

Meeting Minutes
English Graduate Student Union
Wednesday, 25 October 2017
2:30-3:30 PM

Action Items from Last Meeting

Graduate Conference

Settled on topic: "Strange Matter(s)," and date: March 10. Bryan will draft CFP this weekend and workshop it with Chris next week (10/29-11/4). Our aim is to have something prepared to circulate at the Behn/Burney Conference in Pittsburgh next Friday (11/3). General framework will be New Materialist in design (though we will solicit papers on a broad spectrum), and we will reach out to Lowell and Christine in hopes that they might recommend a keynote speaker whose scholarship aligns with the conference topic (and whom we will try to secure by end of November). We will aim to have the CFP uploaded to the EGSU website by mid-November, and updated once we've secured a speaker. We will also update last year's conference website to reflect this year's material.

Fundraising

Discussed upcoming and potential fundraising ventures including the Book/Bake Sale with CoW, to be held 10/26. We also discussed local business outreach and donations as a potential source for funds. Bryan reported last year's speaker cost approx. \$1000. Current organizational funds are less than \$100. It is hoped that the book portion of sales will contribute, but alternative sources for funding will need to be pursued.

Social Events

Augee continues to organize Friday Happy Hour, though he notes this is difficult when he is out of town and it would be helpful to have someone else take point in those cases. He also suggests that we build on recent steam, advocating for participation from department faculty and staff as well. Bryan will continue looking into venues and times for Open Mic Night and report at the next meeting. The proposed Halloween Party has been scrapped in lieu of potentially organizing a social event later in the semester.

Bryan reports that Elana now has access to our bank account.

Bri now has access to EGSU's website, is in the process of updating it, and will continue to do so as our initiatives develop

New Business

Graduate Colloquium & Student Senate

Sam reports that everything is going well and that he has no action items at this time.

GPC & Lit Program

Chris reports that the GPC and Lit Program Committee have identified recruitment as a priority in recent meetings. The GPC has noted student profiles on the webpage as a needs area (Dr. Komisaruk is currently aggregating bios to this end), and is working towards a framework for direct admit (BA-PhD) in the lit program. The Lit Program Committee, meanwhile, has decided upon a local outreach strategy to English programs within a few hours driving radius. Chris additionally reports that the booklist process and aspects of coursework organization have been discussed as potential areas to be considered, but that no specific courses of action have been formally submitted for consideration by the committee.

Meeting frequency

Members present agree that the current system of planning meetings to coincide with GPC meetings is ideal.

Other Business & Action Items

Reading the Cannon Initiative:

Members have voiced interest in beginning a “reading the cannon” cycle, in coordination with Dr. Francus. Ideally, students will identify four canonical texts each in Am. Lit, Brit. Lit, and World Lit—from different periods. The twelve texts will then be paired with faculty members willing to discuss them, and scheduled in monthly increments over the course of two years. So, where Dr. Francus might (for example) participate in a two-hour discussion of *Don Quixote* in February, Dr. Komisaruk might do likewise with *Frankenstein* in March, and Dr. Germana might similarly take on *Invisible Man* in April. Chris will take point in gauging interest levels and developing the initiative if deemed viable.

Booklist Initiative:

PhD students present at the meeting cite (and lament) a uniform need to “slow down” after qualification exams, and prior to dissertation, in order to contextualize historical, critical, and genre-specific lenses according to the primary texts they will need to consider. Because primary texts aligned with a student’s ultimate dissertation parameters are not reliably covered during the coursework or booklist phases of the program, students present at the meeting suggested advocacy of a fourth list at the booklist phase, in which students might organize primary texts aligned with their prospective work towards dissertation, and through which they might contextualize their written responses for the other lists and their oral defense during the qualification stage. They reason that this addition would require minimal (if any) procedural changes to the program, that it would establish more effective scaffolding towards a dissertation prospectus, and that it stands to provide greater context for professional development. They further suggest that such a supplement to the current process would appeal to prospective students as a programmatic strength (and therefore serve as a recruitment mechanism), wherein the booklist and qualifying exams work directly in line towards the eventual dissertation—as compared to more traditional broadly-disbursed comprehensive exams, and other non-scaffolded approaches.

It was further noted that alt-ac, social justice, and pedagogy-centered initiatives for professionalization are appreciated, and potentially relevant at dissertation, but likely counterproductive if situated as required components of the booklist and qualification process.

MA-Lit Transitional Project and Program Coverage:

MA-Lit students present voiced interest in a clearer path toward the thesis option, if they choose to pursue it, and may likewise be interested in alternative summative/transitional/extended projects such as a capstone and/or the portfolio “exam.” It was also suggested that increased rhet/comp (with emphasis on rhetoric) course offerings might be useful.

ENGL 680 Requirement:

It was suggested that ENGL 680: “Intro to Literary Research” should be required for all grad students taking literature classes.

Other Programs:

MFA and MA-PWE students present had no remarks about their programs.

Representation and Notification:

Members present would like clarification on when Lit Program and other faculty meetings take place and who is allowed to attend. They also ask to receive notes from these meetings where/when appropriate. Chris reports that it is his understanding that he is invited to GPC and Lit Program meetings as a PhD representative and that Elana is similarly invited as a representative for the MA-Lit students (and that Heather and Bri are likewise invited as program representatives at GPC meetings), but that he is uncertain about whether others are “allowed” to attend these and other faculty meetings. It was also asked whether representational proxies might be employed in the event that representatives are unable to attend, if the meetings they are invited to participate in are not open. Chris will inquire and report at the next meeting.

Job Titles:

The title “Graduate Teaching Assistant” was questioned as inadequate for the work that graduate students perform as instructors. “Graduate Teaching Associate” was noted as potentially better, and “Teaching Fellow” was noted as an alternative title employed by similar programs. It is assumed that the English department has little influence over the moniker, but Chris will inquire and report back at the next meeting.