

REvisions:

UNH English Department Newsletter

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***Transitions* Seeks Essay Submissions, Editors for Its 2023–2024 Edition**

Twenty years after the publication of UNH's first anthology of first-year writing, *Transitions* is still going strong
by Laura Smith

Transitions is preparing its next edition, seeking new writers and editors. *Transitions*, an e-anthology of writing from UNH's English 401: First-Year Writing, is published annually in August for use in English 401 classes.

"Every year I'm truly impressed by the writing that our First-Year Writing students produce in our classes. Our teachers do a wonderful job of mentoring the students to craft work they are proud to publish. Further, the graduate students take on the work of publishing *Transitions* each year—they are professionals, and it is always a delight to see what they create," writes Cristy Beemer, Associate Professor in English and the UNH Director of Composition.

First-Year Writing students produce four major assignments during the class, and they may submit this work for consideration in the following year's issue.

"You're not writing this just for me, you're writing this for your peers," General Editor Ashley Barry explains to students in the class.

Transitions 2022–2023 General Editor Ashley Barry and Assistant Editor Rachel Roy met recently via Zoom to describe the process of creating the anthology and to encourage submissions for the upcoming edition.

Last year, English 401 students submitted a total of around 200 essays, including 100 for consideration in the personal essay section. Students who are selected for the anthology receive a stipend of \$100 as well as a large reading audience. English 401: First-Year Writing welcomed 2200 students this year.

The essays are then used in English 401 for reading and discussion of both the content and craft, as models for the different genres studied in the class: personal essays, critical analysis essays, annotated bibliographies, and researched persuasive essays.



General Editor Ashley Barry and Assistant Editor Rachel Roy described *Transitions* to incoming English 401 instructors in August.

Assistant Editor and incoming General Editor Rachel Roy explains, "One of the purposes [of *Transitions*] is definitely to have teaching examples," including specific techniques which students can emulate, such as innovative structures or incorporation of sources. "We try to have different things that students could do."

Multiple drafts of the same essay are particularly welcome.

"We have the intention of identifying a paper that's gone through some significant changes," Barry says. "That would be a really interesting way to see the process of that writer, that writer's paper."

Barry and Roy commend the work of writers featured in this year's anthology.

"We had different perspectives that gave a different angle into topics," Roy says.

Transitions 2022–2023 also included something new: images. Images such as graphs or illustrations can helpfully complement an essay.

"I really hope we see more of those in the future," Barry says. Beemer explains, "Although there are some limitations

due to copyright [of the images], we are hoping to showcase multimodal essays in future versions of *Transitions*."

Once students have submitted their writing in May, the *Transitions* staff gets to work. This year, section editors Jess Flarity (personal essays), Jen Daly (researched persuasive essays), and Ann DeCiccio (critical analysis essays) drew on their experience in teaching English 401 to select works for the anthology.

"Anyone who's working on *Transitions* has taught or is teaching English 401 and so has a good sense of what an excellent essay for this might look like. They've got that expertise so that they can also say, 'I could imagine talking about this essay in this way in my class,'" Barry says.

The work of the editors involves lots of conversation. Barry and Roy describe the energy and fun during the long summer meetings to discuss the submissions.

"When everyone agrees on an essay and is so enthusiastic about it and talks about how much they can't wait for students to read this, that is such a great moment," Barry says.

Incoming General Editor Rachel Roy welcomes applications for section editors for the upcoming edition by March 10; English 401 students may submit their own essays for consideration by May 10 at

<https://mycourses.unh.edu/enroll/4XT7XE>

Students from English 401
in fall 2022 and spring 2023
are invited to submit their writing by May 10 for
consideration in *Transitions* 2023–2024:
<https://mycourses.unh.edu/enroll/4XT7XE>

A New Familiar

by Shelley Girdner

When I ask David Blair what year he started teaching at UNH, he replies, "Oh, the year after Seamus Heaney died." For those of you marking time in a more traditional manner, that translates to 2014. This comment also works as an introduction to the inherency of poetry in Blair's life.

David has been a part of the UNH MFA program for almost a decade, having served as a visiting writer multiple times. His recent hiring as a lecturer allows for several benefits, not least of which are the opportunities his courses and mentorship will offer graduate and undergraduate students. Blair is an experienced teacher, having worked at several colleges and institutions, and a descendant of teachers—his father retired from the University of Pittsburgh at 79. He is also a gifted writer. Tony Hoagland describes Blair as a "wholly original American poet [whose] poems yammer and jam..." The poet Julia Story (GRAD '99) describes his collection *Friends with Dogs* as "a long fast-paced walk with your weirdest, smartest friend" and honestly, real world walks with David are probably a lot like this, too, if the few chats I've had with him are any indication.

David spends his time on campus funneling that fast-paced, yammer-jam energy into projects and opportunities for students in the department. This fall, he had a rotation of visiting writers offer virtual readings and craft talks in his graduate workshop. Blair also worked in conjunction with David Rivard to bring the buzzy poet Dorothea Lasky, author of several collections and a co-creator of *Astro Poets*, to campus as part of the UNH Writers Series. Lasky will read this April 6th @ 5pm in Hamilton Smith 210.

Blair has big plans for nurturing and expanding the creative vitality that is the UNH undergraduate poetry scene. To that end, this fall, he hosted a Poetry Open Mic night. He



Photo courtesy of David Blair

said it was important to him that the students get to share their work in the same room as the featured writers of the Writers Series, so he staged the event in Ham Smith 210, with the help of Janine Wilks, several grad students, and a stack of pizzas. After an enthusiastic reception—over 20 students performed and more than 60 were in the audience—he has plans to bring the evening back this April.

Stop by David's office, 301G, if you're interested in joining up on any of his poetry adventures; want to learn more about his many and varied projects, including an upcoming book of paired poems and collages; or if you just want to hear about the surprising role craft toilet plungers play in his most recent book's cover design.

David Blair is the author of one collection of essays and five poetry collections, including his most recent *True Figures: Selected Shorter and Prose Poems, 1998-2021* which is available from Mad Hat Press. <https://madhat-press.com/products/true-figures-by-david-blair>

Watch for Blair's fall 2023 classes here:
<https://courses.unh.edu/>



Photo courtesy of Rachel Burdin

UNH Presents at 2023 Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting in Denver

Taylor Cassiani (BA, Linguistics, class of 2023), Emmanuel Bawa (MA, Linguistics, 2021; now a PhD student in linguistics at CUNY), and, via Zoom, UNH Assistant Professor and Linguistics Program Coordinator Rachel Burdin, presented their research during a poster session at the January meeting of the 2023 Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting in Denver. Their joint work investigates Ekhwa and Hausa vowels (two languages both spoken in Northern Nigeria). Cassiani's work on the project and travel to the conference were supported by the UNH McNair Scholars Program.

Future Teachers and Librarians Check Out Durham Public Library's YA Literature Collection

Members of English 789/889: Teaching Young Adult Literature visited Durham Public Library's young adult (YA) literature collection in January to learn about YA literature, collection development, and teen programming. Head of Youth Services Lisa Kleinmann and Youth Services Library Assistant Kelly Montagano welcomed the class and shared stacks of book recommendations.

Right to left; sitting: Anna Sourdif, Emilia Willett, Emilee Lenning, Elizabeth Veale, Maddie Hadwen, Laura Smith, Katie Leger

Right to left; standing: Lisa Kleinmann, Head of Youth Services, Durham Public Library; Alex Vergara; Emma Knowles; Grace Libucha; Norah Cummings; Seamus Baker; Cameron Adams; Blake Bolduc; Audrey Kenison; Christa McCormick; Katherine Janicki; Kelly Montagano, Youth Services, Durham Public Library; Kevin Shegani



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