



The Literature Program

Texts & Technology

Literature/Language Alumni Newsletter -- Summer 2000

The Doings . . .

This is the first of what we hope will be a twice annual LITT Alum newsletter. Actually, it isn't the first; a student sent out a newsletter some years ago but after she graduated no one else picked it up. So, I probably should say:

This is the second of what we hope will be a twice annual LITT Alum newsletter.

The college seems, finally, to have gotten the message that alums are important to the college community and should be kept informed and connected to what we do here. At least, the new appointments in the Alumni Office suggests that the college thinks you are important.

We certainly do – though our lack of connection to all of you seems to deny that. We do talk about you, share letters and email from you, wonder what you are doing, get excited when you contact us about a new job or change in direction. You are much on our minds.

We sent over 500 letters to our alums this last fall asking you to contact us. Only about 78 did. That is probably not bad – as surveys go.

Consider this, then, as another request to contact us with news, your mailing and email addresses or just a quick note to say hello.

Job/Career Meeting

We had a meeting this Spring where four former LITT majors discussed their present jobs and how they got to where they are. The four were Nicole Pensiero, Mike Kammer, Nancy Natello and Pam Wirstad. Each person seemed to suggest that a LITT degree prepared you for all sorts of jobs, that serendipity plays a part in getting a job you want, that it takes hard work at the bottom to get to the top, that teaching was fun but really hard work and that they were all pleased to have graduated from Stockton's LITT program.

If the rush of our present students to the front of the room to chat with these former majors meant anything, it seemed to suggest that they were eager to network with these students from earlier classes.

If any of you would like to participate in this endeavor, contact Lisa Honaker. Her email address is

below.

What's New In the Program?

The program keeps changing and adjusting to new trends in teaching literature and in making sure our students have 21st -century skills. For example, we now insist that all majors learn to write HTML code for web pages and that they design a page on some literary subject.

We also have a new course on Literary Research which stresses both traditional research skills as well as online skills and literary theory.

We have new courses almost every year. This is because a new type of 2000-level course – one with a thematic approach – has been introduced for beginning students. This allows us to change courses every few terms – keeping us fresh and on our toes – and the courses appeal to students because they change almost every term. Some recent examples are:

Readers, Writers and Books (Tom Kinsella) which “examines the mindset of obsessive readers, writers, and book collectors.”

The Great American Novel (Debby Gussman) – “looked at classic, award-winning, and/or bestselling books from the 1850s and 1950s primarily, and tried to figure out if such a thing as "the great American novel" was possible.”

Detective Fiction (Lisa Honaker) – “we read a variety of 19th- and 20th- century detective novels, looking at the evolution of the detective figure and his/her use in the culture of the novel and the period in which it was written. We also wrote a detective novel, handled as an "exquisite corpse," as a class.

Literature and Empire (Lisa Honaker) – “we read a number of colonial and post-colonial novels as a way of looking at how art reflects and contributes to the culture of imperialism and its aftermath in both colonizing and colonized nations.”

We also are pleased to offer this fall our first course in Native American Literature. It will be taught by Debby Gussman and is a first for us and, we suspect, a first for the college. Another new course, taught last spring by Ken Tompkins, was entitled Computer Visualization in the Humanities. Students did research on ancient buildings and then “built” representations of those buildings in a computer 3D program.

What's New With the LITT Faculty?

The most exciting events this year for the Program were the awarding of tenure to Lisa Honaker and the appointment of Deborah Gussman as our Americanist. Lisa has taught in the program for just over five years; she was granted tenure this past fall. It is wonderful to know that she will be teaching in the Program for many years to come.

We were very lucky when Debby Gussman agreed to come to Stockton last Fall. To quote Tom Kinsella: “She seems to be forging a reputation as an intelligent, demanding, yet compassionate teacher. We are lucky to have her.” I would add that she also has a wonderful sense of humor.

Not new, but worthy of note, is the fact that in 1998 the LITT and LANG faculties agreed to divide into two separate Programs. What used to be called LANG is now ROML – Romance and Modern Languages. As a result of that division, it is now possible to get a degree in Spanish at Stockton. A degree in French is in the works.

When we sent out 500+ questionnaires last fall, 78 of you responded. The figures below show a tabulation of alumni careers:

Business 16 Computing 3 Creative Writing 3 Education 28 Elementary 6 Secondary 20 Higher 2 Law 2
Public Relations 4 Publishing/Journalism 10 Religion 2 Social Work 3

Alumni who have obtained/are working on advanced Degrees 19

If you did not respond to the questionnaire and would like to be included, write to Tom Kinsella or go to the following address and fill out the form:

<http://loki.stockton.edu/~ken/litt/littmajors.htm>

Finally, we have just over 200 majors in the Program.

Some Final Thoughts

We really want to hear from you so contact us and tell us what is happening in your life. We want you to know that we are proud of what you are doing and what you have done. We also want you to know that we keep changing, that we are not resting on our achievements. We believe that just because you have graduated doesn't mean that the connections between us are severed – we are here to help in whatever ways we can.

Keep in touch and take care of yourselves.

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