmosphere as more conflict for the characters. He explained simply by quoting Kurt Vonnegut, to "do awful things to your characters" to see what they are really made of.



For his first published book, Eugene Cross brings his quiet conflicts foremost to the page, impersonating everyone from the elementary school boys to the man waiting out the rest of his life in the retirement home between trips to the casino and racetrack. Cross writes about the small town people he might have known and even been once; never lingering on what happens after to the characters and how they got there to begin with but staying just long enough to remind us that they are just human.

Eugene Cross's book, *Fires of Our Choosing* was released last year and he currently teaches in the Fiction Department at Columbia College Chicago.

KRISTEN CROUSE CONTINUED

working towards a nonverbal source. We kept up a correspondence that I deeply value and, when he died and I could not leave teaching to fly home, my father read our last letter exchange at the service. It's difficult to talk about, hard not to fall into cliché, but his mentorship, a mentorship that generously looked for what goodness was occurring in essays and helped students pull out occasions for thinking deeply, is the greatest teaching I've experienced. Albert reminded me that intellectual pursuit and writing are not solitary acts, but are acts that happen in life and with people

What advice could you give to

our English majors about entering into your field of work?

I imagine that, if you are going to teach English, you're already teaching in some capacity. Start looking at how you are already mentoring, teaching, and listening to your peers and acknowledge those acts for what they are: teaching. I'm still working towards a lot of goals, but Dr. Malcolm Nelson recently reminded me that things take time. It takes time to educate the imagination, to distill values into career goals, and to establish your own path. I think our contemporary moment asks for so much so quickly, but Mac is right, things take time.

What do you like the most about your career?

Everything I want to say eludes me. I find words to be extremely challenging to pin down. I value that, as a teacher, my classroom collaborates to find a way to write into the stutters, to suture together a kind of perfect imperfection where we are always listening, attending to each other, and admitting to the difficulty of fitting words to ideas. It's surprising and genuine to be a part of those classroom conversations.

ENGLISH WORKS CAREER EVENT

English Skills are extremely valuable, and you don't need this humble editor's word for it: just come see for yourself at the English Works Club event on April 30th, from 12:00pm to 3:00pm. For more information, contact Christina Stock at stoc7590@fredonia.edu

And make sure to look out for updates at the club's website:

www.FredoniaEnglishWorks.wordpress.com.

CONTACT US!

SUNY FREDONIA

Any questions about any of these articles or feel like something coming up needs to get covered?

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For all of your English department updates!

The English Department's newsletter is meant to inform a specific audience: the English majors, the English professors and the English alumni. That's why we write about events and news concerning the students and the faculty so that YOU can get more involved! Are you a student who would like to learn more about English related clubs and events or would like to write an article for us? Are you a professor with ideas for future articles or ideas for some of the events you see here? Or are you an alumni who would like to be featured in our "Alumnus of the Month" article? Please contact us!

ZWEIG LECTURE CONTINUED

agenda. Stefan Zweig, perhaps the most widely anticipated of all the writers, kept an extremely low profile and published little or no official statement, expressing, "let me be myself". This political reclusiveness was contrasted against the firebrand activism of another visiting writer, Emil Ludwig. Disappointed, the Argentinian press turned on Zweig and heaped praises upon Ludwig.

At this juncture, Professor Kelz brought our attention to an incident that became the central action of the lecture. Zweig had been invited to speak at that sole, independent, German-speaking school, the Pestalozzi school. The Pestalozzi had become the only school willing to accept Jewish

refugees, despite the pressure they faced. Zweig accepted the invitation, and he made an unscheduled visit to this school. The impact of this world famous author upon these children couldn't be measured, and Professor Kelz had actually found some of the people who had been at the school when Zweig visited. These children were touched by the energies Zweig devoted to these afflicted peoples.

Professor Kelz showed through his research, evidence, and lecture that "he [Zweig] refused the spotlight and was cast in a very negative light for it". Kelz also demonstrated how Zweig, an example for any generation, could focus beyond the political to care about people. While Zweig may not

have found the "spiritual solidarity" he had been looking for, the author did manage to inspire the refugees in their struggles. This trip and subsequent visits imprinted Zweig into the memory of Argentina.

While his popularity may have waned for a period after his death, Zweig's legacy lives on through his works and influence, and SUNY Fredonia has the unique privilege of being one of the largest archives of these works. This underscores the little known opportunity for students at Fredonia, where it is possible to study many of the original and authentic articles by Zweig. Hopefully, this lecture series will have created interest for students to explore the life of Stefan Zweig.

