



# English @ Furman
















Front Row left to right: Dr. Laura Morris, Dr. Gretchen Braun, Dr. Lindsay Turner (former), Dr. Lynne Shackelford, Dr. Melinda Menzer, and Dr. Shane Herron.

Back Row left to right: Charlotte Maitz, Dr. Nick Radel, Dr. Karni Bhati, Dr. Willard Pate, Dr. Michele Speitz, Dr. Jeanne Provost, Dr. Joni Tevis, and Dr. Gregg Hecimovich.

“ALONE WE ARE SMART. TOGETHER WE ARE BRILLIANT.”

— STEVEN ANDERSON, EDUCATOR

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## A Message from the Chair

Dear Furman English Friends,

We are well into the 2019-2020 school year, but I wanted to take a moment just to cast a glance back to the success of our 2018-2019 campaign. The theme I established for the 2018-2019 school year was “joyful engagement.” We lived up to the theme!

### Joyful success!

Furman Ink, a departmental writing group, was launched. **Michele Speitz’s** article “Lyres, Levers, Boats, and Steam: Shelley’s Dream of a Correspondent Machine” was published in *Studies in Romanticism*, and she published a piece on Humphry Davy, John Keats, and Charlotte Smith in an edited collection entitled *Romanticism and Speculative Realism*. **Gretchen Braun** had an article on H.G. Wells and two book reviews accepted by *Studies in the Novel* and continues to serve as editor of the *Furman Humanities Review*. **Shane Herron** was named a contributing editor to the *Scriblerian* and continues work on a revise-and-resubmit monograph for Cambridge University Press. **Joni Tevis** landed her biggest creative piece yet in *The Southern Review*. **Laura Morris** travelled as a mini-ambassador for Furman as she completed a book tour for her first story collection, *Jaws of Life* (2018), and did media spots and other invited talks. She also prepared the way for Furman’s prison initiative, which she is co-directing. (See accompanying articles.) **Margaret Oakes** led a wildly successful British Isles trip and conducted her usual star mentorship, including leading two students to present at the national Sigma Tau Delta Conference. (Faith Kressner won first prize in Creative Nonfiction.) **Nick Radel** and **Michele Speitz** were awarded Summer Residency Fellowships at The National Humanities Center. Nick continued work on his introduction for the updated Arden Shakespeare edition of *Richard II*. He has two more chapter contributions forthcoming, while Michele continued work on her monograph, *Technologies of the Sublime*. **Melinda Menzer** was named to the board of the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust and hosted a successful CLP on campus by Carl Wilkens, the former head of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International in Rwanda. She is also serving on the Faculty Status Committee. She has a forthcoming publication in an MLA collection on teaching History of the English Language. **Karni Bhati** trained as a mentor as part of the new Pathways initiatives.

## A Message from the Chair, continued

**Lynne Shackelford** led the Academic Policies Committee and put together a new event for the department, the Faculty-Student-Alumni gathering at Cherrydale. **Willard Pate** assisted with all things Furman English, while she also placed her photography in the online edition of *The Photo Review*, received the top award for photography in the Anderson Arts Center's juried art show, and had two two images selected as honorable mentions in an international competition for women photographers. **Lindsay Turner** accepted a tenure track job at the University of Denver. Her one year at Furman was epic as she published a book of poetry, a volume of translation, and multiple articles and poems; recruited majors; hosted CLPs; and shone joyously as a colleague.

Student success!

**Olivia Corso** presented her original research on Michel Foucault, Margaret Atwood, and Neal Stephenson at World Con 76 [mentors: Michele Speitz and Joni Tevis]. **Faith Kressner and Olivia Oliver** presented creative work at the Sigma Tau Delta Conference [mentors: Joni Tevis, Laura Morris, and Margaret Oakes]. **Beth Fraser** landed two major conference papers on ecocriticism and Romantic literature [mentor: Michele Speitz]. **Catherine Byrd and Emily Little** presented their original research about Furman's connection to slavery at William & Mary [mentor: Gregg Hecimovich]. **Maddie DuPree** won a Metropolitan Fellowship to support an internship in New York City, helped form our new internship with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and was named a Furman Fellow [mentor: Willard Pate]. **Olivia Corso** received a Furman summer research fellowship to work with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust [mentor: Willard Pate]. **Akanksha Kaushik** received the award for Excellence in Interdisciplinary Humanities Studies at Furman's Academic Awards Banquet last April. Her paper was entitled "Species We Don't Like: Zoo Redressal of Stereotyped Anthropomorphism in Animated Films" [mentors: Jeanne Provost and Margaret Oakes]. The department dominated at *Furman Engaged!* with students from Nick's, Gretchen's, Lynne's, Michele's, and Margaret's classes all presenting. **Adare Smith** organized the Inaugural Joseph Vaughn Day [mentors: Nick Radel and Mary Alice Kirkpatrick]. Other departmental events included a pizza party, a Homecoming reception, *Moby-Dick* and Valentine's Day festivities, and an annual banquet honoring our departmental award and scholarship winners and our graduating seniors.

Alumni Panel event sponsored by Dr. Margaret Oakes



L to R: Taylor Barton ('01), Josie Sawyer ('07), Dr. Margaret Oaks, Andrew Huang ('11)

# New Chair of the English Department

By Courtney Kratz ('19)

From Charlotte, North Carolina, Dr. Gregg Hecimovich and his wife, Christy, are both passionate educators. Christy is a dedicated Montessori upper-middle school teacher (4-6 grades). Gregg and Christy have two daughters, Beatrice, age 12, and Elsie, age 10. Ardent readers, the Hecimovich family enjoy curling up with books on the weekends — or traveling with shared audiobooks as the family sets out for interesting destinations.

Dr. Hecimovich was drawn to Furman because of the university's innovative teaching and engagement with students. He was particularly impressed by The Furman Advantage, with its funding for creative teaching, which he observed Furman endorses more actively than other institutions. Dr. Hecimovich specializes in biography and literary history of the antebellum period. His work focuses on the lives of enslaved people, an interest he developed as a Victorianist doing archival research.

"The joy is discovery," he notes about working in the archives. His Writing Biography course for spring semester 2020 will draw on the work he's been doing for the past decade. Questions that intrigue him are



"How do you use archival research to tell a story? Why would you? What's the genre behind it and the value for students?" In the course, students will pursue a topic that excites them, "a life they want to tell."

Writing Biography bridges Dr. Hecimovich's teaching and what he finds most joyous, and that's what he hopes to bring to the department. "I want to bring joy and increase the number of majors," he states as his primary goals. He hopes to encourage the department to follow the unique talents of its individual faculty and to give them license to be as creative as possible with their work and their engagement with students. He believes Furman offers such opportunities and has taken advantage of them himself. Dr. Hecimovich taught a first-year writing seminar on Furman's relationship to slavery and

acquired funding to take students out into the field, to explore archives, and to directly encounter Greenville history (a journey that wouldn't have been complete without handpicked car snacks).

"I think every professor has some element of their own drive and the joy they have in their field, and I want to facilitate everyone to be as creative as they can with their students in the act of discovery," Dr. Hecimovich declares. His first-year writing seminar speaks to this joy in discovery, for two of his students presented at The Lemon Project at the College of William and Mary to report what they discovered in the archives on Abraham Sims, the key figure in Furman's Task Force on Slavery and Justice. It seems his courses have already sparked joy and discovery and, no doubt, will bring in new English majors as well.

# TRANSFORMATIVE *Education*

## Creating the Furman Prison Education Partnership

By Dr. Laura Morris



Dr. Laura Morris

Before coming to Furman in 2015, I was the Bureau of Prisons/National Endowment for the Arts Artist-in-Residence at Bryan Federal Prison Camp in Bryan, Texas. Since my arrival in South Carolina, I've missed teaching in prison. Fortunately, when I told Furman administrators I wanted to bring a prison education program to the state, they listened. Along with **Sally Morris Cote** of the Riley Institute, I've created the Furman Prison Education Partnership (FPEP).



Sally Morris Cote

FPEP's mission is to bring education to currently and formerly incarcerated people, with the goal of providing a transformative experience for all involved. Thus far, we've partnered with Perry Correctional Institution, a Level-3 men's facility in Pelzer, about 40 minutes from Furman's campus. We hope to connect with local re-entry organizations to bring educational opportunities to returning members of the Greenville community.

While our long-term goals involve multiple courses in the community and in carceral settings, we've started small. Since January 2019, Furman faculty and staff have taught three short courses at Perry—Mindfulness, Survey Research Methods, and Lifestyle Medicine for Mental Health. I'm currently teaching our first full-semester class in the prion, Introduction to Creative Writing, a course I also teach on the Furman campus.

Practicing creative writing often forces us to be vulnerable, which is especially difficult within prison. During my time at Bryan Federal Prison Camp, my classes became places of trust. At Perry, I wasn't sure the same would be true. Imagine how happy I was when the men in my course began opening up about their lives, the good and the bad. While the men learn about creative writing, they're also practicing vulnerability and openness.

I'm especially grateful to have senior English major Hailey Pierce joining me in the class, as she's been a huge help in responding to student work and to talking to the men about what it means to be a writer. She's also been witness to the transformative power of prison education – on the men in the class, on me, and on herself.

As FPEP continues to grow, I hope more students will get to take part in educational opportunities with incarcerated and previously incarcerated people.

# DISCOVERY EDUCATION

## A Transformative Academic Experience

By Hailey Pierce (Class of 2020)

My parents thought I was insane when I first asked if I could help Dr. Morris teach Creative Writing at Perry Correctional Institution. What kind of college girl wants to spend time in a room with maximum security prisoners? Had I even considered the safety of the prison? What type of men would I encounter in the class? What if one of them convinced me he was innocent, prompting me to help him escape, ultimately landing myself in prison for aiding a convict?

After many reassurances that yes, I considered the safety of the class, and no, I wasn't going to fall in love with one of the men so that I could bust him out of prison, they finally said yes. Furman said yes, too, and now I spend my Monday afternoons correcting sentence structure and offering suggestions for narrative clarity with thirteen convicted men.

The juxtaposition of free-flowing Furman life, compared to the almost militaristic and cold reality of Perry, always shocks me as Dr. Morris and I pass through the first of many barbed wire gates onto the grounds. Prison is usually this unknowable entity, this imposing structure full of bodies that look vaguely human, whose hands are stained by the crimes they've committed. But at Perry, I interact with men who crack jokes, listen to my advice, wish me a "good afternoon," and write beautiful stories about pain, humor, and hope. They just happen to be wearing bright orange jumpsuits.

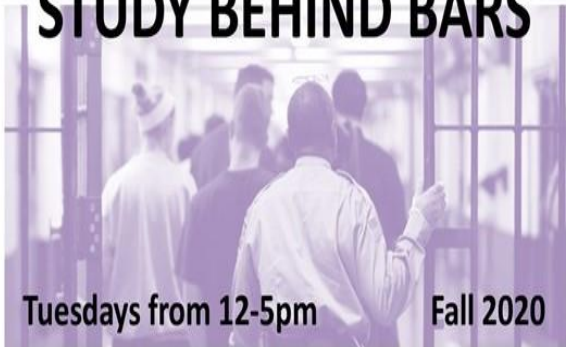
Am I aware that some of my students have killed people? Absolutely. Do they deserve an education just like everyone else in the world? Of course.

Writing is so much more than words on the page for these men. Writing is therapy. Writing is escape.

Writing is a connection to each other, to Dr. Morris, and to me. And while I struggle with my internalized belief that criminals are undeserving of mercy and second chances, I genuinely love going to prison.

The ability to engage with these men is not an

### STUDY BEHIND BARS



**Tuesdays from 12-5pm**      **Fall 2020**

Interested in challenging your understanding of the criminal justice system? Consider applying to take ENG 200: Intro to Creative Writing, Furman's first course offered inside a prison through the Furman Prison Education Partnership.

<https://furman.box.com/v/fpep-fall2020>

Questions? Contact [fpep@furman.edu](mailto:fpep@furman.edu).

opportunity I thought I would seek out, nor one that many people will have, but I feel incredibly blessed to work alongside Dr. Morris and teach a subject I love.

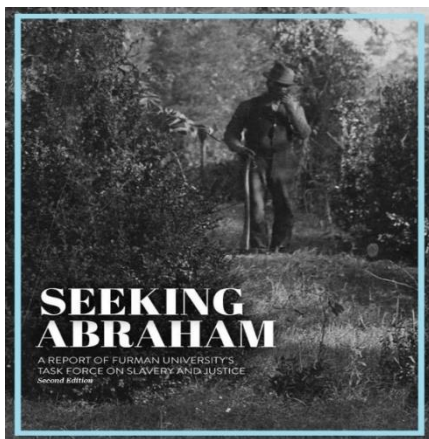
My first day in class, one of the students asked me if I was afraid of coming to prison. After I explained to him that I came to Perry to study higher education in prison systems and to personally engage with inmates, he said, "Well, I just want you to know that you don't have to be afraid of me or any of the guys in this class. If anything happens, we'll take care of you. You don't have to worry about anything."

And honestly, I'm not worried at all. If anything, I look forward to my Monday afternoons at Perry with my class. If you ever have the opportunity, I encourage you to volunteer at a prison. It will change your life.

# RESEARCH

## Student and Faculty Collaboration: Advancing What We Know about Abraham Sims — One Year Later

Dr. Gregg Hecimovich



I arrived as the new Chair of the English Department in August 2018 just as Furman University released to the public their “Seeking Abraham” Report. Inspired by Abraham, a former slave of James C. Furman (the university’s first president), the “Seeking Abraham” Report was the fruit of a year-long investigation by professional historians, archivists, faculty, staff, alumni, and students into Furman University’s historical connections with slavery. The goal was to bring to light Furman University’s past and to make recommendations to acknowledge and reckon with Furman University’s roots in slavery.

I immediately adopted the report as a primary “textbook” for my newly crafted First-Year Writing Seminar, “Picturing Slavery.” I was thrilled to be at a university bold enough to engage its own problematic history and visionary enough to place such a focus on high-impact practices. I figured my nine freshmen writing

seminar participants and I—all newly arrived on campus—could use The Task Force Report as a map for understanding more about ourselves and where we had landed.

I tweaked my original plans a bit and applied for Furman Advantage funding. We needed fuel, a passenger van, some hotel accommodations, and a small dining budget if we were going to really push boundaries. The redesigned class, thanks to funding, now emphasized high-impact practices. Here is what I proposed for \$1,705.00.

**Engagement:** Students will step out beyond the classroom and into the spaces where the past and present merge through the work of archived research and public scholarship.

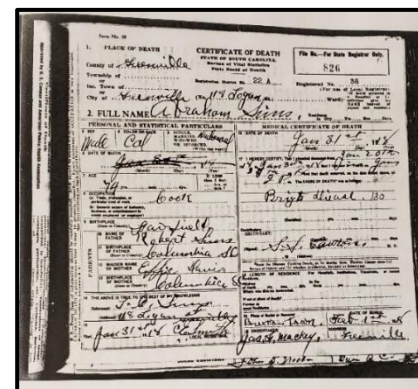
**Diversity:** Practical, hands-on experience will facilitate new ways of thinking and responding to the legacy of slavery and the resurgence of white supremacy in contemporary American life.

**Real-World Application and Novel Problem Solving:** Students will become partners in the creation of new knowledge (a distinctive University project). Together, we will integrate, synthesize, and problem solve in order to produce new knowledge and make our own claims on Furman’s history.

**Public Demonstration of Learning:** The results of our work will matter, not just in a grade and credit for a required class, but in enriching the knowledge and history of others, just as it enriches ourselves.

We got the money. Next, I enlisted (unpaid) guest speakers and slotted them: 1) Dr. Steven O’Neill, South Carolina historian and Task Force member; 2) Felicia Furman, descendant of the Furman family; 3) Mark and Gabi Rumph, descendants of enslaved people associated with the Furmans; 4) Dr. Jeffery Makala, University Archivist; 5) John Sherrer, Director of Cultural Resources at Historic Columbia in Columbia, South Carolina; 6) Steve Tuttle, Director, Archives and Records Management at The South Carolina State Archives. We saved our cash for research travel and van snacks.

I opened the course by teaching students (with the assistance of library liaison Steve Richardson) how to conduct archival research in genealogy databases, like Ancestry.com and Newspapers.com. On September 7, 2018, my student Emily Little struck gold. On her second Friday night in college, at Furman University, Emily made the biggest discovery yet about Abraham Sims. She found his death certificate.



Continued on next page 8



This major breakthrough instantly advanced the work of The Task Force. My students and I used Emily's findings over a series of classes to begin to develop a fuller and more precise picture of Abraham Sims' life, beginning with correctly identifying his date of birth, where he was born, who his parents were, his marriage to Madora (Dora) Bruton Sims, and more. Later we would build further on these insights to uncover the important place Dora Bruton Sims appears to have held in Greenville's African American Community.

As a class, we reasoned through the documents. Although the first edition of the report had Abraham's birth year as 1839, Emily's discovery suggested otherwise. The Task Force report seemed not to be aware of the 1880 Federal Census record. This document and other corroborating evidence clearly point to Sims' birth in 1844. Sims' death certificate establishes he was 74 years old at the time of his death. If the death certificate is correct, Abraham's birth would have been 1844 (not 1839, as noted in The Task Force Report). That date seems to accord better with the photographic evidence, while also confirming that the photographs are, indeed, of Abraham. The 1890 image from the report is more likely that of a 46-year old Sims than a 51-year old Sims. The death certificate also matches an 1880 Federal Census record that lists Abraham Sims and his household marking Abraham as 34 ten years before the 1890 photograph, further confirming the birth date noted in the death certificate. Multiple sources, then, confirm Sims' date of birth as 1844.

Just as significantly as establishing Abraham's birthdate, the death certificate identifies Sims' birth in Fairfield County, South Carolina, and his parents' birthplace as Columbia, South Carolina. With Sims' birthdate and these locations in hand, we were ready to explore what we could learn at sites associated with Sims' early life.

We also located the area where the Furman plantation was sited and the location of Furman Baptist Institute, when it was situated in Fairfield County. Along the way, we visited the Baptist churches that were an important part of Richard and James C. Furman's acquiring Abraham Sims (and most of the



Our overnight trip October 23-24 included a private tour of both The Hampton-Preston House and The Mann-Simmons site in Columbia, South Carolina. John Sherrer and his staff "rolled out the red carpet" as he promised. John joined us at the end of our tours to discuss the work of non-profits and the role of interpreting history for public audiences. On day two we did a field trip based on our archival work locating the birthplace of Abraham Sims in Fairfield County on either the property of Jonathan Davis or his brother James B. Davis (both planters near Jenkinsville, South Carolina).

other 56 enslaved people listed in the 1850 slave schedule for James C. Furman). We ended our adventures back in Columbia, South Carolina at the South Carolina State Archives, where Steve Tuttle, Director, Archives and Records Management, directed our research further. While in the archives, students may have located an early slave inventory listing Abraham Sims when he was in the possession of the Davis family (consistent with our other findings). But further work needs to be conducted by future classes to see if this can be confirmed.





Here are new facts that we uncovered about Abraham Sims by the end of the semester. We discovered that Sims, like Clark Murphy, served for “many years” as a cook at Greenville’s Women’s College. We know this from Sims’ obituary that we unearthed in archives of *The Greenville News* (January 31, 1918). There it states, “[Sims] was for many years a cook at Greenville Women’s College.”

We know, too, from the death certificate that Abraham Sims was born in Fairfield County, South Carolina. His parents were Robert Sims and Effie Davis of Columbia, South Columbia. Further, his wife, Madora (Dora) Bruton Sims (1856-1913) was the daughter of Benjamin Bruton, the mixed-race blacksmith who founded Brutontown in Greenville. According to Dora’s obituary (which we also uncovered) she was a founding member of Springfield Baptist Church and appears to have been an active and important member of Greenville’s African American community throughout her life.

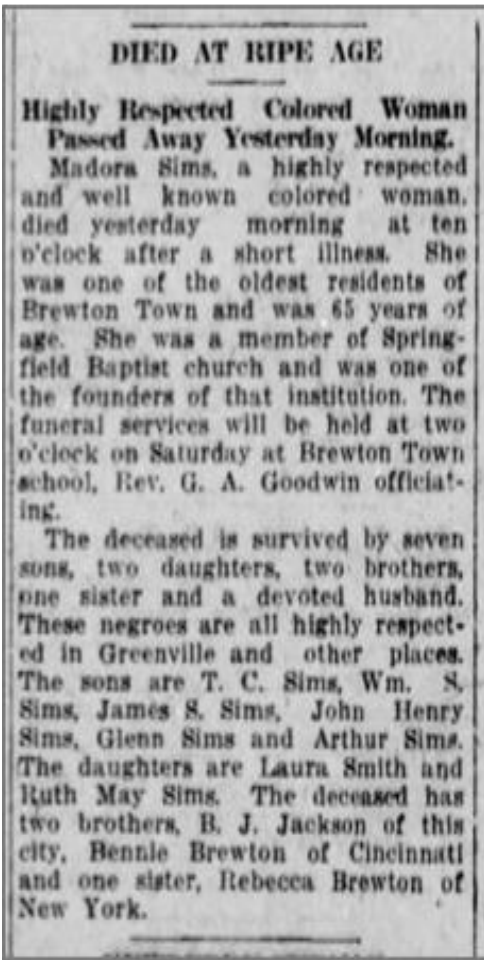
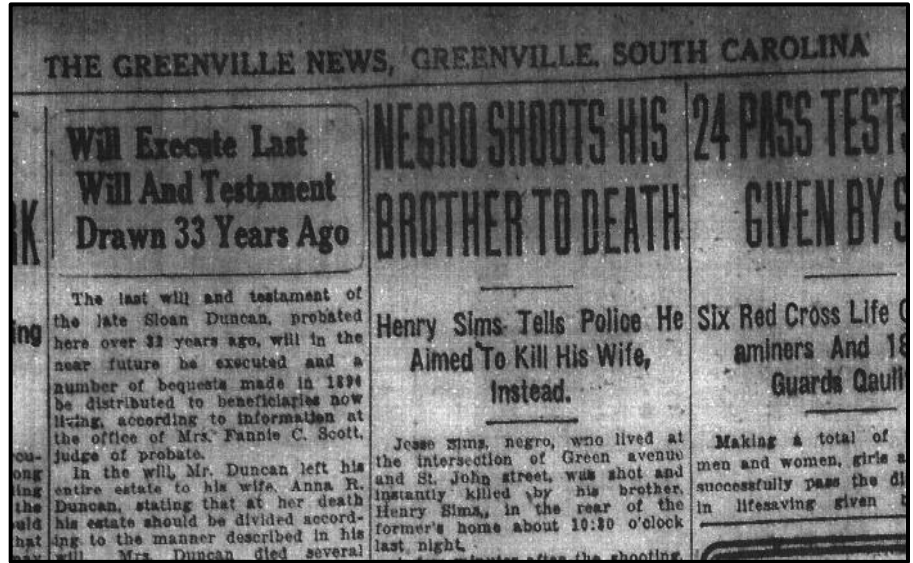
**ABRAHAM SIMS**

Abraham Sims, a good old colored citizen of Greenville, died at his son's home yesterday afternoon at 6 o'clock. He leaves one brother, seven sons and two daughters. Sims during his long life in Greenville, gained the confidence and respect of both white people and members of his own race and all who knew him will regret to hear of his death. He was for many years cook at Greenville Woman's College. Funeral announcement will be announced later.





Further we discovered that Abraham and Dora had at least nine children, seven boys and two girls; William Sims (1877-?), James Sims (1879-?), Glenn Sims (1883-?), Laura Sims (1885-?), Jesse Sims (1888-1923), Henry Sims (1893-?), and Ruth Sims (1896-?). We tracked down information and early genealogies for most of these. Student Catherine Byrd uncovered the tragic story of the Abraham Sims' sons, Henry and Jesse. Henry committed fratricide, shooting his brother through the heart on August 18, 1923.



# New Option within the English Major

By Dr. Joni Tevis



Dr. Joni Tevis

Recently the English Department launched a Writing Track to complement our Literature and Language Track within the major. This new track consists of nine courses, including three foundational courses—Introduction to Creative Writing, Interpretive Strategies, and the Senior Seminar, in which students write and revise a portfolio of creative work along with a critical introduction that places the work into a larger literary context. Writing Track courses include workshops in nonfiction, fiction, and poetry; travel writing; journalism; professional communication; and other writing courses, including our annual May Experience course, Writing with Writers, which brings in an eminent writer—the genre specialty varies from year to year—to work with our students. This highly successful course has been offered at Furman for ten years now. Courses in Early Traditions, Cultural and Global Studies, and other courses in the English Department round out the track.

One of the track's goals is to help reinforce the ways in which writing and reading inform each other.

Student enthusiasm for the new track has been high. Students from the first iteration of the Senior Seminar in Creative Writing—the track's capstone course—drafted and revised portfolios in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Paul Bryant, an English and Sociology major from Florence, South Carolina, reflected that the track “forced me to write in genres that I thought I wasn't well suited for. This has caused me to become a better writer overall.” Bryce Caputo, an English major from Greenville, South Carolina, noted that the track “helped give me writing tools focusing on style.” Faith Kressner, an English and music major from Charlotte, North Carolina, said that the track “gave me the opportunity to foster confidence in my own writing and the courage to pursue it wholly.” Courtney Kratz, an English, Asian Studies, and Philosophy triple major from Maryville, Tennessee, valued the opportunity to build several courses upon each other in leading up to the capstone course. The track “made craft a priority rather than a one-time elective course,” she said. Catherine McLaughlin, an English and French major from Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, commented that “the writing track allows you to develop your writing voice in a variety of genres and applications—

providing you with a writing background and skill set that is well rounded and will lend itself to multiple career paths.”

In December 2018, the capstone course culminated with Thesis Defense Day, during which students read from their portfolios and fielded questions from colleagues about their craft and influences. It was a high point of the semester for the whole departmental community!

The writing track builds upon the Furman English Department's long tradition of fostering creative writing in its students. Alumni George Singleton ('80), Mindy Friddle ('86), Tommy Hays ('77), and Ed Tarkington ('95) recently returned to campus to read from their published novels, and current English majors helped introduce and host the writers. In addition, the May 2019 Writing with Writers course was taught by alumnus Jonathan Rogers ('91). Holding a Ph.D. in seventeenth-century literature from Vanderbilt and teaching at New College Franklin in Tennessee, Dr. Rogers writes both fiction and nonfiction, favoring what he terms “fantasy adventure stories told in an American accent.”

The English Department is delighted to have the new option of the Writing Track within our major and look forward to continuing our proud tradition of nurturing dedicated and accomplished writers.

# Furman Summer Fellowship Abroad

By Olivia Corso (Class of 2020)

The summer before my senior year at Furman, I spent two months in Stratford-upon-Avon working with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. I lived in a tiny apartment across the Avon from the central hub of Stratford and spent an hour walking through the spacious park on my way to and from the Birthplace Center. My position within the Trust was customized to my interests — a kind of curatorial intern. I was given a manuscript written by the late Dr. Gregory Wells, titled *John Hall, Master of Physicke: A Casebook from Shakespeare's Stratford*, published in February 2020. *John Hall, Master of Physicke* is a translation (the second in history) of Hall's medical case files — 178 cases, ranging from scurvy to a sore jaw - adapted from Dr. Wells' doctoral thesis. My job was to integrate new information gleaned from the manuscript into the SBT's current tale of John Hall. My tasks included updating panel texts, designing new interactive displays, and curating an online exhibition for launch of the book.

I was grateful my summer fellowship in Stratford was tailored to my interests. It may seem counterintuitive that as an English major, I did not study Shakespeare while living in his place of origin. However, as a Studio Art major, I am interested in curatorial work, and as a pre-med student, I enjoy studying medical history. Working for the SBT, I researched 16<sup>th</sup>-century medical practices, worked with a



Stratford-upon-Avon

museum space and collections, and studied Shakespeare's life in Stratford through the lens of John Hall (Shakespeare's son-in-law). The experience could not have been more individualized!

Living and working in Stratford was my first time overseas, for tragically, the demands of my two majors made my schedule too busy to study abroad with Furman. I forged this opportunity as my chance to travel and experience a culture outside my own. Living alone in a foreign country was intimidating. Though I had no language barrier to navigate, nor did I have to board in a hostel, I was pushed to my young adult limits. Mundane activities, such as keeping myself fed and exercising, became intimidating when I was shopping at Waitrose, not Walmart, and jogging along the Avon instead of around the Furman

Lake. For these reasons, however, I can say my time in Stratford with the SBT has been the most formative period of my undergraduate career. Not only did I experience exponential professional growth, but I also felt myself shedding the skin of my adolescence and coming into adulthood with as much grace as possible.

I am very thankful for all the people who helped me on my Stratford experience and for everyone who nurtured me during my fellowship. As only the second student to work with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, I am thrilled the English Department and Furman are able to offer the opportunity to new generations of students so they may have as formative an experience as mine.

# Students Present Work at International Convention

By Dr. Margaret Oakes



Dr. Margaret Oakes

Furman English majors have had their creative or academic work accepted for presentation at the Sigma Tau Delta International Convention every year they have submitted.

The 2019 and 2020 conventions have been no exception. **Olivia Oliver** presented her poetry and **Faith Kressner** her creative nonfiction in St. Louis in March 2019. Faith garnered the first prize in Creative Nonfiction among a field of over 30 students for her essay “Pilgrimage to a Rock House,” which came with a \$600 cash prize. The students and Dr. Margaret Oakes, who accompanied them to the convention, enjoyed being out and about in St. Louis.

This March, **Beth Fraser** and **Anvi Yalavarthy** will present their work at the convention in Las Vegas. They and Dr. Oakes are excited to explore the bright lights of the city and hear this year’s featured speaker, scholar Terry Tempest Williams. We wish Beth and Anvi the best of luck with their continued work.



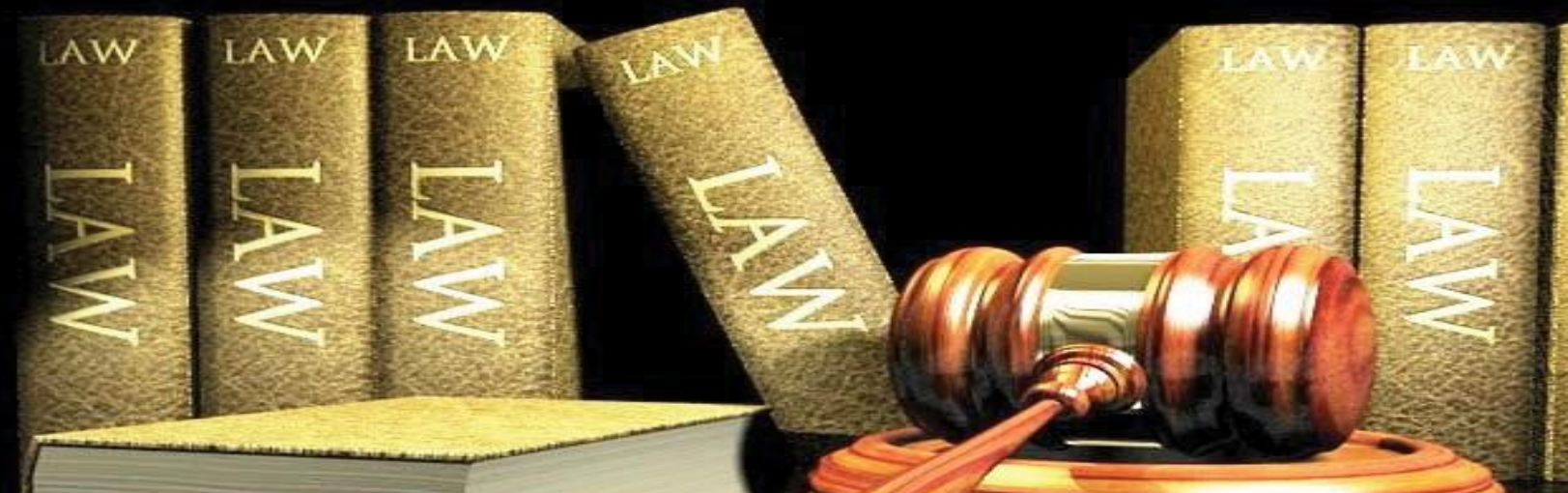
Faith Kressner



The Sigma Tau Delta Convention brings students from chapters of the honorary around the world to share their work, get career ideas, and hear from nationally known authors. Over 600 students attend annually, in particular enjoying the Bad Poetry Contest and the chapter roll call, where we get to respond with “FU ALL THE TIME!”



(L) Faith Kressner and (R) Olivia Oliver



## Return of Alumna Chelsea Feustel to Discuss Careers in Law

By Danielle Dechant (Class of 2020)

As an English major seeking to become a judge, I was excited to hear former Furman alumna, Chelsea Feustel ('09), discuss her career path from being an undergraduate considering graduate study in English to her current position in Atlanta serving as a Staff Attorney for Georgia Supreme Court Justice David Nahmias. Ms. Feustel spoke at a lunch/discussion event co-sponsored by the English Department and the Pre-Law Society—an event that allowed the participants to ask a range of questions regarding applying to law schools, choosing a specialty area, and developing a fulfilling career.

While at Furman, Ms. Feustel majored in English and also concentrated in Women's and Gender Studies. She desired to explore gender studies more fully, but at the time Furman did not offer a major in that area.

During an Issues in Women's and Gender Studies class, Ms. Feustel was inspired by a guest speaker, Patricia Ravenhorst, a Greenville lawyer who was deeply involved in social justice issues. That inspiration and the realization that her English classes had driven her passion for the law in teaching her the power of words motivated Ms. Feustel to apply to law schools.

After graduation, she attended Emory University School of Law and was named a Woodruff Fellow Scholar, the highest merit-based scholarship offered. Once in law school, she took Feminist Legal Studies and continued to strengthen her belief that by emphasizing women's and gender studies, one can see distinctions in the law from all perspectives. After clerking for a judge, Ms. Feustel realized that working as a staff attorney for a judge provided the ideal opportunity to apply her research and

writing skills honed as an English major.

Upon first meeting Ms. Feustel, I was impressed by her ability to pursue what she thought was the right path for her no matter what challenges came her way. For instance, her writing sample for law school voiced concerns regarding discrimination of LGBTQ+ individuals. In preparing for a legal career, she thoroughly researched positions and applied to become a staff attorney to various judges across several states, undaunted by an extremely competitive application process. After hearing the significant impact that knowledge of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies can exert upon the legal field, I am eager to see how Furman's new major can impact our communities.

## A Friday Afternoon Surprise

By Dr. Lynne Shackelford



(L) Dr. Lynne Shackelford (R) Dr. Joni Tevis

On the afternoon of Friday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, I was methodically evaluating Moodle posts from my American Passages class. By 4:30 students had abandoned the suite, and only a few stalwart English faculty remained, including my next-door neighbor, Joni Tevis. I heard Joni's office phone ring, but maintained my concentration on the Moodle posts. I wasn't trying to eavesdrop, but I could hear Joni's voice increase in pitch, interspersed with some charming laughter. The conversation continued longer than a routine phone call from a student needing an appointment or a spouse wanting to know what time to prepare dinner. Now those of you who know Joni know that she is naturally ebullient, but the enthusiasm in her voice reached a new pinnacle of intensity.

I kept doggedly commenting on the Moodle posts. Soon Joni appeared at my doorway with a smile as wide as the Mississippi and motions that fit my imagination of how leprechauns cavort. "Guess what, Lynne," she enticingly drawled, while her eyes sparkled as she danced in my doorway.

She then vowed me to secrecy before confiding that she had received a National Endowment of the Arts grant for \$25,000. She explained that she couldn't share the news broadly before NEA officially announced the recipients.








Of course, the grant recognizes Joni's talent as a writer of creative nonfiction. As our former colleague, now faculty emeritus, Gil Allen often observes, "Joni writes like an angel." However, the recognition also attests to Joni's determination and persistence.

Since 2007—in two-year cycles—Joni has painstakingly devoted countless hours to filling out NEA grant applications, most recently with the assistance of Judy Romano, Furman's grant officer. Again and again, the rejections came, but Joni didn't give up—she just decided she'd apply when the next biannual opportunity arose.

Now—let the trumpets sound—Joni's prodigious talent has been recognized on the national level. This year out of 1600 applications, the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded 36 grants. Congratulations, Joni! We look forward to seeing what literary fruits that award yields.




# faculty NEWS

-  **Gretchen Braun** was excited to participate in the successful proposal to make Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies a major at Furman, to co-direct the WGSS Program, and to teach the Introductory Issues in Women's and Gender Studies course for the first time.
-  **Melinda Menzer** recently published an article, "HEL [History of the English Language] and General Ed Requirement: Finding a Place in the Liberal Arts Curriculum," in an MLA volume, *Teaching the History of the English Language*, co-edited by Chris C. Palmer, '99. In 2018, she was appointed to the board of the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust and since then has become increasingly involved in Holocaust education in the state. In November 2019, Menzer completed a ten-mile swim across Amistad Reservoir, traversing the US-Mexico border. Her swim raised over \$10,000 for HIAS, the world's oldest refugee assistance organization. Finally, Menzer and her husband celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in January; their older child is due to graduate from Trinity University in May, and their younger child is a freshman in high school.
-  **Margaret Oakes'** proposal for a book on gendered casting in Shakespeare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been accepted for publication by the academic press McFarland Publishing. The anticipated publication date is late 2021.
-  **Willard Pate** has spent several weeks each of the past three summers photographing on the Aran Islands off the coast of Ireland. She already has her reservations for this summer's trip. Hopefully, the end result of all this travel/photography will be a book.
-  **Lynne Shackelford** has been celebrating Furman's decision to offer a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies major as well as a minor, after pushing for over a decade for that opportunity to be realized. She, along with Gretchen Braun, is co-directing the WGSS program this year. Highlights of the past year have been researching Poe's knowledge of the developing field of 19<sup>th</sup>-century psychology and traveling in Spain, finally realizing her dream of visiting the Prado. She's looking forward to co-directing Furman's program in the British Isles during the fall of 2020 and enjoying a visit from her Denver-residing CPA daughter while the group is in Ireland.
-  **Michele Speitz** packed a whirlwind of activities into 2019, a year made full by visits back home with her family in Northern California, a summer fellowship at the National Humanities Center in Durham, three months in the UK while leading the British Isles Program in the fall, and last but not least, a week in southern Spain visiting dear friends.
-  **Joni Tevis**, David, and Caroline (now 9 years old) visited Wyoming last August, in part for essay research on Heart Mountain and the Japanese-Americans held there during World War II, and in part to visit Yellowstone. In October, Joni ran another half-marathon that featured many hills, because hills are her biscuits and gravy.

The English Department mourns the passing of John H. Crabtree on June 26, 2019. John Crabtree was an esteemed colleague, Shakespeare scholar, and teacher of undergraduate students and OLLI participants, and served the University as vice president for academic affairs and dean.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank our Department Assistant, **Melissa Browning**, and **Lynne Shackelford** for gathering the material, assembling the pages, editing, and producing the newsletter.





## Honor Roll of Donors

- ✦ Mr. Basil Manly V and Sandy Manly '76 [Alumna] from Davidson, North Carolina – generous monthly donations to our Endowment Fund: Crabtree-Stewart Lectureship in Literary Studies.
- ✦ Miss Elizabeth S. Baughman and Liz Baughman '00 [Alumna] from Elgin, South Carolina - generous monthly donations in budget support to the English Department Operation Fund.
- ✦ Mr. and Mrs. John B. Usher, John Usher '72 [Alumnus] from Springfield, Virginia –generous monthly donations to the English Department Budget-Enhancing Fund.



- ✦ Hayden Cox ('18) – Digital copywriter for SHUFE Media in Lawrenceville, Georgia.
- ✦ Savannah Wright ('19) – Enrolled in Duke Divinity School
- ✦ Noelle Warner ('19) – Employed by Skyboard Video Gaming
- ✦ Zachary Treu ('15) – Senior Unit Manager at National Geographic Partners

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### SHARE YOUR NEWS!

English alumni and retired faculty are invited to share updates. Our faculty members are always delighted to hear from former students and colleagues. Please return this form by mail or scan and attach to an email. We look forward to hearing from you!

Last name:

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Any news you'd like to share with Furman English Department: