

WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
v17 n2 / 15 SEPTEMBER 2025

IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome back to *Writers Bloc*! We're pleased to share another inspiring issue with you. Meet our newest faculty member, whose fresh perspective promises exciting additions to our department. This issue's student writing showcases the talent flourishing on campus. Plus, you'll find some great poetry and a dash of weirdness. Also note that we'll be looking for your pet stories for an upcoming issue.



SEND WRITERS BLOC SUBMISSIONS TO

melissa.gish@glenville.edu

Views expressed in the *Writers Bloc* are not necessarily the views of GSU.

CONTACT FACULTY AT

www.glenville.edu/departments/language-literature

WELCOME DR. O'NEIL

Meet the Department of Language and Literature's new faculty member Dr. Scott O'Neil, "the Shakespeare guy."

Writers Bloc: Tell us a little about yourself.

Scott O'Neil: I was born in Rochester, New York, and then moved to Northeast Pennsylvania when I was 5. I grew up there, went to college at Towson University (in Maryland), and then taught high school at North Harford High School for four years. I then went to graduate school (an MA at St. Bonaventure University and

then a PhD in English Literature from the University of Rochester). I've worked as a visiting assistant professor at St. John Fisher College, a lecturer at Alfred State College, and an assistant professor at Arkansas Tech University. Before all that, I also worked as a freelance sportswriter, a camera/camcorder salesman at Best Buy, a deli worker extraordinaire, and as a costumed mascot for a television station in Scranton, Pennsylvania.



WB: What interested you in Glenville?

SO: The job description was a great fit for my academic and teaching background, and I was excited to move back to the Eastern time zone. Arkansas was just too far away from all of my family and friends.

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

SO: Honestly, it was the people. Every one of my degrees has its own "Nerd Herd" associated with it—friends (to this day) with whom I could nerd out over literature. That's hard to find out in the wild, and colleges and universities are amazing places to be to find such like-minded people.

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

CK: I'm always learning. This is one of the things I love about a school like Glenville—it's small, so we all end up wearing a variety of hats. That creates opportunities to learn about different kinds/genres of literature rather than just being siloed in our academic niche.

WB: What classes are you teaching this fall?

SO: I'm teaching two sections of Survey of English Lit I, a section of Critical Reading & Writing I, and a section of Shakespeare.

WB: What do you want your students to discover/learn in your classes?

SO: 1980s/1990s pop culture so that they will understand my cheesy jokes. Beyond that, I want them to discover/learn what kinds of literature make their brains pop. Seeing students get excited/passionate about something is so incredibly rewarding.

DR. O'NEIL, INTERVIEW CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



O'Neil and Windsor (as in the Merry Woof of). She has her own Instagram. Check her out:

<https://www.instagram.com/merrywoofofwindsor/>

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

Scott O'Neil: I think it can help brainstorming and in the organizing of thoughts, but it can't actually do the thinking for us. AI writing is incredibly polished writing that says nothing new and is devoid of passion. I'll take a messy paper with something to say over a polished paper that says nothing every. single. day.

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

S O: It runs the gamut. I love SF writers like Timothy Zahn and Isaac Asimov, comic book writers/artists like Fabian Nicieza and Darick Robertson, literary authors like Tim O'Brien, and classics like the Brontë sisters (I will never not take an opportunity to re-read *Jane Eyre*).

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

S O: My most recent publication came out in 2024—it was an article about the role of disguise in containing madness in John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge*. I'm currently working on an article arguing that Shakespeare's friars were used as a vehicle for him to comment on the very public Jesuit trials of the late 16th century. I'm also working on launching a digital humanities project called *The Players' Post*, which collects scans and transcriptions of letters written by notable Shakespearean actors (mostly from the 19th century). I'm also close to launching a pedagogy/pop culture YouTube channel.

W B: What hobbies or interests keep you busy outside of work?

S O: Is my dog a hobby? Brushing and vacuuming after a German Shepherd/Husky mix is kind of like a second full-time job. The YouTube channel I mentioned is kind of a hobby. I also enjoy walking and watching sports (soccer and hockey are my big two, but I also like football, baseball, and basketball).

W B: Please leave us with some more fun facts.

S O: I've traveled a lot, but mostly within the last 15 years. I went to Sydney, Australia, for a week back in 2010. I've been to France and London as the TA for a theater in England class. I've made SEVERAL trips to Stratford, Ontario, for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, and would love to arrange a trip there for GSU students. I've also acted in a few plays (as has my dog). Somewhere in the depths of YouTube, you can find my first ever conference presentation (because I was greener than Irish grass, and set up a camera before presenting). It's....not great, but (to paraphrase that "she turned me into a newt" guy from Monty Python) I got better.

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

GRAVITY-DEFYING SOUL: WHY THE NICHOLAS BROTHERS STILL STAND APART

Contributed by LeQuies Strother, Athletic Cond/Coaching Major

I recently watched the video "Nicholas Brothers, Stormy Weather, Gregory Hines Comments" on YouTube, and I wasn't prepared for the impact it would have on me. At first, I thought it would just be an impressive old dance number, the kind of thing you admire for a moment and then move on from. But instead, I found myself replaying the clip, almost unable to believe what I was seeing. The Nicholas Brothers weren't just dancing; they were pushing the limits of what seemed possible.



Screenshot from "Stormy Weather in color - The Nicholas Brothers and Cab Calloway | Colorized with DeOldify" by Black Pepper Swing, YouTube

Gregory Hines's remark that no one today could replicate their routine without the use of CGI really stayed with me. We live in a world where performances are constantly edited and polished, but what Fayard and Harold Nicholas did was raw, real, and in one take. The fact that they performed that staircase sequence without rehearsing on the actual steps left me stunned. It wasn't just skill; it was trust, courage, and vision all happening in the same moment.

Watching them made me reflect on how often I hesitate before taking risks in my own creative life. I tend to overthink, prepare endlessly, or even back away from opportunities because I'm afraid of failing. The Nicholas Brothers didn't let fear hold them back. They leapt literally and trusted they would land. That fearless energy is what makes their performance unforgettable, even generations later.

It made me wonder what moments in my life I've missed because I was too cautious. I don't need to leap down a staircase into the splits, but I do need to take more chances without second-guessing myself. The Nicholas Brothers showed me that sometimes the most extraordinary results come not from perfect planning but from daring to trust yourself in the moment.

Watch the video here:

https://youtu.be/WsGT_BNJahA?si=yJPX33NeNjwNGjNR

And learn more about the Nicholas Brothers here:

<https://ew.com/movies/the-nicholas-brothers-classic-hollywood-dance-duo/>

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@glennville.edu

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

SHARE YOUR PET STORIES

The BBC recently reported that “researchers in the United States have found that spending time with pets is more effective at reducing stress than talking problems through with friends or partners. The researchers found that people with pets had lower resting heart rates and blood pressure than those without a cat or dog. Pet owners also made few mistakes during mental arithmetic.” Email us your pet stories and pictures; tell us some of the ways your pet (dog, cat, bird, dragon, etc.) helps you deal with stress, and we’ll share your “best pals” in an upcoming *Writers Bloc*. Email the editor: melissa.gish@glennville.edu



Fall, Leaves, Fall

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.

— Emily Brontë

GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY

We all know how much fun it is to binge Netflix or play video games for hours on end, but it's important to remember that lesson from kindergarten: *Go outside and play!* How about a few rounds of Scrag? This game is played with a large ball (basketball, football, soccerball, etc.). One person carries the ball toward some randomly chosen goal (a tree, bench, fence, etc.). All other players assault (scrag) the ball carrier attempting to seize control of the ball. Chases, intimidation, and trickery are all fair game. Once the ball has changed hands, the new ball carrier is the target. The game has no goal other than to be played until all are exhausted and ready for a long nap.

Here's another one. It's called Sardines. The whole group hides their eyes and counts aloud together to 50 while one person goes and hides. Then everyone begins to look for the “fresh sardine.” When you spot the sardine, you don't tell anyone; instead, when no one is looking, you slip in and hide with the sardine. Eventually everyone starts to disappear. The last one left is the “rotten sardine.” The first one to find the sardine gets to hide as the “fresh sardine” in the next round. Imagine 5 or 10 of you all huddled together in a tight spot trying to keep from laughing and being seen!

Yes, college students are now adults, but who says you have to grow up all the way?

JUST FOR FUN . . .

While sitting on a chair, lift your right leg and make clockwise circles with your right foot (go ahead—no one will see you). While doing this, draw the number “6” several times in the air with your right hand.

You can't do it, can you? Your foot gets confused!

According to the Cleveland Clinic, “Exploding head syndrome (EHS) is a sleep disorder that makes you hear explosions or other sudden, loud sounds, usually in your sleep. It can be scary to experience, but EHS isn't painful and isn't a sign that something is wrong with your ears or brain.” Researchers at GSU have discovered that in some cases, Exploding Head Syndrome may be the result of slamming your forehead on a table or desk upon falling asleep in class.*

Check Us Out!

The Department of
Language & Literature
is on Facebook

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



* Yes, we made that last part up.

WEIRD QUESTION *of the* WEEK

We asked folks to practice synesthesia by asking "What word feels like it should smell like something or taste like something even though it has nothing to do with smell or taste?"

Alyssa Hall - Field Forensics (CRJU) Major

"To me, 'bureaucracy' smells like old government offices with dusty files and worn-out furniture. The taste is bland and unappealing, like a stale saltine cracker that's been sitting out for too long."

Amanda Chapman - Associate Professor of English

"The word 'utilize' gives me the sensation of a sharp, metallic, irritating smell/taste"

Lloyd Bone - Associate Professor of Music, Marching Band Director

"Catawampus (I've always loved this word). It smells like a flea infested, mangy, foul smelling swamp creature."

Michael Vozniak - Assistant Professor of English

"Orgoglio. He's a giant in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. It means 'pride' in Italian. But every time I see or hear his name, I think of cheese."

Shelly Haynes - Associate Professor of Education

"My word is 'chartreuse' and it sounds like it would smell like a floral perfume."

Megan Moats - Teacher/Counselor, SSS

"Funny enough, I actually have two examples. The first word 'flamboyant' is spicy and tropical. Perhaps it's the 'flam' part at the beginning or just that I imagine red colors when I say it. The second word is 'velvet.' This word simply reeks of grandma perfume. You know the type—strong and overwhelming just in the bottle, but she insists on wearing 100 spritzes, which makes it even worse. Like you just laid down on her couch after she fed you the largest meal, even after you insisted you were not hungry, and the smell of the perfume has been captured by the pillow of the same perfume spritz everyday for the last 50 years."

Ethan Duncan - Admin of Justice (CRIJ) Major

"'Mythical.' I think it would taste like dark berries like blackberries or blueberries."

Schuyler Chapman - Associate Professor of English

"'Canker sore.' I dunno what it tastes like, but it smells like sour milk in my head."

Melissa Gish - Associate Professor of English

"The word 'Tuesday' would taste like lukewarm coffee that's been sitting too long, with a hint of pencil eraser."



**"The more that you read, the more things you will know.
The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."**

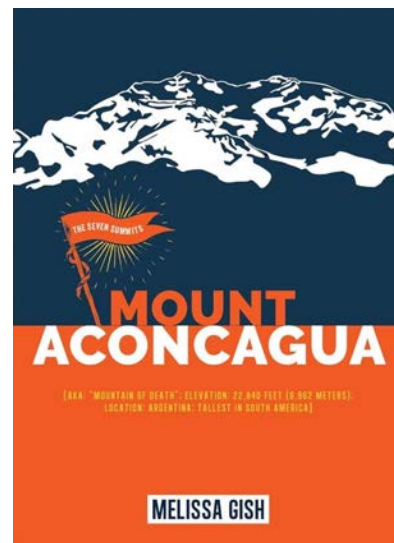
— Dr. Seuss

FALL BOOK REVIEWS

Mount Aconcagua (Creative Education, 2025) is the latest book by the Department of Language and Literature's juvenile nonfiction author, Professor Gish.

Reviewed by Adlai Chapman, Gilmer High School

From the very first paragraph of the introduction the book hooks readers like an ice tool in a frozen waterfall. The description of the Argentinean "Mountain of Death," Mount Aconcagua, in this entry to the Seven Summits series will definitely draw in many people and keep them with their nose in the book. The book is filled with a lot of detailed information about the mountain, from its geography and history to the wildlife that makes the mountain its home, but it keeps it fun and entertaining.



The book is also good for most ages, as despite its main audience being younger readers [grades 7-10] it still has enough interesting information to keep anyone enthralled with the stories of ancient peoples' connection to the mountain and of more modern peoples' lives alongside the mountain. There is also a good amount of vocabulary that can teach younger readers interesting words and what they mean. Overall, the book is very good and can keep anyone engaged with its material.

Reviewed by Anonymous, Undecided Major

This was a pretty new book on a display at Books a Million a while back when I had birthday money to spend. I don't usually reach for romance books, but I like to read books about dragons, so I picked up *The Baby Dragon Cafe* (Avon, 2025) by A. T. Qureshi. This book totally surprised me. It's really fun and honestly just adorable. The story has this comforting, fantasy feel that makes you want to curl up with a blanket and never leave the little cafe.

Saphira runs a cafe where humans and baby dragons hang out (yes, it's cute). She's dealing with constant repairs due to a few naughty dragons, and things get complicated when Aiden shows up with his baby dragon, Sparky, and asks for help. Saphira agrees to help train Sparky, and from there, a relationship starts to grow between her and Aiden. This is why it's considered a romance book.

Their relationship is really nice, not full of anger like lots of books about relationships. This actually made it feel more real. There's a fake marriage twist that I didn't expect but really enjoyed. I loved how they supported each other, helped each other open up, and had such a trusting bond. And Sparky made everything really fun.

This book might seem like it's just cute on the surface, but it also has deeper themes about trust and choosing your family. I already can't wait for the next book in the series. If you love dragon fantasy and want to try something a little different, then *The Baby Dragon Cafe* is 100% worth reading.

Glenville State University Department of Language & Literature,
Appalachian Studies Program, and the Robert F. Kidd Library

Little Kanawha Reading Series

Thursday, September 25, 2025

Join us at 4:00 p.m.

Robert F. Kidd Library



Traci Probst

Traci Probst is a poet, educator, and instructional technologist whose work bridges the worlds of creative writing and higher education. A Glenville State University alumna and English Education major, she was named Glenville State College Student of the Year in 1990. She holds a Master of Education from West Virginia University (1995) and earned her Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from West Virginia Wesleyan College in 2024. She currently serves as an instructional technologist and adjunct professor at West Virginia Wesleyan College.

All Readings are Free and Open to the Public
Readings are Streamed on the GSU YouTube channel

www.youtube.com/channel/UCj8JJvWCB5ksZirQzCINnpQ

The Little Kanawha Reading Series provides a showcase for a diversity of literary forms and voices in order to acknowledge and enrich the cultural heritage of Appalachia and the communities around the Little Kanawha River.



DEPT. OF LANGUAGE & LIT

— WRITING & ART —

HALLOWEEN CONTEST

Show off your spooky side with a Halloween-themed piece of creative writing or art. Write a story or mini-essay (up to 1,000 words) or a poem (up to 2 typed pages), or take a creepy photo or make some scary artwork. Share your paranormal experiences!

Your work will be displayed in and around the Department of Language and Literature's office on the third floor of the Harry B. Heflin Administration Building.

Drop off your work with anyone in the department suite (include your name & email address) OR email it to either melody.wise@glennville.edu or melissa.gish@glennville.edu

Due: 3:00 pm, Monday, October 28

**THERE WILL BE PRIZES, BUT
THEY ARE A SECRET!**

