

WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
V17 N1 / 1 SEPTEMBER 2025

NICE TO SEE YOU

Welcome new freshmen and transfer students, and welcome back returning readers! We hope you find *Writers Bloc* interesting, informative, and inspiring. We love to publish student writing, so please email us book, movie, TV, and video game reviews as well as articles, essays, and opinion pieces on any topic. Share your artwork and photos as well. We also encourage your responses to what you read here. Feel free to share your ideas and opinions.



SEND WRITERS BLOC SUBMISSIONS TO

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CONTACT FACULTY AT

www.glenville.edu/departments/language-literature

WELCOME DR. KONG

This is the first of two interviews with the Department of Language and Literature's new faculty members. Watch for the second interview in our next issue. Here we meet Dr. Catherine Kong.

Writers Bloc: Tell us a little about yourself.

Catherine Kong: I grew up in Wafangdian, a small city under the jurisdiction of Dalian, alongside the coastal area of northeastern China. I received my BA and MA in English language and literature at Shandong University, China, and I completed my PhD in English at West Virginia University in the United States, focusing on Irish Gothic writing and Modernism. Before I joined GSU, I taught English composition, literature survey courses, and genre studies at West Virginia University, and worked as an editorial assistant for Victorian Poetry in the Department of English and as a graduate writing consultant of Eberly Writing Studio at WVU.

W B: What interested you in Glenville?

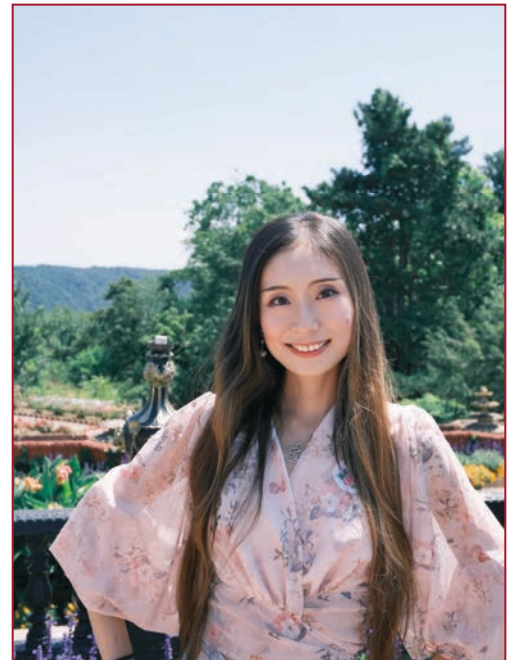
C K: Over the years, I have found that West Virginia has become my second home, and I am willing to continue to contribute my knowledge and service to the local community, which I now call home.

W B: What aspects of being an English major/grad student when you were in college did you most enjoy or value?

C K: I still remember how deeply touched and emotional I was when I was reading William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*—I was amazed by how Faulkner uses multiple temporalities to depict a painful, yet strong memory of the South tainted with generational trauma in the family. I also remember following Mrs. Dalloway's morning excursion in post-war London in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to grasp the crisp air of June, where her one single slice of daily experience is about to evolve into multiple trajectories of her life traces. I love how English literature liberates me—while I read and study, I transcend myself into different historical and cultural domains, where I both sense and feel for the characters as if I were living through their lives. The knowledge I learned as an English major opens me to the world to potentially its fullest, as I was trained to be capable of exploring the world beyond my comfort zone and gain various perspectives from dialogues I create among authors from different ethnic and geographical origins.

W B: And now, what do you enjoy most about teaching English?

C K: I enjoy seeing students making progress in their writing in my class; I love to see how students find their own voices and agencies throughout their writing processes and become masters in their research topics by the end of the semester. I also feel a sense of achievement when I observe how students get involved in exploring literature and can relate literature to their daily lives, so that my students understand that literature is not just about old/dead books and authors, but it is also deeply rooted in our individual lives, and the stories (despite being fictional) still create vibrant ripples in our contemporary world.



Dr. Kong interview, continued from page 1

Writers Bloc: *What do you want your students to discover/learn in your classes?*

Catherine Kong: I hope my students will learn to listen to different voices in my classes. Both composition and literature courses expose students to various rhetorics and audiences, and it is important to let them understand that there is **more than one** way to approach a research question, a writing prompt, and to address and interpret lived experiences.

Experiencing and listening to multiple experiences leads to the second goal I want my students to learn in my courses—empathy. Although the linguistic and stylistic perspectives of English courses are truly the gems of the studies, I also expect my students to be able to become better people with compassion and understanding for others in their personal lives, and I believe this is one of the goals of our education to always adhere to.

W B: *With the rising influence of digital media and AI, how do you see literary studies and/or writing evolving?*

C K: It seems to me that completely banning students from AI usage is almost impossible at this point, but I think it may be more productive if I can explain to students what works and what does not work while using AI in literature/writing classes. For example, for detailed literary analysis with quotations to back up your ideas, AI could not grasp the nuances in the literary texts, nor could the machine retrieve the page number to quote correctly to keep the citation flawless. However, AI may be useful if a student could formulate specific instructions for brainstorming a topic, where AI may generate some new ideas and increase creativity.

I also think that for first-time learners who have not mastered certain skills in English, we do need to limit their AI usage in English courses. Seeking quick remedies from AI-generated texts will only disrupt their learn processes, because they have not yet understood what the texts are supposed to look like or what they are supposed to accomplish in writing, and AI-generated ideas would only confuse them more and make students too lazy to think for themselves. One way I found that seems to be quite effective for students to stop using AI in English classes is to teach them how AI hallucinates answers by explaining the difference between artificial intelligence and a reference book, where I explain how AI generates ideas vs how search engines retrieve answers.

W B: *What are some of your favorite books? your favorite movies?*

C K: I enjoy reading Gothic stories, such as Dorothy Macardle's *The Uninvited* (1943), and certainly, the classic Gothic novella, Le Fanu's *Carmilla*. I love the sensational descriptions of the haunting, and I am always fascinated by the dualities and boundary-transgressing characteristics in Gothic writing.

Some of my favorite movies include *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) and *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain* (2021). Both movies give me tears—but for different reasons. *Monty Python* is really funny with humor, irony, and great improvised lines. *Electrical Life* is not truly a fictional work, but a remake based on Louis Wain's biography. He was considered the artist who significantly changed how cats were perceived in Victorian society, and the effects are still profound nowadays. Benedict Cumberbatch did a great job portraying the artist's greatest joy and deepest pain. It was a great story!

W B: *Do you have any creative or research projects in the works?*

C K: Currently, I am working on tailoring one of my dissertation chapters about Dorothy Macardle into a draft for a journal submission. I am aiming to submit my draft by the end of this academic year.

W B: *How do you like to spend free time?*

C K: I love to explore social media for baking recipes and bake whatever I find that seems good. I love to study baking techniques and food photography, and I like to talk about them forever. If you find any dessert recipes, please send them my way.



W B: *Please leave us with one more fun fact.*

C K: One fun fact about me is that I am actually a descendant of Confucius, and I am the 75th generation of the Kong family. In fact, my last name "Kong" (which is the standard romanization of the sound of my surname) sounds just about the same as "Con" in Confucius!

We are very excited for Dr. Kong to join the Language & Literature branch of our GSU family. When you see her, be sure to welcome her.

The Little Kanawha Reading Series will host
Poet and educator Traci Probst

Thursday, Sep. 25, 2025

at 4:00 p.m., in the
Robert F. Kidd Library,
Glenville State University

Free and open to the
public; everyone welcome!



Check Us Out!

The Department of
Language & Literature
is on Facebook

- News & Info
- Event Updates
- Videos
- Opinions
- Fun & Games



COMING TO THE GSU STAGE HALLOWEEN 2025

DRACULA:

THE CASE OF THE SILVER SCREAM

From a concept by David Grapes
Adapted for the stage by Robert Neblett and David Grapes



Get involved in the production! Non-speaking parts or help with staging, costumes, sets, and other behind-the-scenes jobs. Contact Jennifer Wenner at jennifer.wenner@glenville.edu

PERFORMANCES OCT 31, NOV 1, 7, 8
IN THE FINE ARTS AUDITORIUM

Contributed by Jennifer Wenner, Senior Lecturer of Communications

A 1948 film studio is filming their latest monster movie on location in the halls of the Whitby Sanitarium. The lead actress, Lorna Mills, has disappeared. Her replacement, Lucy Murray, hires hard-boiled PI Abe Van Helsing to find out what happened to Lorna, and investigate the odd events happening at the sanitarium. Director Jonathan Harker needs money for the film and asks European immigrant Count Dracula to invest. Van Helsing is reluctant to investigate, but the case has ties to another case he investigated. Will he solve the mystery? Finding out is going to suck.

Glenville's Little Kanawha Theater and Drama Club presents *Dracula: The Case of the Silver Scream*, a play by David Grapes, just in time to celebrate Halloween 2025.

Performances will be held October 31 and November 1, 7, 8 in the Fine Arts auditorium.

There are still options for several non-speaking roles, or screaming roles, if you wish.

You can get involved in non-acting positions as well because help with many other elements of the production is always welcome.



Contact jennifer.wenner@glenville.edu for more information.

Hey kids, this ISN'T your grandpa's Dracula!



WEIRD QUESTION *of the* WEEK

What does your favorite T-shirt say?

Schuyler Chapman - Associate Professor of English

"My favorite t-shirt ever (sadly departed) said 'If You're Not Irish, Force Yourself,' but my current favorite has Garfield on Mars thinking 'I am tired of Earth. These people. I am tired of being caught in the tangle of their lives.'"

Kaiya Lian - Psychology Major

"My favorite t-shirt says, 'Back-to-Back.' I like that shirt because it is referencing to my volleyball high school team that were back-to-back champions of our conference."

Jonathan Minton - Professor of English

"This one is easy. The Ramones."

Jennifer Wenner - Senior Lecturer of Communications

"Spherical Earth Society' or the one my niece made for me: 'Frumious Bandersnatch,'"

Marjorie Stewart - Professor of English, ret.
"the few. the proud. the marine-athoners."

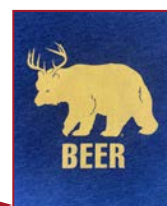
Bought after running the Marine Corps Marathon in October 2003 (I think). I had the flu, but I did it anyway. Smart? Probably not."



Amanda Chapman - Associate Professor of English
"She is a little girl rabbit.' It's a Miffy tee."

Michael Vozniak - Assistant Professor of English

"I got this about a year ago in Mackinac Island, Michigan. It definitely gets the most attention out of all the shirts I wear!"



Laycee Conway - Dual Enrollment Freshman

"My favorite shirt says 'I came, I saw people, so I left.' I got this at Five Below last year when I went school shopping because it matched my personality."

Melissa Gish - Associate Professor of English

"It says 'Starfleet Academy,' but I never wear it because Brent Spiner signed it at the Thunderbird Hotel in Minneapolis in 1993."

Donovan Williams - New Undeclared Freshman

"My favorite shirt says 'Seattle Seahawks' and has a drawing on it. It's my favorite shirt because my uncle gave it to me before he had passed away, and it was our favorite football team."

Scott O'Neil - Assistant Professor of English

"My whole high school soccer team had T-shirts from EA Sports that were plain white, with the words 'I'm better than you and I can prove it.' The hilarity is that we were absolutely awful. We couldn't beat a carpet, but for a few minutes during warm-ups, at least we made the other team a little nervous."

LIFE THROUGH LEARNING

Contributed by Sunday Collins, General Studies Major

The beautiful thing about learning is that I can take it with me wherever I go. As a young child, I was always told that my knowledge would play a very important role in my life. For many years, my education didn't mean much. This world is scary to me, but with a well-educated mind, I can prepare myself for the unpredictable. My English class made me personally realize how precious life really is, and to value myself is important. Learning to express myself without words shows just how beautiful life is. Taking my education seriously was the best decision I made to move forward.

What is more frightening to me is imagining the unknown, for tomorrow is not promised. During my second semester in college, I was introduced to an English class that completely reset my outlook on the world. It was within that very first week I had a taste of what the real world was, real situations revolving around life and death. The topics we covered involved the many different emotions we can experience. I know now just how fragile the human heart is. Many times, in my life I felt sad or angry. This would be a frequent emotion for me until I joined my English class. We would sit for hours and talk as a class through our assignments about the world around us. Learning about the fragile matters of life made me appreciate what time I have on Earth. I found solace in joining the meetings, and in myself for understanding better. It's better to smile and move on rather than walk away in anger.

I learned from my professor that journaling is a great way to keep track of the things I learn for future reference. To drown the negativity of the world, I took the words of my professor seriously and started keeping a journal to write in if I am upset. Additionally, I learned from my English class that art is a great way people express themselves. As a class, I would sit and listen to stories of historical times when things were a bit different from today. I learned people communicate through many kinds of language to speak their mind. Over the course of a few assignments, I understood that art is a way to communicate and not just some scribbles on a canvas. Art is expressed not only through the mind, but also through the heart. This changed how I saw the world dramatically by opening my mind to make me fully understand just how capable we are as humans. That class taught me beauty through art, and that even silent voices are heard in creativity.

Art speaks louder than words when nothing can be said. I would start with simple doodles, and over time I would create my own pieces of art which helped me whenever I was going through a rough time. My English teacher had an interest in art just as I do, therefore inspiring me to dig deeper into learning more about artistic value. I believe my outlook on this world deepened my understanding of how precious life really is and the beauty we create in it.

In essence, life to me is precious, not just an everyday matter I wake up to. I learned many lessons of life through that English class and experienced for myself that I need to live in the moment. Everything I will be doing now is going to be my life—to take my education and make something of myself. That class made me personally realize how precious life really is, and to value myself. Learning to express myself through words and art shows just how beautiful life is. Taking my education seriously has been a vital decision that will only make me stronger. If it truly wasn't for my English class, I may never have had my wake-up call to life.



To the Light of September

When you are already here
you appear to be only
a name that tells of you
whether you are present or not

and for now it seems as though
you are still summer
still the high familiar
endless summer
yet with a glint
of bronze in the chill mornings
and the late yellow petals
of the mullein fluttering
on the stalks that lean
over their broken
shadows across the cracked ground

but they all know
that you have come
the seed heads of the sage
the whispering birds
with nowhere to hide you
to keep you for later

you
who fly with them

you who are neither
before nor after
you who arrive
with blue plums
that have fallen through the night

perfect in the dew

— W. S. Merwin

OCTOBER READINGS

The Little Kanawha Reading Series First Annual Chapbook Contest Winner Heather Loudermilk will read on **Thursday, October 9, 2025**

GSU's Kaitlin Ensor, Jason Gum, and Bob Hutton will read on **Thursday, October 23, 2025**

All readings begin at 4:00 p.m. in the Robert F. Kidd Library on the GSU campus. Free and open to the public; everyone welcome!