

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

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Editor

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CRISTIN O'KEEFE APTOWICZ SLAMS FREDONIA

By Tomi Stratton

On Thursday, September 30th, the Visiting Writer's Series kicked off with slam poet Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz. Aptowicz is the author of four books of poetry, including *Everything is Everything*, *Dear Future Boyfriend*, *Oh, Terrible Youth*, and *Hot Teen Slut*. She gave her craft talk to a packed English Reading room – people sat on the floor to listen to her – and spoke a lot about interacting in the writing community at an adult level. Her reading, in Thompson 101, shocked and delighted those fortunate enough to have come out on the rainy night.

At her craft talk, Aptowicz suggests two different ways that we, as college students, can start interacting on an adult level with the writing community. Her first piece of advice was to try and get into literary magazines. Her second piece of advice was to take advantage of the internet. Can't read po-

etry in New York City because it is midterm time at college? Upload a video of it to YouTube. This way, if someone anywhere in the world searched for "poetry about blank" the work can be viewed. The internet is a great way for beginner writers to get their foot in the very competitive door.



Photo by Julie Denero

The first thing she did at the reading was teach the crowd things that get said at slam readings. She demonstrated the "Uh huh," "Mmhm," "Say Word," and "Preach!" then had the crowd repeat them back to her. She told the crowd it was okay to say these things if they agreed with what her poem was saying, and it

was okay to laugh. She started with "Crack Squirrels," a poem about a crack epidemic in the 80s, which had the crowd laughing within the first few line

She also read "This Mask Is What's Holding My Face Up," about the year the neighborhood fathers had to take their children trick or treating; "Notes on Rejection(s)," a poem she made from actual notes of rejection she has received from publishers; and "Drunk Boyfriend at the Poetry Reading," which painted an interesting picture of Aptowicz's domestic life with poet Shappy Seaholtz.

One of the most meaningful poems to me was entitled "Op-Ed for the Sad Sack Review." This poem was written in response to an alarming amount of writer suicides. It's about being so down, the narrator googles the word "failure," and google tells her that she spelled the word "failure" wrong. She admits that she may have a stupid reason for living,

Continued on page 4

Coffee Talk	2
Brown Bag Series	2
Community... On Ice!	3
Writer's Ring	5
Sigma Tau Delta Column	6
Upcoming Dates and Cool Classes	7

SIGMA TAU DELTA'S COFFEE TALKS

By Tomi Stratton

Sigma Tau Delta hosted the first coffee talk of the semester on Wednesday, September 29th. The guest faculty speakers were Dustin Parsons and Sarah Gerkenmeyer. Both of the guest faculty speakers are creative writing professors on campus.

With the introduction of the writing minor, Sigma Tau Delta thought it was important to bridge the gap between these professors and the students of SUNY Fredonia.

The talk opened with

the students and faculty members getting coffee and cookies and sitting down in



Photo by Melissa Mallaber

the English Reading Room in Fenton. The students wrote their questions anonymously on a piece of paper and placed the questions into a coffee cup, which was then pre-

sented to the professors. Meanwhile, Professor Parsons and Professor Gerkenmeyer discussed their journey and how they ended up teaching at SUNY Fredonia.

From there, the professors reached into the cup and addressed the students' questions in an informal and candid manner. One

question that was brought up wondered at the professors' own style in writing. Professor Gerkenmeyer commented that her words often come off as "lyrical"

Continued on page 4

BROWN BAG KICKS OFF WITH RADIO SYSTEMS

By Amanda Rogers

The first event of the Brown Bag Lecture Series, "Fredonia Radio Systems: A Living Laboratory," took place on the 29th of September at noon in Room S-104 of the Williams Center. This year, the theme for the lecture series is "Cultivating Creativity, Embracing Innovation." All events in the Brown Bag Lecture Series are free, and open to the campus and the community.

The Fredonia Radio Systems have been managed by students for the community for more than forty years. With such long histories, the stations are perfect examples of this year's theme of embracing innovation in a creative manner.

The Radio System is a "living laboratory," and it provides students with a method of learning how to use media while managing both of the radio stations, podcasts, and

live shows. The lecture series event brought faculty and alumni together to discuss the radio system and its success.

The panel members consisted of: Dan Berggren, a former faculty member of SUNY Fredonia who now travels across country to pursue his music career; Katie Fuchs, the 2009-2010 General Manager of the Radio Stations; Laura Deen Johnson,

Continued on page 5

ENGLISH COMMUNITY... ON ICE!

By Travis Perry

One of the most important things here at SUNY Fredonia is the sense of community for the students. Music majors have Mason Hall. Math majors have the Fish Bowl in Fenton Hall. But where is the place for English majors? I mean, we have the English Reading Room (located at Fenton 127), but it is always being used by other concentrations, or staff to use for their own purposes. What the English department lacks in location and buildings, its members have to make up for in effort.

Such an effort is being shown in Ice Skating classes all semester, as a group of senior English Adolescence-Education majors have decided to do their own team-building as a bit of a break from the stresses of the week together.

Why do it? As senior Andrew Garvey put it, "I decided to take the class first and foremost because the other seniors in our major were doing it."

"With the stress of student teaching looming and my final semesters wrapping up, I needed a way to relax and use my creativity in different ways," responded classmate Max Soule-Oneto.

So a few English Education majors decide to take



Photo by Coach Jeff Meredith

to the ice together to cool off from the rigors of their last few months before student teaching starts next semester. Does this have anything to do with building the English community?

"It definitely has made us more of a community," Garvey went on to say. "I can see us getting together in a few years and talking about high speed snowball fights and playing Ice Quidditch. It has definitely given us a lot of good memories together."

Garvey raises a good

point about community, but how does the faculty of the English department feel about this attempt to build community between English majors?

"You mean, all of [those] guys skating and having fun together?" queried Dr. Scott Johnston, an avid skater himself.

"Absolutely, it helps to build the sense of community between English majors."

So there you go, folks. Do you have a slot in your schedule for next semester that needs to be filled? Your friends have an opening too? Sign up for a fun class like ice skating and take some of the stress out of your busy week.

We may not have a building to ourselves, but we have effort in spades. It's up to members of the English department, just like this group of seniors, to build up the sense of community in the department. One game of ice Quid-

SLAMS FREDONIA CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

“it’s better to live for a stupid reason than to die for one.” It was a very moving poem that discussed a feeling that everyone has felt at some time or another. It called for a sense of community, so we can all help each other. She combines humor with serious issues wonderfully.

In the Question and Answer section of the reading, Aptowicz discussed her next work. It is about the life

and times of Thomas Mütter and the Mütter Museum. The Mütter Museum is a museum of strange things: things saved from sideshows, medical mysteries, and a collection of 2,000 that had been removed from various people’s throats. It will be her second historical nonfiction book, her first being a book on slam poetry in New York City called *Words In Your Face: A Guided Tour Through Twenty Years of*

the New York City Poetry Slam.

Aptowicz slammed into SUNY Fredonia and showed us a world many of us haven’t seen before. Her words and performance inspired us. Ironically, the man who inspired her to be a poet is the next visiting writer: Jim Daniels. Aptowicz herself says not to miss his craft talk and reading, on Thursday, October 21st. The craft talk will be at 4pm in the English Reading Room and the reading will be at 7pm in Thompson 101.

COFFEE TALK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Professor Gerkenismeyer commented that her words often come off as “lyrical” but admitted that she likes the gritty. Often, these two styles clash for her. She likes magical realism. Professor Parsons considers himself a “maximist” – he often writes three times as much information for a story than gets used in the final draft. His stories are always grounded in reality.

Another question asked how the professors inspire their students. Professor Gerkenismeyer likes to make her students write a lot and hand in unrefined work. This way, as the professor, she can look at it and offer students opinions that they might not have seen. Professor Parsons

stressed that if his students are stuck, he asks them to look at the character. The student has to wonder, “who is this person” and “how will this person act, organically, in the situation?” If the dialogue seems forced the student doesn’t know the character well enough.

When the professors were asked what inspires them, Professor Parsons responded immediately with his children, while Professor Gerkenismeyer admitted that making herself feel vulnerable helps her write. Both are currently working on projects. Professor Parsons is working on a collection of short stories. Professor Gerkenismeyer working on the first draft of a novel, and was hoping to finish

the final chapter by Fall Break.

In a department where space for educators and students to collaborate is limited, the Coffee Talks Sigma Tau Delta hosts have become very important to the students. By inviting professors to talk openly and honestly with their students, the Coffee Talks are bridging the gap between those who teach and those who learn. This is a great event and a great opportunity for students. Sigma Tau Delta’s next coffee talk will be on Friday, November 12th at noon in the English Reading Room (Fenton 127) and will be featuring Dr. Steinberg and Dr. I. Vanwesenbeeck. Come check out this event to learn more about SUNY Fredonia’s faculty!

WRITER'S RING COLUMN

By Jill Durland

Writer's Ring and Sigma Tau Delta are co-hosting a masquerade themed open mic at The Spot in Williams Center. The open mic will be held at 7pm on October 28th. The stage will be open for anyone who wants to share a piece of their writing. Even if you don't want to read, grab your mask and come down to join us. This is a great chance to

see some of the most talented writers on SUNY Fredonia's campus. In other news, Writer's Ring is hoping to co-host a craft talk with the Jewish Student Union. The craft talk is planned for next semester. The craft talk will feature a Jewish author who will share their knowledge about the craft of writing. More information will be

released later when the event is closer.

Writer's Ring is still welcoming new members so please come and stop in. We meet every Monday from 6 to 7. Every second Monday of the month we have writing prompts. All other Mondays we peer review works so bring in any writing you want an opinion on. As always, Writer's Ring appreciates you!

BROWN BAG SERIES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

...program host at WNED FM and SUNY faculty member; Jim Ranney, a faculty member at Buffalo State College assists WNED TV with special news and assignments; and Greg Snow, a SUNY Fredonia faculty member who maintains the audio systems and equipment on campus.

All the panel members discussed the topic of change in the radio systems.

"We make it possible to get messages from here to there." Dan Berggren told the audience. The radio stations are not only a strong part of SUNY Fredonia, but of

the community as well. He noted that one of the reasons the stations have been so successful is due to the fact that the stations promote the "liberal arts concept" which is strong at SUNY Fredonia.

Katie Fuchs explained that the stations have been very open to changing technologies, and that in part had to do with the changing student body of the radio station. Other members of the panel spoke about the involvement of different students throughout the years.

A powerful memory of the panel was of

the Radio Tree, which was planted with the help of the President on Arbor Day. The event was broadcasted then on the station's show, "High Noon Friday." One of the key remarks made by the panelists was that the ideas for all the shows are created by the students. With such a diverse group throughout the years, the Fredonia Radio Stations capture the theme of the Brown Bag Series: "Cultivating Creativity, Embracing Innovation."

The next Brown Bag Series event will take place on the 3rd of November. The title of the discussion is "Backchanneling: A Creative Experiment with Twitter and Facebook in *The Altruists*."



Sigma Tau Delta Column



By Joseph Moynihan

Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honors Society, will be hosting several highly anticipated events in the coming weeks. Beginning October 7th, we will be participating in the *WCA Home Short Story Program*, an opportunity for members of the English Department to interact with the other members of the community. We have received outstanding support from volunteers for this event but encourage anyone interested to participate.

On October 18th, from 7-8, we will be hosting *Meet the Uppers* in the English Reading Room located in Fenton. This is an opportunity for underclassmen within the department to ask questions of their upperclassmen. It is an amazing opportunity to discuss experiences, get advice, and collaborate with others in the department. All English majors are encouraged to

attend, regardless of class standing.

The *Masquerade Ball Open Mic' Night* will be held from 7-9 on October 28th, in the Spot, located within the Williams Center. During this event all of the audience will be provided food, drinks, and a festive atmosphere in which to share their literary work. Masks will be handed out upon entering the Spot and creative costumes are encouraged. Come out, read your literary work, or just listen to others. Either way, this will be an event to remember.

Sigma Tau Delta will once again be hosting our *Coffee Talk* on November 12th, from 12-1, in the English Reading Room. Dr. Steinberg and Dr. Venwesensbeek will be our featured professors for the event. We encourage everyone to attend, ask questions of the professors, listen to their academic experiences, and

gain a new perspective on two members of the English community.

We are happy to once again provide events, which both entertain and bring together the student body. We encourage everyone to attend. It has always been our hope that our activities could bring together individuals from the same academic community in a fun and interactive way. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered or participated in the past and we look forward to new perspective volunteers.

Upcoming Events:

Meet the Uppers- October 18th, 07:00-09:00, English Reading Room.

Masquerade Ball Open Mic' Night- October 28th, 07:00-09:00, The Spot.

Coffee Talk- November 12th, 12:00-01:00, English Reading Room.

UPCOMING DATES AND EVENTS

- **Writer's Ring** - Every Monday in the Reading Room in Fenton!
- Mon, Oct 18 - **Sigma Tau Delta's Meet the Uppers** from 7-9pm in the Reading Room. Talk to Upperclassman about scheduling!
- Thurs, Oct 21 - **Visiting Writer** - Jim Daniels (fiction). Craft Talk: 4pm in English Reading Room. Reading: 7pm in Thompson 101.
- October 25-29: **ADVISING WEEK** for course selection of Spring 2011! Don't forget to meet with your advisors!
- Thurs, Oct 28 - **Open Mic Night** cohosted with Sigma Tau Delta and Writer's Ring in the Spot in Williams Center
- Mon, Nov 1st - Undergraduate **Registration for Spring 2010** begins!
- Tues, Nov 9 - 4:30pm - **Prof. Vivian Liska's guest seminar** in Dr. McVicker's ENGL 516 Criticism and Theory class on Kafka and the contemporary Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben
- Wed, Nov 10 - 4:00pm - Prof. Vivian Liska will give the **First Annual Stefan Zweig** Lecture in Reed Library

INTERESTING CLASSES TO CHECK OUT FOR SPRING 2011

- Four sections of **Intro to Creative Writing (ENGL 260)** will be offered, with 5 seats reserved per each section reserved for Freshman and Sophomores
- **Literary Publishing (ENGL 261)** with Professor Parsons
- **Medieval Literature (ENGL 310)** with Dr. Steinberg
- **The Contemporary Novel (ENGL 330)** with Dr. B. Vanwesenbeeck
- **American Literary Roots (ENGL 331)** with Dr. VanDette
- **Environmental Literature (ENGL 333)** with Dr. Jarvis
- **Film: Silence to Sound (ENGL 380)** with Dr. McRae
- **Romanticism in World Lit (ENGL 391)** with Dr. Kaplin
- **Special Topics: Niagara's Underground Railroad (ENGL 399.01)** with Dr. Hildebrand and Dr. Liggins

ATTENTION ALL WRITERS!

Are you interested in journalistic writing? Do you want to contribute your perspective on events in the English Department? Would you like to have your article about English Department events in print? Write for the Newsletter! Contact the Editor, Tomi Stratton, for more information!

