Language and Literature Majors Are a Diverse Group
by Abby Tregre, Martha Castell, & Alexis Arabie

We asked our departmental majors to discuss why they chose this field of study. The answers are as different and as interesting as they are. Here are five of their stories.

“Take a writer away from his typewriter and all you have left is the sickness that started him typing in the beginning.”
-Charles Bukowski

All English majors are indefinable and have specific reasons for choosing this path as their professional career. Here at Nicholls, there is a diverse and unique group of people pursuing areas of concentration in English: Creative Writing, Literary Studies, and Writing and Rhetoric. The skills gained in these areas are applicable to every career option.

Our students’ future plans are as varied as the ways that they came to choose this field.

Q: Why did you become an English major? What or who inspired you?
A: “I became an English major basically to rebel against my father, who wanted me to become a culinary major like he was. After taking one of Dr. Kennedy’s classes where he spoke of what an English major actually is, it intrigued me.”

Q: What is your favorite piece of literature?
A: “Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman.” Brandon is deeply inspired by Walt Whitman’s Leaves of Grass, which has affected his life in different ways.
Q: Why did you decide to become an English Major?
A: “I would describe myself as always having been a creative person. In a poetry and drama class that I had decided to take, I wrote a poem, and the professor immediately told me to change my major to English, if it was not already. It was like I was always meant to be an English major, but I was denying myself.”

Q: What are your plans after you graduate?
A: “I’m not ready to say good-bye just yet, but I only have one semester left. Saying that, I might pursue my master’s at another university, although I’m looking to get lost and find out what I’m looking to pursue for my master’s first. I’m looking to other areas of study, such as philosophical studies, theology, and world mythology for a focus in my master’s degree.”

Q: Why did you become an English Major? What or who inspired you?
A: “I have always had a passion for writing, but writing became more important after the death of my father. His death took my writing to a new and darker level, which developed my expression through the years. He was/is my inspiration every day as my writing becomes stronger. Obviously my urge to write led me directly to the English major.”

Q: What are the plans for your future with your writing career?
A: “I plan on going to graduate school. I do want to go out of state so I can get more experience outside of Louisiana. I will not be gone long because I love my city, New Orleans.” Zavier wishes to publish her poetry and pursue different writing techniques from another viewpoint and meet new and different writers.

Q: Who have been your favorite professors so far?
A: “Banville, Kennedy, and Perkins were professors that taught classes that I took pleasure from. Kennedy performed a humorous impression of what reality does to the human being by using a piece of chalk to represent a person and a heavy book to depict reality, which crushes the chalk/person. Kennedy also brings in different aspects of art to discuss literature, which is an effective way of learning about it.”
The new and exciting creative writing minor arrived at Nicholls this past spring and is open to students of all majors. Mass communications, music, art, and history majors are all among those involved in the creative writing minor. The minor helps students to develop better writing skills, which will be beneficial in occupations such as copy editing, online and traditional publishing, and magazines.

The creative writing minor requires the completion of 18 hours with a minimum grade of a C in all English courses. The courses include English 265 (Introduction to Creative Writing) or English 266 (Nonfiction Prose Writing), English 311, English 312 (Creative Writing Seminar--Fiction), English 430 (Writer’s Workshop), and at least 6 additional semester hours of 300-level literature or film electives.

Dr. Katherine M. Conner was the first creative writer hired at Nicholls State University, followed by three faculty members, Mr. Jay Udall, Mr. Nick Mainieri, and Dr. Lance LaPlante who were hired after the retirement of two former creative writing professors. The creative writing faculty started a writing and reading series, where students and faculty listen to each other’s work. There are three readings a semester, and the faculty are planning more.

“Creative writing isn’t easy. Creative writing is a personal kind of writing—it’s not the same as formal academic prose. That doesn’t mean it’s playtime either. Because a lot of the time people think, ‘oh, creative writing, that’s easy,’ when it’s actually really hard if you are doing it well,” according to Dr. Conner. Creative writing is fiction, poetry, a personal essay, or creative non-fiction, which is a blend of fiction and non-fiction. “People say it has to be all real, but at the same time, you’re embellishing to follow along with the narrative thread.”

Along with the other instructors, Dr. Conner has established the online national literary journal Gris-Gris, which has attracted many students to the new minor. She hopes that the minor will continue to grow through the readings and other prospective events.

The creative writing club is in the development stage. Admitting that the planning process needs to start soon, Dr. Conner says that she and other members involved with creative writing in the Department of Languages and Literature look forward to working with new and younger students.
Nicholls State University has always sought to connect itself and this area to the national and international scene of literature, arts, and culture. Now, through the hard work of several professors and students, Gris-Gris has risen to cast a spell of its own brand of unique culture.

Dr. Ellen Barker, Department Chair of Languages and Literature, had the idea to create an online literature journal and recruited the creative writing team of Dr. Kathy Conner, Dr. Scott Banville, Mr. Jay Udall, and Mr. Nick Mainieri, all of whom have participated in publishing various journals and submitted their own literary work to journals throughout the country. In addition, the current English 432 Publishing Practicum class contributed as student editors in reviewing all work submitted, gave input on the new website, and organized the recent release party.

The creation process took a little over a year, and was funded by the generous donation of a former adjunct professor, Mr. Leo Lindner. Over five graphic designers were screened until the right one was found to create not only the right logo but also a website that evokes a mood similar to the Gris-Gris name itself.

“Gris-Gris conjures up images and associations with voodoo--spells, hexes, curses, and charms. But it also speaks to the crossing of boundaries, the mingling of cultures, and the layered history of this region itself. So it turned out to be the perfect title,” said Dr. Conner. She has always been drawn to the dark, the ominous, and the creepy, and said this region is somewhat famous for its haunted history, so this approach seemed fitting. On the particular reasoning behind the design of the website, Conner said, “I wanted something that would capture the rich cultural history of this region, including its Gothic undertones.”

Jay Udall reports the journal will stretch beyond traditional literature and will host fiction, poetry, music, dance videos, paintings, nonfiction, and various other media. Nick Mainieri states, “The separation between an online and printed version is we will offer more flexibility in digital media with limited costs.”

The first edition includes fiction and poetry by N. Scott Momaday; Ann Marie Macari; Julie Kane, the current Poet Laureate of Louisiana; Joseph Boyden, the Fletcher Lecturer for this year; and Jessica Pitchford; among others. Gris-Gris will host writers and talent from across the globe, delivering their work through our own digitally brewed cultural medium. Gris-Gris readers can look forward to an upcoming interview with Nick Spitzer, host of the radio program “American Routes,” to be featured on the website.
Enter the Writing Program Administrators (or as we like to call them, the WPAs), and to answer your question, there are four. The Writing Program Administrator himself is Dr. Scott Banville. Connie Sirois is the associate WPA. They oversee the first year writing program and handle the “logistical administrative stuff” according to Banville. Marly Robertson and Louie Charpentier are Assistant Writing Program Administrators, and they have more focused tasks. Robertson acts as a liaison between Nicholls and Fletcher Technical School to make transfer between the two schools more uniform. Charpentier works closely with the campus’ Writing Center to bridge the gap between the writing center and English department. He has also established weekly student composition workshops and related activities.

The WPAs’ primary mission is to promote good composition skills through effective teaching devices. This is because effective communication skills are extremely practical, regardless of one’s anticipated direction in life. Whether you enjoy writing or bitterly despise it, there is no question about the importance of writing well. To this end, the WPAs aim to provide students with the best tools for expressing their ideas to make the writing process a little less painful. “I could be onboard with students just not hating writing so much,” says Marly Robertson.

The WPAs provide workshops for university faculty that help instructors determine the proper way to go about scoring student work. The WPAs demonstrate innovative ways of teaching composition skills. “We want to spotlight and share cool things people are doing in their classes,” explains Dr. Banville. The WPAs facilitate a valuable exchange of ideas.

Dr. Banville advocates a “process approach” in which professors request drafts and/or make themselves available to review in-progress essays. This allows a one-on-one session where a professional can provide feedback and guidance to a student who is in the process of writing. This is important to the success of the composition, but also to the student’s overall education. “It’s very important that students understand the writing process, and not just the task,” Banville explains. “Writing is a more complicated matter than just grammar.” Another benefit is that the “process approach” discourages students from starting their papers the night before the due date.

The WPAs enjoy their work and express great confidence in their colleagues. Banville says that his favorite aspect of his work is seeing the cool things that teachers and students are doing. Charpentier likes to plan the faculty and student workshops. Robertson appreciates the growth of writers in her classroom. “It’s not just that we want students to be competent writers,” explains Marly Robertson, Assistant Writing Program Administrator. “We want students to be comfortable and confident in their writing. They should feel like they have something to say that is worth hearing.”

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Due to her selflessness, Kenna Coyle is considered an angel in Nicholls State University’s Department of Languages. English and foreign language professors who work with her know her compassionate, kindhearted, calm and collected personality. Kenna enjoys going above and beyond for her coworkers, her students, and the university. Kenna herself states, “I enjoy making others happy.” Her hospitality comes from her pure heart. She has made south Louisiana her home, and she gives the Department of Languages and Literature’s main office a welcoming and friendly ambiance, but learning the southern ways of Louisiana is an ongoing process for Kenna.

Kenna is originally from Lodi, Wisconsin, and she has lived several places in her life. From Wisconsin she moved to Louisiana, Missouri, Illinois, and back to Wisconsin. Kenna currently resides in Schriever with her husband and two stepdaughters. She plans to call Schriever home for a long time to come. She strongly believes it is important to travel and experience different cultures in order to appreciate them. Kenna’s decision to move back to Louisiana happened when Hurricane Katrina devastated her husband’s family. It was the hurricane, however, that made it possible for Kenna and her family to relocate permanently to Louisiana, and it brought her to the Nicholls’ community.

Administrative Assistant is now Kenna’s official position, although her colleagues would call her the office angel. Department Chair, Dr. Ellen Barker, states: “Everyone loves her; she has the patience of a saint, is always friendly, and is the best administrative assistant I have ever had.” Kenna’s main goal is for everyone to be happy, and she will go the distance to assure that happens. She also goes above and beyond in her work as she volunteers on three committees at Nicholls State University. She is an active member of the Awards Committee, Grants Committee, and the important Recruitment and Publicity Committee. She is the only administrative assistant at Nicholls State University to volunteer for committee work.

On top of her professional activities, Kenna has many interests and hobbies, and baking is one of her favorites. She regularly brings cupcakes, cookies, and cakes to her desk in the Department of Language and Literature. Kenna kindly shares her fresh baked goods with everyone who walks into her office. Besides baking, Kenna also enjoys hosting literature parties for the department, traveling, and taking in the scenery while being on the water.

The bodies of water in Louisiana are one of the reasons Kenna enjoys staying here. She likes to visit her Wisconsin home during the summer to avoid Louisiana’s heat and humidity. The Cajun culture allows her to share her hospitality with everyone around her. She loves trying Louisiana’s unique dishes, but cannot seem to get used to the spices. Kenna recalls that she grew up with a lot of meat and potatoes and was taught never to combine starches into one meal. “Seeing what you all call “Ragoût Patate” poured over rice was a bit of a shock for me.”

Kenna Coyle’s personality fits that of a southern woman. Now, if only she can get used to the heat and spices, she will become a true southerner! Southern or not, Kenna has something special which she shares with everyone, and that is her kind heart.
A common myth among most college students and people in the workforce is that you can pursue only teaching with an English degree. Through the works of many accomplished writers and college graduates, this myth has been proven to be false. With an undergraduate degree in English, students acquire skills in critical thinking and analysis. English majors have a variety of careers to pursue, including journalism, publishing, copywriting, business, law, and, yes, teaching.

Dr. Katherine Conner, Assistant Professor of English and Chief Editor of Mosaic and Gris-Gris literary magazines, earned her Ph.D. in creative writing from Florida State University. During her career as a writer, Dr. Conner has published several short stories, and she was paid for them. English carried Dr. Conner to different avenues during her career. Teaching was not the only option.

Dr. Richmond Eustis is Assistant Professor of English and Honors Coordinator in the Department of Languages and Literature. Dr. Eustis states that being able to interpret the English language “is an increasingly rare skill. People don’t know how to take anything beyond the surface meaning of a statement. English majors are better at that.” English majors are good at taking jobs that require critical thinking skills. The best jobs require these skills.

**English at Its Best**

Ellen Barker (Chair of Languages and Literature) says that one of the strongest preparations for admission to law school is majoring in English “Law school is a big essay test, and having a degree in English prepares you for law school,” states Dr. Shana Walton, who earned a Ph.D. in anthropology with a concentration in linguistics. “The LSAT test for law school requires you to have critical thinking skills, and critical thinking is a skill that English majors are required to have,” continued Walton. English majors average a 155 score on the LSAT.

In other words, “English Majors outscore students who have bachelor’s degrees in political science, liberal arts, sociology, education, accounting, and finance,” asserts Barker.

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**Minor in English**

According to Dr. Barker, “English is the perfect complement to any major. It assures employers that graduates have good written communication and analytical thinking skills.” College students obtain minor degrees in English for many different reasons. This extra skill can show employers that students can be valuable assets to their company and to the workforce. Nicholls State University now offers minors in film studies, creative writing, and cultural studies.

In addition to the areas of concentration in English, The Department of Languages and Literature has a series of new and diverse courses available to the student body. From the famous stories in the Bible to New Orleans literature, students will be able to take classes based on subjects that capture their interest and give those who are not familiar with these areas of study an unforgettable introduction. Many students and faculty members are excited about the new additions to the department. So, now can you honestly say that English majors can only teach?

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“Music and writing are the best human creations.”

Dr. Shana Walton
Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Department of Languages and Literature’s newsletter. This will be a yearly feature highlighting the past year’s events and upcoming events for the new year. Our department has been fortunate to experience tremendous growth in the last two and a half years. We have added several new faculty members who have helped to expand our areas of expertise; thus we have new areas of concentration for the majors in English, such as creative writing, literary studies, and rhetoric and writing. The department has also added new concentrations to the minor. In addition to English, Spanish, and French, we now have creative writing and film studies. We are also enjoying a record number of majors and minors, and this semester, Spanish will be offering a total of seventeen classes, so this subject is expanding.

In the fall 2012, the department launched its new national/international literary journal, Gris-Gris. This first edition featured the Pulitzer Prize winning N. Scott Momaday; Giller Prize winner, Joseph Boyden; and Louisiana’s poet laureate, Julie Kane. We already have many new submissions for the second edition. Spring 2013 will also mark Mosaic’s 50th anniversary. In addition, the creative writing faculty are offering a reading series available to all students on campus who would like to read from their original work. Typically such readings are scheduled on Wednesday evenings, so please look for announcements posted on the departmental web page or on flyers posted throughout the campus. The English Society is flourishing, and events associated with this student club will be posted on the departmental web page.

Be looking, also, for the announcement of two new clubs: the Creative Writing Club and the Film Club. Students of Language also host a variety of events throughout the year.

The department, in conjunction with Sigma Tau Delta, an English honors society, will be hosting the second Undergraduate Humanities Symposium this spring. This gives students the opportunity to present their scholarly work in a setting that duplicates the professional conference setting. Last year’s symposium was quite successful.

This first edition of the newsletter was written by students in my ENGL 366 class as part of their service learning project. I wish to thank the members of both sections of my 366 classes on their hard work. I also wish to thank Dr. Robin White for formatting this newsletter, and I would like to thank both Dr. White and Linda Stanga for their editorial contributions to this first effort.

In short, the Department of Languages and Literature is a happening department. We have faculty members from all over the country with degrees from many prestigious universities. We offer a welcoming environment and hope to provide all majors and minors with a friendly academic home.
English Classes!
The Department of Languages and Literature is offering more diverse English classes, even in freshman composition. As head of the department, Dr. Ellen Barker states, “We have not branched out as much on the [English] 101’s, but it is harder to do so because that class offers more of a narrative approach. We do have the Harry Potter themed 101, but students will not be reading Harry Potter. [. . .] Also, Professor Becky LeBlanc teaches a Bayou Studies 101, and she does some interesting things with that course. Her students even took a field trip down to Grand Isle.”

If students browse through the options of English classes on Banner for spring semester 2013, they will see that there are many unique themed classes being offered at all levels, such as English 101, Harry Potter; English 102, Japanese Culture; and English 210, Fairy Tales or 7 Deadly Sins.

Many students may have heard of new changes concerning classes in the semesters to come. With Nicholls State going toward a half day on Friday, many students want to know whether the number or diversity of classes will be affected. Dr. Barker responds: “Actually, it will work pretty well, and now I will have more flexibility when scheduling. [. . .] I will have more variety: MW, MWF, TTh, and three-hour courses that meet one day a week.” As the varieties of classes are growing, some students are curious what their English course options will be when scheduling for the following semester. If this is the case, students should log onto the Department of Languages and Literature website: Nicholls.edu/language/

Although many students take English classes just to fulfill their general education requirements, some schedule English classes for pleasure. In recent semesters there has been a growing interest in the English 210 themed courses and in the 300-level courses, such as English 316, Survey of British Literature II; English 322, Survey of American Literature II; and English 332, Drama, leading inquiring minds to wonder how the different English classes are created. Dr. Barker answers, “The Nicholls State faculty collaborate and share ideas, or individual faculty members tell me what they might like to teach in order to come up with new themed classes that students would be most interested in taking.”

Whether you are scheduling English classes as a gen. ed. requirement, as an elective, or just for pleasure, the Department of Languages and Literature offers a variety of choices for you!

by Kasey Autin, Jill Fremin, & Natalie Gros
“Yes, it has been a long road, but the film minor is officially here,” states Dr. Todd Kennedy, Assistant Professor in the Department of Languages and Literature, which has added a new minor in film studies. In addition, a new film club will start at the end of the fall, 2012 semester. According to Dr. Kennedy, “The minor in film studies is a program that will introduce students to the demanding study of film.” He says that the need for this program grew from students’ daily use of visuals.

**Fanatic of Films**

With a Ph. D. in 20th Century American Literature and Film from the University of South Carolina, Dr. Kennedy jumped at the opportunity to start the film studies minor and become the advisor to the new film club. Prior to coming to Nicholls, Dr. Kennedy was a visiting Assistant Professor at Tulane. The job at Nicholls has also provided him with a permanent position teaching American Modernism. His love for films is obvious in his office, which is decorated with various movie memorabilia.

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**Minor in Film Studies**

According to Kennedy, “The film studies minor can help show that the English major is well-informed,” and he adds that students will be better equipped to discuss numerous genres of literature. “The film studies minor will also help students who are not English majors. Students with this minor will stand out from the crowd when applying for jobs that use any type of digital media. The film studies minor will provide students with the skills to understand and analyze moving images, sound, plot, camera work, and many other skills.”

**Film Studies Sequence**

Dr. Kennedy emphasizes, “The only required course you have to take for the minor is English 240, Introduction to Film, which will be offered every semester and some summers.” Upper level film courses will be offered at least once a semester:

- ENGL 240 - Intro to Film
- ENGL 340 - Film Genres
- ENGL 341 - Major Filmmakers
- ENGL 440 - Themes in Film

Among courses either already offered or in the works are “The Western,” “Female Directors,” “The Body in Film,” “Woody Allen,” “The Road Film,” and “Musicals.” Languages and Literature will offer the following courses in the 2013 spring semester:

- ENGL- 340 Bollywood
- ENGL- 341 Woody Allen
- ENGL- 440 The Body in Film

(continued on next page)
Counting Credits

All film studies classes count as English courses at the 200, 300, or 400 levels. They will also help fulfill humanities credits or free electives. In order to receive a minor in film, students have to fulfill 18 credit hours.

Coming Soon

Dr. Kennedy explains, “The new film club will be under way by the end of the 2012 fall semester and will be open to individuals seeking a film minor or to individuals who enjoy watching movies. There is no fee to join the film club.” He predicts, “The film club will be a small, less intensive version of the English Society,” and he estimates that it will consist of ten to twenty students and could possibly grow to thirty students.

Still Captivated?

If you need more information about the film minor or the film club or if you are interested in taking any of the film classes offered in the 2013 spring semester, contact Dr. Kennedy in Peltier 246 or by email at todd.kennedy@nicholls.edu.

Of Special Note

Cercle Francophone French practice every Tuesday @ 5:30 p.m. at the Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center located at 314 St. Mary Street.

Check with Languages and Literature for our Creative Writing reading dates in the Colonel’s Retreat – Spring 2013.

Tac Tac 218 is a bi-weekly French and Spanish film series in Peltier 218 at 2:18 p.m. on specifically scheduled Mondays.

2013

JAN

FEB

Room 218 @ 2:18 pm

FEBRUARY 4: French Film: Amelie (2001)

FEBRUARY 8: Spanish Film:

MAR

Room 218 @ 2:18 pm

MARCH 4: French Film:

MARCH 18: Spanish Film:

MARCH 4: Jubilee: A festival of the Arts & Humanities

MARCH 22: Tresors du Bayou

MARCH 27: Mosaic Anniversary Party - Invitation Only

APR

Room 218 @ 2:18 pm

APRIL 8: French Film

APRIL 22: Spanish Film

APRIL 23-24: Humanities Symposium

MAY

5th: Cinco de Mayo
This year’s Fletcher Lecture was titled “Walking to Morning: A Reading and Lecture” and was presented by Joseph Boyden, a faculty member in creative writing at the University of New Orleans and recipient of the Geller Prize in Canada, an award equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize in the U.S., for *Through Black Spruce*. His two presentations consisted of readings from his work and discussion of his influences, including his large family. He has been working on producing a film based on his novel *Three Day Road*. He says there is one more book to follow *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce*, completing the trilogy.

The Fletcher Lecture Series was started by faculty in the English Department to honor Dr. Marie Fletcher, who was not only an original faculty member at Nicholls in 1948 but also head of its English Department. Shortly after she retired, she returned to Nicholls State University as an English remedial instructor until her death.

Last year’s Fletcher Lecture was presented by Dr. Darrell Bourque, former Poet Laureate of Louisiana, and was titled “In the Company of Others.” He delivered the 28th annual Fletcher Lecture.

Born and raised on a farm in Louisiana, Bourque earned his bachelor’s degree at what is now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and his master’s and Ph.D. in creative writing from Florida State University. He has made great contributions to Louisiana’s local literature and has inspired many young poets with his life’s work.
Nothing to Do on Nicholls’ Campus? Think Again! Think English!
by Julia Quebedeaux, Cory Meissner, & Tabetha Melancon

There are no shortages of opportunities to socialize, play, or learn throughout the semesters on the campus of Nicholls State University. And it is no secret that the University is abundant with students full of artistic, creative, and unique qualities. Nicholls State University has prided itself on its creative students by providing productive outlets for their creativity. One such outlet for the students is an event called the English Creative Reading/Writing Series.

The English Society at Nicholls and members of the creative writing faculty, consisting of professors Kathy Conner, Nick Mainieri, Jay Udall, and Scott Banville, host the Creative Reading/Writing Series. According to Professors Mainieri and Conner, the series was started by Dr. Conner and is only a year and a half old. Conner says she did something similar to the Creative Reading/Writing Series when she was a graduate student at Florida State University. When teaching a creative writing class of her own, she believed that the students’ reading their work to the class would not be enough and that starting the series would be a good way for English majors and other writers to network and share their latest work in a low pressure environment.

Professor Mainieri says, “The series provides a forum for students to share their written works with one another.” According to the professors, the program is similar to open-forum readings and gives students who will be working in the writing and literature fields the chance to experience what a public reading is like. Hearing other students’ work is also beneficial not only to English majors but to all students.

According to Dr. Conner, the Creative Reading/Writing Series started with about fifteen students, all from her creative writing courses. Now, over fifty students attend and are from all majors. Mainieri says, “At times, there has been standing room only. You’ll hear from a litany of English majors, students you know and whose work you enjoy, and then all of a sudden an engineering major will show up and rock your world with her poetry.” Due to its rapid growth, not only are writers of prose performing but musicians as well. The event takes place three times a semester, nearly once a month, in the Colonels’ Retreat. The series has been a continuously growing event, and, through advertisement, the English Society hopes to see it grow even further. Because the participants enjoy these meetings as well as learn from them, more meetings will be added next semester. The professors hope that, one day soon, they will be able to advertise in The Nicholls Worth. For now, students can find flyers for the Creative Reading/Writing Series on campus.

On November 7th, we had the opportunity to attend the last Creative Reading/Writing Series of the semester. Students had the chance to enjoy a laid-back atmosphere and exciting conversation. The readings were punctuated with funny introductions and gag prizes. Even though the participants joked around, some of the pieces were serious and emotional. This series seems to help students in that some participants read pieces that they had been advised on in previous interactions. Not only does this series allow students to express their work, but it also helps them to become better writers.
Due to the availability of classes and rise in interest, the Nicholls State University Department of Languages and Literature has grown from offering two Spanish sections in the fall of 2010 to six in the fall of 2012. Dr. Bryant Smith, a linguistics professor at the university since 2010, has been a great advocate for the foreign language program. Dr. Smith stresses the importance of learning another language to all of his students: “Having a minor in Spanish can be the edge that you need when applying for a job,” he insists.

Dr. Smith feels that because he learned Spanish later in life, he can offer “tricks of the trade” and guide his students to becoming successful foreign language speakers. The university is also thrilled to have Ms. Mabel Illidge on the faculty as a native Spanish speaker. Her presence in the department offers students different cultural and linguistic insights that only a person with the native tongue can convey.

In addition to Dr. Smith and Professor Illidge, there are other new faces teaching Spanish: Dr. Richmond Eustis and Ms. Sarah Vitale. Joining the faculty in the spring is Beatrice Roques. Professor Roques is originally from Mexico and received her degree from Louisiana State University. Some students at Nicholls have recognized the growth in Spanish culture in the South, so students are taking a second language as a minor to better their job opportunities. Whatever the reason, Nicholls State is very thankful for all the professors who have championed the importance of

The culture of South Louisiana has had French influences for three centuries. However, the French language specific to this region has been dying over the years. As a region, we need to stay excited about French to help keep our culture alive. French students have a great opportunity to study abroad through Nicholls’ partner institution in Nova Scotia at Université Sainte-Anne. Not many students are even aware of this prospect. This program provides cultural and linguistic immersion, which allows for our students to learn French quickly. Dr. Robin White, French professor at Nicholls, says, “Our folklore, cuisine, climate, agriculture, architecture, and lifestyles are so connected to West African and Caribbean Francophone cultures. The study of French, in and of itself, is the way to make connections between Louisiana, Canada, the Caribbean, and Africa.” She is passionate about sharing this information with the students of the university.

Dr. White explains, “A Department of Languages and Literature is about expression, ideas, debates, argumentation, and seeking new ways of expression.” Expanding foreign language in this department can only make for a better university. Together, with the right attitudes from faculty and students, this growth in foreign languages at Nicholls State University will accomplish wonders.

¡Adios!

Those who want to practice their French are always invited to Le Cercle Francophone every Tuesday at 5:30 at the Jean Lafitte Acadian Center on St. Mary St in Thibodaux.

Check out the Calendar in this Newsletter for French and Spanish films every other Monday at 2:18 p.m. in room 218 Peltier.
Hooked on English
by Kristen Benoit, Jordan Chiasson, & Amanda Betts

When he explained the literature, I felt as though he was casting a spell. I was hooked,” Dr. Michele Theriot says as she recalls an English teacher she had in college. Originally an accounting major, she was inspired to change her major to English. Continuing on to earn her M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, she eventually came to work here at Nicholls in the Department of Languages and Literature. Dr. Theriot began advising both English and general studies students in 2000 and is now the Undergraduate Advising Coordinator for the department. In addition to her advising duties, she also teaches freshman composition and literature classes, but she “also devotes a lot of time throughout the semester and the summer to advising students. There are always questions about courses, career choice, changing a major, transfer questions, etc.”

English candidates can earn a Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in creative writing, literary studies, or writing and rhetoric. Minors include English, creative writing, film studies, French, or Spanish.

As an advisor, Dr. Theriot states that she sees many Nicholls students questioning what classes fulfill the degree requirements for the English program. These classes can be found on the Department of Languages and Literature webpage. Also, students are curious to know which career options are available to them after graduation.

Career Choices

“Many people don’t realize how flexible a Bachelor of Arts in English really is,” states Theriot. In fact, she listed a lot of interesting career choices that any English major could potentially go into. A few include:

• public relations specialist
• journalist
• blogger
• teacher
• technical writer

In addition to advising and teaching several English classes, she also guides majors through the process of selecting and applying to graduate or professional programs, such as law school or library science. Of all of her advisees, there is one graduate with whom she has a special connection. Dr. Theriot convinced her to realize her potential and become an English major and to seriously consider graduate school. She is now working on an MA in English at Southeastern. Dr. Theriot uses this student as an example to her other advisees.

Often students are unaware of the opportunities available to them with an English degree, and so it is important to have specific subject advisors, such as Dr. Michele Theriot, who can guide students to develop their full potential.

Email: michele.theriot@nicholls.edu
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Do you like what we are doing in Languages and Literature? Make a financial donation to the department. Donations will go toward student and faculty projects and programs, such as Mosaic, Gris-Gris, or helping our faculty present a paper at a conference. Contact Dr. Ellen Barker (ellen.barker@nicholls.edu)

Consider a donation . . .

Did you know that the Nicholls State University budget has been cut by nearly half since 2009? Despite financial challenges, we have grown as a department and done “more with less.” With that said, there are constant financial burdens that affect daily operations of our department: Printing and paper, student and faculty travel, scholarly research projects and presentations all take dollars, which are increasingly scarce. Our literary journal Gris-Gris and the Honors program require funding. Please consider making a donation to our department by getting in touch with our chair, Dr. Ellen Barker.

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Famous Last Words . . .

The Pushcart Prize website does not demur: “The Pushcart Prize-Best of the Small Presses series, published every year since 1976, is the most honored literary project in America. Hundreds of presses and thousands of writers of short stories, poetry and essays have been represented in the pages of our annual collections.” We are proud that a Languages and Literature professor, Jay Udall, has a poem nominated for a 2014 Pushcart prize. Jay says that he is “happy to be in the running.” His nominated poem is a reflection on his new Louisiana home. Given that this is one of the most prestigious literary prizes in the country, we are happy too.

Since 2011, the Department of Languages and Literatures has adopted a family. This year, we raised over ten boxes of gifts and food, plus over $300.00 for a Baton Rouge family in need.

In the spirit of the 2012 holiday season, the Department of Languages and Literature donated boxes of animal food, blankets, litter, toys and other goods to Hope for Animals—a Thibodaux no-kill animal shelter.