



Department of English Language and Literature

Message from the Chair



Prof. Kevin McGuirk

Several years ago the Department of English got a new name: the Department of English Language and Literature. Occasionally we receive queries: do we teach English as a Second Language? The answer is No, I'm afraid not. English is in our name because it happens to be our tongue. For us the term Language may actually be more important than English, because we are interested in the power of the word, a power sometimes called rhetoric. Literature is there because it is an instance of the word in its most concentrated, illuminating form. Literature tells us about language, the most sophisticated and powerful technology known to human society. And language, of course, tells us about everything. Are we the Department of Everything? Not quite, but we see the kind of thing we do as broad-ranging and highly pertinent, indeed crucial to understanding human cultures, human technologies, and the natural surround of both, even as our primary work might be defined more narrowly: the study and production of the critical, creative, and designed word—past, present, and looking forward to the future. As the new dynamic banner on our website states it: English at Waterloo is contemporary and traditional. If you are an alumnus, I hope this newsletter calls to mind the importance of rhetoric and literature. Possibly most of you, still alert to the power of the word, are reminded of this every day, pleasurably and otherwise. If you're just a sojourner in cyberspace who happened upon us, please use it as a portal to our growing website. Either way, I hope you enjoy a new feature: interviews with interesting alumni. This year we talked to three. Professors Shelley Hulan and Linda Warley interviewed Robert Thacker (MA '76), author of a recent biography of Alice Munro, when he visited campus on September 27 to receive an Alumni in Academics Award; and I had a conversation by email with Jason Schneider (BA '98), music journalist and novelist, and Andrew Vincent (BA '97), songwriter and performer, about Canadian music, writing in the cultural sphere, and studying English.

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In addition, let me say: we'd like to hear from you! Tell us about what you've been doing since you graduated, so that we can include additional alumni profiles and news in later issues of the newsletter. Write to our Administrative Assistant and Department Webmaster, Maureen Fraser, at engalum@uwaterloo.ca. Finally, all the best in your endeavours this year!

Across the Creek

Acting Chair Gary Draper is on a well deserved sabbatical leave until Jan 1st, 2008 and his place is being taken by Carol Acton. We welcome new and returning instructors over the Fall and Winter terms: **John Corr** (101A), **Margaret Sweatman** (108E), **Andrew Deman** (208B), **Kelly Teahan** (210H), **Nadine Gingerich** (210I), **Tim Paci** (217), **Veronica Austen** (251A), **Pat Zettel** (305A; 305B), **Dorothy Hadfield** (316), **Cara DeHaan** (108F), **Kim Jernigan** (201), **Ryan Devitt** (251B), and **Jacqui Smyth** (336). In other news, **Tristanne Connolly** was Visiting Scholar in the Contemporary Literary Studies Department at the University of Tokyo in May and June and gave lectures and classes on Canadian and Romantic literature at the Canadian Embassy and at universities throughout Japan. **Ted McGee** wrote the program notes for the Stratford production of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and participated at Stratford in a panel with directors and actors on the theme of "The Outsider" in Stratford productions this season.



St. Jerome's also has a fine lineup of visiting writers for its reading series: Sonnet L'Abbe, Trevor Cole, Robert Moore, Sharon Thesen, Tamas Dobozy, Alayna Munce, and Patrick Lane will be reading and discussing their work over the next six months. Check the St. Jerome's website <http://www.sju.ca> for specific information.

—Carol Acton, Acting Chair, Department of English, St. Jerome's University

New Faculty

Rebecca Tierney-Hynes is delighted, if rather surprised, to find herself back in southern Ontario. After having completed her degrees, both graduate and undergraduate, at the University of Toronto, she moved to Boston to teach at Suffolk University, but Waterloo's irresistible charms drew her back almost immediately. She is an eighteenth-centuryist who works primarily on what she likes to call "the afterlife of genre." In other words, she studies the way discussions of genre and generic change appear in literary and philosophical texts, and what those discussions tell us about eighteenth-century theories of mind. Her last big project, currently in revision, was on ideas of romance and eighteenth-century theories of identity. She's now distracting herself from her revisions by beginning a new project on satire, the aesthetics of ugliness, and moral philosophy. She lives in Toronto with her partner, Sarah, and two small but demanding striped cats.



Our New PhDs

One of the biggest developments for the English Department in recent years has been the expansion of its highly successful PhD program.

Over the years several of our PhD graduates have written award-winning dissertations, and many have secured tenured and tenure-track positions in universities across the continent. Here the members of this fall's incoming PhD class--at 11 new students from across Canada, the US, and Russia, the largest group to date--are introduced:

Jessica Antonio received her BA from Thompson Rivers University and her MA from the University of Saskatchewan, both in English. Her research interests include trauma theory, Canadian and women's literature, and post-colonial studies.

David Arthur gained his BA from the University of Guelph and MA from McMaster University. His main area of interest is in Victorian novels--mostly the later nineteenth century, but occasionally drifting as far as the late eighteenth or the early twentieth centuries.

Stephanie Bell has an honours degree in English and Religion & Culture from Wilfrid Laurier University. Her primary field of interest is composition theory and pedagogy, but she is also interested in theories of communication, rhetoric, and language.

Jason Hawreliak took his honours BA in English at the University of Waterloo and his MA at Wilfrid Laurier University. His research focus is on post-colonial theory and literature, especially the role of mimicry and hybridity in the texts of major Caribbean authors.

Christine Horton gained her BA in Political Science and honours English from the University of Western Ontario, and her MA in English from Wilfrid Laurier University. Her current research interest is in post-colonial literature and theory.

Alexis McQuigge did an honours BA in English at the University of Guelph and an MA in English at McGill University, where she also worked at the Burney Centre. Her research interests include eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women's writing, and colonial literature.

Jason Park has a BA in Philosophy from Sungkyunkwan University in Korea and an M.F.A. in fiction writing from the University of Iowa, USA. His wide-ranging research interests include philosophical literature, cross-genre fiction, surrealist literature and film, contemporary American poetry, and the French writers of the nouveau roman.

Meredith Quinn Powell earned both her MA and BA at Wilfrid Laurier University. She is interested in post-modern theory, American literature, African literature, and human rights and international relations.

David Shakespeare took his honours BA in English at the University of Toronto, with a minor in Philosophy; and he holds an MA from Wilfrid Laurier. His general research interest is in British romanticism; more specifically he is interested in the working class in William Blake's poetry.

Danila Sokolov has a specialist degree, cum lauda, in English Studies, and a Kandidat Nauk (graduate degree) in Comparative Literature, both from St. Petersburg State University, Russia. His research interests include early modern non-dramatic poetry, critical theory, film theory, and psychoanalysis and hermeneutics.

Kevin Ziegler received his BA from the University of Saskatchewan and his MA from Queen's University, both in English. His current area of interest is contemporary Canadian graphic narrative.

For more profiles of our MA and PhD students, click [here](#).



The UW Dickens book club is now in its fourth year. New members, whether from the community or at UW, are always welcome to join. Contact Kate Lawson for more information klawson@uwaterloo.ca. (Pictured L to R) Gail Corning, Claire Wilson, Kate Lawson, Sally Haag, Viktor Haag, David DeHaan, Joel Rodgers, Andrea Chappell, Carol Upton.

Department News

FACULTY

Kathy Acheson is the recipient of short-term fellowships at the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Paul Mellon Centre for the Study of British Art. Both are in support of her book on Visual Rhetoric and 17th Century English Print Culture.

On Friday, October 12, the Waterloo Early Modern Studies Group sponsored its first public lecture. M.J. Kidnie (University of Western Ontario) spoke on "Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation" in the W.K. Thomas Library. The Department of English co-sponsored the event.

STAFF

Norma Snyder has stepped down from her position as Chair's Secretary. Norma was an Admissions Records Clerk in the Registrar's Office prior to joining the English Department. She transferred to the department in 1989, when she took up the position of Graduate Secretary. Norma became Chair's Secretary on November 15th, 1991 and served in that capacity for over fifteen challenging years of '90s cutbacks and '00s growth Departmental Chairs that Norma served with over the years include **Gordon Slethaug, Bill MacNaughton, Murray McArthur, Lynne Magnusson, and Kevin McGuirk**. We wish Norma the very best in all her future endeavours.

We welcomed two new staff members this year. **Jennifer Lehman**, our Graduate Program Assistant, joined us in May 2007. Jennifer came from the Biology Department where she was Graduate Program Co-ordinator for 7 years. In undergraduate studies we welcome **Jenn MacSporran**, Undergraduate Program Assistant who previously worked for the Distance Education Department. **Maureen Fraser** our former Undergraduate Assistant is now the Departmental Administrative Assistant. **Ilona Haus**, former Undergraduate Assistant, has just published a new fiction entitled *Blue Valor*.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

PhD Defenses include:

Veronica Austen, '07 (Supervisor: Kevin McGuirk). "Inhabiting the Page: Visual Experimentation in Caribbean Poetry."

Lara Varpio, '07, (Supervisor: Catherine Schryer). "Mapping the Genre of Healthcare Information Work: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Interactions Between Oral, Paper, and Electronic Forms of Communication." At the past October Convocation Lara was awarded the Alumni Gold Medal for outstanding PhD Dissertation.

Other News:

Christine Robertson (BA '06, MA '07) has won a PhD Canada Graduate Scholarship and is off to the University of Toronto.

Erin MacDonald (MA '98, PhD '05) and her husband **Robert Muhlbock** (MA '00) are the proud parents of a baby girl. Erin is happily settled at Fanshawe College as Professor of English/Communications.

Erin Charter (BA '05) won a SSHRC Canada Research Grant this year and is at Ryerson in their Communication and Culture program.

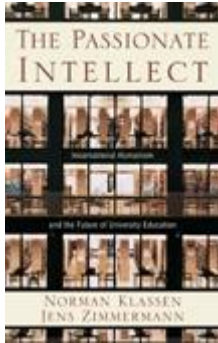
Geoff Burt (BA '05) also won a SSHRC CRG and is doing an MA in International Relations at University of Toronto's Munk Centre.

Joanne DiNova (MA '97, PhD '03) has accepted a tenure-track position in the Department of Professional Communication at Ryerson University.



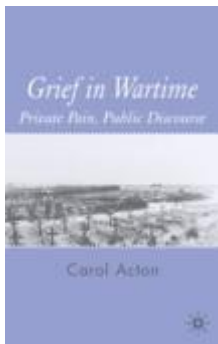
Dr. Lara Varpio
Alumni Gold Medal Recipient

RECENT FACULTY PUBLICATIONS - NEW BOOKS



Norman Klassen and Jens Zimmermann, *The Passionate Intellect: Incarnational Humanism and the Future of the University*, (Baker Academic, 2006).

This book takes up the theme of humanism and puts it into the context of changing commitments in the institution of the university from the Middle Ages through the Enlightenment to postmodernity. Citing evidence and discussion of an institution in crisis, this book argues for the relevance of faith commitment as part of the life of the mind and of a viable humanism. *The Passionate Intellect* is written in the first instance for Christian students who may be uncertain how to affirm intellectual endeavour in general and how to negotiate the ideological terrain of the contemporary university. Other students, particularly those in the humanities or with a humanistic outlook, will also find that *The Passionate Intellect* provides a means of contextualizing disciplinary issues within a broader framework.



Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime: Private Pain, Public Discourse*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Drawing on private expressions of grief expressed in letters, diaries, memoirs and poetry, Carol Acton focuses on the lived experience of wartime loss and on the power of the dominant public narratives to shape and control private experience of grief and its articulation. She shows how the experience of bereavement challenges the binaries through which war is constructed, 'home' and 'the front', 'ally' and 'enemy', and collapses constructions of war that confine it within geographic limits and dates. Since prescribed bereavement behaviour in British and North American cultures is gendered, and since the defining and regulating of gender roles becomes extreme in a country at war, the author pays particular attention to the gendering of representations of loss in wartime.

A Note from the Editor

As many readers of this newsletter already know, the English Department at the University of Waterloo is thriving: we have an ongoing program of new faculty hiring and development, with an important, new senior position being advertised this year; an intensified and growing graduate program; and a group of popular undergraduate degrees, including a literature and rhetoric honours degree (to name just three areas of success).

Do let us know what you think about our programs, courses, and the material in this newsletter. Would you like to see further interviews in future newsletters? Would you like to know more about faculty research activities? Alumni: send us an update on you and yours for the alumni news section of the newsletter--we love to hear from you. And thanks for your financial support, too: your donations help us as we seek to deliver the best student scholarships and awards, the best learning environment, and the best new research in Canada.

Sincerely, Fraser Easton

English Department Alumni Interview



Robert Thacker, Author, of *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives* (2005)

“...it felt like being in a cave.”

“... there was this literary tradition of imaginative confrontation with the prairie-plains as landscape that had already happened in terms of an imaginative divide. Margaret Laurence had the decency to admit it, but most Canadian writers haven’t.”

An excerpt from: An interview with Robert Thacker (for the full interview, click [here](#))

Robert Thacker is Professor of Canadian Studies at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York. Professor Thacker earned his degrees in English Language and Literature at Bowling Green State University (BA), the University of Waterloo, Ontario (MA), and the University of Manitoba (PhD). He is the author of the first major literary biography of renowned Canadian author Alice Munro. *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives* was published by McClelland and Stewart in 2005. A recipient of the Molson Research Fellowship, he has also published on Willa Cather, prairie fiction and English-Canadian literature, and was editor of *The American Review of Canadian Studies* from 1994 to 2002.

Linda Warley: [Your book on Munro] is the end of a big project. [T]here are years of work that have gone into it.

Robert Thacker: Not only that, it felt like being in a cave. Literally. I worked at home in my basement; I had good lighting. I’d start at five o’clock in the morning and come up for what I called my second breakfast when Debbie [my wife] got up, and by then I had done three or four hours. I mean you do the work because you want to do it, but the point was to try and get as much of the archival stuff out there as I could, because my own feeling is that there are so many great archives that we just don’t use by and large. And you can’t just blame it on theory. You can blame it on other things. I sometimes think it’s laziness, because [archival work] is hard work: you have to go in there, you have to re-arrange your life, you have to put your rear end in a chair, and you have to go in there every day and see what’s there.

Shelley Hulan: As you mentioned, another big part of your academic life has involved thinking about regionalism, and you teach both Canadian and American literature and research them. We were wondering about what parallels or differences you see in regionalisms in Canada and the U.S.

RT: I’ve helped out in the last couple of years with a couple of anthologies of Canadian and American Western history. I think it’s really interesting in terms of the different exceptionalisms that come to play in each. I came to Canadian literature at a time when there were several books which were claiming the prairies as Canadian space. Any Canadian writer who wrote about the prairies—Grove, Stead, and others began in the 1920s—would have known James Fenimore Cooper, Hamlin Garland, and Willa Cather. In other words, there was this literary tradition of imaginative confrontation with the prairie-plains as landscape that had already happened in terms of an imaginative divide. Margaret Laurence had the decency to admit it, but most Canadian writers haven’t. There are other interesting anomalies. The fact that [Wallace] Stegner’s *Wolf Willow* is a book that is far better known in this country than it is in the United States. *Wolf Willow* is a great regionalist text. What I mean by exceptionalisms too is that in America exceptionalism is all the usual bombastic stuff—patriotism, we are the best, and so on. In Canada it’s the reverse of that—it’s as Canadian as possible in the circumstances. I find that—the interplay and the back-and-forth, who would have read whom—these kinds of questions fascinating. In recent years I’ve been thinking about what do I do now? I’ve basically decided on Munro and Willa Cather and I’ve done a little bit of work on Emily Carr and a few other people.

To read the whole interview, click [here](#).

An excerpt from: a conversation with Jason Schneider and Andrew Vincent (for the full interview, click [here](#))

Jason Schneider (BA '98) is the co-author of *Have Not Been the Same: the Canrock Renaissance, 1985-1995* (ECW Press 2001) and the author of a novel, *3,000 Miles* (ECW Press, 2005). He is active in the K-W area as a music journalist and he is an assistant editor of Canada's national music weekly, *Exclaim*. **Andrew Vincent** (BA '97) is a songwriter and performer, a technical writer, and a PhD candidate in Culture and Communication at York University. His CDs include *To Thine, A Short Trip with the Pirates*, and *I Love the Modern Way*, all with Kelp Records (Ottawa). The conversation, facilitated by **Kevin McGuirk**, took place when Andrew was in Waterloo for Thanksgiving.



Andrew Vincent

Andrew Vincent: I've been doing most of my research in what I call small-scale cultural production.

Kevin McGuirk: Give me an example of that. Are you mostly talking about record labels, like Kelp Records, or are you talking about performers?

AV: One of the most interesting things to me about local music production and small-scale music production is the connections between a variety of small labels, smaller venues, places where musicians work part-time, bars, and how those very small localized sort of things are actually connected to larger sorts of things.

Jason Schneider: I think that was like a big epiphany I had while doing the book. It pulled back the curtain on what the life of a musician is like, especially in Canada. Because even with the most successful Canadian artists, they're still barely making a living. We mentioned Mary Margaret O'Hara. She's like a cult figure around the world, and I remember seeing her on Queen Street in Toronto. No one recognized her, she can go into any place in Toronto and no one has a clue who she is. But it got me to see that the music business in Canada is just tiny, and the people really have to work hard to get anywhere.

AV: Well, as the book points out, despite the fact that the industry is small, a lot of great music is still put out, and without that much money. Why does the book end with '95?

"there were a bunch of bands coming out [and] we used to just lump them all together, call them *Our Mother Moist!*"

JS: It wasn't arbitrary. I guess we could kind of see, once you get up to '95, that was the time when the idea of a star system kicks in. That was the time when there were a bunch of bands coming out—I hate to even say it—*Moist* and *I Mother Earth*—we used to just lump them all together, call them *Our Mother Moist!* Just bands like that, they would seemingly come out of nowhere and the major labels would say, well, these guys have the look and the sound, and if we just throw a whole pile of money at it, they'll become big. And they did, and that was running contrary to what we perceived to be happening in the ten years before. Before that, major rock labels were still focusing on classic rock bands, for lack of a better term, people like Bryan Adams and Tom Cochrane, because that was what radio wanted. But by '95, that was all changing.

KM: Were you at St. Jerome's, Jason?

JS: Yep.

KM: Because I noticed that in *Have Not Been the Same* you thank [St Jerome's professors] Stan Fogel and Eric McCormick.

"...the first class I had was with Eric. It blew my mind."

JS: Actually, the first class I had was with Eric. It blew my mind. It was really inspiring. And I'm sure that everyone says that about him. I'd finished journalism at Conestoga, so I was already working a little bit. There was a weekly magazine around here, before *Echo*, called *Id*, and that's where I got started. For some reason, though, I felt like I needed that English degree. To read the whole interview, click [here](#).

Michael Bryson (BA '92) is the author of two short story collections, "Thirteen Shades of Black and White" (Turnstone Press, 1999) and "Only A Lower Paradise" (Boheme Press, 2000). His story "Six Million Million Miles" appeared in "05: Best Canadian Stories", edited by Douglas Glover. Since 1999, Michael has also been the editor of the online literary journal The Danforth Review (<http://www.danforthreview.com>). More information can be found at www.michaelbryson.com.

Christine Fischer Guy

I've been writing freelance journalism for 15+ years now, among other writing things, since finishing my MA. I'm most excited about the fiction I've been working on for the past 4 years.

I have two short stories forthcoming in *Descant* and had two fiction reviews in the Globe and Mail this year. I've also been reviewing fiction reviews for *Books in Canada* and *Women's Post*, a small paper that is nonetheless read by the literary community. I did an 'inverse omnibus' review of Orhan Pamuk's book *Snow* for Bookninja.com with poet Adam Sol (you can find it here: <http://bookninja.com/magazine/spring2006/pamuk.htm>) this year too. Last year I published my first short story, a flash fiction, in a new literary journal called *Grimm*. You might have heard of it—one of the editors is based in Kitchener, the other in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Shelly Sanders Greer (BA'86)

I received a graduate degree in journalism from Ryerson in 1988 and am a freelance writer for the *Toronto Star*, *Canadian Living*, *Canadian Family*, *Maclean's*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Homemaker's*. I also taught journalism at Sheridan College for two years. Now I am trying to expand into larger writing projects. I have written an historical fiction novel for middle grade readers and am looking for an agent, and I'm working on a non-fiction book with a professor at Nipissing University. My husband and I have three children, who do not want to become writers because "it looks like too much work!" You can see some of my articles on my web site: <http://home.cogeco.ca/~shellywrites/> and can reach me at shellywrites@cogeco.ca.

Heather Cicinski (BA '76)

After graduating from UW, I attended York U (teacher's college), and after that Queen's U (Kingston) for A.Q.s. While I am currently teaching Grade 4, I am qualified to teach to Grade 12, with Honours in English from Queen's. As well, I have obtained Part 1 (of 3 Parts) in Librarianship and in Special Education. Lots of fun.

Peter Abrams (BA '76)

Upon graduation from UW in 1976 I, like so many other English grads, continued my education at Duncan MacArthur Hall at Queen's. After the apparently requisite stint as a supply teacher at various local public and high schools, I was hired to do an "LTO" (long term occasional) at Bowmanville High School. I taught English—and Math! for a term and waited for word from my Principal about whether or not the teacher I had replaced would return. As luck would have it he didn't and I was hired to teach English full time in the fall of 1979. I have been there ever since. This year will be my twenty seventh year on staff at the school. I have one or maybe two years to go until retirement.

Guest Speakers

The English Department Speaker Series, organized by **Ken Hirschkop**, was pleased to host talks by two world-renowned scholars in 2007: Terry Eagleton of Manchester University and Jerome McGann of the University of Virginia. Terry Eagleton, author of "Literary Theory" and perhaps the world's leading English-language authority in that field, spoke to more than 100 people on March 30 on "The Death of Criticism". The talk explored the continuing importance of critical writing in literary studies for critical social thought. In September Jerome McGann, a noted critic of Romanticism and a leading figure in the use of digital technology for humanities scholarship, spoke on "The Opening of the Field: Online Scholarship in the Humanities (2007)". McGann wanted to emphasize both the possibilities and difficulties of using the new media for collaborative online scholarship.

Although Eagleton and McGann are the best known of recent visiting speakers, they are just highlights from an ongoing programme, which this year included visits from Michael Groden of the University of Western Ontario, Caroline Bassett of the University of Sussex, Lee Mitchell of Princeton University and our own Randy Harris (visiting us from his sabbatical!).

I have in the meantime been married for eighteen years, have two children, Cameron and Heather, and my wife, who began her career as a visual art teacher, now teaches violin to private students. She teaches the Suzuki method to about thirty students a week. I think this approach involves something to do with motorcycles and their maintenance but I am no violinist. I am an erstwhile Suzuki motorcycle rider and it did sound at times much like the sounds I sometimes hear emanating from the studio in the house when she is having a novice student-often under seven years old-practice his first bowing!

I have been back to 'Uniwat '(is that acronym still used?) only once recently and I was struck with the incredible changes the place has undergone in the intervening years. I remember when the trees in the arts quadrangle were still saplings being held up with T-bars and twist ties or whatever it was that was used. Now the place is a veritable Eden with shade! I remember it being so open and sunny. There was nothing between Village I and Village II. I remember Ron Eydtt when he was some officer of the University and not just a name on a new residence. I am proud to have graduated from U of W and remember with real fondness and gratitude so many of my Profs; Dr. Roman Dubinski, Dr. Hibbard, Dr. McCormack and others who have undoubtedly retired.

Amy Rutherford (BA '00)

I went on to complete a master's in English at Queen's University. I now live in Kingston and work at Queen's as a library technician at the Teacher Resource Centre. I would like to get my Master of library science within the next two years. My husband Craig and I are most excited to announce the birth of our daughter Abigail Jane on July 3, 2006. I always think back with fond memories of my time in English at Waterloo!

Rod McLachlan (BA '06)

Following my graduation in April 2006, I immediately began Western's MA in Journalism program in May. I have loved every minute of it despite the lack of rest.

Currently, I am on a six week internship, as part of my program, at CBC Sports in Toronto. I'm working on the Hockey Day in Canada broadcast (Jan. 13, 2007). My RPW studies never cease to help me in some form or another, often when I least expect. As well, there are two other UW English RPW alumni in my program, **Arlen Panchoo** and **Tina McFadden**.

ALUMNI let us know what you are doing. Keep in touch by mail, fax, or email:

Department of English Language and Literature
Hagey Hall of the Humanities
University of Waterloo,
Waterloo, ON N2L 3G1

Email englalum@uwaterloo.ca or FAX 519-746-5788

