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College of Humanities and the Arts

Summer 2015

Expressions, Summer 2015

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Vol.7 Summer 2015

Featured Stories



Hammer 2.0

Developing the Hammer Theatre Initiative

After nine months of public process that included numerous meetings, discussions, and brainstorming sessions about the beloved iconic blue box on the Paseo de San Antonio, in June 2015 the San José City Council unanimously endorsed SJSU's proposal to operate the Hammer Theatre Center for the next three years.

Known to many of you simply as the Rep, the San José Repertory Theatre was founded in 1980. Its sudden closing last year created a blight on the downtown area and an economic hardship that affected local businesses, particularly those that depended on theatre patrons.

At SJSU, we are excited about the possibilities that come with reactivating the Hammer Theatre Center with dynamic, diversified programming. We are working to build a Collaborative for Arts, Innovation, and Technology to revitalize San José by expressing the ideas and creativity inherent in Silicon Valley. This represents an opportunity for the College of Humanities and the Arts to take the lead, and help the campus become more embedded in the downtown community. With a commitment to the downtown arts scene and a framework for asking all faculty, staff, and students to imagine how they can participate in the Collaborative for Arts, Innovation, and Technology, we believe that we are poised to take SJSU's artistic and cultural programming to new levels.

The contract with the city should be signed by the end of September, after which we will continue to work with the city to improve the facility and build programming ideas to help activate the theatre and surrounding outdoor spaces. Hammer 2.0 meetings are taking place regularly on campus. You can sign up for updates and learn more about theatre use and activation on the [Hammer 2.0 website](#).

"It is an exciting and unique opportunity for the city, the arts community, and our campus community. We are very pleased to be able to be a part of this wonderful effort," noted Interim Vice President for Administration and Finance Josee Laroche. Here in the College of Humanities and the Arts, we are already looking toward the Hammer's future opportunities for programming which will revitalize downtown, bringing patrons and artists back together inside their beloved blue box.

Featured Stories



The Disasters of War

80 Goya Etchings on Exhibit at SJSU's Natalie and James Thompson Gallery

He worked clandestinely to document the atrocities of the war raging around him. Goya was serving as a court painter to the Spanish monarchy when the country was invaded by Napoleon. Although he was 62, nearly deaf and in poor health, he kept up his printmaking through the year-long starvation of Madrid when the city was under siege by French forces. The artist worked for the next ten years to create his subversive works until he began to run out of copper for plates. But before this shortage happened, Francisco de Goya amassed his secret collection of 80 aquatint etchings that stand as a sobering testament to the ravages of war. The images of *Los Desastres de la Guerra* depict an unromantic record of the scenes he saw around him as a result of this conflict, and the collection is grouped into three categories: war, famine, and political and cultural allegories.

Although Goya's livelihood was earned primarily through painting portraits of nobility, he turned to the dark shadows and shades of etching for his documentary project. Mary Tartaro, interim director of the Natalie and James Thompson Gallery, remarks on the forcefulness of this exhibition: "It's like when I viewed images of the Vietnam War on TV, war reporting that was so graphic and powerful."

Art historians are unclear what Goya's ultimate intentions were for the etchings, but they were considered so incendiary that they weren't published until 35 years after his death. Our only direct link to the painter's thoughts are the captions he wrote for the prints, with titles like the straightforward *Escapan entre las llamas* (*They escape among the flames*) depicting men and women fleeing a burning city, to the enigmatic *No quieren* (*They do not want to*) showing an elderly woman preparing to stab a soldier who's attacking a young woman. This latter print depicts a scene that afflicted many during Goya's lifetime: women raped by the invading army.

The San José community will experience Goya's prints thanks to the combined efforts of several entities: the exhibition was curated by Janis Tomlinson from the University of Delaware; it's on loan from Pomona College Museum of Art; and it will be displayed at our campus gallery thanks to the generous endowment of Natalie and James Thompson. On November 3, during the closing week of the show, the College's dance program will perform a choreographed response to the artist's vision.

These devastating images created by Goya two centuries ago serve as a powerful reminder to current generations about the price of war.

Los Desastres de la Guerra is on display at the Natalie and James Thompson Gallery September 1 through November 6; the exhibition is free and open to the public. For more details visit the [gallery's website](#).

by Cathleen Miller

Featured Stories



Dave Eggers' *The Circle* Comes to Campus

"Privacy is theft." So declares Mae Holland as she succumbs to the notion of wearing a real-time video camera to prove her "transparency" as the public is able to view her all day long. Mae is the protagonist in Dave Eggers' novel [*The Circle*](#), a futuristic saga of employee life with the world's most powerful internet company set on a sprawling California campus... a tale that seems eerily familiar.

And for this reason SJSU's [Campus Reading Program](#) chose *The Circle* as this year's selection. According to the program's director, Scot Guenter, "Aside from being a compelling narrative, *The Circle* rose to the top of the 2015 list in part because it is set in Silicon Valley, in the near future, and imagines some startling and transformative advances in social media and technology, and as a result, daily life and interaction, that the committee thought would provide lively stimulation for student interest, engagement, and discussion. And besides, those changes, while disseminating from here, are occurring on a global level, in a manner that deserves everyone's scrutiny and reflection."

While the campus community is reading the novel en masse, this opportunity has spawned other types of engagement with the narrative. Professor Jessa Brie Moreno is working on a [stage adaptation](#). She says, "In joining SJSU's TRFT Department last year, I became inspired to develop a student ensemble on devised and co-developed works. Co-created theatrical experiences are empowering, non-hierarchical models that provide a depth of learning and engagement not always accessed by more traditional forms.

"When TRFT Chair David Kahn brought to my attention that the campus-wide novel would be Dave Eggers' *The Circle*, it seemed the perfect piece for such a navigation." Thus Moreno was able to acquire rights to the work and set about creating an adaptation.

Adding another dimension to the stage production will be Professor James Morgan and the students in SJSU's [Game Development Club](#). They will help collaborate by integrating technology into the theatre-going experience.

Campus experts from a variety of disciplines will add rich facets to [the discussion](#) on *The Circle*. As Moreno notes: "We are in the heart of Silicon Valley, and the appeal of landing a job at a leading tech company is real for much of our student body. The protagonist, Mae, is not unlike any self-assured, entrepreneurial young woman, whose ethics come into question as she navigates the meaning of personal success in this environment. *The Circle* stands as a cautionary tale of morality in this age of connectivity, and brings up some real-life questions around how far it will all go. Our production team is already emailing daily articles in the news that mirror concepts in the text. It couldn't be more timely."

Eggers himself wrote about the eerie timeliness of his creation while writing the novel: "A lot of times I'd think of something that a company like the Circle might dream up, something a little creepy, and then I'd read about the exact invention, or even something more extreme, the next day." The [Campus Reading Program](#) website lists all events associated with *The Circle*, so be sure to check there for events in which you can participate! This program is one of many ways that we support our faculty, staff, and students and encourage co-curricular programming that helps to enrich student experiences at SJSU!

by Cathleen Miller

Portraits



Kathleen McSharry

Introducing Associate Dean

Kathleen McSharry

It is with great joy that I announce the arrival of our new Associate Dean, Dr. Kathleen McSharry. Dr. McSharry is an experienced academic leader with expertise in curriculum, assessment, student success, and strategic initiatives related to humanities and the arts. In making this announcement, I also want to thank search committee members Fred Cohen, Scot Guenter, Damian Bacich, Vivi Yang, Connie Hwang, and Elaine Collins, as well as staff liaison Keay Edwards, for their incredible work in running an efficient, effective, and successful search.

Dr. McSharry earned her B.A. in English at the University of California, Berkeley, and master's and doctoral degrees in English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She began her academic career as an instructor of Women's Studies and English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, later serving as an English professor and department Chair at Dana College in Nebraska. She moved to full-time administrative duties at St. Francis University in Pennsylvania, where she administered the general education program and over saw the first-year seminar program.

Before coming to San José State, McSharry served as Associate Dean of the College for Curriculum and Bruce Donovan Dean of Chemical Dependency at Brown University. As Associate Dean of the Curriculum, McSharry worked with 45 academic departments on curricular development, assessment, and evaluation. She also managed first-year and sophomore seminar programs, supervised academic tutoring and writing support initiatives, and directed strategic initiatives housed in the College. In her capacity as Dean of Chemical Dependency, McSharry provided primary academic and emotional support to students recovering from drug and alcohol use disorders, and worked with other offices on campus to establish policies and procedures that ensure a safe learning environment. Her

publications focus on Holocaust pedagogy and standards-based approaches to assessing general education learning outcomes.

Dean McSharry is thrilled to join the College of Humanities and the Arts at San José State University. She looks forward to collaborating with faculty, staff, and students across the University to foster an appreciation of the arts and humanities in the lives of individuals and in the health of communities.

by Lisa Vollendorf

Portraits



Cathleen Miller

Meet the New CLA Director

Considering author [Cathleen Miller](#) has given talks about her own books at venues ranging from the Ford Foundation to the United Nations Foundation to the American International Club of Rome to Cinequest, she is no stranger to the world of literary events.

Now Dean Lisa Vollendorf has named Miller as the new director of the [Center for Literary Arts](#), which hosts readings, discussions, and master classes with writers of exceptional vision and voice. In its 29 years of existence, the CLA has brought to the San José community such literary giants as Ken Kesey, Toni Morrison, Amy Tan, William Styron, Czeslaw Milosz, Seamus Heaney, Bharati Mukherjee, Robert Hass, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Maxine Hong Kingston, Peter Matthiessen, Ursula LeGuin, Allen Ginsberg, George Plimpton, Isabel Allende, Margaret Atwood, Mary Oliver, Grace Paley, Derek Walcott, Paul Theroux, Pat Conroy, Tim O'Brien, Jane Smiley, Sherman Alexie, T.C. Boyle, Michael Ondaatje, Norman Mailer, Oliver Stone, Elmore Leonard, Frances Mayes, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, Joyce Carol Oates, Robert Bly, Alice Walker, David Sedaris, Adrienne Rich, Tony Kushner, Studs Terkel, J.M. Coetzee, ZZ Packer, Junot Diaz, Mary Roach, Denis Johnson, Kim Addonizio, E.L. Doctorow, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Aleksandar Hemon, Dana Gioia, and Neil Gaiman.

"Professor Miller is committed to building on the strong reputation of our Center for Literary Arts," said Dean Vollendorf. "She has the right skill set and track record to make the most of this opportunity for the College, the University, and the broader community."

The Dean's choice of leadership for the CLA was supported by members of our literary community for a variety of reasons. Professor and novelist Nick Taylor, director of SJSU's world-renowned Center for Steinbeck Studies, teaches with Miller in the English Department's MFA Creative Writing Program. He says, "She's a superb public speaker and great at putting on events, so I think those

skills will ensure that CLA functions will be fun and exciting."

"Cathy gives amusing parties full of clever people in her smart apartment," says Mona Onstead, longtime chair of the CLA Board (and herself a noted host). "I expect Cathy will put a unique imprint on the CLA. She's a writer of nonfiction, a woman, and has a special sense of showmanship, so the CLA will continue to flourish under her leadership."

At San José State, Cathleen Miller teaches courses in creative nonfiction and serves as faculty advisor to [Reed](#), SJSU's 148-year-old literary journal. In her own creative output, the author has traveled around the globe to write books telling the stories of people and places. She has interviewed diplomats and heads of state on five continents, patients in an Addis Ababa hospital, rape camp survivors in Kosovo, and midwives in the mountains of East Timor. Her work sometimes places her in strange circumstances, such as cruising St. Petersburg in a Winnebago to interview prostitutes, and running down a Brazilian mountain at midnight fleeing bandits.

Two of her books have made a major impact on the lives of women. The international bestseller *Desert Flower*, the story of activist Waris Dirie, describes the Somali nomad's experience with female genital mutilation. This book's print version has sold 11 million copies in 55 languages, and was later adapted as an [inspiring film](#) with Timothy Spall, Sally Hawkins, and Juliet Stevenson.

Miller's most recent publication, [Champion of Choice](#), is a biography of Dr. Nafis Sadik, who headed the United Nations Population Fund for 30 years. *The London Times* named Dr. Sadik one of the most powerful women in the world, mainly because of her advocacy for female reproductive rights. *Champion of Choice* was named one of the "Top Ten Biographies of 2013" by Booklist. "We read biographies as

Portraits *(continued)*

a blueprint for our own lives,” says Miller. “I realized at a point during my research that interviewing all these heads of state and diplomats was like getting a PhD in leadership and diplomacy.” No doubt these skills will come in handy as she takes over the reins of the CLA.

“One of the things that first prompted me to apply for the job at San José State was learning about this line-up of CLA author events. In the time that I’ve been here, I’ve had conversations with Salman Rushdie, Dorothy Allison, Tobias Wolff, Nick Flynn, Khalid Hosseini, Tim Cahill, and—for god’s sake—Gore Vidal! These are some of the great talents of our time, and an incredible resource for the community. Now, with the University’s acquisition of the Hammer Theatre, we’ll have the perfect downtown venue to host large events. It’s an exciting time to be a part of it all as the CLA heads into its 30th year.”

For a schedule of upcoming events visit the [Center for Literary Arts’ website](#). All fall 2015 events are free and open to the public.

by Scott Winfield Sublett

Portraits



Daniel Susser

Assistant Professor,
Philosophy Department

Becoming a part of the growing technological center that is Silicon Valley is one of the goals of Daniel Susser, the newest faculty member of the Philosophy Department. Delving into the ethical side of engineering and technology, Susser seeks to teach his students to question, clarify, and seek coherence as they study the world around them, while working closely with the students to help them become more engaged citizens.

Susser focuses his research on the philosophy of technology and often is engaged in politics and public policy, counseling and encouraging others to think critically about the ethical implications of proposed policies. Far from the typical philosopher image — aloof, impractical, and speculative — Susser uses his understanding of the world to explore new angles, and advocates for others to do the same as society continues to grow, innovate, and advance.

“I’m passionate about teaching people how to think critically about how we develop and use new technologies,” Susser explains. “My favorite moments in any course are when students call deeply held assumptions into question — when it occurs to them that the most obvious and ordinary things might be otherwise than they had always believed them to be.”

Drawing on his experiences from his studies at George Washington University, Stony Brook University, and his postdoctoral research fellowship at the New York University School of Law, Susser looks forward to working closely with the future designers, developers, and executive members of the tech industry who now study at San José State.

“I love technology,” he admits, “but I also worry about it. My goal is to worry about it rigorously and constructively.”

Outside of his teaching and research, Susser enjoys spending time reading, watching T.V., and spending time with his partner, who works as a philosopher in the nonprofit world. He avidly pursues the CrossFit training regimen and looks forward to the opportunities to explore the outdoors once he has relocated to the area.

by Kaitlynn Magnuson

Portraits



Ryan Skinnell

Assistant Professor and Assistant Writing Program Admin, Department of English and Comparative Literature

Joining San José State's University in fall, 2015, Ryan Skinnell is a rhetoric and composition specialist and a former professor at the University of North Texas. During the course of his studies at UC Santa Barbara, CSU Northridge, and Arizona State University, Skinnell experienced a wide range of environments that helped shape his teaching philosophies and reinforced his love of rhetoric and composition. By joining the San José State faculty, Skinnell hopes to become a part of the energy and momentum that is ever-present on San José State's campus and transmit his enthusiasm to his students, ultimately contributing to his students' achievements.

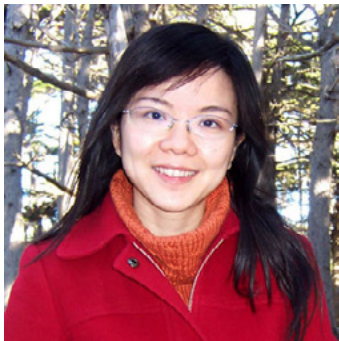
"What I appreciate most about teaching is that it's really hard," Skinnell remarked. "Every time I teach a class — any class — I expect to learn a lot from my students, and I've never been disappointed. I love learning, and I always learn a lot from my students about what I'm teaching.

"As a rhetoric and composition specialist, Skinnell utilizes the complex relationships that exist between writing, argumentation, persuasion, language, and power in order to teach all kinds of students to be better users of language. He enjoys this aspect of his specialization the most and is proud to count himself among those who contribute to the understanding of language's intricacies and nuances.

When Skinnell is not teaching, he's spending time with his spouse and three young daughters. They frequent museums, explore new areas, and eat new foods as often as they can. Now that they are located in the Bay Area, he is excited to add treks to the numerous California beaches and trips to Yosemite to his list of family activities.

by Kaitlynn Magnuson

Portraits



Chunhui Peng

Assistant Professor of Chinese,
Department of World Languages
and Literature

Bringing with her an understanding of human and historical connections, Chunhui Peng adds her expertise to the Department of World Languages and Literature in the fall. Having served as a teaching assistant at the University of California, San Diego, as well as an adjunct lecturer at Southern Methodist University, Peng brings with her an array of teaching experiences and methods to improve student understanding of the human element of language.

“I have many fond memories of working with students at San José State University,” Peng recalls. “I am looking forward to continuing that journey.”

Focusing her Ph.D. research on personal and cultural memory of traumatic historical events in China, Peng tries to highlight the transnational creation of memory and history, and to help students understand this complex relationship. She considers her role in the classroom as a facilitator and attempts to help students achieve their academic goals on their own terms by providing guidance when needed.

“In my teaching, I strive to create an interactive class setting, using various teaching methods to engage students,” Peng explains. “If research is a solo performance, teaching feels like being in a symphony.”

When teaching, Peng refers often to the research noted psychologist Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi conducted on consciousness, collectively summed up as “flow,” which is a state in which concentration or complete absorption by an activity occurs. She encourages students to achieve this optimal state when working, so that they derive greater happiness and understanding from the work they are doing. This philosophy also aids in her comprehension of her own research and enables her to continually grow as she joins the SJSU faculty in the fall.

by Kaitlynn Magnuson

Portraits



Britt Juleen

Assistant Professor of Dance,
School of Music and Dance

Adding her unique international perspective to the School of Dance is Britt Juleen, the newest assistant professor of dance. Having begun her teaching profession after an eighteen-year performing career as a soloist ballet dancer in The Netherlands and Germany, she offers a wealth of real-world experiences to her students as she introduces them to the world of dance.

“What I enjoy most about teaching is discovering the unique individual voice that lives inside each and every one of my students,” Juleen added. “I honor learning from all of my students.”

Having recently completed her Master of Fine Arts in dance through Hollins University with an international residency at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Frankfurt, Germany, Juleen looks forward to sharing with her students her European direction and experience with in the dance world. She also brings a certain understanding and discernment gained from her time teaching at Alonzo King LINES Ballet at Dominican University as well as her involvement with the teen and youth program at ODC Dance Company in San Francisco.

Now a part of the dance program vision of Dr. Fred Cohen and Associate Professor Heather Cooper, Juleen hopes to combine her talent with that of existing faculty in order to expand and grow the program.

“My love of dance has been transformative. Sharing this passion with students, colleagues, and the greater community at San José State University will be an enriching opportunity.”

Juleen derives her teaching methods from a belief that the consciousness of the human artist exists inside the body and that this consciousness desires to express itself through classical dance. Her curriculum integrates an experiential, anatomy-based approach to classical ballet training that allows students to explore the mechanics of movement. In this way, students develop their senses, and their artistry is then refined based on this sense of knowledge of body and feeling. This offers endless opportunities for students to evolve and thrive throughout their training.

by Kaitlynn Magnuson

Portraits



Adam Shiverdecker

Assistant Professor, Department of Art and Art History

Pursuing his passions to the Silicon Valley, Adam Shiverdecker is the newest faculty member to join the Department of Art and Art History. Having taught previously at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, University of West Florida, and University of Toledo, Shiverdecker brings a wealth of practical skill to enhance the learning of San José State University students. He is also an accomplished spatial artist, focusing on ceramics and structural forms in his own work.

Shiverdecker is excited to join the San José State faculty and to be a part of a region that cultivates creative solutions to difficult problems while encouraging innovation. The fields of visual art and ceramics have long been considered effective methods of critical inquiry, and Shiverdecker brings a variety of skills he acquired through his experiences in the field. He hopes to add to the study of innovative approaches to ceramics, a tradition that has been promoted by Stan Welsh, a retiring San José State faculty member greatly admired by Shiverdecker.

“I enjoy building upon existing methods, skills, and frameworks for discovery, and I find that the classroom is an excellent device for that,” Shiverdecker elaborated. “I also enjoy cultivating a community that responds to challenges with thoughtful and engaged responses.”

Drawing upon his training from The University of Toledo, where he earned his B.Ed., as well as from his M.F.A. studies in studio art at the University of South Carolina, Shiverdecker seeks to expand the techniques and ideas of his future students. His practical experience as the Studio and Fabrications Manager of Greenwich House Pottery in New York City enables him to give students a glimpse into what it is like to be a practicing artist in today’s society and also address some of the challenges they might face.

“Take risks and make good work,” Shiverdecker advises, and he strives to incorporate this philosophy into his daily life. Even when he is not in the classroom, Shiverdecker adapts to wherever he is, having lived in Ohio, South Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New York over the course of his career. Adjusting to California is but one new step as he continues to create and make his visions come to life through his ceramic art.

by Kaitlynn Magnuson

Portraits



Funie Hsu

Assistant Professor of American Studies,
Department of Humanities

Focusing her studies on the relationship between the United States education system and the concept of the American empire, Funie Hsu brings her unique perspective to San José State University as she joins the Department of Humanities faculty in the fall. Eager to take part in the collaborative spirit that thrives between students and faculty, Hsu brings with her a love of teaching that stems from her time as an elementary school teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Now firmly entrenched in the world of academia, Hsu strives to explain and demonstrate how oppression has been structured into the American social and educational systems, as well as emphasize the historical development of inequality, race, and systems of power. She seeks to impart this knowledge to her students in order to improve understanding of the complex systems and to work towards creating more liberatory social systems for the future.

“The process of mutual learning and growth through teaching is invaluable,” Hsu elaborated. “I also view it as an important way to be of service to the broad community and to build new possibilities for social justice.”

Hsu believes that the goal of education is to improve the lives of others, leaving the community and the world in a better state — a philosophy derived from Marian Wright Edelman, a children’s rights activist. She takes great pride and joy in her academic work and is looking forward to the wealth of interesting and rigorous research that is happening at San José State.

In addition to her academic pursuits, Hsu enjoys practicing martial arts and watching films. She also loves spending time with animals, including her senior cat, Babie. She looks forward to bringing her expertise and experience with her as she takes on the new challenges that San José State presents.

by Kaitlynn Magnuson

Portraits



Tova Cooper
Assistant Professor,
Department of Humanities

Coming to San José State University from the University of South Florida in Tampa, Tova Cooper is one of the newest faculty members in the Department of Humanities. Having studied at UC Berkeley, Columbia University, and UC Irvine during her own academic career, Cooper brings a wealth of experience and a love of teaching that finds expression in her dedication to her students. She enjoys being in the classroom, experiencing moments where students become animated and engaged first hand; in doing so, she learns as much from her students as her students do from her.

“As an educator, I thrive on creating an atmosphere where students can make connections between ideas they did not previously see as connected and articulate those ideas both in class and in writing,” Cooper elaborates. “To me, the ability to make and articulate such connections is one of the most valuable characteristics of critical thinking.”

Cooper’s academic interests include literature, history, education, and visual studies, with emphasis on the places in which these areas overlap. She is a published scholar and her most recent book, *The Autobiography of Citizenship: Assimilation and Resistance in US Education*, was published in December, 2014. She is also the author of many articles, including “On Autobiography, Boy Scouts, and Citizenship: Revisiting Charles Eastman’s Deep Woods” and “Zora Neale Hurston and Modernism at the Critical Limit,” both of which explore the boundaries of literature and where literary works intersect with, and are influenced by, historical events.

When not in the classroom, Cooper enjoys creating ceramic art, gardening, hiking, and spending time with her family, which includes her poet laureate husband, Stan Apps, and her two children, Leo and August. She is excited not only to take advantage of the cultural aspects of the Bay Area, but also to enjoy the ample outdoor activities offered by the areas surrounding San José State University.

by Kaitlynn Magnuson

Portraits



Cynthia Baer

Assistant Professor, Department of English and Comparative Literature

First setting foot on San José State University campus in 1977 as an undergraduate freshman, Cynthia Baer has been a proud contributor to the university's Department of English and Comparative Literature for many years. She received both her B.A. and her M.A. in English from San José State, returning to become part of the faculty after she earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of Washington.

"SJSU is my alma mater," Baer explains. "I am here to do for others what so many did for me."

Discovering a community within San José State that fostered intellect and natural curiosity, Baer internalized the core principles of personal discovery and public service that she learned during her time as a student and became determined to pass them to the next generation. Now, she brings her extensive knowledge on Renaissance literature to new students, utilizing the philosophies and mechanisms of Renaissance writers and applying them in the classroom to better serve the campus community. She currently is working to establish the Stretch English program for first year writing and eagerly accepts the challenges such a program brings.

"It is an opportunity to study how we as writing teachers can foster writing for our diverse student body and faculty, bringing forward the best of the past to meet current challenges and maximize current opportunities to make positive change on our campus and in our world."

Adhering to an idea set forward by John Webster, a professor at the University of Washington, that a really top-notch education teaches a person to ask better questions rather than providing answers, Baer seeks to find these questions in both her scholarly and personal life. In the classroom, she enjoys the process of active inquiry, which leads both student and professor to discover new information. Even outside of the classroom, she participates in active discussions about books, reading, and writing with her daughter, a recent CSU Chico graduate, over Sunday breakfast. She relishes the opportunity to pass on these philosophies as she embraces new challenges as an assistant professor in the fall.

by Kaitlynn Magnuson

It's a Dean's Life



It is August again, and we are filled with excitement on campus as we welcome 33,000 students to San José State University. We have seen many changes at the University in the past few months, the most important of which is the arrival of a new interim president. Having recently retired from the presidency at Eastern Michigan University, President Susan Martin has worked in higher education leadership for more than twenty years. You can read more about her [here](#).

President Martin's leadership team at SJSU includes four Vice Presidents: Provost [Andy Feinstein](#) (appointed in 2014), Interim Vice President for Administration and Finance [Josee Larochelle](#) (appointed in 2015), and newly appointed Vice Presidents [Reginald Blaylock](#) and [Paul Lanning](#), both of whom joined the campus in July. This lineup of new leadership already has brought a clear focus to campus-wide efforts to support student success. The future is bright at San José State University!

In the College of Humanities and the Arts, we continue to find new and meaningful ways to support our students, faculty, and staff. I have recently been granted the privilege of helping to lead the University's efforts to operate the Hammer Theatre Center. This is an unprecedented opportunity to expand high-quality arts and culture programming, and to create a destination-worthy artistic facility in downtown San José. The sky is the limit for the opportunities we can create for our students in and around the Hammer!

There will be many opportunities for sponsoring programs, upgrading facilities, and improving technology in the Hammer. We will rely on our wonderful network of supporters, donors, and alumni to ensure success in this partnership. Please stay tuned for updates as the agreement with the city is finalized and we start to activate the facility.

I am pleased to welcome eight new tenured and tenure-track professors to campus this fall. With these new faculty, we are better positioned than ever to help students develop

their creativity, compassion, and critical thinking skills. I also am thrilled to welcome our new Associate Dean, Kathleen McSharry. With more than a decade of experience in higher education administration, Dr. McSharry brings integrity and enthusiasm to the position. You can read more about the talented new members of the College in our [Profiles](#) section.

As you read Expressions and learn more about the accomplishments and dreams of our students, faculty, and staff, I invite you to think about what role you might play in helping to support the Hammer 2.0 efforts. It will take an entire village to make this city-university partnership successful. The College of Humanities and the Arts is at the center of those efforts, but we need our entire community of supporters to help us make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bring an iconic facility back to life while taking educational and artistic excellence to the next level.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Vollendorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Lisa Vollendorf, Dean

News & Congratulations

EVENTS

English & Comparative Literature: To publicize the search for the next Santa Clara County Poet Laureate, the three county laureates will present a program based on the concerts of the Three Tenors. Nils Peterson, Sally Ashton, and David Perez will read poems, their own and by others, grouped together on the great themes of poetry such as Love, Family, the World (as it is or should be). Each poet will hold forth for five minutes on each subject, stepping off and on the stage like Pavarotti, Carreras, and Domingo. We promise not to sing. The reading will be held on Saturday, September 19 at 7 P.M. at Gallery Anno Domini (366 S. First St., San Jose, CA 95113). Admission is free. Come celebrate the Laureates that were, that are, and that will be. Celebrate the life of poetry in Santa Clara County. A special edition anthology release of the three laureates' work will be available at the event.

ALUMNI

Art & Art History: Professor Gale Antokal was invited to be an affiliate faculty member at the JSS (Jerusalem Studio School) Summer Art School & Residency in Italy for summer 2015. The program, located in Civita Castellana, less than an hour north of Rome, is situated in one of the most pictorially evocative landscapes in all of Italy and in the birthplace of open air painting. The town is rich in history, both cultural and artistic, going back some eight millennia to the pre-Roman Faliscan civilization. In the Lazio region of Italy, during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, Civita was a Grand Tour epicenter of open air landscape painting for artists sojourning through the Roman Campagna. It has been painted and inhabited by Corot, Ingres, and Turner. San Jose State Alumni Susan Suriyapa (MFA 2010), Michelle Latessa (MAEd 2000), Susan Burgers (MFA 2008), Ilanit Edry (BFA 2000), Maryanne DeCarolis (BFA 2011), and current student Shannon Belardi (BFA, 2015) enrolled in Professor Antokal's "Drawing into Landscape" course with several other participants, working and interpreting directly from the cliffs, gorges, ruins, castles, forts, pastures, and mountains in this location. The participants travelled to Arezzo and Monterchi to study the works of Piero della Francesca, as well as visited some of the great art and architectural treasures in Rome.

FACULTY

English & Comparative Literature: Two SJSU professors, Linda Mitchell and Andrew Fleck, crossed paths this summer at the Eleventh International Milton Symposium, held in Exeter in the United Kingdom. Professor Fleck was at the end of a six week research trip that started with participation in the International Spenser Society meeting in Dublin Ireland, while Professor Mitchell was at the start of several weeks of research in Europe, culminating in her participation in the conference of the International Society

for the History of Rhetoric in Tubingen, Germany. Professor Mitchell presented research related to her edition of Milton's Grammar; Professor Fleck presented a paper on Milton and his Dutch contemporaries on the issue of Republican political formations.

English & Comparative Literature: The Writing Across the Curriculum program launched a new website and Facebook page this summer. The site, available at www.sjsu.edu/wac, features resources and ideas for integrating writing into your courses developed by colleagues from all across campus. The Facebook page, available at www.facebook.com/sjsuwac, features everything you love about Facebook, including pictures and videos of cats (but with a Writing Across the Curriculum spin). The site is a collaborative effort between the WAC program and the many faculty members who have joined us in our seminars. Upcoming events include special seminars for 100W coordinators and instructors, and other seminars for faculty members looking to integrate and support writing in their courses.

English & Comparative Literature: Leah Griesmann has been awarded a 2015-2016 Artist's Residency at the Swatch Art Peace Hotel in Shanghai.

English & Comparative Literature: Dr. Avantika Rohatgi attended a week-long intensive seminar at the magnificent Schloss Leopoldskron, Austria as a Salzburg Fellow in July. Dr. Rohatgi has passionately advanced the learning of global citizenship in her writing classes at San José State since 2008. In 2013, she was honored with an author award for her book, *Global Rights and Perceptions*. Besides being actively involved in several human rights organizations, she is working with the Global Compass Committee and the SJSU Justice Studies Department to involve students in shared co-curricular experiences on the theme and enactment of Global Citizenship. She describes the experience as a most "satisfying and enriching cohort of committed and diverse professionals who believe in the precepts and principles of global citizenship, and are deeply committed to promoting change on campus." In her words, "I will forever remain deeply grateful to the College of Humanities and Arts for encouraging my passion to create a more aware and civic campus, both locally and globally; and to the SJSU Salzburg Program for the opportunity to interact with administrators and educators with a variety of experiences and perspectives which helped inspire innovative pedagogical strategies that I plan to use to design courses and projects that will further challenge our students to find solutions to critical issues of global concern in order to touch lives and ennoble humanity."

News & Congratulations *(continued)*

English & Comparative Literature: Washington Square Q&A
SJSU's alumni magazine, *Washington Square*, published an interview with Dr. Mary Warner:

WSQ: Even among experts, there seems to be some debate about what constitutes Young Adult (YA) literature. How do you define it?

Warner: A rather arbitrary part of the definition of YA literature is that the protagonist(s) are thirteen-years-old and up. (This distinguishes YA literature from children's literature where the protagonists are infants to age 12.) While YA literature addresses teen readers, the best works embody complex literary devices and universal themes found in canonical texts and other adult literature. Social issues such as death, religion, politics, race, economics, and sexuality are common themes that YA literature tackles. In their development into adults, teens are establishing their identity, forming relationships, and expanding their perspectives. Thus they want to read books that speak to these issues.

WSQ: Professor Barbara Bontempo of Buffalo State has said: "Young readers want a hero." Do you agree?

Warner: Actually this statement could be made about readers of any age. One of the great archetypes of literature is the hero—the figure that will stand up for the right and champion the good and triumph over evil. Typically YA authors create the contexts for their teen protagonists to be heroic following a characteristic colloquially described as "Please, Mother, I want the credit!" They devise ways for the characters to solve problems and achieve worthy accomplishments. Harry Potter exemplifies this pattern, as do, among others, Liesel Meminger in *The Book Thief*, Jonas in *The Giver*, and Lily Owen in *The Secret Life of Bees*.

WSQ: YA books seem to have fewer "happy-ever-after" endings than books written for pre-teen readers. Why do you think that's the case?

Warner: Teens are closer to adulthood and to the issues adults face. They need guides to help deal with all that is not "happy-ever-after." YA books are basically optimistic, with characters making worthy accomplishments. At the same time, the YA authors writing contemporary realistic fiction, sometimes called "the problem novel genre," suggest that young adults will have a better chance to be happy if they have realistic expectations about both the good and the bad in our world. Through fiction, readers learn about characters and how they deal with life's challenges from a safe and neutral distance where the danger does not threaten.

WSQ: Are there other common denominators to be found in successful YA literature?

Warner: Young adults need story, story with which they connect. Marion Dane Bauer, editor of *Am I Blue?*, a collection of short stories that focuses on adolescents and sexual identity, shares a powerful statement: "I have never met a bigot who was a reader as a child." Successful YA lit takes readers beyond the barriers of "unknown" or "different." As an adult reader of YA lit, I find the best YA books transport me to other worlds. I'm "with" the characters in their confrontations with loss, death, pain, loneliness, and violence, and in the joys of friendship, love, adventure, and success. The appeal of the best YA lit is to be life-changing and, at times, life-saving, giving readers connections to others' stories.

WSQ: Has YA literature significantly changed since the 1960s?

Warner: YA literature has adapted to the changing realities of the decades since the 1960s. YA literature of the '90s and the first decade of the 21st century has become "grittier" and "edgier" in language, topics, and genres. Nancy Garden's *Annie on My Mind*, a ground breaking lesbian/gay relationship book in 1982, has been succeeded by multiple LGBT books that are powerful books dealing with gender issues. The flood of dystopia, science fiction, and steampunk novels mirror sociological and technological advancements. Graphic novels and other books with variant textual presentations capture some of the effects of texting and multimedia. The paranormal and Gothic have grown in popularity, and fantasy from Kristin Cashore, Tamora Pierce, Philip Pullman, and Diana Wynne Jones (and of course J. K. Rowling) dominates the best reads lists. A significant change is also the representation of cultures and ethnic groups—Naomi Shihab Nye and Suzanne Fisher Staples offer pictures of the Middle East; *My Forbidden Face*, by Latifa, chronicles a young woman's life under the Taliban.

WSQ: In your SJSU class, Literature for Young Adults, students are asked to list books they read as adolescents that significantly impacted their lives. What are some of their favorites?

Warner: I ask my students in the first class meeting to name a favorite book or literacy practice from their childhood and explain why this book or literacy practice is important. Among the literacy practices students have talked about: moms taking them to the library, grandmothers sharing stories of their childhood, and parents reading to them. It's key to celebrate the ways parents and other significant adults can foster and support reading early on. The books' names range from *Charlotte's Web*, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and *The Cat in the Hat* to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Giver*, *The Harry Potter* series, *Hatchet* (Gary Paulsen), and *Holes* (Louis Sachar). As young people move through middle school into high school and their interest in reading wanes, it becomes even more important for teachers and significant adults to simply suggest: "This is a book you might like."

News & Congratulations *(continued)*

WSQ: As a literacy specialist, you've expressed concern about an "aliterate" trend among students. Can YA literature help reverse that trend?

Warner: Reading and writing are integrated literacies and each supports the other. These literacies can only become stronger when we read and write often, when we build our reading and writing muscles. Unlike illiteracy that refers to those who are unable to read, aliteracy means that one is able to read but chooses not to. I use an activity called a "book pass" to help my students see as many YA books as possible. I bring to class about 100 YA books, and students are given one to two minutes to quickly review the book. They make lists of the books they'd like to read—those that capture their interest in some way. YA lit can reverse the trend toward aliteracy in providing reading that is accessible and with which teens can connect and in which they can find pleasure.

WSQ: Any predictions regarding YA's future?

Warner: YA authors want to keep connecting to teen readers; they want to keep addressing what is significant in teens' lives and experiences. I am a reviewer for two major journals in the field of YA literature, and several of the books I've reviewed in the last year are examples of YA authors creating what they believe to be relevant. *City 1: (Revolution 19)* describes the "Bot" controlled world in the 2040s. In the sterile world of robots and automation, the teens' quest to save their parents and other family members poignantly emphasizes the importance of humanity/humanness, giving the novel universality that surpasses that of typical science fiction/apocalyptic, technological world war stories. Another example is *Into the Grey*. The book is set in Ireland in the '70s and poignantly captures the fierce loyalty of brothers, living and dead.

WSQ: Your personal all-time favorite YA novel?

Warner: It's very hard to narrow down to an all-time favorite YA novel. A book that I have taught often and reread every time I've taught it is *Witness* by Karen Hesse. It is actually a free verse poem, written in five acts; additionally, it's historical fiction, inspired by the true story of a Ku Klux Klan incident that took place in Vermont in the 1920s. In *Witness*, eleven characters share the story through vignettes that are witty, satirical, and profound. Leanora Sutter, a 12-year-old African American girl, harassed by an older classmate who tells her the "dragons talked about lighting you and your daddy up..." says she turned her back and walked out of the school, "without my coat, without my hat or rubbers. I didn't feel the cold, I was that scorched." In class we read the book aloud with students assuming the roles of the eleven citizens. Every time I'm amazed at how well the students "get" the characters and voice them as they read. Afterwards we write about a shared experience in our lives. I frequently use the events of September 11, 2001.

Mirroring Hesse's vignette style, students are encouraged to write about their own experience or in the voice of someone they select (e.g., first responders, passengers on the flights, those working in the Towers). Then we read aloud and create our own readers' theatre. Examples are posted at: www.sjsu.edu/faculty/mary_warner/Warnerstudentlinks.htm.

Music & Dance: A new piece by Aaron Lington for three trumpet soloists, full orchestra, and large jazz ensemble will be premiered in Houston on Dec 3, 2015. This new work will feature the principal trumpet of the Houston Symphony, Mark Hughes, as well as multiple Grammy-winning jazz trumpeter Randy Brecker.

Events

For all events in the College of Humanities and the Arts, please visit our [events calendar](#).

Upcoming events include:

September 2015

Sept 23: [Akropolis Quintet Performance](#). 7:30pm in the Music Concert Hall.

Sept 30: [Chang-Rae Lee Reading](#). 7:00pm in MLK 225/229.

Sept 30: [Layna Chianakas Recital](#). 7:30pm in Concert Hall - Music 176.

October 2015

Oct 1: Chang-rae Lee in Conversation with Noelle Brada-Williams. 1:00pm in MLK Steinbeck Center.

Oct 6: Islamic Studies Lecture Series. 6:00pm in the Student Union Theater.

Oct 7: [Jazz Orchestra Performance](#). 7:30pm in the Concert Hall - Music 176.

Oct 9: [Real Men Sing](#). 7:30pm in the Concert Hall - Music 176.

Oct 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23 & 24: [The Great Gatsby, adapted for the stage](#). 7pm in the University Theatre.

Oct 28: Mark Slouka Reading. 7:00pm in MLK 225/229.

The College of Humanities and the Arts sponsors more than 400 cultural and artistic events every year.

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