

Department of English Newsletter

Words Matter

Fall 2020 * Volume X, Issue I

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A Note from the Chair: Dr. Susan Goulding



We have heard repeatedly that hope is not a strategy. Indeed, it is not. But hard work is, and as we approach the 10th month of the COVID pandemic, we now have hope because so many have worked so hard: scientists, care providers, bus drivers, custodial staff...and all of you, faculty, staff and students. Through the darkest of the days, we now can see not only that this specific event, this virus, will lose its grip on us, but we can also see that when we give people room to do what they are good at, and when we work together in our various ways, our hopes can be real and substantial and not mere wishes.

As some of you know, I like to run (perhaps a term I use too loosely)—usually in the morning, along the boardwalk. On days when there is a west wind, there is a point where I turn back toward home, west off the boardwalk, and face this stiff (often cold) wind in a kind of wind tunnel. While maybe not quite a brick wall, it is halting; I often feel like one of those old cartoon characters, maybe Wiley Coyote, wheels spinning but going nowhere. I have felt like that for much of the last several months, working hard but unsure of progress. But now I take a step back, and look at all we have, through hard work and together, accomplished: we have continued meaningful education, we have made it this far. And the winds will abate as we move through spring, as we continue to work together.

Over these next few weeks, though, we all need to rest our muscles, all the various kinds of muscles we have exerted so hard. Please take time over the winter break to be with families and friends in whatever way you can do so **safely**; please take time to recognize your own accomplishments, which may not be the usual ones but which are equally if not more worthy of celebration. You have my deep appreciation, students, faculty, and staff alike, and my best wishes for a warm and relaxing—and healthy—winter break.

~ Susan Goulding, PhD
Chair, Department of English



MONMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH





**Dr. Kristin Bluemel,
Professor**

***“I bet one of the
secrets to
completion is to
get to work
immediately. “
- Dr. Bluemel***

How to Win a Leverhulme Visiting Professorship

by Kristin Bluemel, Ph.D.

My story about the twenty-two month long process of conceiving, proposing, and winning a Leverhulme Visiting Professorship at Newcastle University in England is probably as interesting as the research aims described in the grant application itself.

The first thing to know about the award is that it is granted to the host institution, not the visiting professor. My offer letter from the Leverhulme Trust was forwarded to me by the Newcastle University English professor and Dean of Research who is my sponsor and the official grant recipient, Dr. Matthew Grenby. This Leverhulme Trust letter offered no guidance about navigating around COVID-19 restrictions, but did stipulate that I should be referred to in all publicity as Leverhulme Visiting Professor Bluemel and that Newcastle University should get credit for winning the grant. In other words, I could cherish a fine sounding English title all I wanted, but real credit goes to Newcastle University and Dr. Grenby. This is all fair and above board, given that I never could have won the grant on my own, but it does seem odd to spend nearly nine months drafting and redrafting a document, only to cede ownership over its ideas to other people and institutions. This is what scientists do all the time, but we humanists are used to sole proprietorship over our inventions, even after significant editorial input.

The second thing worth knowing is that any successful Leverhulme application will be treated like a top secret document. Initially, Dr. Grenby had asked me to begin drafting application materials without understanding that I had no access to the application form. As you can imagine,

this initial draft was not promising. When Dr. Grenby sent me samples of past successful Leverhulme applications, along with stern injunctions to share them with no one, the scales dropped from my eyes. Elite institutions like Newcastle University remain elite in part because they simply do not share with regional institutions like Monmouth University the kinds of writing—the distinctive grant language, rhetoric, and logic—that lead to successful, high prestige awards like the Leverhulme Visiting Professorship. It really is not about the fundamental integrity

three professionals in various Newcastle University administrative offices read, edit, and improve the application. Most mystifying of all was my discovery that once the grant application was complete, I had no control over its submission. That job fell to the Newcastle University grants office, which waited until the last 24 hours prior to deadline to hit “Submit.” Apparently that, too, is one of the secrets to winning a Leverhulme Visiting Professorship.

Due to the pandemic, my visit to Newcastle will begin in January



Photograph: www.ncl.ac.uk

of the research itself. In my case, my research on rural modernity, children’s book illustration, and Thomas Bewick—the 18th-century Newcastle wood engraver, illustrator, naturalist, and writer credited with transforming print culture in the West—had been at the center of every conversation about my Leverhulme application. What changed was the institutional context in which that research could be pursued, an institutional context so different from Monmouth’s as to transform the stature and meaning of the research itself. This context includes an office devoted to administering grant applications; in addition to five Newcastle faculty who gave me feedback on my draft, I must have had two or

2022 rather than January 2021. That means I have more than twelve months to figure out the secrets to completing in a six month visit all the goals of writing, lecturing, teaching, networking, service learning coordination, one-on-one advising, archival work, museum programming, conference organizing, and journal editing that Dr. Grenby and I described in the application. I bet one of the secrets to completion is to get to work immediately. After all, when I am in northern England I want to have enough spare time to wander along Hadrian’s wall, visit Northumbrian castles, and get to know the friendly locals in pubs, at agricultural fairs, and border shepherd shows.

M.A. Coffee Hours Encourage Conversation

by Mikaela Manarang

During these unprecedented events, it is now more important than ever for Monmouth University to create a place for students and professors to have conversations and form connections. The English M.A. program has found a way to continue to build bonds with their students in spite of these troubling times. The program has set up and organized events to highlight the success of the graduate faculty. These events, the M.A. Coffee Hours, are a place where the faculty are able to share their works and give the students advice for their futures. As Dr. Azcuy explains: "We [Monmouth University] began the 'Coffee Hours' via Zoom in Fall 2020 as a place for students to meet faculty teaching in the MA programs in English (Literature, Rhetoric & Writing, and Creative Writing). The format is a casual introduction to the professor and an open conversation and interaction with the group. It is a terrific format for students to meet new faculty teaching in the program or with professors whose field they might be considering for study, thesis, or a career path. Some students attend because it's nice to visit

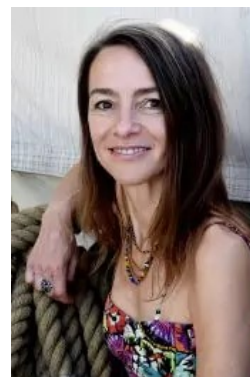
with their peers and professors outside of class time. It is also an excellent opportunity for students to ask our impressive faculty about their journeys inside and outside academia."

During the Coffee Hour held on Wednesday, November 18th, Dr. Mihaela Moscaliuc spoke about her year-long sabbatical during the 2019-2020 academic year. "The sabbatical was delightfully productive, even with the slowdown during the pandemic," she says. "I published a book of translations I had been working on for a few years, a co-edited anthology that appeared this fall (*Border Lines: Poems of Migration*), and a critical article (in the journal *Critical Romani Studies*), and finished a collection of poems titled *Cemetery Ink* (University of Pittsburgh Press) that is coming out this spring. I wouldn't have been able to do most of that without the sabbatical."

Her work ethic can be contributed to her great love for poetry and her devotion to her craft. Such enthusiasm for her craft is an inspiration to Monmouth University students.

Moscaliuc additionally spoke about that, during her sabbatical, she shifted her focus onto a genre of poetry she called "Pandemic Poems." These poems, as she described, were not necessarily about the pandemic nor the isolating effects of quarantine but they were rather about similar topics and themes that she wrote about previously. She explains that the effects of the pandemic inspired her to look at topics pertaining to the cultural crisis from a different perspective.

Dr. Moscaliuc continues to be hopeful, using poetry as a beacon for positivity and optimism. "I truly believe that poetry can make things happen—hopefully, mostly good things," she explains. "I started writing poems late, in my mid-thirties. After three collections, I remain a beginner, and perhaps always will be. That's not necessarily a bad thing. Each time I sit down to write, I'm filled with both excitement and apprehension." We encourage all Monmouth students to attend these Coffee House events in the future, not only learn from the faculty but to also create relationships with the professors and their peers.



Dr. Mihaela Moscaliuc,
Assistant Professor

**"Each time I sit
down to write,
I'm filled with
both excitement
and
apprehension."
- Dr. Moscaliuc**

Toni Morrison Day Announcement

by Diana Turcios

The Department of English is excited to announce that it will be hold the Second Annual Toni Morrison Day event which will be held on February 18, 2021. Toni Morrison Day allows the Monmouth community to partake and celebrate the work, activism, and voices that she uplifted.

Toni Morrison was a renowned author and civil rights activist who unfortunately passed in

2019. Through her works and life, Toni Morrison has impacted and elevated the lives of many, especially of those in marginalized communities. She dedicated herself to the acknowledgement and fight against oppression and spoke out against the dangers of privilege.

The daylong celebration will be virtual, with both synchronous and asynchronous events. A

symposium will include both faculty scholarship and pedagogy as well as student contributions. There will be participants from multiple academic disciplines from the University as well as invited guest speakers. Please look for further details in early January.



Toni Morrison



Dr. Migalí Armillas-Tiseyra

“We started this Series to introduce students to scholars who are working in critical new fields of inquiry and discovery in which we engage our graduate programs . . .”

- Dr. Azcuy

Inaugural *Scholarly Speaker Series*

by Deanna Venezio

On November 20th, 2020, we welcomed Dr. Migalí Armillas-Tiseyra, an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Penn State University, for her lecture, *The Dictator Novel: Writers and Politics in the Global South* and discussion as the inaugural *Scholarly Speaker Series* event. The English department's Graduate Director, Dr. Mary Kate Azcuy, discusses the newly developed *Scholarly Speaker Series*' relevance and importance for Monmouth University: “We started this Series to introduce students to scholars who are working in critical new fields of inquiry and discovery in which we engage our graduate programs—in literature, rhetoric and writing, and creative writing—and interdisciplinary conversations with gender, intersectionality, and global issues. Thus, our collaboration with PGIS and IGU. These scholars introduce their current work via a short lecture and then discuss their research, writing process, and scholarly endeavors via a question-and-answer period with the audience.”

We are very fortunate as a de-

partment to be offered these opportunities at a virtual distance. Dr. Armillas-Tiseyra's Zoom presentation delivered astute discourse for our students. Her lecture included the opening pages of *The Dictator Novel*, where she discusses the importance of the dictator being a “fictional character removed from historical references”:

To read the dictator novel solely for its attack on the dictator obscures its examination of the systems within which dictatorship takes shape. Such readings risk overlooking the complex ways in which novels about dictatorship also intervene in larger debates, whether on the internal difficulties of national consolidation, the role of external and global force in sustaining dictatorship, or even the political function of writing itself. (Armillas-Tiseyra 4)

Not only does she suggest a more open mind when understanding African and Latin American literature, with a focus on the “intersection of large-scale comparative frameworks and political system,” but she applies

theoretical discussions and debates regarding the systems.

She taught us that the dictator as a character is often absent in a majority of a novel's content and focuses on the narrative and how characters work their way through these environments through “socially charged” rhetoric. We come to learn how these dictatorships came to fruition in the first place. With that being said, she has an authoritative ability to tell crucial stories with grace and conviction.

Finally, I asked MFA in Creative Writing Director, Assistant Professor Alex Gilvarry, for his ideas on Dr. Armillas-Tiseyra's astounding lecture: “We don't really see the dictator novel being written in America, but Magali's work is so important because it highlights the parallels we do have in our political system. It's as relevant as ever. Her work also reminds us of what great art and literature are supposed to do.” I agree with Professor Gilvarry. Authors like Dr. Armillas-Tiseyra set the bar high for the next generation of writers.

Department Student Achievements

MA Theses and Manuscripts Defended

Brittany Cote, “Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*: Magical Realism or Gothic Hybrid?” Fall 2020.

Charles Chipman, *Turnbuckle: A Novel*. Fall 2020.

C. John Schoonejongen, *Take This Longing*. Fall 2020.

2020 Graduates

July/August 2020— 5 UG

January 2021 — 10 UG, 4 GR



Delta Sigma Chapter

by Melissa Lauria and Professor Beth Swanson



SIGMA TAU DELTA

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

During the Fall 2020 semester, the Delta Sigma chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at Monmouth University has been committed to remaining active and providing a supportive community for our members, even during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Despite limitations on indoor gatherings, which have drastically changed the way we organize and host our events, our Sigma Tau Delta family remains strong.

Due to the safety protocols in place on our campus, our general member meetings are now held remotely every two weeks. Often, before meetings, our members share stories, laughs, memories, and experiences over Zoom, just as we would during any other semester when meetings are held in classrooms. We have also transitioned our annual Life After Monmouth Workshop Series to an online platform, hosting two successful (virtual) academic workshops. Our October workshop, "Thinking About Graduate School?" was hosted by Dr. Stan Blair and Judith Shingledacker, current graduate

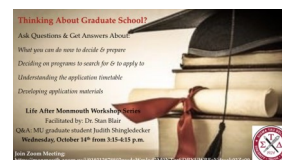
student and Secretary for Sigma Tau Delta. During this workshop, we learned how to navigate the graduate school selection and preparation process. Our November workshop, "Thinking About Academic Conferences?" facilitated by our Chapter Advisor, Prof. Beth Sara Swanson, introduced students to the basics of conference selection and proposal writing.

Sigma Tau Delta strengthened our commitment to fundraising and supporting our philanthropy partner, Catsbury Park—a small, non-profit animal rescue organization in our neighboring community of Asbury Park. During the fall semester, we successfully ran a virtual popcorn fundraiser through DoubleGood, which raised significant funds to go towards the establishment of the Dr. Prescott Evarts Memorial Scholarship fund. We are also presently using social media outreach and Venmo to collect donations from our members, which we will use to purchase much-needed Amazon Wish-

list items that will support the rescue efforts of our friends at Catsbury Park.

We are also proud of Sigma Tau Delta's new Mentoring Program, which pairs Sig Tau members with first and second-year English majors. We envision this program as an important opportunity to reinforce our sense of community and emphasis on supporting academic excellence, especially during these trying and isolating times.

As the fall semester nears its end, we are looking forward to next semester, when Sig Tau will participate in the Student Symposium on Toni Morrison Day. This event will feature student work focused on themes linked to Morrison's life and work. Sig Tau will also hold one of our favorite annual events: Blind Date with a Book! Books will be available for pick-up in the Library, with more details to come. Sig Tau members will also have the opportunity to attend two more academic workshops on topics pertinent to the English major and life after Monmouth.



Sigma Tau Delta held a variety of events throughout the Fall 2020 semester.

The Delta Sigma Chapter is proud to welcome the following students as new members. The annual Induction Ceremony is being planned for Spring 2021.

Sigma Tau Delta Fall 2020 Inductees

Allison DeGrushie

Shannon Johnstone

Annamarie Maneates

Shannon McGorty

Elaine Meeks

Emma Varga



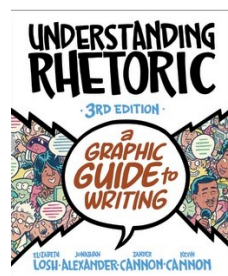
Jonathan Alexander

Author Jonathan Alexander Visits College Composition I Class by Professor Linda Sacks

What happens when academic authors meet graphic designers? The surprising result is the popular English composition textbook, *Understanding Rhetoric: A Graphic Guide to Writing*, now being published in a 3rd edition by Bedford/St. Martin's.

On November 30th, Jonathan Alexander, the Chancellor's Professor of English and Informatics at the University of California, Irvine, Zoomed in to talk with the students in EN 101 H2, an Honors section of College Composition I taught by Professor Linda Sacks. "I emailed Professor Alexander to tell him how much my students were enjoying *Understanding Rhetoric* and asked if he would like to visit the class," Prof. Sacks said. "I was very happy that he accepted my invitation." In anticipation of Prof. Alexander's visit,

the students prepared some questions about *Understanding Rhetoric*, co-authored by Elizabeth Losh, and illustrated by award-winning cartoonists and comic book authors Kevin



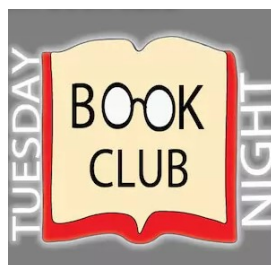
Understanding Rhetoric: A Graphic Guide to Writing. 3rd edition. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2021.

Cannon and Zander Cannon. "Why a graphic textbook?" they asked. In response, Prof. Alexander shared the details of how

and why this unique take on the traditional composition textbook was created.

Prof. Alexander said that he had always been a fan of comics and graphic books. When he proposed the idea of writing a graphic textbook to his co-author, she was all in. Alexander and Losh lived near each other in California at the time, so they often discussed plans for the book over a home-cooked dinner. Deciding on the content for the book was only the start. When they met with Cannon and Cannon, they began to understand that the graphic representation was just as important in conveying concepts. For example, most pages are divided into boxes. In a chapter titled "Why Rhetoric?" three equal-sized boxes feature the

Continued on page 7



Learn more about the Series at www.monmouth.edu/mca/series/tuesday-night-book-club/.

Join the Tuesday Night Book Club

by Diana Turcios

The Tuesday Night Book Club concluded their last book review of the semester on December 15, 2020 with Amor Towles' *A Gentleman in Moscow*. The novel follows aristocrat Alexander Rostov as he becomes jailed in the luxurious Metropol Hotel in Moscow. He is sentenced to remain in the hotel while the politics, people, and world around him continue to change. After all, a hotel is only nice to stay in when one knows they will eventually go home. While Count Alexander is technically imprisoned, he never views it as such. Instead he takes comfort and enjoys the finer things in life, like a nice bottle of wine or the conversations with the people who visit him in the hotel. "A Gentleman in Mos-

cow" is a novel that reminds the reader to appreciate the things that people tend to overlook when they are focusing on bigger issues. Most importantly, the aspects of life that never go out of style like honesty, dignity, and integrity.

The now Virtual Book Club is hosted by Professors Kenneth Womack and Michael Thomas. They began the book club once they received several requests from members of the community begging for one. Dr. Womack viewed the request as a great way to share amongst the Monmouth community books that they loved and books they did not love as much. Now, Tuesday Night Book Club has a full line up that that everyone can enjoy. Dr. Womack described next semester's line up

as, "a great sense of variety!" The lineup contains different forms of literature expanding from contemporary classics, to short stories and non-fiction. The Tuesday Night Book Club is an excellent way for individuals to share their passions for reading in an open environment with other individuals who appreciate a well written piece of work. Although individuals are required to read the entire book, all are welcome and may participate in the discussion. Dr. Womack encourages students and other members of the community to tune into the virtual book club because, "sharing in the experience of learning about a work can be a great mean for previewing a book that might just change your life!" Join the book club's virtual meetings, held monthly on Tuesday nights at 7:30 p.m.!

M.F.A. in Creative Writing Welcomes Guest Speakers

by Mikaela Manarang

Throughout the fall semester, the M.F.A. Creative Writing Program has welcomed published authors to Monmouth University to encourage aspiring writers to pursue their passion by telling stories of their own experiences in the literary world.

Professor Gilvarry, Graduate Program Director for the M.F.A. in Creative Writing, explained how crucial it is for the University to create a space where Monmouth students and published writers can have conversations and therefore nurture the students' creative aspirations. Professor Gilvarry says: "It's important for continuing our literary community on campus, especially now during the pandemic, and it's important for the writing students in our M.F.A. program to hear direct from the authors themselves. These events make our M.F.A. students part of the discussion of literature."

Guest Speakers for the semester have included Seth Fishman, Megha Majumdar and Arcelis Girmay. On November 11, 2020, Sarah Gerard spoke about her experience in the writing field by telling stories about her time as an M.F.A. student, her relationship with publishers, and her experience

as a creator. The meeting began with Gerard reading "The Killer," a fictional story she wrote.

Gerard described her journey towards becoming a writer, which began when she was growing up in Florida. Her father, a writer, fostered her love for storytelling and allowed her to explore her relationship with literature, becoming a mentor for her. In college, she found herself with a deep fascination in Shakespeare because, as she

said, she was enthralled by his works; the depth of his writing, both his plays and his sonnets, captivated Gerard, and she explains that the fact that there were always more things to find, more things to analyze, in Shakespeare's works fueled her love for his writing. This fascination with books and stories grew even stronger when Gerard discovered her love of words, their meanings, and how they came together to create complete and cohesive stories.

During the Q & A session, Gerard explained that she strives to teach readers a lesson by placing her characters in situations where they are forced to confront a problem. Her characters, as she described, are very much a collec-

tion of people that she knows from her life, even saying that some of her characters are an allusion to herself. She emphasized the idea that the audience must get a sense of who the author is through his writing, even if the writing is sometimes fictionalized. When reading, the readers must feel like the author is telling them a secret. Sarah Gerard very much exists in her books and she wishes for the students to do the same in their writing.

The M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program plans to continue this series next semester, inviting three more writers to be guest speakers—one in poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. The Monmouth University students have benefitted greatly from these Guest Speakers as they were able to communicate directly with those who are part of the literary profession and learn from their life experiences. Professor Gilvarry encourages Monmouth University students, even those who are not part of the M.F.A. program, to attend these events as everyone can learn from these writers.



Sarah Gerard

**"...[I]t's
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- Prof. Gilvarry**

Author Jonathan Alexander Visits . . .

(Continued from page 6)

classical appeals of Ethos, Logos, and Pathos, showing how these concepts can work together in a text.

While drafting and designing the book, characters emerged, too. Losh and Alexander became cartoon versions of themselves, and other characters, including traditional and non-

traditional college students and historical figures from Socrates to Frederick Douglass, peopled the text. "How do I come across?" Alexander asked the students. Some said that he added humor to the book, something not usually present in college textbooks. "I'm the foil," he agreed. "Elizabeth is the voice of reason!"


One silver-lining of meeting on Zoom is the opportunity to invite guests from all over the country to share their perspectives. Professor Alexander's visit to EN 101 H2 was thought-provoking and memorable. It's not every day that students meet the author of their textbook!


MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH

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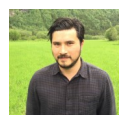
(Right, clockwise) Monmouth University saluted healthcare workers and first responders; An aerial view of The Great Hall at Shadow Lawn; The Versailles Room in the Great Hall was transformed into a classroom; Dr. Kristin Bluemel visited Campgaw Mountain Reservation; Edie Hetzel took evening walk with her family; Sigma Tau Delta students held virtual meetings; Dr. Womack took a break from Zoom; Sue Starke celebrated the end of grading by decorating her home; Bethany Dickerson relieved pandemic stress by baking; Dr. Estes shared the view at Newfound Lake in NH; Corinne Cavallo captured a beautiful sunset; Prof. Nikki Nicola spent quality time with her daughter; Dr. Estes hiked at Big Sugarloaf Mountain in NH; Signs were posted across campus to re-mind all about safety protocols; Prof. Joel Stone spent some time outside; Dr. Goulding's dog, Phoebe, attended all of her Zoom classes; Prof. Amanda

(continued right)

EN Faculty news...



Dr. Mary Kate Azcuy returned from a sabbatical abroad as a Fulbright Scholar in Russia.



Prof. Alex Gilvarry appointed as Graduate Program Director for the M.F.A. in Creative Writing

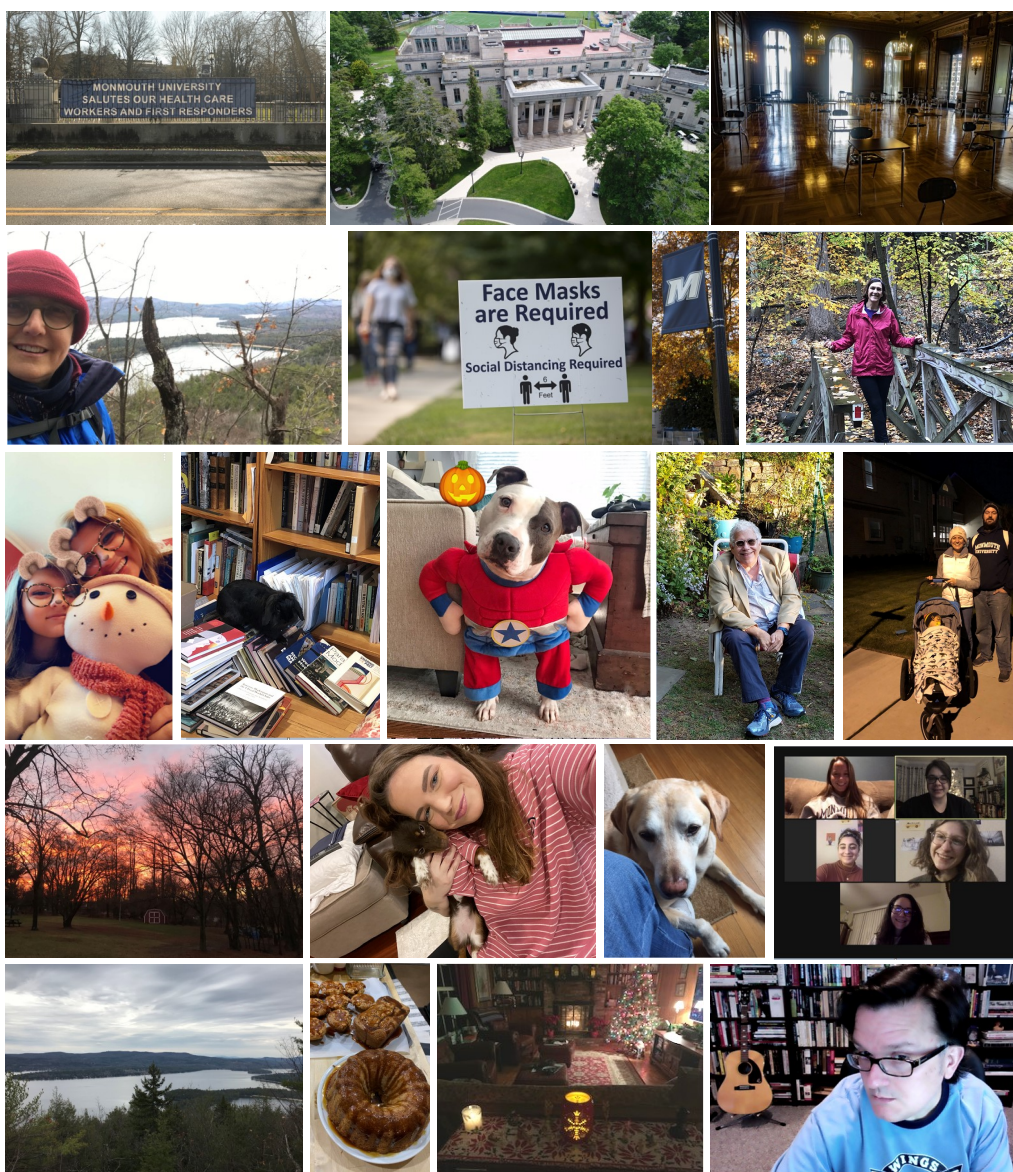


Dr. Kristin Bluemel wins Leverhulme Visiting Professorship at Newcastle University for Spring 2022.



Dr. Mihaela Moscaliuc returned from a year-long sabbatical.

A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words



cont.) Connelly twinned with her dog, Nugget; Dr. Bluemel's rabbit, Milo, sat atop all of the entries in the Modernist Studies Association First Book Prize for 2020; Corinne Cavallo's dog Tucker saved the day!