In the new economy, supply and demand equals a win for English Majors

As an English major, you have undoubtedly been asked the question, “What are you going to do with an English degree?” Indeed, in this world of economic uncertainty, the humanities in general have come to be looked upon as a thing of the past, a kind of intellectual luxury that is no longer affordable in an increasingly utilitarian world. Even as you are certain of your own love of literature and writing, you may feel anxiety when others cannot see a more practical reason for your degree. As much as we want to talk about the edification one receives from higher education, only a very practical, use value reason will satisfy the critics. With this in mind, let us delve briefly into some of the practical arguments for an English degree so that you can rise above the objections of the naysayers. First and foremost, your English degree provides you with valuable writing skills. According to business writer Bruna Martinuzzi, “A MetLife survey found that 97 percent of business executives rate writing skills as very important. English majors—perhaps more than any other major—are trained to write well.” The University of South Dakota’s Department of English website reminds us that careers often fail to launch or become stalled later because of poor writing skills: “After surveying 120 major American corporations, the National Commission on Writing, founded by the College Board, concluded that ‘writing is a threshold skill for both employment and promotion, particularly for salaried [professional] employees’ and that ‘[p]eople who cannot write and communicate clearly will not be hired and are unlikely to last long enough to be considered for promotion.’” Secondly, an English degree provides students with the “soft skills” necessary to succeed in the workplace – these include the ability to communicate well, to think critically, and, the
NEW DIRECTIONS

The Department continues to roll out its new curriculum in 2017. New curriculum courses taught in the Winter will include English 2251: History of the English Language, II, taught by Dr. Daniel Hannah; English 2510: Global Literatures in English, taught by Dr. Anna Guttman; English 2810: Gender, Sexuality and the Body in Literature, taught by Dr. Rachel Warburton; English 3119: Adaptations and Appropriations of Shakespeare, taught by Dr. Michael Richardson; English 3710: Canadian Literature to the Centennial, taught by Prof. Cindy Seldon; English 3750: 21st Century Indigenous Story-Telling, taught by Dr. Judith Leggatt; and English 3911: Life Writing, taught by Dr. Scott Pound.

number one skill listed on an article about “The Top 10 Things You Need at Work,” “empathy and emotional intelligence.” Martinuzzi notes that Keith Oatley, a University of Toronto researcher, has found that studying literature develops one’s empathy, a quality that has important applications in the workforce. English majors, according to Oatley, "understand characters' actions from their interior point of view, by entering into their situations and minds, rather than the more exterior view of them that we usually have.” Martinuzzi argues that “this improves interpersonal understanding and enhances relationships with customers and business associates. When you hire an English major, you're likely hiring someone who brings cognitive empathy to the table.”

Finally, because fewer students are choosing an English degree, they are more in-demand than ever. According to an article in MarketWatch by Jillan Berman, “English majors who graduated in the class of 2015 had a mean starting salary that was 13.6% higher than the mean starting salary for English majors in the class of 2014, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers first-destination survey. That’s a much larger increase than what students in more popular majors…experienced during the same period.”

In the end, Berman’s advice is simple and powerful. Students, she argues, should play to their strengths rather than pursue degrees which they may wrongly perceive as having more use-value: “The bottom line is that it can be difficult for students to predict the value of a given degree in the coming years, so they may be better off pursuing subjects where they can be successful in school and be sure to graduate.”
EVENTS

UP-COMING TALKS

Works in Progress
Dr. Judith Leggatt and Monica Flegel will give a talk entitled, “Did Ghostbusters 2016 Lead to Trump?”
This talk will be held on:
January 20th 12:00-1:00 in ATAC 5036 and OA 3007.

Round-Table: Censorship
To mark Lakehead University’s Research Week and “Freedom to Read” week, the Department of English will hold a public round-table
Sunday, March 5th in the Brodie Library’s Fireside Room. Members of the department, as well as members of the public, will be speaking on the topic of censorship, followed by a public discussion.
All are welcome!

Upcoming Events
Master’s Program Information Session
This session is open to all students.
Are you interested in learning about completing a Master’s degree in English here at Lakehead?
We will be holding an Info Session on our graduate program on
January 16th, from 2:30-4:00 in ATAC 5037 / OA 2005.
This session will introduce you to the options available in this program, including pursuing coursework, a research or creative project, or a self-directed thesis on a topic of your choosing. We will also discuss the Women’s Studies specialization option. Finally, the session will address the funding and scholarships available to students, as well as using your Master’s degree to find employment.

Consider Graduate School!
Applications are being accepted for English Graduate studies, contact Dr. Flegel, Graduate Coordinator.
Questions?
Email Dr. Flegel
mfleg@lakeheadu.ca
Phone: 807-343-8285
UPCOMING STUDENT AWARDS

Recommendations are being made for the Bill MacDonald Prize. Winner receives $500.00 and copies of three select books written by Bill MacDonald.

Entries are being accepted for the Munro Prize for Poetry and for Prose. Winners, one for prose and one for poetry, receive $410.00.

Deadline: January 31

Laureen and Biff Weiler Memorial Award (LBWSI), is still open and accepting applications.

Deadline: April 15

EVENTS CONTINUED

Upcoming Events

Pizza Party

The English Department will hold its annual end-of-the-year pizza party in March. Come unwind from a busy year and catch up with your fellow students and professors over pizza and cookies. The party will be held on the Thunder Bay campus at the Faculty Lounge on March 21st from 12:00-2:00. The date and time for Orillia is TBD, and will be announced in January.

English Student Conference

Get ready to present your work! This year, the Department of English will be hosting a conference for undergraduate and graduate students of English on April 10th. We will be visiting your classes and sending out emails and posters with the details in the coming term. This is a great opportunity to get some public speaking experience and to support the research of your fellow students.

FACULTY NEWS

LECTURES AND TALKS

Dr. Cheryl Lousely was an invited speaker in October at Tamkang University, Taiwan. Her talk was entitled, "Migrant Asians, Northern Tropicality, and Climate Change in Contemporary Canadian Speculative Fiction."

Dr. Lesley Clement was a guest speaker in December at TRT's (Turkish Radio and Television) 5th International Children’s Media Conference in Istanbul.

Dr. Anna Guttman was part of a panel at the Association for Jewish Studies Annual Conference in December. The subject was “Our brother's blood:” Postcolonials, Jews, Others.” which was part of the conference “Looking Outward” Reframing Jewish Studies.” which celebrated 40th anniversary of Jewish Studies at Emory.

Monica Flegel gave a talk on "Women and Fanfiction" in November for the Annual General Meeting of the Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre.
Our faculty continues to publish widely within the discipline, contributing to the scholarly community in a variety of ways.

A number of our faculty published works over the past year, including:


English Degree in the News

As part of the ongoing debate about the relative value of Humanities/English higher education (of course, we’re in favour of it!), MarketWatch.com published this fantastic article on the financial benefits of an English Degree:


Check it out!
GUEST SPEAKERS

Australian poet Gina Mercer gave a reading and talk for English students at the Orillia campus on November 1st, 2016 as part of the Global Literatures in English and Ecocriticism classes.

Sheena Albanese and Donna Goodman, the director and set designer of Cambrian Players’ production of Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet), visited the Contemporary Women Playwrights class.

FACULTY PROFILE

Dr. Judith Leggatt has been a member of the department of English at Lakehead since 1998. She is a past chair of the department and a past winner of the university’s Distinguished Instructor Award. Her teaching and research is primarily focused on Indigenous texts. Recently, she has published articles on suicide prevention in Cree comic books and vampires and the writing of history in Drew Hayden Taylor’s young adult novel The Night Wanderer (co-authored with Dr. Kristin Burnett). She has also developed two exciting new courses for the department, 21st Century Digital Storytelling, and Indigenous Children’s and Young Adult Literature. Dr. Leggatt is particularly interested in, she says, “the translations of Indigenous storytelling into new forms for the 21st century” and the ways in which they show “the vitality and innovation of the cultures.”

Cornelia Strube gave a master class on November 2, 2016. Which was presented by the International Festival of Authors, The Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and the Department of English.

EXCEPTIONAL. UNCONVENTIONAL.
STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ENGLISH STUDENT ASSOCIATION (ESA) AND THE ARTERY

Want to meet new people and gain valuable experience? The English Student Association provides opportunities to get together with your fellow students through a variety of events held throughout the school year. Past events include Poetry Slams, book sales, and the production of the ESA’s literary magazine, The Artery, which publishes student creative writing and visual art.

Submissions for the next edition of The Artery are currently being accepted. As Lakehead's literary magazine, The Artery can easily be a great way to accumulate proof of publication for aspiring writers and artists. We accept all forms of creative writing (including poetry, short stories, plays, rants, jokes, etc) and visual artwork (including paintings, photography, drawings, images of sculptures, etc) from the students, staff, and alumni of our university. As long as it is creative, we would love to receive what you've made. Submission guidelines can be found on our Facebook Page or our web page on the English Department Website.

All are welcome! Volunteering on the editorial staff of the Artery, or as a member of the ESA, provides great experience and is an enjoyable way to get to know other English students outside the classroom. Please check out the information at https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/english-student-association/the-artery or contact luartery@lakeheadu.ca for further information.

If you would like to get involved with the ESA, have ideas for events, or would like to be a part of the editing team for the upcoming contact: The Artery.

THE POST

English students can also get involved with:

The Post: Lakehead University’s Undergraduate Research Journal

an interdisciplinary, open access, research journal that is both for and by the students of Lakehead. There are two primary goals of this publication: first, to give students an opportunity to submit their research to a peer-reviewed panel for potential publication; second, to encourage cross-disciplinary discussion. For more information on The Post see: https://www.lakeheadu.ca/research-and-innovation/undergraduate-research-at-lakehead/the-post-review-process.

Students can submit their papers to: thepost@lakeheadu.ca