

## Literature

MIT's [Literature Section](#) has a profile that is unusual among its peers, although not unique within MIT's School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS): it has internationally recognized faculty who are committed to working closely with an undergraduate population made up largely of non-majors.

Both parts of this identity matter. Within the last year, one of our senior colleagues was president of the Shakespeare Association of America (SAA), a major voice in the discipline; one of our junior colleagues won the Rome Prize, a highly competitive fellowship whose recipients are chosen from many disciplines in many countries; another senior colleague brought a major international conference to MIT and helped to shape the curriculum for humanities at a new university in Singapore. Other colleagues published groundbreaking books, were invited speakers at international conferences, and consulted on manuscripts for the most important presses and journals in our field. Yet while all our faculty teach advanced subjects related to our research, we also expect to do half our teaching in introductory classes—not in large lectures, but in small, communication-intensive subjects intended for students in their first two years of study. Senior faculty also regularly volunteer to teach more intensive entry-level writing classes designed for students who need extra help with college-level writing. Many of our faculty have been recognized as outstanding teachers by the school and the Institute: of our 15-member faculty, five are or have been MacVicar Fellows and two recently won the James A. and Ruth Levitan Award for Excellence in Teaching. Our newest member, professor Marah Gubar, recently won the Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award at the University of Pittsburgh. Alongside our profile as scholars, what happens in the classroom is a key part of our mission and who we collectively are.

This combination of high expectations of excellence in research with high commitment to small-group teaching, including at the introductory level, defines our unit. In recent years, Literature has been successful in attracting and retaining our first-choice candidates even without the PhD programs offered by MIT's peer institutions. This speaks to the success of MIT's unusual model in the context of the profession as well as that of our own campus.

At the same time, our location within a world-class institute of technology offers particular challenges. Among these challenges is visibility. Members of the public (and even some of our own MIT colleagues) sometimes express surprise that MIT has a literature unit; they also express curiosity about what we do. Others are unaware of the wide variety of genres, media, and approaches that characterize our teaching and research agendas. Clearly, we have an opportunity to communicate more vividly the nature and value of our own work and our contributions to the Institute in ways that go beyond the dissemination of research through professional journals and conferences.

There are some challenges in doing so. The model of small-group teaching that has been so successful with MIT's students does not translate into striking, public narrative as readily as a new scientific discovery, a technological breakthrough, or the successful deployment of a massive open online course. By virtue of its intimacy and ephemerality,

what happens in the classroom isn't readily visible or audible to audiences outside its walls—even when it makes a critical contribution to our students' success, impact on the world, and sense of themselves as empowered speakers, and even when (as we are sometimes told) it changes lives. How can we tell this story in a way that makes it meaningful and accessible to larger audiences, and how can we share some of our intellectual product with audiences outside the classroom and the university?

In some ways these challenges are particular to MIT; yet in the wake of two major reports describing the humanities as “under pressure,” the nature and value of all work in the humanities may need to be freshly articulated to the various publics that we collectively serve (for more information, see [“The Heart of the Matter,”](#) prepared by the Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and [“The Teaching of the Arts and Humanities at Harvard College: Mapping the Future,”](#) prepared by a working group of faculty at Harvard University).

At MIT, the institutional weight and inherited understandings that still accrue to the study of literature on liberal arts campuses are muted; the nature of our student body does not tie us to the kinds of classes required to serve large numbers of majors and prepare them for advanced work in the discipline. These local conditions afford us the freedom to innovate, to serve as a test bed in conditions that map what all literature departments may experience in a few years.

In some ways, our challenges are particular to the humanities; yet the humanities are not alone in facing pressures to make a case for themselves. MIT's leadership in developing online classes as supplement and alternative to existing educational models has sharpened the concurrent need to define and articulate to a larger public the value of a campus-based education that is, by definition, available only to a few. Literature has not been absent from MIT's innovations in pedagogy: members of our faculty have been deeply engaged for years with imagining, developing, and using digital tools in our classrooms, and we have begun to explore models for online teaching that fit and enable what we teach. Yet these innovations go hand in hand with a continuing commitment to small-group teaching—as has been said, humanists flipped the classroom a long time ago. We are thus keenly interested in the campus-wide challenge of how to make the case for being on a campus in the first place—as well as how to make the most of our co-presence and its unique affordances.

## **News and Personnel**

### **Highlights**

Professor Diana Henderson served as president of the SAA. Professor Eugenie Brinkema, who works on film and visual culture, was promoted to associate professor without tenure. Professor Arthur W. Bahr, the Alfred Henry and Jean Morrison Hayes career development chair, was promoted to associate professor with tenure and awarded a Newhouse Faculty Fellowship at Wellesley College for 2014–2015. Diana Henderson and professor Peter S. Donaldson successfully deployed a new online module, “Global Hamlet in Performance,” in their classrooms (see Teaching, below); Peter Donaldson also secured two new international partner archives, in Taiwan and Brazil, as collaborators under the auspices of The Global Shakespeares Video and Performance Archive at MIT.

This year, we were also able to make an exciting outside appointment, bringing Marah Gubar from the University of Pittsburgh, where she directed the program in children's literature. A renowned scholar of children's literature and performance, Gubar will add a new area as well as reinforcing existing strengths in 19th-century fiction. Finally, Literature successfully competed for two of six new predoctoral fellowships in the humanities funded by the provost; in the coming academic year, we will be welcoming Shermaine Jones, a PhD candidate in English at the University of Virginia, and Rosa Martinez, a PhD candidate in English at the University of California, Berkeley.

The year saw other arrivals and departures. Emily Jones, a postdoctoral fellow funded by the Global Shakespeares project, helped with the design of an online module used in several of our Shakespeare classes. Julia Panko concluded a two-year Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship and prepared to leave for a tenure-track job at Weber State University. We also saw two retirements: Kate Delaney, lecturer and housemaster of East Campus, came to MIT after a distinguished career in the Foreign Service and taught very popular classes on science fiction and 20th-century American culture. Howard Eiland, a much-loved lecturer and renowned translator of Walter Benjamin, taught introductory and advanced classes on fiction at MIT for more than 25 years.

Several faculty members were off campus for all or part of the academic year. Assistant professor Stephanie Frampton spent the year at the American Academy in Rome. In the spring, Ann Fetter Friedlander professor Ruth Perry was on leave and spent time as an MIT Fellow at Balliol College. Professor James Buzard was on leave for the academic year, traveling to Beijing and Singapore. Professors David Thorburn and Shankar Raman were on sabbatical in the spring.

The section experienced several changes in staffing. Kevin MacLellan and Hannah Carpenter, both administrative assistants, moved to positions in Global Studies and Languages, and Music and Theatre Arts, respectively. Brad Seawall, staff to the Communications Forum, retired. Doug Purdy, who ran the Humanities Film Office for many years, left MIT to pursue an emerging career as a writer. Over the course of the year, we welcomed Susan Wiedner and Ben Kemp as administrative assistants in headquarters; Coralie Kraft as staff to the Communications Forum; Laura Ryan as a media assistant in the Film Office; and Corinne Spencer as assistant to the section head, professor Mary C. Fuller. Locally, we've rolled out a new website that will make it easier to post current news about activities and achievements, including video clips of faculty talking about what they do and why they do it. Changes in MIT's guidelines provided an opportunity to rethink our visual branding, and the section plans to have a new logo by the end of the calendar year. Work on a website for the Humanities Film Office neared completion, with input from various stakeholders. Faculty and staff were also given iPads to better enable collaboration, productivity, and multimedia teaching.

### **Publications, Conferences, Lectures, and Outreach**

Eugenie Brinkema published *The Forms of the Affects*, a monograph exploring the intellectual history of the emotions and their visual manifestations in popular and avant-garde film, with Duke University Press; her book was featured on the MIT homepage with an accompanying news office story ("[Film, form and feeling](#)," May 7,

2014). Mary Fuller edited and introduced a special issue of the journal *Studies in Travel Writing* on “Travel in the Anglo-American Atlantic World, 1550–1747,” showcasing work by participants in English Encounters with the Americas, a National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminar for college professors that she directed at MIT in 2011. Ruth Perry published two essays from her ongoing research on the pioneering collector of folk music Anna Gordon Brown; among numerous other publications, her chapter on wealth and property in the 18th-century novel appeared in volume 2 of the *Oxford History of the Novel in English*. Senior lecturer Wyn Kelley’s essay on Herman Melville was included in the *New Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, and two other chapters appeared in American and Spanish collections. Peter Donaldson had articles published in *Shakespeare International Yearbook* and *Shakespeare*. Associate professor Sandy Alexandre reviewed for the journal *Small Axe*; she, Diana Henderson, and Shankar Raman all published chapters from their work in progress.

Diana Henderson gave a keynote address to the Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft in Weimar, and another invited talk at the University of Vienna. Mary Fuller was an invited speaker at the University of Basel and attended a workshop for editors on a major project for Oxford University Press held at the University of Southampton. Eugenie Brinkema spoke at two conferences hosted by the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis. Peter Donaldson visited Taipei for a talk and workshop on MIT’s Global Shakespeares Archive at the National Taiwan University, and participated on a panel at the National Theatre of Taiwan. James Buzard gave invited talks at Tsinghua University in Beijing and at the Singapore University of Technology and Design. Ruth Perry and visiting lecturer William Donaldson spoke at the Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society in Paris. Stephanie Frampton spoke at the American Academy in Rome.

Ruth Perry gave a plenary address to the International Society for the Study of Narrative at MIT in April. Diana Henderson delivered the presidential address at the annual meeting of the SAA and spoke at a panel on “Feminism and Feminization in the Digitized Academy” at the Modern Language Association (MLA) Annual Convention. Sandy Alexandre spoke at the International Conference on Narrative, at Dartmouth College’s Futures of American Studies summer institute, and at the concluding panel of MIT’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Luncheon Seminar Series; she also chaired and served as respondent for a panel at the American Studies Association and gave an intermission talk with questions and answers at Boston’s Strand Theatre. Her research was featured on the MIT homepage (“[Intellectual property](#),” Feb 14, 2014). Arthur Bahr was invited to speak at the Columbia University Graduate Colloquium, at the inaugural symposium of the Yale Program in the History of the Book, and at the Bard College Medieval Studies and Experimental Humanities Program; he also spoke at the annual conferences of the MLA and the Medieval Academy of America. Eugenie Brinkema gave invited talks at the University of Rochester, Colorado College, and the University of Buffalo, and she was invited to deliver a keynote address at The New School for Public Engagement’s 12th annual graduate conference: Critical Themes in Media Studies. She also spoke at the World Picture Conference and at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, where she organized and chaired a panel. Stephanie Frampton gave a talk on ancient libraries at the American Philological Association’s annual conference. Associate professor Noel Jackson spoke at conferences in Boston; Washington, DC; and Berkeley. Shankar

Raman organized and led a research seminar at the annual meeting of the SAA and was an invited speaker at Vanderbilt University. Wyn Kelley gave a keynote address at Hofstra University's Digital Research Center on digital annotation and the future of reading, and was featured on a plenary panel with Henry Jenkins at the annual meeting of the National Writing Project; she also appeared with Henry Jenkins at a festival on *Moby Dick* hosted by the Los Angeles Central Library. She appeared with Kurt Fendt (HyperStudio) and Jeremy Dean (Genius.com) at the MIT Communications Forum, and spoke on Arctic photography at the Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists. Peter Donaldson, Diana Henderson, and Shankar Raman presented the D'Arbeloff- and SHASS-funded online teaching module "Global Hamlet in Performance" at SAA's first annual digital salon.

### **Professional Service**

Diana Henderson served as president of the SAA. Wyn Kelly was a member of the executive committee of The Melville Society. Eugenie Brinkema was nominated for the MLA Executive Committee on Film. Mary Fuller became the international representative to the Hakluyt Society for the United States and president of the American Friends of the Hakluyt Society. James Buzard was on the executive committee of the Dickens Project. Associate professor Margery Resnick served as president of the International Institute in Madrid and won a competitive grant to include it in the State Department's "American Spaces" program.

Members of the faculty served as editors, advisors, or members of the editorial board for a number of professional journals: *Leviathan* (Wyn Kelly); *Studies in Travel Writing* (Mary Fuller); *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* and *Shakespeare Studies* (Diana Henderson); *ELH: English Literary History, Victorian Literature and Culture, Nineteenth Century Literature, Victoriographies* (James Buzard); and *InVisible Culture* (Eugenie Brinkema). Visiting lecturer John Picker was invited to serve on the editorial board of *Sound Studies*, a new interdisciplinary journal. Mary Fuller joined the advisory board for a new book series at Ashgate Publishing, *Maritime Humanities 1400–1800*. Literature faculty also reviewed manuscripts and proposals for presses including Routledge, Oxford University Press, Continuum International Publishing Group, Blackwell, Ashgate, Johns Hopkins University Press, and Broadview Press, and for journals including *American Literary History*, *Publications of the MLA*, *Chaucer Review*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, and *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

Shankar Raman read applications for fellowships at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University. Peter Donaldson reviewed fellowship applications for the Folger Shakespeare Library and the American Council of Learned Societies. Arthur Bahr was an external grant reviewer for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. He also served on the steering committee of the New England Medieval Conference and was co-organizer for the second biennial meeting of the BABEL Working Group. Stephen Tapscott reviewed applicants to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and continued on the board of British and American Studies at the West University of Timișoara in Romania. He was also a referee for the Italian government's national academic research assessment. Noel Jackson served on the organizing committee for the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism's annual

conference. Wyn Kelley was an advisory curator at the New Bedford Whaling Museum and associate editor of the Herman Melville Electronic Library. Diana Henderson was a consulting scholar to the Actors' Shakespeare Project and served on an external review committee for the English Department at Northeastern University. William Donaldson was elected an honorary member of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies.

### **Service to MIT**

Literature faculty served on numerous institute committees and other bodies. Sandy Alexandre served on the Subcommittee on the HASS (Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences) Requirement (SHR). Mary Fuller served on the Faculty Policy Committee (FPC) and the Corporation Joint Advisory Committee on Institute-Wide Affairs. Margery Resnick served on the Committee on Discipline. David Thorburn served on the Committee on Intellectual Property. Ruth Perry served on the editorial board of the Faculty Newsletter. Peter Donaldson was a member of the EDx-MITx interest group and served on the Educational Advisory Committee within the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. Shankar Raman chaired the Committee on Curricula in the fall before going on leave. Diana Henderson continued to serve as dean for curriculum and faculty development, serving on the Committee on the Undergraduate Program, SHR, the Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement, the *MITx* Subcommittee of the FPC, the Creative Arts Council, and the MIT Council on Educational Technology, in addition to numerous oversight and leadership responsibilities within the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education. She also chaired monthly meetings of the undergraduate faculty officers.

Arthur Bahr served on the Presidential Committee for Distinguished Fellowships, and was a faculty fellow in the Burchard Scholars Program. Sandy Alexandre served on the Burchard Scholars Program selection committee and on the Louis Kampf Writing Prize committee. Ruth Perry served on the D'Arbelloff Fund for Excellence in Education awards committee. Shankar Raman served on the Committee on Foreign Scholarships. The selection committees for the MacVicar Faculty Fellows, the Alumni Class Funds awards, and the D'Arbelloff Fund awards were all chaired by Diana Henderson. Noel Jackson served on the Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship selection committee and was director of the Kelly Douglas Fund. Margery Resnick directed the Burchard Scholars Program.

Arthur Bahr, Sandy Alexandre, and Diana Henderson served on the steering committee, programming committee and/or curriculum committee for Women's and Gender Studies (WGS). Arthur Bahr was the concentration, minor, and major advisor for Ancient and Medieval Studies (AMS), and organized the AMS colloquium. Sandy Alexandre coordinated the Literature Faculty Workshop, and gave a keynote address at the Campus Preview Weekend Minority Family Reception. David Thorburn and Noel Jackson oversaw the Communications Forum and served on the planning committee for the bi-annual Media in Transition conference. Ruth Perry served on the steering committee of the Technology and Culture Forum. Margery Resnick directed IAP (Independent Activities Period) Madrid and the MIT Semester in Spain program, and gave a keynote address at celebrations of the 50th anniversary of McCormick Hall. Mary Fuller served on a senior search committee for Comparative Media Studies/ Writing (CMS/W).

Professor Alvin Kibel (chair), Arthur Bahr, and Sandy Alexandre served on the Literature Curriculum Committee. Noel Jackson served as undergraduate officer for Literature. Sandy Alexandre, Noel Jackson, Mary Fuller, and Diana Henderson served as freshman advisors; Noel Jackson won an award for the most creative advising activity. Sandy Alexandre was also a mentor in the Office of Minority Education's Mentor Advocate Partnership Program.

### Teaching

Faculty members experimented with new tools and methods in the classroom this year. Wyn Kelley used Lo-Cast mapping software along with Annotation Studio—a tool she co-developed with HyperStudio—in a new seminar on Herman Melville. A new online module developed under the auspices of the GSP was used and assessed in several classes: Diana Henderson's subject 21L.010J/21W.042J Writing with Shakespeare, and Peter Donaldson's subjects 21L.009 Shakespeare and 21L.435/CMS.840 Literature and Film. Mary Fuller piloted 21L.S88 Literature from Anywhere: An Engineer's Guide to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a new subject meeting physically over IAP and virtually during spring 2014; this initiative was funded by the School of Engineering as part of the school's Semester from Anywhere experiment. Literature from Anywhere was approved for HASS distribution credit by SHR, and received an Alumni Class Funds grant to support a second iteration in spring 2015.

Our interdisciplinary interests led to numerous forms of collaboration in the classroom. Arthur Bahr co-taught the AMS subject 21L.014J/21H.007J Empire: Introduction to Ancient and Medieval Studies with two colleagues from History. Mary Fuller co-taught the humanities exploration subject 21L.013J/ 21M.013J/21A.201J The Supernatural in Music, Literature and Culture with Charles Shadle (Music and Theatre Arts). Wyn Kelley and Sandy Alexandre gave guest lectures in 21L.008J Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies, taught by Michel DeGraff (Linguistics). We also offered a number of subjects cross-listed with other units. In the fall, Ruth Perry and William Donaldson taught 21L.023J/21M.223J Folk Music of the British Isles and North America, cross-listed with Music. Eugenie Brinkema, Peter Donaldson, and Julia Panko taught subjects cross-listed with CMS, and Alvin Kibel taught 21L.022J/21W.739J Darwin and Design, cross-listed with Writing. Ruth Perry's seminar 21L.707 Problems in Cultural Interpretation: Women Reading/Women Writing was cross-listed with WGS. In the spring, Peter Donaldson, Kate Delaney, and Alvin Kibel taught cross-listed classes on Shakespeare in film and video (21L.435/CMS.840), American popular culture and narrative in the 1960s (21L.430/CMS.920), and American film genres (21L.706/CMS.830); Sandy Alexandre taught 21L.504J/WGS.140J Race and Identity in American Literature. Arthur Bahr, Shankar Raman, Alvin Kibel, and James Buzard all spent time in residence at the Singapore University of Technology and Design teaching and assisting in the development of a humanities curriculum.

Our six-unit samplings classes, meeting once a week for the whole semester or twice a week during the first or second half, continued to allow an attractive flexibility in topics as well as in scheduling. William Donaldson introduced a class on the fairy tale. Wyn Kelley offered new subjects on the gothic and on women writers who have received the Nobel Prize in Literature. David Thorburn taught a class on politics and private

life in contemporary fiction. Mary Fuller offered a condensed version of her regular seminar on Milton's *Paradise Lost*; students in this discussion-based class interacted with materials from 21L.S88, providing user feedback and critique. New subjects and syllabi were also introduced elsewhere. Lecturer Ina Lipkowitz, the regular instructor for our popular 21L.458 The Bible class (who also publishes and blogs about food and food history), developed a new seminar, 21L.707 Reading Cookbooks, with MIT's history in nutrition and food science as one of its informing contexts. Eugenie Brinkema drew on her research to design a new syllabus on violence in contemporary film and literature for 21L.435 Literature and Film; Noel Jackson introduced a new syllabus on feeling and the feelings as a topic in aesthetics and affect theory in 21L.451 Literary Theory. For his subject 21L.704 Studies in Poetry, Stephen Tapscott taught a seminar on Walt Whitman and world poetry with Professor Marja Roholl, a distinguished visitor from the University of Amsterdam. Finally, Arthur Bahr offered 21L.705 Major Authors, a popular new subject in Anglo-Saxon, expanding the existing AMS language and literature offerings in Latin (21L.611, 21L.612, 21L.S94).

This academic year saw the end of the HASS-D system. As anticipated, we saw a modest contraction in enrollments from a three-year average of 930 enrolled students to 808 in AY2014. Some classes had unexpectedly strong enrollments while others fell off markedly. Changing patterns of enrollment intersect with a growing desire to streamline and reconsider our course offerings, but we expect to defer a full-scale overhaul of the curriculum until after this year, when the system may be further perturbed by the introduction of a new enrollment management system. We are also keenly interested in an improved scheduling system; while the hours for large first-year lectures are typically known in advance, we would welcome richer data about enrollment numbers and capacity throughout the week.

In spring 2014, Wyn Kelley synthesized conversations with all of our teaching staff into a report on our pedagogy, including methods, challenges, and goals. We hope to deploy these materials to create new tools for assessment, as well as to continue the exchange of teaching materials on Dropbox that was inaugurated last year.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Previous reports articulated a vision of the section's evolution into a "multimedia comparative literature for the 21st century." To fully realize such a vision would require a major commitment of resources (and institutional will), and would change the section's identity in fundamental ways. It remains a possible direction for a unit that long ago broadened its ambit from "English" to "Literature," and whose faculty were early advocates and practitioners of film and media studies in the academy. At present, however, our interest is focused on immediate opportunities and available resources as we assess the long-term picture. In the area of comparative literature, for instance, student demand suggests the possible addition of Ancient Greek to our broadening AMS language offerings; we also expect to continue support of the Spanish-language subjects that came to Literature with Margery Resnick's appointment several years ago, and that were given transitional support by the SHASS Dean's office. Other synergistic opportunities exist for expanding subjects focused on literatures in translation and for diversifying the media studies curriculum with younger faculty who work on a range of historical media.



Any steps in the direction of media studies and/or global comparative literature naturally intersect with the work of our closest academic neighbors, CMS/W and Global Studies and Languages. The landscape for collaboration between our units seems distinctly brighter in 2014 as all three units emerge from a multi-year period of merger and reorganization; many of the advantages envisioned from a more sweeping program of reorganization may be captured by closer consultation and coordination among our groups. To this end, the three heads have begun meeting for monthly lunches to share information and align our efforts. We see many areas—beyond our current portfolio of shared course offerings and co-sponsorship of events—in which such collaboration promises to be rewarding.

The opportunities and promise of collaboration extend well beyond Building 14, however. Our campus harbors unparalleled intellectual resources of energy and creativity, and these are precisely the resources we need to devise innovative and effective responses to the local and national challenges outlined in our introduction. From informal conversations and networking in coffee shops and on committees to joint projects in labs and classrooms, collaborations can become a mode of research about what a humanities for the 21st century might really look like.

In the coming years, many opportunities for collaborations across boundaries at MIT can be foreseen. New efforts are under way to coordinate groups of multi-perspectival subjects on health and on the environment. Colleagues in computer science and other disciplines are paying attention to narrative—one of our central interests—as a way of contextualizing and shaping information. Literary studies and linguistics share interests in the formal properties of language, but these disciplines, once closely allied, have drifted apart at the national level; the potential rewards of renewing a lively exchange are evident. Finally, the digital revolution is remapping the landscape for the objects, methods, spaces, and organizing systems associated with reading. MIT—with Literature as one of many contributors—should be a powerful voice in shaping the future of reading, books, and archives.

**Mary C. Fuller**  
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