

THE CHRONICLE



*A Newsletter for the Department of English and Foreign
Languages at Texas Southern University/February 2005*

First thoughts...

Let America be America again.

Let it be the dream it used to be.

From "Let American Be American Again," Langston Hughes

Upcoming McCleary Symposium:

The Age of Ralph Ellison:

Examining the Man and his Art

The 2005 J. Marie McCleary Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Arts, sponsored by the Department of English and Foreign Languages, will be held March 31-April 1 at Texas Southern University. This year's symposium focuses on the "The Age of Ralph Ellison: Examining the Man and his Art." The conference, chaired by Dr. Shirley Walker Moore, will highlight the literary achievements, historical presence, social impact, and life of the famed American artist. Presentations that incorporate arts such as music, painting, drama, and film are also encouraged in order to maintain the interdisciplinary scope of the symposium. Papers are limited to only 20-minute presentations. This year's two-day program promises to offer one of the best line ups of scholarly papers to be presented. The symposium will be attended by scholars from universities in

Houston and Texas, as well as other parts of the United States and abroad.

This is the seventh annual J. Marie McCleary Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Arts. The conference will be held at the campus of Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas. Selected papers will also be eligible for publication in an electronic edition of the conference's proceedings.

The deadline for proposals and abstracts is February 28, 2005. You are encouraged to submit your letters of interest early on as time slots for presentations are limited. Proposals and abstracts should be sent to Dr. Shirley Walker Moore at moore_sw@tsu.edu or x7652.

Standards Finalized For Freshman Composition

Standards for freshman English composition have been formulated. The Freshman English Standards Committee for English 131 and 132—comprised of Dr. Shirley Walker Moore, Dr. Michael Sollars, Dr. Ronald Samples, and Professor Billy Turner—has developed specific criteria for advancing excellence in student writing and grammar skills for students enrolled in the first and second semester courses of English composition. The committee, working in concert with faculty teaching freshman English, has developed a detailed document that chronicles criteria such as the minimum number of compositions assigned, vocabulary requirements, essay grading standards, a common Department final, and other criteria. The committee, while recognizing that instructors have long had their individual standards in place in the classroom, has supplemented and strengthened the instructor's existing class performance criteria through a unified set of standards. The specific standards have been distributed to all Department faculty.

These Department specifications are important for a variety of reasons. First, such guidelines communicate to all students what is expected of them by both the instructor and the Department. Second, these standards in student performance are shared by both individual instructors and the Department. The backing of the Department gives definitive support to the instructor's classroom pedagogy. Third, these benchmarks maintain uniformity across all English 131 and 132 sections, a policy required by the University. Finally, such standards communicate to the University at large that the Department expects and strives to fulfill a high level of excellence in grammar and writing performance by students. In all, the need for a set of spell-out standards is necessary to assist students in performing at their optimum level of learning. Department Chair Shirley Walker Moore provided the incentive and support for the committee to spearhead the development of these freshman English standards. Dr. Sollars acted as chair of the committee.

“Salvation” Available, Too, In the Writing Clinic

A video production of Langston Hughes' "Salvation" is now available in the resource library housed in the MJM Writing Clinic. The 55-minute story offers an enhancement to the narrative excerpt from Hughes' autobiography *The Big Sea* taught by many instructors in ENG 131 and 132. The video is available in both DVD and VHS formats, thanks to Thomson/Heinle publishers.

Washington's *A Doll's House* Plays at TSU

A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen featuring the University Players was ably presented at TSU Playhouse, December 2-4, 2004, under the expert direction of Gladys Washington, faculty emeritus of the Department of English and Foreign Languages. Although written in the late nineteenth century, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* continues to fascinate audiences. Its appeal for theatre-goers as well as for actors and directors is perhaps attributable to its very modern theme—the rights of women. In an age when women's rights were practically non-existent, this play centers on a seemingly docile and submissive housewife who ultimately finds the courage to face the realities of her life with a selfish, cowardly, and domineering husband and the strength to leave both him and her house in order to find herself and to make her own way in the world.



A Doll's House is seen by many as heralding the beginning of the women's liberation movement, although Ibsen, himself, denied this. Having been invited to speak at a banquet of the Norwegian League for Women's Rights, he disclaimed "the honor of having consciously worked for the women's right's movement," but added, "It is desirable to solve the women problem...but that has not been my whole purpose." Consciously or unconsciously, however, with this play, Ibsen has made a very significant contribution to the cause of women's liberation

The Fine Arts Department's recent production of *A Doll's House*, was expertly performed by the University Players. Gaelika Brown was magnificent as the docile but slyly cunning "doll wife" of Torvald Helmer; and Telaney Thompson was especially convincing in the role of Torvald, the benevolently dictatorial husband. Dr. Rank, Torvald's ailing friend who is secretly in love with Nora, was sensitively portrayed by Temesgen Torcuray; and William Lacy was effectively menacing as Krogstadt, Nora's blackmailer and persistent tormentor. As Mrs. Linde, Nora's long-time friend and confidante, Jody Harden gave a truly outstanding performance. Occasional flashes of humor were provided by Helene, the faithful but sometimes saucy maid played by Shundraieka Ross.

Letters to the Editor

As one of the faculty advisors of the Hispanic Student Association on campus at TSU, I want to thank the Department of English and Foreign Languages for organizing the Symposium on the “Day of the Dead,” held this past November. It was our pleasure to participate in the symposium. Making TSU culturally aware of our customs is one of the goals of the Hispanic organizations. The article regarding this event in your December newsletter was well written. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance in the future.

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Cruise to Raise Funds

Brings Many Rewards

Professor Melba Johnson was recently recognized for her invaluable work in overseeing the College of Liberal Arts and Behavioral Sciences’ first annual fund raising cruise. The collegiate program—a four-hour afternoon ocean festivity that included a gourmet buffet lunch and intoxicating music aboard a luxurious cruise boat—was held on January 17, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The cruise set sail from Kemah, Texas. Professor Johnson was especially applauded during the fund raising outing for her work with Dean Pitre and Associate Dean Fennoyee Thomas on the program’s ticket drive, food service, and entertainment. The Department of English and Foreign Languages highly supported the fund raising cruise through its many tickets purchased. More than 135 tickets were purchased overall by faculty, alumni, and friends of the College of Liberal Arts and Behavioral Sciences to raise funds for scholarships and other worthy programs. Miss Joyce Conerly deserves special recognition for her sale of a large number of tickets as well as her organizational assistance.

The next fundraising program is scheduled for April 8, 2005 at the Ensemble.

New Committee Formed

For Archiving Class Materials

A newly formed committee, the Archives Committee, has been organized within the Department to identify, document, and house materials as aids for course development. Such materials include syllabi, books, reference materials, illustrations, audio-visual tools, and other resources. To contribute materials that are suitable for inclusion in the Department’s archives, please contact one of the following committee members: Professors Billy Turner, Iris Lancaster, and Donna Kilgore Kimble.

Notes and Notables In Foreign Languages

By Dr. Carmen García

The Spanish and French faculty in the Department of English and Foreign Languages had a first meeting this semester on January 12. Some of the items and concerns discussed included the creation of new Departmental syllabi and common final exams in light of new textbooks in the first- and second-year Spanish courses. Faculty in Spanish decided to work for reactivation of the Spanish Honor Society; to promote Sigma Delta Pi among those students who have already taken Spanish literature or culture courses; and to create a new Spanish club. The success of the French club has shown that this type of organization can provide a wealth of opportunities, resources, and camaraderie to students of the Spanish language.

A main concern of the faculty is the status of the Foreign Language Laboratory. It was determined that the requisite software is available but that there is a need for training and technical support to install and maintain the software and equipment for maximum student access and success.

This semester the foreign languages faculty members plan a Spring International Festival. This activity, which will take place after spring break, will give faculty and students the opportunity to share the best of our cultures--food, music, traditions, literature--with the rest of our TSU family.

Professors Marylise Caussinus, Marcel M. Crespil, Tommy G. Erwin, Carmen García, Antonio Gonzalez, and Yanina Hernandez of the Department of English and Foreign Languages at TSU participated in "El Día de la Familia," a festival organized by the Mexican Institute of Greater Houston in partnership with Tecnológico de Monterrey, Houston Independent School District, Houston Community College, Univision 45, Telefutera 67, and Univision Radio on January 30, at the Arabia Shrine Center. The event received intensive media coverage and was attended by over 2000 people. It provided a wonderful opportunity to share brochures, information, and promotional items detailing the programs and majors in French and Spanish at TSU to this important segment of our society.

Special thanks go to Professors Michael Sollars and Arbolina Jennings for providing professional looking four-color promotional brochures that detail the programs for majors in French and Spanish at TSU.

Publications:

News & Opportunities

Dr. Michael Sollars is the editor of the work in-progress *Twentieth Century World Novels and Novelists* to be published in 2006 by Facts on File, a New York publisher of printed and on-line research books and information. The volume will contain more than 200 novelists and 300 novels in the twentieth century originally written in a language other than English but subsequently translated into English. Individual entries for the *Twentieth Century World Novels and Novelists* will be written by contributing scholars. If you would like to be considered as a contributor to this research text, contact Dr. Sollars at x7654 or sollars-md@tsu.edu.

Dr. Keith Jardim's collection of stories, *In the Atlantic Field*, is being represented by the Wager literary Agency in Los Angeles. Dr. Jardim is at work on a novel, *The Island Reclaimed in a City to the North*, and has work forthcoming in *The Journal of Caribbean Literatures*.

The five-volume *Encyclopedia of Multiethnic Literature*, edited by Emmanuel Nelson, is scheduled for publication by Greenwood Press in late 2005. The work contains biographical entries by Arbolina L. Jennings, Donna Kilgore Kimble, Michael D. Sollars, and Rita Saylor of the Department of English and Foreign Languages.

New Member of TSU Advisory Committee

Dr. Ron Samples has been elected as a representative for the Advisory Committee on the Faculty Manual at TSU, at the Faculty Assembly Meeting, January 13, 2005, following the opening program for the spring semester. The Advisory Committee is a standing committee reconstituted every four years. It is composed of five faculty members selected by the Faculty Assembly and five members appointed by the President of TSU. This committee is responsible for reviewing all recommendations and feedback regarding proposed changes, and employee, administrative, or Board recommendations or legislative changes, which may affect the Manual. Recommendations by this committee for changes to the Faculty Manual must be approved by the Faculty Assembly, the Administration, and the Board of Regents before inclusion in the Faculty Manual.

An American Movement: The Harlem Renaissance

Join Houston's scholars to explore one of America's most historically significant eras and artistically creative periods, the Harlem Renaissance. Rapid socio-economic advances by African Americans and literal explosion of innovative creative arts mark this era. Harlem became the figurative and literal center of the movement, hence the focus of this symposium. First Unitarian Universalist Church is sponsoring this event. A select gathering of Houston's most noted scholars on African American culture will deliver presentations and performances and facilitate discussion on many enlightening topics. Dr. Betty Taylor-Thompson will lecture on March 1. The program runs on seven consecutive Tuesday evenings, from February 8-March 22. Each program begins at 7:00 P.M. and is free to the public. The church is located at 5200 Fannin. Schedule below:

Feb. 8 *Harlem Renaissance, A Historical Perspective* Dr. Cary Wintz, Texas Southern University

Feb. 15 *Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance* Prof. Lorenzo Thomas, University of Houston

Feb. 22 *Langston Hughes: Performance* Dr. Yvonne Kendall, University of Houston

Mar. 1 *Literature and Poetry* Dr. Betty Thompson-Taylor, Texas Southern University

Mar. 8 *Jazz of the Harlem Renaissance* Prof. Howard C. Harris, Jr., Texas Southern University

Mar. 15 *Art of the Harlem Renaissance* Dr. Alvia .T. Wardlaw, Texas Southern University

Mar. 22 *The Black Cultural Movement* Dr. Cary Wintz, Texas Southern University

Conferences & Colloquía

Dr. Shirley Walker Moore will chair a panel discussion at the Southern Conference on American Studies, Inc. in Montgomery, Alabama, February 19. The theme of the conference is "Human Connections: 50 years Since Montgomery."

Dr. Haiqing Sun has had her research work accepted for presentation at the 2005 International Narrative Conference to be held at the University of Louisville, April 7-10. Her paper is entitled "The Genre and the 'Classical': Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and García Márquez's *Chronic of an Announced Death*."

Dr. Michael Sollars has had a paper accepted for presentation at the 2005 Conference of College Teachers of English to be held at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, March 3-6. Dr. Sollars' paper is entitled "Chaos, Composition, and the Classroom."

Members of the Department will take part in a panel discussion at the Arna Bontemps Foundation in April. Panel members led by Dr. Betty Taylor-Thompson include Professors Michon Benson, Iris Lancaster, and Linda Johnson. The title of the panel discussion is "There is Nothing New or Is It?: From Slavery and Folk Literary Traditions to R&B/Rap/Hip-Hop/Traditions." Dr. Taylor-Thompson, who will act as the panel moderator and participant, will deliver a paper on "Oral Traditions and Self Hatred from Slavery to Rap." Professor Benson's topic will be "Emancipating Strategies in Hip-Hop." Professor Lancaster will speak on "Oral Traditions in African American Literature." And Linda Johnson, a TSU graduate with a master's degree in English and a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri, will present a paper entitled "Sister Souljah and Gender Issues." The panel will take place at the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities—Arna Bontemps Foundation, Symposium and Celebration, Alexandria, Louisiana.

As part of Black History Month, the Department of English and Foreign Languages is sponsoring a program featuring the Buffalo Soldiers. The program takes place February 24, 9:30 A.M., in the Sawyer Auditorium. Dr. Shirley Walker Moore is the chair of this annual observance.

BlackBoard Integrates Successfully with Banner

As of January 10, 2005, the TSU Blackboard (Bb) system has been successfully integrated with Banner/TSU Enrollment Management. The site is the same, but the login names and passwords have changed. To access the TSU Blackboard, click on to <http://texsu.blackboard.com>.

The login identification for all users has been generated automatically using information from Banner/Enrollment Management. It consists of the last name + first initial + middle initial + last 4 digits of the social security number. The password is the same as the Banner /EM PIN. Changes in PIN made to Banner/EM will be reflected in Blackboard.

Faculty members get on Banner through the University Registrar as official course instructors before they will have their courses listed on Blackboard. Their course enrollment is automatically populated by the Registrar through Banner, which systematically generates and regularly updates Bb users, class lists, PIN numbers, and e-mail addresses.

Once on Blackboard, instructors will see that their course gives them a *Control Panel* which they will use to manage their courses on the web. Use the *Control Panel/ Settings* to personalize the look of the course and to make the course *Available* to students. The *Control Panel* is also used to add *Announcements* and *Course Content*. Content may be organized into folders or added as discrete objects or attached as files. In the *Course Options* of the *Control Panel*, parts of or whole courses may be copied, exported to the hard drive, imported from another source, archived, and recycled.

The *Assessment* area in the Bb *Control Panel* contains a *Gradebook* listing all students enrolled in the course. Instructors may add or remove grade book items, weigh grades, download grades to an Excel spreadsheet, sort and filter items, and generate course statistics. The *Assessment* section also contains a *Test Manager* where instructors can add a test from a pool, develop a test, or upload questions previously formulated. The test will not be available to students until it is added to the *Content Area*, at which point it will appear as an entry in the *Gradebook*, and when the student takes a test, the test score will appear in the *Gradebook*.

TSU has bought a license for *Respondus*, a test generating company compatible with Blackboard, which will facilitate the process of creating tests that may be easily posted on Blackboard.

Textbook publishers have developed e-learning materials specifically for the Blackboard platform. For example, W.W. Norton has brought together a wealth of general literature resources, available to students and instructors, in one location, Norton Literature Online available to students and instructors. Some resources are book specific, such as those that accompany the *Norton Anthology of World Literature*, the primary texts used in ENG 230 and ENG 231, found at <http://wwnorton.com/nawol/>. The interactive crossword puzzles, one for each unit, are especially interesting. The site is <http://www.wwnorton.com/literature/>.

The Blackboard system allows for the creation of courses outside the regular University semester offerings. Students involved in the English writing lab are utilizing a course called MTM Writing Clinic with Joyce McEwing, director of the clinic, as instructor. Students attending the MTM Writing Clinic are enrolled into this course and they can work on their skills in the laboratory or on Blackboard from any computer on the web.

For freshman English classes, Thomson's WebTutor which accompanies the *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*, has been loaded into the course created for the English skills lab, the MTM Writing Clinic and a pool of fifty tests, including diagnostic and post tests for freshman English has been added to the Assessment section. Instructors of freshman English who wish to have either of these items available in their specific course sections on Blackboard should speak to Joyce McEwing, director of the MTM Writing Clinic, or Arbolina Jennings, Blackboard contact in the Department of English and Foreign Languages.

Monthly Seminars

Encompass Pedagogy

Beginning in January 2005, the Monthly Seminar of the Department of English and Foreign Languages amplified its range to include pedagogy, the collegial sharing of research and best practice examples in the teaching of language, composition, and literature. The presentations are modeled on Dr. Samples' very successful Fall Seminar series which consist of an informal lecture and discussion accompanied by a light lunch. The first of the Spring Faculty Seminars on Pedagogy featured Professor Melba Johnson who led a workshop on the rudiments of cross-grading essay examinations. Professor Johnson brought her expertise in Developmental Education to a calibration session especially designed for instructors of freshman English but valuable to every faculty member who seeks to strengthen the standards of composition assignments. The first seminar was held in the Department Conference Room MLK 111 on Thursday, January 27, during the noon hour and extended to Tuesday, February 1, 2005. Participants were treated to a well-prepared practicum for which Professor Johnson was enthusiastically applauded. Faculty members who would like to present topics this spring are urged to contact Arbolina Jennings or Michon Benson to schedule for February and April.

Meet Our New Colleague

Dr. Ramona Brown has joined the Department. After graduating from Angleton High School in Angleton, Texas, in 1989, she accepted a scholarship to San Antonio College. There she earned recognition in the *Who's Who Among American College Students* anthology, was named to the National Honor Roll, and received the Multicultural Scholarship. In addition, Dr. Brown was then involved in the Black Student Union and won an outstanding member award for her contributions to that organization's newspaper. Dr. Brown then transferred to Alvin Community College as a general studies major, where she made the dean's and other honor lists. The University of Houston was Dr. Brown's last stop in her endeavor to complete a bachelor's degree. She earned a Bachelor's of Arts in English/Language Arts with a minor in knowledge integration. At the University of Houston, she was involved in the creative writing program and was a finalist in a short-fiction writing competition. An important milestone in Dr. Brown's pursuit of higher education came in 2005 when she completed her Ph.D. in English with a concentration in linguistics at the University of North Texas. Dr. Brown's dissertation is on "Ebonics: A Serious Analysis of African-American Speech Patterns." Dr. Brown has joined the Texas Southern University staff as an adjunct instructor for composition and is now working as a full-time instructor. She is honored to be part of this prestigious, historical institution, and she looks forward to serving the needs of her students.

With Chiasmus, Crossed Ideas Make Sense

There is a peculiar form of writing called chiasmus in which crossed ideas turn out sounding pretty clear. Frederick Douglass was the author of one such use of this form of expression. On February 7, 1817, Douglass was born a slave in Tuckahoe, Maryland. He escaped to the north in 1838, changed his name, and settled in Massachusetts. He became a popular spokesman for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, traveling throughout the United States and the British Isles. He also became a successful businessman (the first Black man to own a publishing house), a diplomat (ambassador to Haiti), and the author of three revealing autobiographies (some of the best "slave narratives" ever written). In them, he wrote some of the most famous examples of chiasmus, a crisscross structure used to write aphorisms and other witty expressions:

"You have seen how a man was made a slave,
you shall see how a slave was made a man."

"Men may not get all they pay for in this world,
but they certainly pay for all they get."

On February 9, 1881, Fyodor Dostoevsky died at the age of 59 of a cerebral hemorrhage in St. Petersburg, Russia. With *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *Notes from the Underground*, he became a towering figure in world literature. While the rest of the world around him rushed into the Modern age, Dostoevsky abandoned his earlier atheism and became devoutly religious, believing Russia should become the spiritual leader of the world. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, he wrote chiasmatically:

"It is not miracles that generate faith,
but faith that generates miracles."

Last thoughts...

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home; its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever.

From "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said

The Chronicle, a Newsletter for the Department of English and Foreign Languages, is published twice each semester. To submit information for a future issue of the *Chronicle*, please send your topics and copy to Dr. Michael Sollars. The *Chronicle* results from the efforts of its contributors, writers, and editors, including Shirley Walker Moore, Michael Sollars, Arbolina Jennings, Ron Samples, Martha Wood, Haiqing Sun, Carmen Garcia, Keith Jardim, Donna Kimble, and Gladys Washington.