From the Chair

Let me begin by celebrating faculty members Geoffrey Green, Sarita Cannon, Emily Merriman and Sugie Goen-Salter. Geoffrey has been elected to PEN International; Sarita, to the position of President of the Humanities Education and Research Association; Sugie, to the position of Executive Officer of the CSU English Council; and Emily, to the Executive Committee of the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association. May they thrive in these new roles in the Republic of Letters.

Our college, once the College of Humanities, grew enormously over the summer with the addition of the College of Creative Arts and about half of the College of Behavioral and Social Studies. We are now a college in search of a name; likely candidates include the College of Liberal and Creative Arts. We expect some interesting intellectual and artistic cross-fertilization with our new neighbors. For example, the Alexander String Quartet, the world-famous quartet that is resident at the University, gave a performance-lecture in Loretta Stec’s course in Literature in English: The Twentieth Century. And our department will be joining with Creative Writing, Theatre Arts, and Comparative Literature to co-sponsor a performance in the spring: Word for Word will perform T.C. Boyle’s “Sorry Fugu” on the 6th of March, in McKenna Theatre. Tickets for students, staff, and faculty will be just $10; tickets for the general public, slightly higher. We hope to see many alumni at the performance. If you are reading this electronically, click here for tickets.

Our programs continue to be vibrant, though we are struggling because of reduced funding and understaffing, and continuing reorganization of the University. The M.A. program in TESOL, as just one example, had another highly successful conference, on 2 December, at which students presented their culminating experience projects to large audiences. The event also included a festive lunch and a closing celebration. The Graduate Literature Association is going strong; it sponsors literary as well as social events and publishes Interpretations, a journal of literary criticism by graduate students, run entirely by graduate students. This year the GLA will publish its twenty-fourth annual volume.

We appreciate the support we have received from our alumni and other friends of the department — both donations to the department and advocacy for public higher education.  — Beverly Voloshin

SFSU celebrates the American Language Institute’s 50th Anniversary

On October 20, 2011 the American Language Institute celebrated its 50th anniversary and many university colleagues participated in the celebration. Speakers at the reception included ALI Director Kathy Sherak; Dr. Linda Buckley, Associate Vice President for Academic Planning & Development; Koichiro Aoshima, international student advisor, SFSU Office of International Programs; Linda Haley, CBET and ECE/ESL Pathway Programs Coordinator and Professor of ESL and Reading at Canada College, and former ALI teacher; Dr. Stefan Frazier, Professor of Linguistics and Language Development at San Jose State University and former ALI teacher; Dr. H. Douglas Brown, TESOL Faculty Emeritus, author and former ALI Director.

The American Language Institute at SFSU is a program of intensive English as a Second Language instruction for non-matriculated students. Because most ALI students intend to apply to SF State or another American college or university, the ALI curriculum focuses on academic English and university preparation. All ALI teachers are selected from our program’s M.A. program in TESOL to undergo intensive teacher training and then teach the English classes at the ALI, a system that makes the ALI unique among intensive English programs in the country.

After fifty years, much has changed in and around the ALI, but the core values remain constant: ALI continues to be a vibrant, supportive, and forward-thinking center for teachers and students to engage in meaningful and purposeful learning. The ALI curriculum, teaching practices, and student services continue to evolve and reflect new research and changing demographics.

Graduating ALI students confidently enter the next stage of their lives equipped with the linguistic and cultural tools to excel in academia and the workplace. ALI continues to be a training ground that nurtures informed, thoughtful, and enthusiastic teachers who become exemplary educators and leaders throughout the world. Finally, the ALI workplace continues to be a supportive environment that fosters collaborative decision-making and innovation.
Staff Updates

Maureen Turner Carey will be going on maternity leave at the end of the semester, and the wonderful Jessica Morrow will begin as the new ETC Staff Manager in January! We are delighted for Maureen and her family, and very excited that Jessica will be joining the ETC staff and hope you will help us in welcoming her.

The CMS program has a new assistant, Amanda Snyder. In addition to having taught a section of English 214 last year, Amanda is currently a student in the M.A. TESOL program. She also holds an M.F.A in Creative Writing from Columbia College, in Chicago. The CMS Program is fortunate to have her!

Ceci Herrmann, in whose capable hands the English Department office flourished for a number of years, has taken another position at SFSU, in the Cinema Department. As we wish her well in her new endeavors (and we are very pleased she’s still nearby to visit!), we welcome Lisa Poehlmann to the English office. Lisa earned her B.A. and M.A. in Literature here at SFSU, has taught English at the secondary level, and continues to teach piano.

Faculty Activities


David Gill was part of a team of scholars who glossed a set of notes that science fiction writer Philip K Dick made about a religious experience he had in 1974. The project recently published The Exegesis of Philip K Dick, released November 7, by Houghton Mifflin. Editor Jonathan Lethem calls the book “A great and calamitous sequence of arguments with the universe: poignant, terrifying, ludicrous, and brilliant.”

Suje Goen-Salter is the new president of the CSU English Council. The council has been in existence for over 35 years, and is comprised of members of English departments from the various campuses in the CSU system. It meets twice yearly, in San Diego in the Fall and in Burlingame in the Spring. The stated purpose of English Council is to “encourage the effective teaching of English in the state of California.” But the English Council also works actively in plenary sessions to showcase the research and scholarship of new English faculty and to bring together faculty across the sub-disciplines of English studies (literature, composition, TESOL, linguistics). In addition to bringing CSU English faculty together, English Council is inter-segmental, with representatives from ECCCTC (English Council of California Two-Year Colleges) and from UC. Just as importantly, English Council is an advocacy group, representing the interests of English faculty, students and programs to the Chancellor’s office.

Geoffrey Green was nominated (by the Board of Membership) for candidacy, and elected to membership in the international organization Poets, Essayists, and Novelists [PEN].

Herman Haluza presented a paper in San Francisco at the HERA Conference last March entitled “Nietzsche and Galeano for our Times.” The paper reads German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and Uruguyan writer Eduardo Galeano together, thereby developing a new interpretive view as well as a perspective on life.

Michael Krasny had a long opinion piece published in the Insight section of the San Francisco Chronicle on July 7, 2011.

Tara Lockhart was in Hanover, NH for two weeks this summer, attending the Dartmouth Summer Seminar for Composition Research. She will present some of the findings from her work this spring in a paper entitled “Research from the Dartmouth Seminar: Acculturation, Transfer, and Conditions for Higher-Level Composing” at CCCC, in St. Louis, Missouri. Tara also published an essay entitled “Thinking on the Page: Summoning Readers and the Uses of Essays,” a piece which explores Edward Said’s essayistic photo-memoir After the Last Sky. The article is in Resources for Teaching “Ways of Reading”, 9th edition (2011).

Sarah Manyika’s novel In Dependence (Legend Press, Ltd.) is now available in the U.S.

In May, Ellen Peel spoke on a panel entitled “The Conference So Far” at Queer and Feminist Narrative Theories, a Project Narrative Symposium at Ohio State University.

Marcel G. Santos has been invited to join a national Working Group on “Promoting Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education” sponsored
Faculty Activities, continued

by the US Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE). The work involves the development of teacher competencies and teacher induction models that support professional growth and ultimately, student success.

In July, Meg Shoerke presented a paper, "Another Weeping Woman: Gender and the Articulation of Grief in Early 20th Century U.S. Poetry," for the "Poetry and Melancholia" conference at University of Stirling, in Scotland.

Gitanjali Shahani will be the new co-director of the South Asian Studies Interactive (SASI) at State, starting Spring 2012.


This past June, Loretta Stec gave a talk at the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment Conference at the University of Indiana, Bloomington. The title of her talk on animal rights and the vegetarian movement in England at the end of the 19th century was "Kinship Across Species and Continents: Henry Stephens Salt Meets Mohandas Gandhi."

Elise Wormuth had two pieces accepted in a juried national show at the Santa Cruz Art League, which ran through November 20.

Rachelle Waksler’s article, “Super, uber, so, and totally: Over-the-top intensification to mark subjectivity in colloquial discourse” has been accepted for publication in a special volume on subjectivity in the Studies in Pragmatics series (to appear in 2012).

In April, Elizabeth Whalley and recent M.A. TESOL graduate Lou Ann Bassen presented Tips for New Teachers “Wow! I didn’t know that ...” at the April CATESOL Conference in Long Beach California. In January, Elizabeth also gave a talk, "Using Poetry in the ESL Grammar Class," at the Hawaii International Conference of Arts and Humanities.

In April, Elizabeth performed with the all-women improv group, Bella Donna. Additionally, her troupe Spontaneous Combustion has been performing shows with a format of games, short scenes and musical numbers in the first half and a fully improvised longform in the second half. In 2012 they will be performing a fully improvised longform in the style of Gilbert & Sullivan.

Loretta Stec gave a talk at the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment Conference at the University of Indiana, Bloomington. The title of her talk on animal rights and the vegetarian movement in England at the end of the 19th century was “Kinship Across Species and Continents: Henry Stephens Salt Meets Mahatma Gandhi.”

Elise Wormuth had two pieces accepted in a juried national show at the Santa Cruz Art League, which ran through November 20.

Rachelle Waksler’s article, “Super, uber, so, and totally: Over-the-top intensification to mark subjectivity in colloquial discourse” has been accepted for publication in a special volume on subjectivity in the Studies in Pragmatics series (to appear in 2012).

Newest Arrivals

M.A. Literature student Jose Navarro, who is finishing his thesis titled “Chicano/Latino Masculinity: A Decolonizing Representation,” recently became a father to daughter, Nayeli (right).

Nancy Sours is a new grandmother. Avery Benjamin McCluney was born May 3 to her daughter, who lives in Boulder, Colorado.

Julie Paulson’s new baby, Adeline Mae Wallace (left), was born on September 15. She was born in Berkeley, CA and weighed 8 pounds 12 ounces. Adeline joins Julie’s husband Ben Wallace, and son, Zachary (4).

Congratulations to all!
Tributes to Retiring Faculty Members

We are grateful to faculty members Dana Lomax and Troi Carleton who wrote tributes to our retiring faculty members.

Elana Dykewoman (Nachman)

San Francisco State won’t be the same without Elana Dykewoman, who retires this semester. Elana is an incredible teacher, writer, and activist, and, for us, the only benefit of her retirement is that she will have more time to dedicate to her literary pursuits and her activism. In this respect, our loss is also our gain.

Elana is the author of several novels, books of poetry, short story collections, and essays. Her writing awards are many, and during her career here at San Francisco State University, she was the recipient of numerous literary prizes, including a Lambda Award and the 2009 James Duggins Outstanding Mid-Career Novelist’s Prize. Her first novel, Riverfinger Women, was selected for The Publishing Triangle’s list of the 100 best lesbian and gay novels, and her work has appeared in countless anthologies and periodicals, including the Journal of Lesbian Studies and anthologies by the University of California Press. Her website reads, “Changing the World, Word by Word,” and if you know Elana, you know she means it. Many of us eagerly anticipate her next project.

It has been my good fortune to share an office with Elana for several years now, and in that time, most every interaction with her has inspired me. When she respectfully challenged the playwright in a Word for Word post-production panel last year, I marveled both at the insight of her observation and the courage of her conviction. Elana is plain smart and unafraid to challenge inequity wherever she encounters it. With students in the office, Elana is direct and strikingly responsive to their developmental needs; she knows where each student needs to go next. And when my father died and she brought out Auden’s “Stop All the Clocks,” I felt like she knew just what I needed as well. She speaks to those around her with tremendous candor and generosity and holds everyone to the highest standards. We will all miss her!

-Dana Lomax

Rachelle Waksler

It has been an honor and a pleasure to work closely with Shelley Waksler over the past sixteen years to develop our Linguistics Program into a thriving and well-respected program. Her commitment and passion are in no small part responsible for the reputation and quality our program now enjoys. From the day I arrived at San Francisco State University, Shelley has been not only an ideal colleague and generous mentor as I worked my way through the tenure and promotion process, she has also been a supportive friend.

I could not have asked for a better colleague in terms of shared philosophy and shared vision on the direction the Linguistics Program should go. As unbelievable as it may seem, we never disagreed professionally on any issue, and worked together in a seamless manner over the years to improve on and push both the undergraduate and graduate programs forward. I considered myself incredibly lucky each and every day I came into work for having the privilege of working side by side with her. I will miss her as a colleague, a partner in our program, and as a friend.

Students admire Shelley for her keen intellect and her outstanding teaching. She has served as inspiration for how to balance cutting-edge research with inspired pedagogy. She has mentored countless graduate and undergraduate students over the years, encouraging them to publish their work and to present their work at professional conferences. Her thorough and thoughtful feedback on all of her students’ work has produced stellar students who can think critically and produce elegant linguistic analyses. She will be sorely missed as a source of inspiration for her students.

While I am deeply saddened to lose her as a colleague, a partner in this program, and as a friend, I am excited for her as she moves onto a new chapter in her life. I join with the rest of the department in wishing her all the best in all future endeavors.

-Troi Carleton

Word for Word returns to SFSU

The Departments of English, Creative Writing, Theatre Arts and Comparative Literature are co-sponsoring a production of T.C. Boyle’s “Sorry Fugu.” Word for Word will be performing this short story on March 6th, 2012 in McKenna Theatre.

Tickets will be $10 for students, faculty, and staff, and can be purchased here.

If you wish to use this performance in conjunction with classroom instruction, you can email the English Department at eng-dept@sfsu.edu for a copy of the story.

Winners of this year’s ETC Spooky Spelling Bee pictured here. First place: M.A. Literature student and ETC tutor, Brendan Manowski (R); second place: Humanities Resource Room Manager, Kitty Quinn-Friel (Center); third place: ETC Staff Manager, Maureen Turner Carey, (L). The winning word was lycanthrope (a werewolf).
Student News

Lindsey Bynum (M.A. Literature) delivered a paper entitled “The Sex(y) Mythology of the Black Woman in Quicksand and Plum Bun” at the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association conference in Scottsdale, AZ.


Nancy Moss (M.A. Literature) presented “Exotic Spectacle: Wordsworth’s Urban Vision” at the 2011 Summer Wordsworth Conference in Grasmere, England. The meeting attracts Romantics from all over the world to its intimate residential setting and the opportunity to hike the fells and visit the ruins that were destinations for the Wordsworths, Coleridge and their circle.

M.A. Literature Alumni Updates

Danielle Ayalon (’07) is attending UC Hastings College of the Law and expects to receive her J.D. in 2013.

Jennifer Bendery (’05) is a White House reporter for The Huffington Post.

Wenli Chien (’04) received her M.A. in Chinese and Comparative Literature in 2009 at Nanjing University, China.

David Heinke (’07) obtained his M.Ed. at Stanford in 2008.

Jason Helms (’06) received his Ph.D. in Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design from Clemson University in 2010 and is currently a post-doctoral scholar at the University of Kentucky and Assistant Director of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Media.

Viola Lasmana (’07) is attending the doctoral program in English Literature at the University of Southern California.

Ashley Proctor (’06) is currently an editor at Google and previously held positions as a reporter with The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times.

Alison Sperling (’10) is attending the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and expects to complete her Ph.D. in 2013.

Liberty Stanavage (’02) received her Ph.D. in English Literature from UC Santa Barbara the Summer of 2011 and started as an Assistant Professor of Renaissance and Seventeenth Century English literature at the State University of New York, Potsdam this fall.

Sean Ticummah Teuton (’94) received his Ph.D. at Cornell and is associate professor of English and American Indian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His scholarly work includes Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel (Duke UP, 2008).