

School of English News

January 2010

Welcome to the School of English newsletter. It's designed to supplement and reinforce all the other means, hi-tech and otherwise, we employ to keep you abreast of developments. Please send comments and suggestions to the editor at david.roberts@bcu.ac.uk or come and see me in B608. Don't forget that the website (www.bcu.ac.uk/english) and the Moodle course pages have the most news...

Careers Talk

On the afternoon of Wednesday January 27th all English students are encouraged to attend an event held by the Careers Service in B612, 1-3pm. It should appeal to second and third year BA students in particular but everyone is welcome to come.

Return of Work

The bad weather has made it impossible for us to moderate all work in time for return on January 18th, so we're waiting another week. Apologies.

Hello and Goodbye

Jackie Gay leaves us at the end of the month to pursue an exciting new life in Canada. She has been a marvellous tutor, colleague and mentor, and she will be sorely missed. However, we have an excellent replacement in the shape of our former Royal Literary Fund Fellow, Ian Marchant. You can read about Ian and his voluminous writings on his website, www.ianmarchant.com.

RDUES and schools

Our world-renowned research unit, based in B606, has won a major grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to work with Stratford Grammar School on materials to support the English Language 'A' level curriculum. RDUES will bring its highly innovative WebCorp technology to bear on helping students to describe more accurately current English usage. Find out more about RDUES by clicking 'Research' on the School website.

Course Developments

We are currently revising the **BA Course** as part of the periodic review process. Course director Ruth Page is consulting a student focus group to discuss proposed changes. See your student reps for further details. Initial approval has been given for us to start a new **MA Course** in writing for stage and screen, part of an ambitious new portfolio of Master's courses run across the Faculty. The new course should come on stream in September this year. Meanwhile, our **National Academy of Writing Diploma Course** is to be upgraded to Master's level. Just ask if you are interested!

National Student Survey

The annual National Student Satisfaction Survey will be conducted among third-year BA students in the forthcoming months. All third-year undergraduates will be receiving a letter about the survey with an invitation to attend meetings.

Erasmus Links

If you're a first or second year, this is the ideal time to think about taking part in one of our Erasmus exchange programmes with a variety of European universities.

See our Erasmus co-ordinator, Professor Mark Addis, for details. English is the medium of instruction in our partner departments and your European credits are fully transferable.

Alumni Association

Premature? Maybe. We're holding a gathering for alumni on June 18th, when former students will be able to get together and share memories of their time in the School of English. There will be presentations on the School's current work and future plans, including the big move to the City Centre campus scheduled for September 2013 (for details and a virtual tour, see the main BCU website). We all hope you'll want to join the Alumni Association after you graduate.

Events

2010 sees the launch of the Birmingham Book Festival's little sibling, which takes wing in May ahead of the main festival in September. Staff and students from the School of English have taken part in the festival in the past few years and we'll be represented again in 2010. If you would like to volunteer your services as a helper, see the contact details on the BBF website.

University Funding

You may have followed the news stories in the national media about public spending cuts, in particular the ones relating to universities. The secretary of state has just announced a cut of at least 12.5% to higher education funding over the next three years. That doesn't mean fewer funded student places: universities will recruit about the same number but receive less government money for each one (if you

want the funding system explained, just ask). No one really knows what effect this will have on higher education nationally, but one local consequence is that all faculties and departments at BCU have been asked to save 5-10% on their planned expenditure for 2010-11. You can be assured that we will try our best to do this in a way that doesn't affect the quality of your education. One thing all students can do is to take this matter up with their Union and with their MP, and to look very carefully at the statements made by different political parties about their commitment to higher education. There will be a general election this Spring and students need to use their collective voice so that politicians are reminded of the importance of what we all do.

Space

Thanks to a review of the room booking system, we hope to reclaim B612 as a study and preparation space in the academic year 2010-11. Some money will be invested in improving it. We're also looking to put up some more displays on the corridor and in the stairwell.

Literary Anniversaries

Last year saw the 300th anniversary of the birth of Dr Johnson, commemorated in Professor Philip Smallwood's highly praised collection of essays for Cambridge University Press. This year, it is 100 years since the death of the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy (don't leave us without at least having started *War and Peace*). An indisputably great writer, Tolstoy died miserably, on the run from his family at the age of 82, holed up in a railway station. Honour his memory. Read him.