

THE NEIU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT— BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME!

NEIU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT ALUMNI NEWS

Fall 2020

From the Chair...

The past nine months have been a huge challenge, no doubt, but the department has risen to that challenge in amazing ways.

Just today I received an email from [Brad Greenburg](#), letting us know that his Southern Lit class would be joined by John Langan, the author of the text under discussion that week, *Homeplace*. “One of the cool things about Zoom classes is being able to do this,” he wrote.

So not only are we surviving—we’re finding ways to improve our student opportunities. Our events can’t entice crowds with great food these days, but we’re still sponsoring well-attended events—for our majors and for the community. Our graduates are going new places, and oddly enough, now that we can’t be together, we’re hearing from even more of you.

Don’t get me wrong—I’ll celebrate big-time when we all have a shot in the arm and get back to campus, but we’re here now, and we’re pushing ahead in every way we can.



“I don’t mind where the professors are teaching from or how they look, because I had a great experience this semester! I appreciate what you all are doing.”

Sophomore Sandra Luz Machuca

IN THIS ISSUE:

- FOLLOWING YOUR SUCCESS! Profiles featuring English Alumni Publications, Jobs, and Reports from Graduate Programs
- Celebrating our Student’s Work in 2020 at a social distance
- Emeritus Chair Don Hoffman briefly visits US to receive Leader Prize
- EVENTS sponsored this fall, COVID be damned!
- Following Up Some Stories from Spring/Summer...
- Alumni News...and much more!

THE BIG NEWS

Well, COVID COVID COVID, as Jan Brady would say.

The BIG news—like so many things we do, not nearly far enough shouted—is that NEIU has done incredibly well in its coordinated response to COVID19. While no, that doesn’t give students back the jobs they lost—and it certainly doesn’t give any of us the friends and family back who have succumbed to this serious disease, but given the real disasters we’ve read about at other campuses, our grand total of 27 employees and 162 students reported with COVID-19 since March is pretty impressive. Lab and Arts classes have taken place on campus, with all others remote in various forms.



Serious kudos to [Sharon Heimbaugh](#), NEIU’s version of the highly trusted national figure, Dr. Birx, along with her co-chair of the COVID19 Taskforce here, [Rick Matus](#).

Alumni News!

Good news from **Becca Petros BA 2018** (formerly Peterson), who is applying to Ph.D. programs now, in Linguistics and English. Her article “Pedagogical Problems with Teaching: a Part –Time Role Model” will appear in the ALAN Review for winter, 2021. No, not an Alan Rickman review, though we’d love to see Becca back on stage. ALAN is the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE.

Back in July we heard that **Kristina Garcia - BA 2012** is doing well, having moved on from her position at UIC to a new gig as Associate Dean for the College of Communications and Behavioral Sciences at Elgin Community College. In this role, Kristina supports faculty through evaluation, assessment, and professional development. She is still, as far as we know, a faculty member for NEIU’s ENLACE Higher Education Master’s Program. YOU GO Mama Bear!

We heard from **Alisa Kumykova - BA 2018** this term, when she did *what every great alum does*—finding opportunities for those after her, where she now works. Now Volunteer Coordinator at Heartland Alliance, which provides educational and other support services for Refugee and Immigrant communities, Alisa reached out to us to publicize jobs at their Belmont office. Speak another language than English? Perhaps Alisa can use your skills! Case Manager positions pay pretty well, and come with benefits!

It was great to see alums **Katelyn Juerjens - BA 2020** and **Isaias Rogel - BA 2020** join us at this fall’s English Faculty Symposium in November. Katelyn, starting her PhD. at Northeastern (Boston), and Isaias, off for his MFA at New Mexico State, both seem happy and

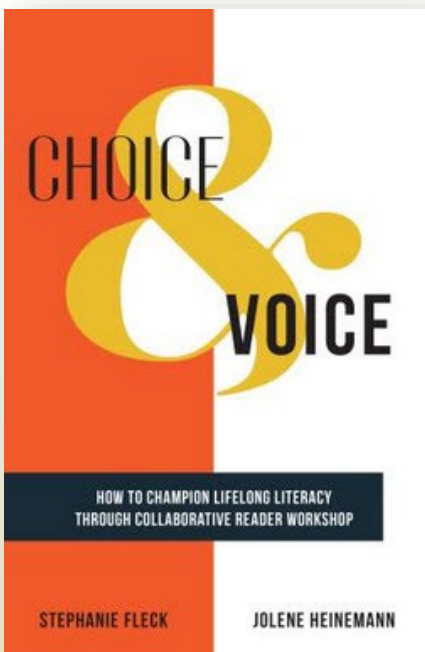
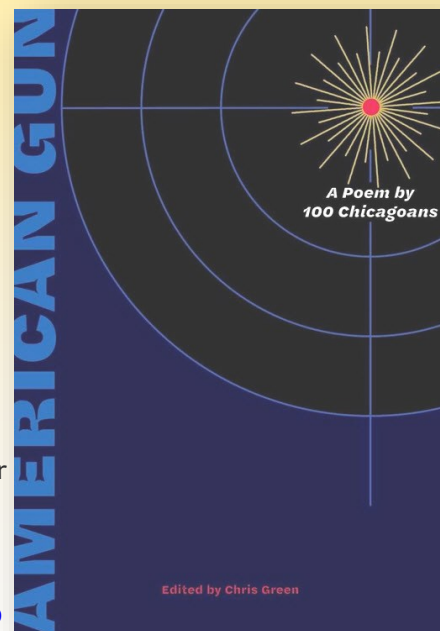
(thankfully) healthy in their new environs. Missing in action (or did I miss him there?) was **Martin Davis - BA 2019**, who began his MFA at Northwestern this term. In a recent FB post Marty reports getting all A’s this term, but feeling like a complete imposter despite all his success. Join the club, Marty—that’s *just the way it feels!* And we missed **Susan Landwer - MA 2019**, as well, now that I think of it. She did write us, though, and reports that she’s just wrapped up her first term in her PhD program, with one 16thc course and another on 19thc writers. She also trained for her teaching at Marquette, and shared her [cool website](#) for her writing courses.

HUGE KUDOS to **Jolene Heinemann - MA 2019** for the recent publication, with co-author Stephanie Fleck, of *Choice and Voice: How to Champion Lifelong Literacy through Collaborative Reader Workshop*. With their work, “readers will have reinvigorated excitement about independent reading and justification for its relevance in the classroom,” says their blurb on the Rowman and Littlefield site. See more [HERE](#) about it, including where to buy it.

Of course, having contributed to a collective epic poem in book form is an accomplishment itself, so we should be proud, too, to see the work of **Car-**

olyn Aguila - BA 2020 in *American Gun: A Poem by One Hundred Chicagoans*. The work, a “collective response to the suffering behind the statistics” brought together a wide variety of contributors, from well-known names to young poets from Chicago’s alternative high schools, where “statistically, students experience the most gun violence.” Check out the vimeo site dedicated to the project [HERE](#). Attention current educators: you can download the book for free.

Speaking of whom, we heard from **Jennifer Velasquez - BA 2020** this month as well, who reports she is now teaching English IV and Film Studies at John Hancock College Prep. Doing her part for our enrollment here, “Every day,” she says, “I tell my students what an awesome school NEIU is...especially their English department!”



FOLLOWING UP... some stories from Spring and Summer

PANDEMIC LITERATURE—now an 8-week course

Last issue's story "Department's Published Series @Popmatters.com Puts the Pandemic in Context," detailed the ways many of our English faculty and some of our graduate students had published essays on the literature of Pandemic in a series curated by **Dr. Ryan Poll**, all in an attempt to help put readers' experiences in historical and theoretical perspective.

The FOLLOW UP was equally successful—a Saturday morning seminar for 8 weeks this fall, quickly orchestrated by Poll, bringing most of those essays to class discussion via ZOOM. The one-credit class, entitled **ENGL 301A: Literatures of Pandemic**, featured no assigned essays and no exams, and filled up quickly. Discussion was lively, and the two-hour format gave us plenty of time to expand on what were relatively short expositions (1500 words) on-line.

Did you miss 'em? You can still read the full array of short essays at <https://www.popmatters.com/reading-pandemics-2645884310.html>



Join us -- at a safe distance -- on this journey through the canonical and radical as we look to literary representations of pandemics in the past to help us understand the politics and possibilities of the present COVID-19 pandemic.

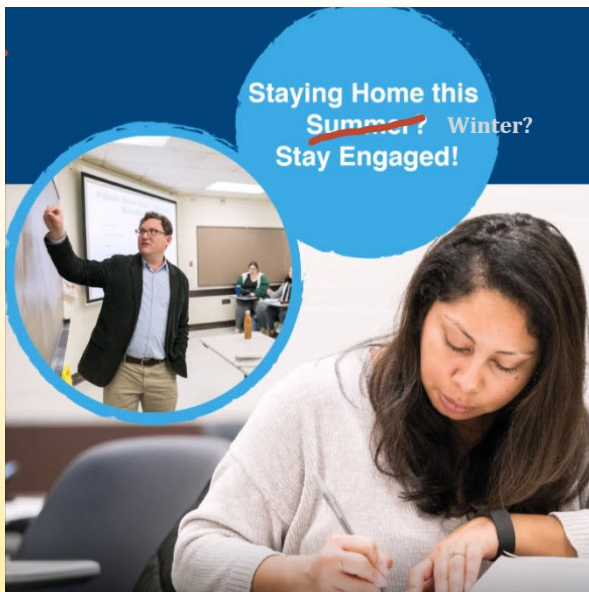
THE ENGLISH INSTITUTE—A QUICK SUCCESS

Last issue featured a story on **THE ENGLISH INSTITUTE**—a series of English courses curated every term from those being taken by NEIU students, now offered to non-degree seeking participants from the community for a greatly reduced price. To date, 14 participants have enjoyed this opportunity (5 in summer, 9 this fall), taking such courses as The Literature of Pandemic (see above!), Critical Journalism, Literature of the Seas, and Writing Poetry/Prose and vice versa among others.

In fact several alumni (**Carly Gielarowski, Melissa Twyman, Robyn Gilliom**) have taken advantage of our reduced rates for Alums.

This spring, the Institute features several Creative Writing courses—Intro to Creative Writing, Creative Writing Fiction, and Creative Writing Non-Fiction, as well as "One Woman Writer"—a trip with Dr. Scherman into the archives in search of continuing mysteries of **Elizabeth Oakes Smith's** life and career.

Read full course descriptions and bios at <https://www.neiu.edu/EnglishInstitute!>



Daniel Woody '13 Digs His New Gig (even if "there will be slugs")...

We continue to follow **Daniel Woody** as he takes on a new role teaching for New York University in Shanghai, and it's great to hear he hasn't forgotten his good friends back in Chicago during his impressive peregrinations.

Back in the summer, Woody described the near magical way his position at NYU worked out. While, yes, "there will be slugs" in the old part of Shanghai, he seems to have wandered mysteriously into a Marguerite Duras novel, living "in the former French Concession, in a renovated, historic lane house built in 1930. The neighborhood itself is an official cultural heritage landmark, known as Cité Bourgogne, and people like to try and peak inside to get a glimpse of what Shanghai was like in the 1930s."

And what would a message from Woody be without his latest poetry gig. Here he is featured as Guest Artist for an ASPZ READS event, but more broadly, he, like us, is working to keep himself productive and mentally healthy:

"I've been constantly writing poems and trying to get a collection published. After two years, Chicago Review published some of my old thesis work last fall. I'm also 150 pages (feels like halfway) into a memoir/nonfiction project: it's a book that is part instructional guide to drinking tea / part discussion and investigation on the idea of truth-telling and authenticity and gossip (see Foucault's lectures at Berkeley: DISCOURSE AND TRUTH) / and part meditation on contemporary

black identity. These three issues seem so different, but I see them as linked, so I hope I can make that apparent and make something special happen in this project. During the Covid outbreak, I spent about six months inside (three months additional after the outbreak was contained in early March). I had become quite a bit agoraphobic and was managing my mental health by a daily practice of drinking tea, reading, and reflecting through writing, before, of course, yielding myself to Netflix. I read quite a few books during that time (some standouts were MINOR FEELINGS by Cathy Park Hong and PHANTASTES by George MacDonald)."

Just last month he quietly advertised with us the "**Global Writing and Speaking Fellowship at NYU Shanghai.**" Fellows receive \$27,000 housing, health insurance and travel to and from China in exchange for tutoring undergraduates and engaging in an individual year-long scholarly, creative or service-oriented project under the guidance of a faculty mentor. The pay, Daniel writes, "is very decent for China, given the very low cost of living, and despite how dope this opportunity is, it seems to me not yet well known or advertised enough." **Anyone interested in knowing more should write to Woody at djw8543@nyu.edu.**



ASPZ KINDLY INVITES YOU TO THE
SECOND EVENT OF OUR READING
SERIES:

ASPZ READS

Date — Saturday, Oct. 24
Time — 4:30-7PM
(Doors open at 4pm)
Place — 105 Whiskey Lounge
96 ShaoXing Lu
上海市黄浦区绍兴路96弄



What is ASPZ READS?
ASPZ READS is a TWO-PART
EVENT.

- The first part will feature 3 writers who read a variety of their works and share their art.
- 1 guest speaker to be included in the 3 writers.
- The second part of the event will be ASPZ's CLASSIC OPEN MIC.
- No break between the two parts

ASPZ READS Guest Artist:
Daniel Woody, academic and creative
writing professor at New York
University in Shanghai.

**A SHANGHAI
POETRY ZINE**

How to apply?
• Apply in the next 48 hours through Giuseppe to be 1 of the featured artists for this event. 2 names will be drawn at random to determine who is selected.
• For the Open Mic, sign up upon your arrival! No need to RSVP.



Following Anna Schultes

You never know how you'll run into a successful English alum!

A few weeks ago when Hilary Jirka wrote to the leaders in District 214 that unfortunately we had to cancel our new colleague Ariana Bancu's seminar "Understanding Linguistic Discrimination," We received an email back from **Anna Schultes**, currently Principal at **Buffalo Grove High School (D214)**, who indicated that her department had found an equivalent opportunity with another NEIU prof. But "it made me smile," she added "to see Dr. Scherman cc'ed to this email... I took a class with him back in the early 2000's as a exchange student from the University of Warsaw..." When she looked back at her transcripts, she found that class in the fall of 2005.

In fact, Anna wasn't one of our English majors, but she still has an alumni relationship to us, now, and we hope for the future.



The story leading to this new contact is circuitous, but really more common than you'd think. "I went back to Poland to finish up my Masters in English," she continued in her email, "then came back in 2007 to pursue a PhD in English-Modern Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. My dissertation was on immigrant female migrants and mothering. In order to get my teaching certificate in IL, I needed to take a couple classes, so I turned that into an MSI at NEIU (my advisor was Katy Smith), so I am actually an NEIU alumna as well.

"I had an amazing fellowship at UW that covered my tuition, so I found a part-time job teaching at D214. I was hoping to move into academia after graduation; however, at the time in 2014-2015 the offers were quite abysmal. "[But] I have tried to find other ways to stay connected to the academic world. I published my first book - *The Migrant Maternal* - in 2016. For the past 3 years, I have been engaged in a research project on how to meet the needs of immigrant students with a friend at Loyola, and we currently have two peer reviewed journal entries awaiting publication (getting permission to do research from school districts is quite the process)..."

Not only is Anna Schultes a newly discovered resource for us—an expert in a field immediately relevant to our students; she is also, now, in a wonderful position to work with us to bring the students she serves the kinds of experiences she enjoyed here in even a single term. OK—not everyone will meet their life partner at NEIU (she met her husband, she tells me, in one of our computer labs).

CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS' WRITING ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020

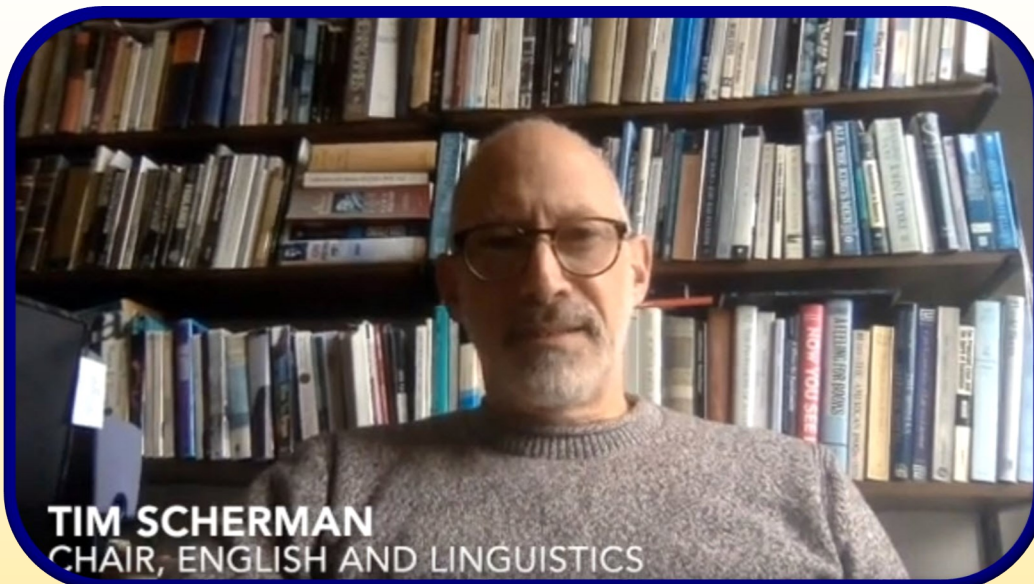
A remote answer to that May event with
great food...

How naïve we were last spring! Putting out our usual call for our students' best work early last March, we had no idea that even delaying our Awards Gathering to the fall was going to be a non-starter.

But we received excellent work—from students doing promising work in 100-level composition all the way to graduate students writing essays near-ready for publication (indeed Heidi Bojorges' essay on *Bitch Planet* was accepted for publication in the journal *FemSpec* only a week or two after our "Celebration" was published). So we wanted, somehow, to do more than write folks an award check.

So consulting students with an array of related images we'd gathered, and working with our creative Office Admin, Hilary Jirka, we put together slides with faces, titles and images—all set to music—to honor the critical and creative work our students did this calendar year. As you'll see, our students are following in the fine English Department tradition for which alums in both critical and creative writing have set the bar.

You can enjoy the show here on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lgra4Mltyrw>



CHAIR, ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS
TIM SCHERMAN

EMERITI ARE JUST OLD ALUMS (but not all get Leader prizes...)



Congratulations to Donald Hoffman, Emeritus Professor of English and Chair, 1956-2002 (or at least it must have felt that way).

Don returned from Baalbec, Lebanon last year on one of his infrequent touchdowns in the United States to find himself recognized by the International Arthurian Society North American Branch (IAS-NAB) with its 'Fair Well-Known' Leader prize—specifically, for his essay 'Queer as Folk,' published in *Arthuriana* 63.6, a special issue in honor of Kevin J. Harty.

As Don explained it to me, “the Fair Well Known... is a reference to a typical Arthurian type, the Fair Unknown, which is also the name of a former Leader prize for an emerging scholar. I am the first to receive the new prize for a retired scholar. In my own mind I think of it as the Fairly Well Known prize, or, more bluntly, the Old Fart’s Prize.”

JOIN ALUM GERRY LEKAS '72 “where the tour buses don't go...”

Somehow we got on the mailing list for Gerry Lekas’s new book—a COVID-ready tourguide to Chicago’s mysterious and lesser known haunts—and discovered an NEIU we didn’t know we had!

Lekas was a Secondary-Ed English major “one hundred and fifty years ago,” as he told me. He taught English and History in middle schools for some time, and is now publishing books about local history. Grab a copy of Gerry’s book while they last, and take a socially distanced tour!

Rick Kogan of WGN did a nice feature on Gerry’s book (as did several other major news outlets). Check Kogan’s out here:

<https://wgnradio.com/after-hours-with-rick-kogan/gerry-lekas-on-his-travel-book-where-the-tour-buses-dont-go/>

Whatever one calls it, it seems they invented it to give to Don as not just a “retired scholar,” but as the committee put it, retired scholars who continue to produce outstanding scholarship.” “In this article,” the committee continued, “Hoffman offers not only a nuanced and engaging queer reading of ten randomly selected Arthurian films but also a master class in academic writing. The style is chatty yet sophisticated, humorous yet powerful. Hoffman’s breezy style makes the huge amount of work involved in this article seem effortless.”

Read it right [here](#), and learn—from a real master.

What NEIU Alum **GERRY LEKAS** is up to...

Gerry Lekas (graduated 1972, English/Sec. Ed.) taught Language Arts and Social Studies to middle school students for several decades.

“... Where the Tour Buses Don't Go”

His recent book “Where the Tour Buses Don't Go” provides pandemic-friendly, self-guided tours of “CHICAGO'S Hidden Sites of the Mysterious, Macabre, Ghostly, and Glamorous.”

Black Lynn TRAVEL

PASSAGES FROM A WONDERFUL MISSIVE FROM JENN LEE...

Last we reported on [Jenn Lee - BA 2019](#), she was headed off to her MFA program at Columbia. It was great to see her stop in at the **Faculty Symposium** this term, and then to catch up with her afterwards in a brief (but as you see—full!) email correspondence. We all remember her as one of the most engaged, versatile minds in our program, so it wasn't surprising to me to read her post on FB the other day “Here's (one of) my problem(s): I want to get a PhD in creative writing. And in queer lit/media. And in medieval/Arthurian lit/media. Help.”

Anyway, here's (part) of Jenn's update!

“I'm so happy to hear that Sigma is continuing on strongly! Everything I did at NEIU was so huge for me, but Sigma and Seeds top that list, I think. COVID is a hell of a thing. It's very odd to think that I've had my last in-person class for my MFA and that it was just some class in early March, just another day. These are not the historical times I ever fantasized about living in...

“So I'm teaching Writing and Rhetoric I this semester. Last semester I taught Writing and Rhetoric II and will probably be teaching that again next semester. They're Columbia's kind of mash-up of ENGL-101/102 and also sort of ENGL-210. We talk a lot about what writing in the 21st century looks like, what creativity actually is and where it comes

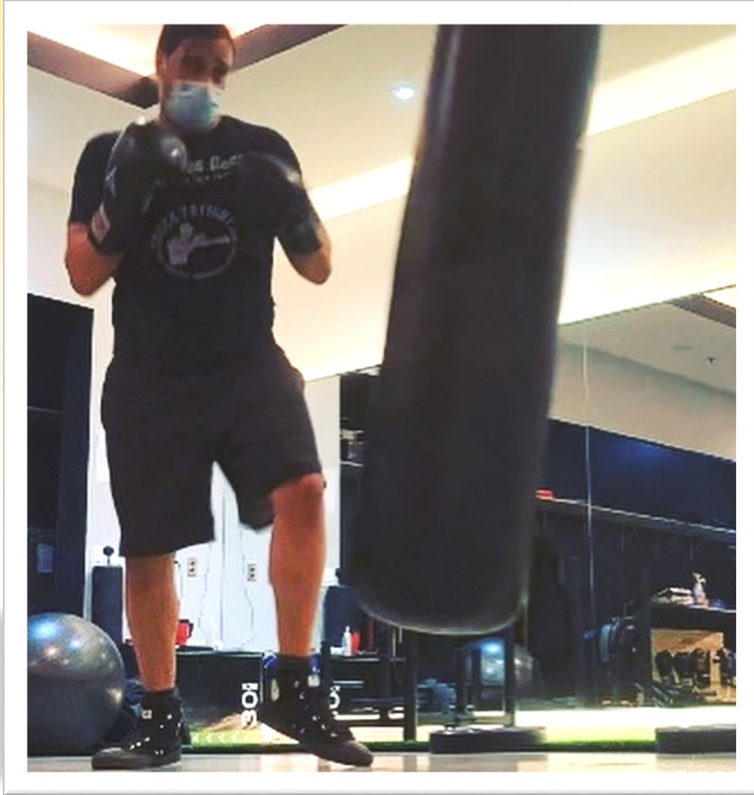


from, writing as a centuries-long and ongoing conversation, how to “read” texts that aren't pure text, reading and writing as active engagement with the world, how to try to shape your ethos as a writer, etc.

“I try to make the courses serve the students as much as I can, since most of my students are not English majors and, instead, are hoping to work in fields like film and television, the music industry, theatre, studio arts, arts management, dance, etc. Mostly this involves trying to pull core texts from a variety of places and genres and fields and voices. I also encourage my students to work multimodally whenever they want to – so if they're a film major, maybe they'd rather respond to a writ-

ing prompt by making a film (and including a little write up about why they chose to do so, how the film is working with the prompt). Many of my students chose to respond in a conventional essay, but I also always get a few films, podcasts, comics, photo essays, animations, and more, which is so much fun.

A NEW SUMMER COURSE FROM PRO JOURNALIST - AND NEW MA ALUM - ELIAS CEPEDA



Taking a little time away from competing on the grappling circuit, or coaching Jiu Jitsu and MMA at the Foundation Chicago gym, or writing new restaurant reviews and sports news for any number of Chicago and national publications, new MA grad **Elias Cepeda '20** designed, wrote and taught **ENGL 374J: Critical Journalism** for Summer III in July and August of this year. Combining student training on the basics of journalistic form with theoretical readings from the Frankfurt school and others, Cepeda's course gave students new insights into the politics of journalism, exploding the fallacies of "both sides" coverage and exposing the roots of journalism's role as that which can exacerbate, or that which can cure, the long-standing injustices we see around us.

Cepeda is currently on the hunt for a place in a Ph.D. program, limiting himself to his top *fifteen* choices for applications!! Good luck, dude—though somehow we don't think you'll need it.

JEN LEE WRITES (cont'd)

I'm heading into my last semester of coursework (this spring), and then next year will be devoted to teaching and working on my thesis manuscript.

"I'm writing a lot of lyrical and experimental nonfiction focused on trauma and memory (specifically the slipperiness of memory and trying to write against the common "survivor's journey" and the idea that there's one clean path through trauma or that you have to be a certain kind of "good" person to be seen as even being able to be traumatized). I'm hoping to write a book-length work of creative nonfiction that plays off of the shape/structure/movement of fractals – it feels like a useful shape for trauma writing, the way you feel like you've moved onto a newer and bigger moment/action/instance, but you pull back/look back and see it's actually the same shape, just larger, or a larger thing made up of all of the same shapes writ small. Or you dig down and see that, at the root, it's the same shape, it's the same shape all the way down. And I think that movement, in and out, is really generative in its refusal of a clean, linear narrative and temporality.

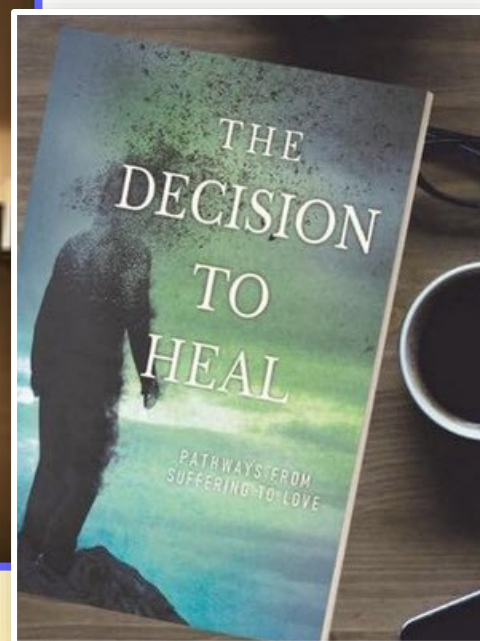
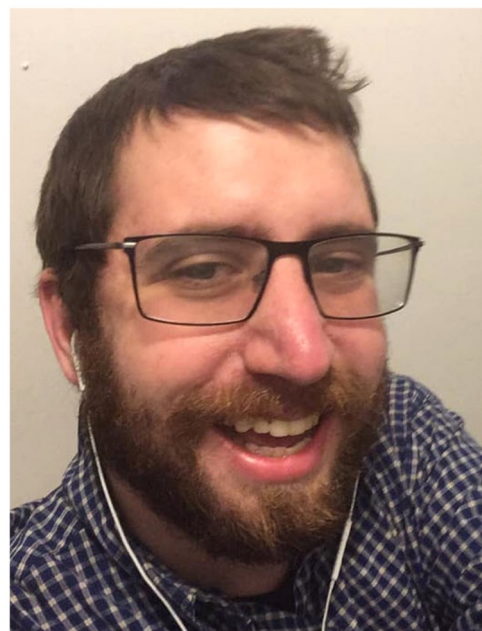
"Most recently, I had a work about food and the body and food in response to trauma published in **The Ocotillo Review**, a print journal (vol. 4.2, summer 2020)."

Keep in mind, folks—this great stuff is edited for space! Thanks so much, Jenn, for sharing this. We can only hope we had something—anything—to do with this activity of mind. You can see all Jenn's stuff at <https://www.jennleewrites.com/>.

JOSH FRIEDBERG'S INSPIRING STORY

Last time we featured [Josh Friedberg, MA '16](#) we raved about the 300-level course he'd designed from his vast research and writing on music and its underlying social, economic and cultural conflicts. What we missed writing about here, unpardonably, was a **powerful TED talk Josh gave recently** at his undergraduate alma mater, Earlham College, in Richmond, IA. In his beautifully paced, funny and honest account, he traced the realization of his own creative faculties to the moment of his writing—and then performing—a song about his experience of autism at Earlham. “As long as my creativity is different in some way, and it shows my truth,” Friedberg concludes, “then I’m satisfied with it, and I wouldn’t change my autism if I could.”

After NEIU, Josh has continued to publish at a break-neck pace in myriad



online journals like [popmatters](#) and [goodmenproject.com](#), where his allusions to music can most easily be traced with a few clicks. Most recently, he’s co-author of a new book, **The Decision to Heal**, which describes “six journeys from suffering to love.” Order YOUR copy [here!](#)

The last bit of good news? Friedberg recently landed a gig teaching at the university level, right down the road from us at North Park College.

ENGLISH EVENTS STILL ABOUND, EVEN IN COVIDTIME...

No, we haven't let up.

While ZOOM isn't for everyone, it actually did afford the opportunity for us to get together virtually this term for English Department events featuring both students and faculty.

At our English Department Faculty Symposium this November, we were pleased to see not just our faculty colleagues but a host of graduate and undergraduate students as well as a few alums join us—the latter of which we would hardly expect with travel costs in a face-to-face format. Check out what faculty are up to in **Hilary Jirka's** awesome slide to the right.

Our Creative Writing faculty were active as well, sponsoring two **82** events featuring poetry and other genres by leaders of **SEEDS** and students in classes being taught this term.

Next time, maybe we'll remember to record this stuff for you.

ENGLISH FACULTY FALL SYMPOSIUM

Attend this Illuminating One-Day VIRTUAL CONFERENCE with Faculty Sharing their Works-in-Progress!

November 6, 2020
10 am - 1 pm

10:00 – 10:10 am Thinking Through Race: The Politics of Sovereignty in the Literatures of US Nations Within	10:50 – 11:00 am "Foundational Impurities in Santiago Puglia's <i>El desengano del hombre</i> (1794)"
10:10 – 10:20 am "LOTS," excerpt from in-progress novel	11:00 – 11:10 am "The Shadow of the Hunter," excerpt from an in-progress novel
10:20 – 10:30 am "As yet the Negro is incapable of equality: the discourse of white supremacy in William Faulkner"	11:10 – 11:20 am She-Crumb, excerpt from a ms merging literary/film criticism with poetry, fiction, and memory-writing
10:30 – 10:40 am "The Mysterious Failure of <i>The Egeria</i> (1852) projected as the first Woman's Rights Journal in the US"	11:20 – 11:30 am "Moral Capital: Love in James Baldwin's Political Thoughts"

10:40 – 10:50 Discussion

11:30 – 11:40 Discussion

12:00 – 12:10 pm
"A Cheesecake in the Bunker," poems inspired by the films of Lucio Fulci

12:10 – 12:20 Discussion

Student Edition

The 82: Writers/Reading

Lincolnwood Town Center

McCormick 3400W

Kimble 3200W

Devon 6400N

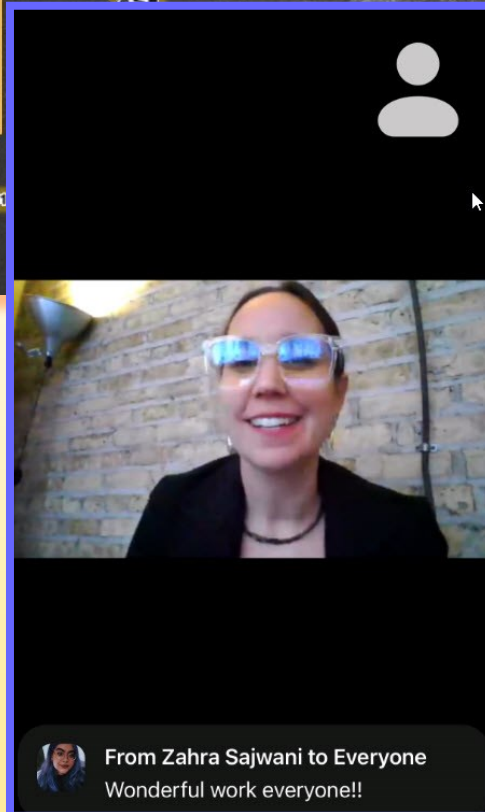
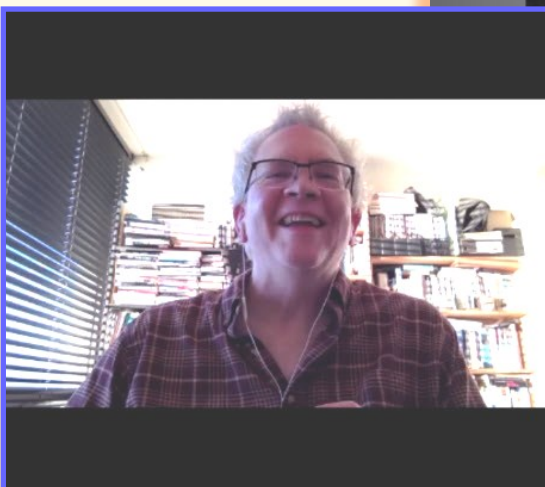
Kimball 4800N

Belmont Blue Line (O'Hare Branch) 3200N

Israa Abbas
Cathy Colton
Mike Fudacz
Xochitl Garcia
Nathan Kaplin
Zahra Sajwani
Ana Santillan
Joanna Vaklin

Tuesday, November 17
3:00 PM

To request the ZOOM link via Cronk at o-cronk@neiu.edu



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT PROFESSORS ENGAGE THE BROADER COMMUNITY FOR “ONE BOOK ONE CHICAGO” DISCUSSION

In 2019, English Department **Professor Chris Schroeder**, who has many times assigned the OBOC selection in his ENGL 205 class, reached out to librarian Young Park at our local Albany Park Public Library and Jennifer Lizak, Coordinator of the **ONE BOOK ONE CHICAGO**, to involve NEIU and its faculty in a discussion of last year's city-wide selection for our reading, *The Sixth Extinction*.

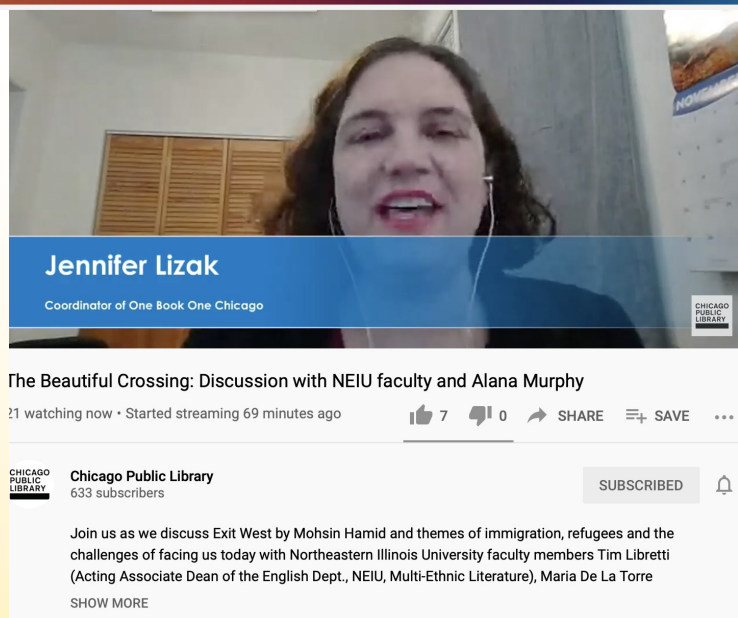
This year, Chris reached out to us all again to make this an ongoing tradition—indeed, a key response to the third in NEIU's list of university goals: Urban Leadership.

The immigration theme of this year's selection—*Exit West*, by Mohsin Hamid—was hugely relevant to NEIU's students and mission, and Chris knew he could depend on colleagues like **Brad Greenburg** and **Tim Libretti** to join other faculty from NEIU in evening of socially distanced discussion and reflection on the novel.

Libretti took the lead as moderator, with Greenburg, and Justice Studies professor **María De La Torre** as respondents. This NEIU contingent was joined by Alana Murphy, project founder of *The Beautiful Crossing*, a platform for sharing the stories of former refugees and asylum seekers.

For the many who tuned in to OBOC's Youtube link, this was an insightful and inspiring conversation.

[THE RECORDING HERE](#) is still available to all interested.



THE MATCHING CAMPAIGN!!

What alums already do for students in the English Department at NEIU is very significant—sponsoring events, speakers, supporting their research, travel, and professional development. Many of you have even provided internships or job opportunities for our graduates. And even with COVID shutting down travel, we've found creative ways with your support to help our students complete their degrees and improve their lives!

But as we announced last summer, at this point our goal is to establish more support, specifically, for our students in need. COVID19 has hit NEIU's demographic the very hardest, and when a student is faced with the question of whether to pay the rent or pay tuition, the answer is obvious.

Some weeks BEFORE COVID, we reached out to our most consistent and generous donors regarding a MATCHING CAMPAIGN. Their response—committing over \$3500 dollars for matching—was beyond generous. Since then, several alums who have never given largely have stepped up in amazing ways—THANK YOU! But we're only part of the way to our goal.

So even if you've never given before, let's try moving to the next level. The goal is to establish a separate endowment to provide students who need some help the support they need to continue, or to finish their degrees.

Especially as the days of the 2020 tax year end, think about the way YOUR DONATION will be matched by our leading donors' commitment. \$50 becomes \$100. LET'S take advantage of the full opportunity and make sure not to leave any of our matching donors' offer on the table!

Please donate today, at neiu.edu/give. Make sure to designate "OTHER" and write in "English Department" to make sure your donation gets to us!

English Department
Northeastern IL University
5500 North St. Louis Ave
Chicago IL 606025

AND KEEP IN TOUCH!

New JOB?

News in Your LIFE?

Change your email?

Let us know! Send an email to Acting Chair Tim Scherman at: T-Scherman@neiu.edu

OR

**Office Admin Hilary Jirka at: h-jirka2@neiu.edu
773/442-5829**

Visit us on the web at
www.neiu.edu/English (your stories are up under "Alumni")

JOIN us on Facebook! NEIU Alumni And Friends: Bringing it All Back Home

PLACE
STAMP
HERE