

FALL/WINTER 2023

GIVE ME GOOD NEWS

The Department of English Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4

What's up with you?

Our English faculty share their latest updates and adventures!

Patrick Chura

Patrick Chura worked with Fermat's Last Theater Co. of Madison, Wisconsin to organize the U.S. premiere of Albert Maltz's long-suppressed 1952 play, "The Morrison Case," a hard-hitting drama about a worker in the Brooklyn Navy Yard who is accused of being a communist and summoned to a Truman-era Loyalty Board hearing. The audio play, with Chura's introduction, is available on the [Fermat's Theater webpage](#).

Bill Thelin

Bill Thelin taught Sports through Film and Literature for the first time this past semester and loved it! He learned about a number of good films and novels during his research--far more than he could possibly use--and looks forward to teaching the course again. If anyone has any suggestions for the future, send them his way!



Alan Ambrisco

Alan Ambrisco has two poems appearing in this winter's edition of *Willows Wept Review*, scheduled for release December 16. The poems, "Urban Gardener's Dilemma" and "Another Ohio Howl", can be read at <https://willowswept.com> once the edition posts.

Other poems by Ambrisco are scheduled for publication in the spring 2024 semester. *Eunoia Review* will publish "Garden Party in Gehenna," "How to Love an Old House" will appear in *Kestrel: A Journal of Literature and Art*, and *Black Fox Literary Magazine* will publish "Dry Horizons".

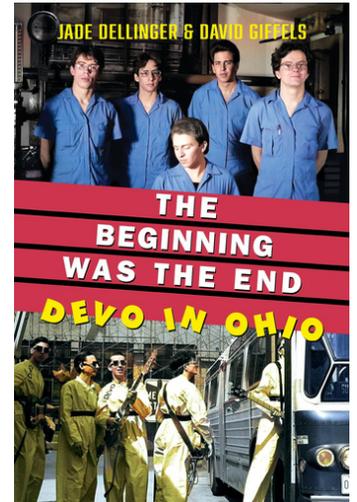


David Giffels

David Giffels spent the fall presenting readings and talks across Northeast Ohio and beyond to promote his latest book, *The Beginning Was the End: Devo in Ohio*, coauthored with Jade Dellinger and published by the University of Akron Press.

This definitive account of Devo's vibrant early history tells the unlikely story of a collection of creative misfits who formed a musical kinship, drawing material and inspiration from the industrial Midwestern environs of Northeast Ohio. With the May 4, 1970, Kent State shootings as a catalyst, Devo channeled protopunk energy into a sprawling art project that would pioneer the use of music videos, innovate technology in pop music, define the aesthetic of the 1980s New Wave/MTV era, and maintain an edge of social, political, and cultural criticism that continues their relevance fifty years after their formation.

Bestselling author Jonathan Lethem calls the book "readable, funny, and comprehensive ... an extraordinary prehistory of Devo before they are plasticized in cartoon fame."

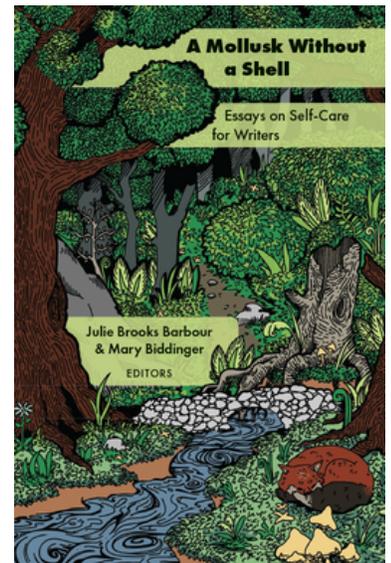


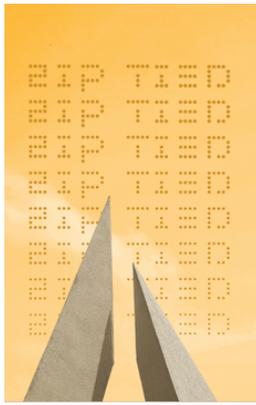
Mary Biddinger

Mary Biddinger is putting final touches on [A Mollusk Without a Shell: Essays on Self-Care for Writers](#), a volume co-edited with Julie Brooks Barbour of Lake Superior State University, forthcoming from the University of Akron Press in spring 2024. About this book, reviewer Gale Marie Thompson states, "This well-organized collection of essays is a love letter to poets, a guide for the care of the actual writer behind the pages." Additionally, this semester Biddinger's poems have appeared in *The Indianapolis Review* and *HAD*, and are coming soon in *Cherry Tree* and *Under a Warm Green Linden*. She also has five linked flash fiction stories forthcoming in the journal *Does it Have Pockets?*

In the fall semester Biddinger presented at the Literary Cleveland Inkubator conference at the Cleveland Public Library ("Editing the Region: Publishing, Place, and the Local in Literary-Cultural Production") and the Winter Wheat Literary Festival at Bowling Green State University ("State of the Poetry Book: A Conversation About Publishing Poetry Collections"). These conferences were especially enjoyable because undergraduate and graduate creative writing students from UA and the NEOMFA attended. Biddinger looks forward to the upcoming Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) conference in Kansas City this February, where she is part of the event "(More than) Crisis and Loss: Writing Female Mid-life" as well as two offsite readings.

Over the holidays, Biddinger will be attempting the Taylor Swift cat-on-shoulders photo shoot with her tortoiseshell kitty, Blanche.





Extra! Extra!

A new student publication is here!

Students celebrate their connection to one another in *Zip Tied*, a collection of creative writings that they made in Writers on Writing in Spring of 2023. Published this week, *Zip Tied* is free to all and available in the front office of the English department in Olin Hall.

Conversation Partners

AT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

The English Language Institute (ELI) directed by Dr. Wei Zhang welcomes all students to use the space, play a board game together, and learn about each other's culture and language. In Spring 2024, ELI is starting its Conversation Partners program to pair an international student with a native English-speaking student to promote friendship across language and cultural boundaries. We welcome students of all majors to join the program. If interested, just stop by ELI right next to the English Department in Olin Hall to sign up or email us at ua-eli@uakron.edu with the subject line: Conversation Partners. Hope to see you at ELI!



Read any good books lately?

Check out our faculty's recommended reads!

Bill Thelin

- *How to Sell a Haunted House* by Grady Hendrix

David Giffels

- *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin
- *Punch Me Up to the Gods* by NEOMFA visiting writer Brian Broome
- *The Eyes and the Impossible* (Deluxe Wood-Bound Edition) by Dave Eggers

Alan Ambrisco

- *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver

Mary Biddinger

- *Yellowface* by R.F. Kuang
- *Real Life* by Brandon Taylor
- *All-Night Pharmacy* by Ruth Madievsky

Tales from the Classroom

featuring

Dr. Hillary Nunn

Students in my ENG 316: Shakespeare's Mature Plays class took up lab work this term to learn first-hand about early modern healthcare practices. No worries – their experiment making a seventeenth century lip salve wasn't dangerous. But students did come to realize how much knowledge is hidden in the seemingly straightforward text of the era's recipe books. The result was a better understanding of the medical know-how that characters like Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well* could claim despite their humble origins.

Students made their lip salve from a recipe found at the Wellcome Medical Library in London. After dividing into groups, each student group received the required ingredients: beeswax (courtesy of the UA Biology department), butter, rosewater, and sugar. Each group had to figure out how and where to make the salve, working with a recipe that didn't offer many specifics. And they had to record images so that they could compare their methods with others.



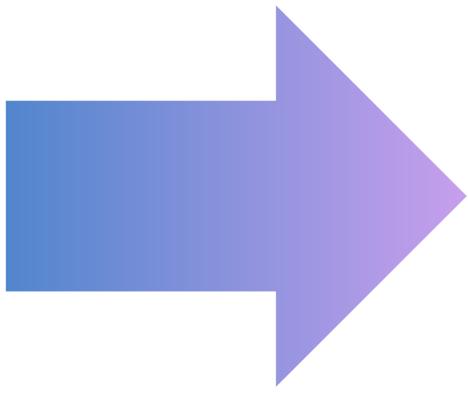
To make Lipps Salve . . .
Take half a pinte of rose-water putt in about the bigness of a large Walnut of fresh butter without any salt, and about the bigness of a large grey pea of Bees-wax & the bigness of a walnut of fine loafe sugar. Boile all together, & when cold take the Salve of the water.



Abby Divine, CJ Jacobs, and Olivia Kurylo settled on the Bierce Library public microwave for their experiment's location. "Nobody asked what we were doing," Olivia reported, but she added "we did get strange looks and side-eyes from the people in the commuter corner (which we all found pretty funny)." Other groups met up to try the experiment in classrooms, their own homes, or even campus parking garages, where they all had to guess at what "butter the size of a walnut" meant as a measurement.

Despite the lack of specifics about amounts and timing, each group produced something that worked as lip salve. They brought their samples to class, and even compared notes about the experience via Zoom with students at North Carolina State University who had made the same recipe.

You can check out the steps Abby, CJ, and Olivia went through to make their lip salve [on their narrated Powerpoint here](#).



NOW THAT'S A GOOD

STORY!

Featuring Jim Wallace

As composition instructors, we are generally with students on their first day of college classes, and frequently we spend their first year with them. After that, though, they often fade out of our lives as they pursue their degrees and, later, their careers.

Occasionally, a bond will form, and we stay in touch past the first year.

Joan Wood (UA '19) was one of those students for me. Joan was an international student from Dominica, and we met on her first day of classes at UA, spent her first year in composition 111 and 112, and developed a friendship after that.

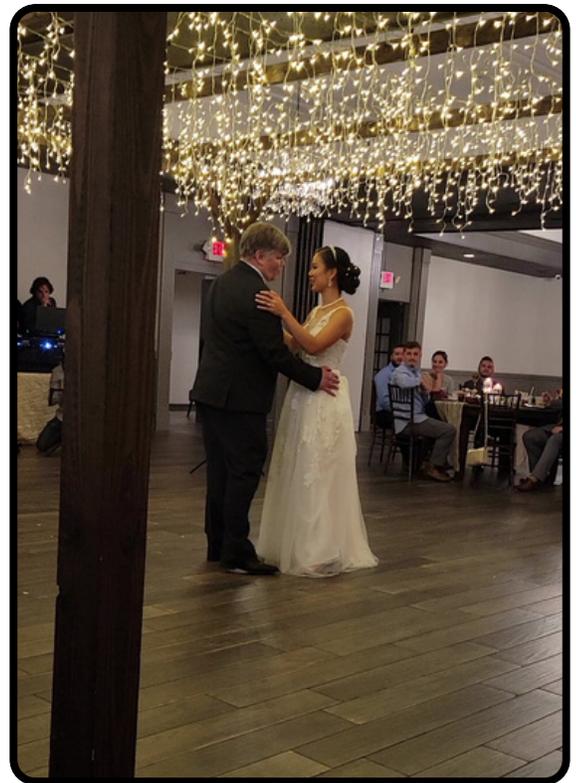
For my wife, Iris, and I, it was like having a daughter: we'd get updates on new groups she had joined, awards she'd received, but instead of asking for money, there would be requests for recommendations, advice on writing, or we'd be invited to awards ceremonies. I remember being woefully underdressed for the celebration when Joan was selected as one of the top ten students in her graduating class (in my defense, I'm a bit of a social idiot, and I had to run there from student conferences).

When Dominica and Puerto Rico were hit by [Hurricane] Maria, Iris and Joan spent weeks talking on the phone, sharing updates on their families, and comforting each other.

At Joan's request, I was on stage for her graduation from the College of Engineering, among the first to congratulate her, and couldn't imagine being prouder of her for all she'd accomplished at UA. As Iris often says, we'd clearly been adopted.

To my surprise, I was given the honor of standing in for Joan's father this last September when she got married (her mom and dad had moved back to their home country after Maria), and it was an unforgettable night.

If you'd told me back in the Fall of '88 when I started teaching at UA that someday I'd be dancing with my "daughter" at her wedding, I would have not believed you, but there I was.



Jim dancing with Joan at her wedding



Hello friends,

Happy Holidays to all! It has been a wonderful semester full of new and old faces in our classrooms. This semester, we congratulate the following graduating seniors with the English BA and wish them well as they open their next chapters.

Mat Cruz (accelerated BA/MA)—will be taking graduate courses only starting in January

Ainsley Doyle
Garrett Formick
Emma Lehman
Lennon Medvick
Jennifer Parr
Thomas Purdon II
Joshua Robinson
John Thomas
Connor Van Maele

We will also be awarding four minors and two certificates.
Congratulations, graduates!

The department has been livelier than ever; we love seeing students and faculty congregating. Make sure you stop in to grab a cup of coffee, say hello, and contribute to our interactive whiteboard (thanks to the amazing Kate Christie)! I am also here to help anyone who wants to review courses, DPRs, or career opportunities.

Have a wonderful, restful break.

*See you all next year,
Lisa*



Dear English Department Colleagues, Students, and Friends,

Let history books reflect that Fall 2023 semester was the one where the Olin Hall 362 seminar room once again became a center of activity in the English department. This room was returned to its former glory as a place where creative writers in multiple genres—grad and undergrad—shared their work around the seminar table, and Senior Seminar students discussed research projects in progress. I would say that today the seminar room exceeds its former incarnation (and I'm not just talking about the radically improved carpet and paint), perhaps because we have a greater appreciation for activity in the department and the pleasant banter of our students.

If the English department has a heart, that heart would probably be the Keurig, but maybe English departments have more than one heart, and the seminar room is that second heart we almost forgot we had. This is a lengthy and mildly poetic way of saying that something in our department has been restored and we are hearing it in the laughter permeating the Olin 301 suite, the dynamic repartee between our students, and the abundant spirit of positive morale.

Thanks to all for your part in making the English department a happy place. I look forward to seeing you in 2024 for more good things.

All the best,

Mary B.



Upstart Crows

at the Green Dragon Inn!

The Upstate Crows packed the Green Dragon Inn in downtown Akron for their first Open Mic Night event of the year on Thursday, October 5th. Over 50 students shared their creative works with an enthusiastic crowd, which included friends and family, as well as patrons from beyond the university.



Upstart Crows officers Chloe DiMario and Scott Kenimond organized the event, which lasted just under 3 hours. The University of Akron Press donated books for the prize packages, and they also provided limited edition bookmarks. As Chloe said in thanking everyone for their time and support, "What a talented bunch of writers. We really love you all!"

Just Married

Administrative assistant Kate Christie (née Tasseff) was married to Brock Christie on August 25th, just before the start of the Fall semester. She is happily settling into her new life in Macedonia, OH and is still getting used to her married name!





DON'T FORGET

The semester kicks off
Tuesday, January 16th!



**thanks for
reading**

SEE YOU NEXT TIME!

Submit your updates for the next
edition to Kate Christie at
kit4@uakron.edu!



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