

# THE CHRONICLE



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

## **First thoughts...**

*It had been startling and disappointing to me to find out that story books had been written by people, that books were not natural wonders, coming up of themselves like grass. --Eudora Welty, whose mother was a school teacher, learned to love books even before she was able to read them.*

## **Intercultural Fest Rings With Resounding Success**

TSU's faculty and students in French and Spanish hosted a special intercultural event April 25. The Intercultural Fest offered lectures, dance, music, food, and other experiences to highlight the importance of multiculturalism at TSU and around the globe. The festival featured Lila Vernon, a cultural singer from the country of Belize, and traditional Mexican music by the group Mariachi Continental. French and Latin musical presentations by students Bernard Pierre, Valeria Ross, Joey Jones, and Shana Thomas were particularly well received. Program moderators included Dr. Marylise Causinus, Professor Yanina Hernandez, Dr. Haiqing Sun, and Professor Anna Barrett. Professor Tommy Erwin delivered closing remarks. Recognition is also extended to Dr. Marcel Crespil and Dr. Carmen Garcia. Hearty congratulations go out to all students and faculty who worked long hours to prepare for the highly educational and entertaining program. Attendance by faculty and students at the Intercultural Fest was impressive.

## **Committee Reports And Assignments**

Members of the Department's Hiring Committee including Shirley Walker Moore, Thorpe Butler, Betty Taylor-Thompson, Ronald Samples, Rita Saylor, Michael Sollars, and Billy Turner have been assigned the responsibility of hiring a full professor and an assistant professor in English. Dr. Moore will work with the Spanish and French faculty in determining future possible hirings in the area of languages.

Dr. Thorpe Butler, chair of the Department's Library Committee, has made available a detailed assessment of the TSU Robert James Terry Library's resources and facilities, a review carried out by Collegis at the request of Dr. Richard Pitre. Collegis' assessment places particular emphasis on the library's present and future use of technology. To review this assessment, contact Dr. Butler at [Butler\\_ta@tsu.edu](mailto:Butler_ta@tsu.edu). Dr. Butler also reports that off campus Internet access to the TSU Library, while not yet effective, is expected to be active by the fall 2005 semester.

## **Highlights Of Conferences & Symposia**

The Department of English and Foreign Languages was well represented by Drs. Shirley W. Moore and Ron C. Samples this year at the 26<sup>th</sup> annual gathering of the Southern Conference of African American Studies, Incorporated (SCAASI), held in Montgomery, Alabama, February 17-19. Dr. Moore chaired a session on "Post Montgomery African American Literature" and served as a judge for the Butler Essay Contest, the annual undergraduate contest in written composition. Dr. Samples chaired a session on "Post Montgomery and Diaspora Black Literature" and presented a paper on "The Myth of Pathology in *Oedipus the King*." Tours of Tuskegee Institute and Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, the organizational site of the 1960 Montgomery bus boycott, complemented the conference experience. Drs. Moore and Samples also visited Alabama State University.

Professors Michon Benson and Kevin Daniels presented papers at the 68<sup>th</sup> annual College Language Association Convention in Athens, Georgia, on April 9, 2005. Professor Benson's presentation, "From the Ride-and-Tie to 'Ryde-or-Die': The Legacy of Emancipating Strategies for Contemporary Hip-Hop Cultural Forms," and Professor Daniel's paper, "The Last Rap Album Ever Made," were extremely well received. CLA is a professional organization of college teachers of English and foreign languages. Founded in 1937 by a group of Black scholars and educators, CLA serves the academic, scholarly and professional interests of its members and the collegiate communities they represent.

Arbolina L. Jennings has had a paper accepted by the South Central Modern Language Association (SCMLA) to be presented at its annual meeting. The study, "Re-designing Literary Cyber Spaces for Effective E-Learning at Texas Southern University," will be a part of the session entitled Computer Applications in English and Foreign Languages. The SCMLA annual convention will be held October 27-29, 2005, at the Warwick Hotel, Houston, Texas. The convention theme is "Literary Spaces."

Donna Kilgore-Kimble served as a panelist at the First Annual Blueprint Conference sponsored by ENHANCE, through the Department of Sociology, on April 8, 2005. Her topic looked at "The Influence of Hip Hop Music and Culture on Today's Youth."

Ms. Kilgore-Kimble also was interviewed on *Pan-African Journal* on KPFT, 90.1 FM, on Sunday, April 10, 2005. Her presentation focused on the role of poetry, its relevance to and influence on people of the Diaspora, from North and South America and the Caribbean to Africa. She discussed early poets such as Phillis Wheatley, and read Harlem Renaissance and Negritude poets as well as modern writers such as Melvin Tolson and Maya Angelou.

Dr. Michael Sollars presented a paper on “Chaos, Composition, and the Classroom” at the Conference of College Teachers of English of Texas (CCTE), held March 3-5, 2005, at Baylor University. Drs. Rita Saylor and Thorpe Butler attended the popular conference and were on hand to hear keynote speaker Stanley Fish from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

## **Praises For Black Colleges**

Judith Boswell Griffie published a book of inspirational poems, *Stardust on my Face: Affirmations for Children*, in 1996. “My main goal is to inspire, encourage,” she says. “I want my words to be a blessing.” She sings many praises for Black colleges:

“A Black College is not so much a place to go as it is a place to grow. It is not so much a social place as it is a sacred place.”

“A Black College is not so much a place to become independent as it is a place to learn mutual dependence.”

“A Black College is more than a place to be on your own; it is a place to be your best.”

## **McCleary Scholarship Fund Deadline**

The J. Marie McCleary Scholarship fund, named in honor of the well-respected professor and chair of the Department of English and Foreign Languages from 1955 to 1979, was established in March 2001 to offer awards to deserving undergraduate or graduate majors in English or Foreign Languages. Applicants must have earned six credits of upper division courses with a grade of B or better or at least six credits of graduate work in good standing. Complete eligibility and award details are available in Martin Luther King Center 106. Applications must be submitted no later than thirty days prior to the first day of classes of the semester for which the award is requested.

## **Who’s Who At TSU**

Professor Angela Bisong has been nominated to be honored in *Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers*. Professor Bisong was selected to be included in this book compilation of outstanding educators because she has “made a difference” in the lives of her students. Students help to nominate those who are recognized in the publication.

Professor Iva J. Woods has been nominated again to be honored in *Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers*. Her name will appear in the eighth edition of the compendium of outstanding educators. This is Professor Woods’ second nomination to the prestigious publication. Only five percent of the nation’s teachers are honored in each edition of *Who’s Who* and less than two percent are included in more than one edition.

# THE AGE OF RALPH ELLISON: EXAMINING THE MAN AND HIS ART

The Minerva Literary Association under the auspices of the Department of English and Foreign Languages held the 2005 J. Marie McCleary Interdisciplinary Symposium on The Age of Ralph Ellison: Examining the Man and his Art. The program took place at TSU, March 31-April 1. This year's program drew the largest number of presenters from outside of Houston and Texas in the history of the conference. Presenters traveled to TSU from as far away as Nova Scotia and California. Papers presented research focused on the literary achievements, historical presence, social impact, and life of the famed American artist Ralph Ellison.



Pictured above (l-r) Dr. Callahan, Professor Evelyn Thornton, and Dr. J. Marie McCleary



Pictured above (l-r) Dr. John Callahan and Dr. Shirley Walker Moore

The topic for the 2006 J. Marie McCleary Symposium is **Blues II**.

This year's keynote speaker (pictured left) was Dr. John Callahan, the literary executor to Ellison's estate and the editor of Ellison's unfinished novel *Juneteenth*. Dr. Callahan has published extensively on Ellison's writings and enjoyed a close association with the late author. Dr. Callahan is a humanities professor at Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon. Dr. Shirley Walker Moore deserves recognition for her perseverance in securing Dr. Callahan as the program's speaker. Dr. Moore, originator of the McCleary Symposium, served as this year's program chair. Co-chairs included Dr. Michael Sollars, Dr. Ronald Samples, and Gary Wilkins. Melba Johnson, a member of the program committee, deserves high praise for her sponsorship of the food service for the symposium.

The 2005 McCleary Symposium included presentations that incorporated such various artistic disciplines as music, painting, drama, and film. Of particular note, Dr. John Sapp, current poet laureate for the Department of English and Foreign Languages and chair of the Department of Chemistry, examined Ellison's collection of essays in *Shadows and Acts*. This was the Seventh Annual J. Marie Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Arts. This year's conference was held at the University Museum at TSU.

# THE AGE OF RALPH ELLISON: EXAMINING THE MAN AND HIS ART



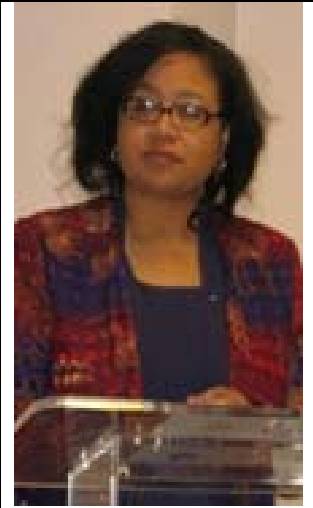
Photos clockwise from above: Dr. John Callahan, Dr. John Sapp, Mario Jenkins, Shana Thomas, Dr. Callahan, Rene Piper, Dr. J. Marie McCleary (retired from TSU), and Dr. Callahan. All photos courtesy of Don Smith



## **Coming in the Fall Issue** ***Faculty and Students Inducted*** ***Into National Literary Society***

The Fall 2005 issue of *The Chronicle* will feature a story on members of the Department of English and Foreign Languages who were recently inducted into Lambda Iota Tau (LIT) Honor Society. Pictured left is Dr. Rhonda Saldivar, TSU's official representative of the honor society, who will announce that Professors Angela Bisong, Thorpe Butler, Arbolina Jennings, and Michael Sollars are new members of the national literary and academic honor society. Student inductees in LIT include Tarius M. Roberts and Neshon P. Jackson.

Photo courtesy of Arbolina Jennings



## **Rediscovering Proust**

At the April meeting of Readers Anonymous, a 30-member luncheon book club in Southwest Houston, Arbolina L. Jennings reviewed *Swann's Way* by Marcel Proust in the new translation by Lydia Davis. This English version affords an opportunity to rediscover the literary work that some consider the greatest of the twentieth century.

*A la recherche du temps perdu* has been read for nearly a century in the venerable translation of Scott Moncrief as *Remembrance of Things Past*, with its focus on rumination and memory. The recent translation, an on-going project involving multiple translators, is now entitled *In Search of Lost Time*, with its more accurate emphasis on the internal odyssey of the individual amid the devastation and losses of the present for the wonder of the past.

The accomplishment in this book in the guise of a meditative autobiography is the self-realization of the artist and the creation of the work of art, *In Search of Lost Time*, which has attained a resonance almost unique in 20<sup>th</sup> century literature.

In several essential ways Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* shares this quality with the *oeuvre* of Marcel Proust. Both texts are in the form of autobiographies though they are clearly fictional modernist constructs. Both texts are structured similar to a musical composition with overture, motifs, and myriad variations upon themes. Both writers are in search for an identity reflective and refractive of their own very specific place and time in history, and in the case of both writers, the novels that result are emblematic of modern man's struggle for meaning, vision, and permanence.

## **Catalogue Changes** **Coming Fall 2005**

Two new courses, a senior capstone course in English and a course in women's studies, are among the additions to the Undergraduate Bulletin to be effective in the fall 2005.

ENG 432 English Capstone Seminar is described as a culmination of baccalaureate work and

preparation for further work in academic or nonacademic environments. Students work with advisors and mentors in their fields on a capstone project in order to demonstrate mastery of research, writing, editing, and documentation skills. Students also prepare a portfolio of critical essays, and they review literary history and major literary works in preparation for the state-mandated exit exam. This exam is a part of the course. The English Capstone Seminar is required for graduation for all English majors who enroll at TSU beginning Fall 2005, but students who have enrolled prior to that date are strongly encouraged to take the course.

Africana Womanism is a course to be added to the women's studies curriculum. English 440 will be used for that course since the Department already has an English 441 for African American Fiction and Criticism. This course is described as the study of Africana women's literature throughout Africa and the African Diaspora.

## Writing Goes To the Blackboard

This semester for the first time, the Minnie T. Metters Writing Clinic has been offered through the Blackboard (Bb) platform. This means that students can access the learning activities in the Writing Clinic (MLK Center 252) as well as from a computer at any remote location.

Through the course, twenty-eight units are available and correspond to the problem areas that most beginning writers encounter. Each unit follows a simple format: (1) background study or tutorials, (2) learning activities on which the students must score 80% or better, and (3) a writing proficiency designed to give students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the skill(s) studied.

Once a student registers in the Clinic, the Writing Clinic coordinator enrolls him or her into the Bb course, at which point the MTM Writing Clinic Bb course appears in the student's My Courses listing on Blackboard. Registered students use their Bb username and university password to access the course.

The student's diagnostic test results serve as the basis for an analysis sheet prepared for the student when he enrolls in the Clinic. This sheet shows the raw score out of 50-objective questions on the diagnostic test and indicates the items missed on the test. The student is then instructed to study all problem areas. Both the tutorials and the learning activities must be completed before the student attempts a writing assignment. Upon successful completion of one unit, the student proceeds to the next unit of study listed on the analysis sheet.

As of the March 18 registration deadline for students to enroll officially in the Writing Clinic, 627 students had registered. Other statistics will be available at the end of the semester.

To view the course, go to <http://texsu.blackboard.com> or the Blackboard Login on the TSU web page and use **studentn1234** as the username and **012605** as the password. Some value-added learning activities are available only to students who have purchased a new copy of the Harbrace Handbook and have a student access code. Some activities can be accessed only in the Writing Clinic. However, all "clickable hot links" can be used by anyone interested in reviewing any content area in grammar, usage, mechanics, and composition. For additional information, contact Writing Clinic Coordinator Joyce J. McEwing at x7981 or x7413.

## **French Student Receives Award to Study Abroad**

French students from the Department of English and Foreign Languages represented TSU during the cross-university, city-wide Léonardon-Magnin scholarship contest, sponsored by l'Alliance Francaise de Houston, held this past February.

Mary Muturi, a sophomore, was awarded a \$3,700 scholarship in the competition to study at a French university this coming summer, according to Drs. Marylise Caussin and Marcel Crespil who worked closely with all students participating in the French language contest. Also of important note is that Christopher Hanson and Marnine Thomas, two other students who represented TSU at the contest, left an excellent impression on jury members. The scholarship committee members regretted that more funds were not available for such deserving students.

In addition to the students' exceptional individual performances, it is important to underline the special team spirit existing between the TSU students and their French professors. Of the five Houston universities represented at the city-wide competition this past winter, Drs. Caussin and Crespil were the only professors present to support their students. This is but one of the many added steps taken by these professors to make a success of this great opportunity. Dr. Caussin and Crespil, despite busy schedules, selected the candidates, helped students complete their applications, reviewed the student essays, and organized many training sessions to coach the TSU candidates for their interviews during the competition.

The work of the professors is not completed. According to Dr. Caussin, there remains much to do in the way of determining for winner Ms. Muturi the most appropriate French-based language program, finalize travel and accommodations, and organize the administrative aspect of the trip with the French Consulate.

"We gladly envisage the future of our French program as we are confident in our other students' abilities. We believe that this scholarship is the first one in a long series of student achievements," says Dr. Caussin.

## **Second Annual Creative Writing Festival**

NuRoots Creative Writers, under the joint auspices of the Department of English and Foreign Languages and the Communications Department, will present its second annual spring creative writing festival on Saturday, May 7, 2005, from 2-5 P.M. in the MLK Auditorium. Student members of the group will present short stories and poetry. A reception will follow in MLK 111. Please plan to attend to support our budding artists. For more information, contact Donna Kilgore-Kimble.

## **Women's History Luncheon Features Ohio State Speaker**

The 2005 Women's History Luncheon, held March 10 and sponsored by Dean Merline Pitre, featured historian Stephanie Shaw, Ph.D., professor of history, Ohio State University. Her topic was "Grandmothers, Granny Women, and Old Aunts in the Antebellum Slave Communities." Committee members from the Department of English and Foreign Languages included Melba Johnson, Shirley Walker Moore, Donna Kilgore-Kimble, and Rita Saylor.

## **The Leading Edge: Instructional Technology Moves Ahead in the Department**

Instructional Technology is rapidly becoming a part of the courses, the laboratories, and the organizations of the Department of English and Foreign Languages. As of January 2005 the Minnie Metters Writing Clinic, housed in MLK 252, has become accessible on line through a course created on Blackboard. In addition, the majors in the Department now are part of a Bb organization, which will serve as a digital bulletin board, document source, and discussion forum for those students specializing in English, French, or Spanish.

The new senior Capstone Course in the Department is being developed by a team of specialists in the Department headed by Dr. Rita Saylor. The aim of the group is to package in an e-learning format lectures, study guides, and bibliographies which will aid major students to prepare for examinations and research a senior project. In addition, students in the capstone course will produce an e-portfolio of their best work.

In Spring 2005, English faculty have 30 courses available on Blackboard, and a dozen of those courses provide extensive interactive materials for students on line. The reaction from students has been extremely favorable. They cite the ability to access their materials and assignments at will, to submit their assignments remotely, and to keep up with their performance on Bb assessments in the grade book an asset to classroom learning.

Instructors and students are looking forward to the next steps, the 24/7 availability of the Help Desk, library research on line, and universal TSU e-mail for students. These services will facilitate the two-way communication which is pivotal for Blackboard effectiveness. For more information, contact Arbolina Jennings at [jennings\\_al@tsu.edu](mailto:jennings_al@tsu.edu).

## **The Secret of Remorse**

### ***Fyodor Dostoevsky***



**Father Zossima had already noticed** in the crowd two glowing eyes fixed upon him. An exhausted, consumptive-looking, though young, peasant woman was gazing at him in silence. Her eyes besought him, but she seemed afraid to approach.

“What is it, my child?”

“Absolve my soul, Father,” she articulated softly and slowly, sank on her knees and bowed down at his feet. “I have sinned, Father. I am afraid of my sin.”

The elder sat down on the lower step. The woman crept closer to him, still on her knees.

“I am a widow these three years,” she began in a half-whisper, with a sort of shudder. “I had a hard life with my husband. He was an old man. He used to beat me cruelly. He lay ill; I thought looking at him, if he were to get well, if he were to get up again, what then? And then the thought came to me—”

“Stay!” said the elder, and he put his ear close to her lips.

The woman went on in a low whisper, so that it was almost impossible to catch anything. She had soon done.

“Three years ago?” asked the elder.

“Three years. At first I didn’t think about it, but now I’ve begun to be ill, and the thought never leaves me.”

“Have you come from far?”

“Over three hundred miles away.”

“Have you told it in confession?”

“I have confessed it. Twice I have confessed it.”

“Have you been admitted to Communion?”

“Yes. But I am afraid. I am afraid to die.”

“Fear nothing and never be afraid; and don’t fret. If only your penitence fail not, God will forgive all. There is no sin, and there can be no sin on all the earth, which the Lord will not forgive to the truly repentant! Man cannot commit a sin so great as to exhaust the infinite love of God. Can there be a sin that would exceed the love of God?”

Think only of repentance, continual repentance, but dismiss fear altogether. Believe that God loves you as you cannot conceive; that he loves you with your sin, in your sin. It has been said of old that over one repentant sinner there is more joy in heaven than over ten righteous men.

“Now go, and fear not. Be not bitter against men. Be not angry if you are wronged. Forgive the dead man in your heart what wrong he did you. Be reconciled with him in truth. If you are penitent, you love. And if you love, you are of God. All things are atoned for all things are saved by love.

If I, a sinner even as you are, am tender with you and have pity on you, how much more will God. Love is such a priceless treasure that you can redeem the whole world by it, and expiate not only your own sins but the sins of others.”

---from *The Brothers Karamazov*

**Final Thoughts...**

*We must carry the arts to the people,  
Not wait for the people to come to the arts.*

---Arthur Mitchell, founder of the Dance Theatre of Harlem

*The blues is an art of ambiguity, an assertion of the irrepressibly human over all  
circumstances, whether created by others or by one's own human failing.*

---Ralph Ellison

*Real life, life at least laid bare and illuminated—the only life in consequence which can be said to  
be really lived—is literature, and life thus defined is in a sense all the time immanent in ordinary  
men no less than in the artist.*

---Marcel Proust

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