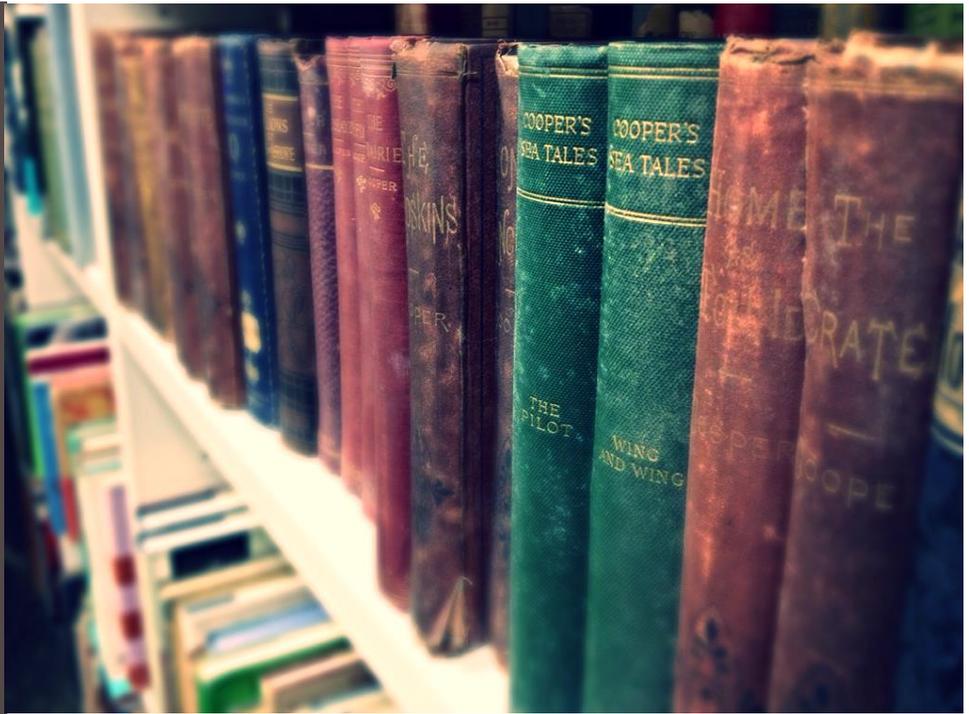




# English Exchange

Connecting English majors  
at Ashford University



Vol. 2.3

September 2015



## What's New?

The latest and greatest news from the  
Department of English at Ashford University

**NEW MINORS: Increase the value of your Bachelors of Arts on the job market!**

Experts agree that one can never have enough advantages on the job market. Luckily, Ashford is very proactive in building opportunities for its students to have such advantages.

(Continued on page 4)

**SUBMIT YOUR WRITING: *The Ash* and *The Ashford Humanities Review* officially open for submissions!**

As they read final papers at the conclusion of a course, English instructors are well aware of the wealth of talent Ashford's students possess. Now it's finally time for students to share their great writing with a much broader audience. Yes, the editors of two new publications that feature the essays and creative writing of Ashford's students are now selecting pieces for publication!

This [link](#) will lead you directly to the page where you can submit your critical essays, artwork, poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction!

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**In this class review, our very own Student Editor, Dori Biata, reflects on her experiences in an already-popular course that was recently revised by Ashford's full-time faculty: ENG 318, Creative Writing.**

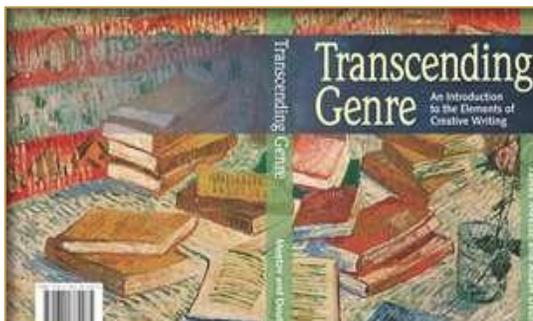
## **Creative Reflections: Assessing the New and Improved ENG 318**

English majors have many opportunities to express themselves in writing. From essays, poems, journals, and discussion question responses, we always have a Word document or pen and paper within reach. But few classes give the student an opportunity to write something he or she really wants to write.

ENG 318: Creative Writing was that one class in which I was able to not only write, but write for fun. Sure there were guidelines on the assignments, but through this class I was able to write fiction, nonfiction, and poetry that made me learn and grow as a reader. The course assignments include writing 3 poems, a short story, and a creative nonfiction piece. In the last two weeks of the class, students revise these drafts while receiving feedback from the instructor and classmates.

Students are encouraged to think outside of the box and write pieces with a lot of imagery and emotion. The class helped me grow as a writer and made me dare to dream up new ideas. The textbook, *Crossroads: Creative Writing in Four Genres* (2005) by Diane Thiel, was also a pleasant read with numerous tips that help a writer understand character, setting, different creative writing genres, and how to create meaningful metaphors. In fact, the book still sits on my bookshelf, its pages bent down to mark different sections that have helped me get inspired when I am stuck in my own creative writing.

The instructor was also really wonderful. Professor James Meetze offered insightful feedback on every assignment and I felt as though I learned so much from his teaching and the course. It was through his teaching that poetry became a joy to write and the words inside my head came to life as I typed them on the page. By taking this course I found out who I was as a writer because ENG 318 isn't just creative writing that looks good on your transcript; it's a class that's good for a writer's soul.



**Faculty Editor's note:** *Yes, like Dori, I always keep Diane Thiel's textbook close at hand, but ENG 318's course revision team knew it was time to offer students a more up-to-date creative writing manual. After all, Thiel's book was published in 2005! Enter James Meetze and Adam Deutsch, two of Ashford's esteemed full-time faculty members. They are also widely published writers who have now co-authored the book pictured to the left, which will be included in all ENG 318 courses beginning in November. Be sure to reserve your seat in the class soon!*

## An Interview with English Major Chris Hamm

By Jessica Acuna, Student Editor



### **You're technically a Junior here at Ashford, but how long have you been working towards your Bachelor's degree?**

Well, that really depends on how you look at it. I started school in the fall of 1988 after completing Basic Training for a stint in the Air Force Reserves. Initially, I was not ready to be a good student without the structure of high school and parental oversight. I spent a couple of years deciding on a major that involved something that I am passionate about. A couple of years into it, I met a lovely woman and put school on hold to get married and have a family. Fast forward twenty years, give or take, and I enrolled at Ashford.

### **When did you know you wanted to be an English major?**

Not until I cleaned up my GPA and stopped lying to myself that I wanted to pursue anything but a Humanities degree. I saw *Top Gun* way too many times in the late eighties, which informed my desire to

be a pilot, which informed my "desire" to get a technical degree. After a few years of life experience and learning to listen to myself, I made the right decision.

### **What career field do you think you will pursue when you graduate?**

My children are both nearing the time when they are going off on their own adventures, building independent lives, etc. I have a wonderful job with a lovely company, but I have done my bit for king and country, so to speak, so I do not think I will continue with that; it is time for something new, but I am unsure as to what that will be. I do have an opportunity to move to Europe in about two years, depending on a couple of variables, but it is my intent to do that move. The idea of working and living in Europe, of spending some time with my grown daughter there, experiencing all that Europe has to offer while being immersed in its culture, sounds lovely to me.

### **Do you have a favorite piece of literature? What makes it your favorite?**

So many...so many. Consistently I answer this question with two novels and a poem; *Frankenstein*, *Interview with the Vampire*, and "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." *Frankenstein*, widely considered to be the first science fiction novel, satisfies my love of period pieces, more formal language, and science fiction. The part of the book that deals with the possibility of friendship between Victor Frankenstein and Robert Walton, the captain of the sailing ship who finds him wandering the ice (enter parts of "Rime of the Ancient Mariner") is the best part of the story. "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is a poem that I discovered with while studying abroad in the UK in the late 90s. It was an amazing experience to be in the land where it was written, to feel and to see it all around me.

### **Do you think you are a better writer or a better editor?**

Writer. Writing has always been a fairly natural process for me. I do not put a lot of thought into a start necessarily; it just seems to flow. That being said, since I know that I cannot turn in "steam of



## Enhancing Your Ashford Degree: A Minor Can Have Major Benefits

~ By Kristi Dougay, Student Editor

“Minors, along with double majors, are increasingly popular as students try to master multiple subjects on the way to flexible careers or future education.”

~ Michelle Slatalla, *The New York Times*

After choosing a major, many students decide to complete their elective courses by pursuing a minor. To complete a minor, students must take six courses in the chosen area of study. Minors are not mandatory and students can instead choose to take a variety of elective courses to complete their degree. However, there are many benefits of choosing a minor and doing so will better prepare students for the job market or even graduate school. According to Slatalla (2008), a secondary area of study can show job interviewers and graduate school admissions officers that an applicant has multiple areas of expertise and has done more work than other undergraduate students. Whether a student is looking to explore the possibility of a double major, add a specialization that will aid in a future career, or simply learn more about a subject of interest outside of a chosen major, there are many minors available to help one reach those goals. Ashford is now offering seven new minors. Please note that students cannot minor in the same discipline as their major.

**Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC)** – A minor in JMC will provide the knowledge and skills associated with news writing and reporting in various platforms. Students will learn the basic elements of creating content for various forms of media and they will study the ethical and legal standards of journalistic reporting. Students will also learn to communicate with diverse audiences and present information from various perspectives. This minor may be a good fit for Communication Studies, Linguistics, and English majors.

**Sociology** – A minor in Sociology will provide students with the tools needed to become an agent of change in society. Students will learn to highlight social problems, research why and to whom these problems occur, and provide solutions that advocate social change. The courses in this minor will provide increased knowledge of societal issues and cover the unique experiences of key groups in society that experience unequal access. Students will also learn more about the varied tools of applied research used by Sociologists to understand social phenomena as well as increase skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and communication. This minor may be a good fit for students interested in career roles in Activism and Advocacy, Policy, Government and Social Services, Non-Profits and Charities, Human Resources, Labor Relations and Organizational Management, Media, Communications and Journalism, Marketing, and Business Analysis.

**Speech and Language Disorders** – This minor focuses on the increasing demand for speech pathologists and special education teachers. The courses taken with a minor in Speech and Language Disorders will help to satisfy the specific course prerequisites for enrolling in graduate programs accredited by the American Speech Language Hearing Association and for obtaining ASHA’s Certificate of Clinical Competency. This minor may be a good fit for students in the Colleges of Education and Health who are interested in receiving additional training in speech and language disorders.

(Continued on next page)

**Global Studies** – A minor in Global Studies will provide a rigorous multi-disciplinary education that focuses on the most challenging issues facing global leaders today, while encouraging a holistic approach to the effects of globalization and a cosmopolitan view of these issues. The minor introduces the basic concepts and theories of comparative politics, the political implications of international security matters, and the international political economy. This examination of global issues will be put into context by studying social culture and politics in Europe, Latin America, the Arab world, India, East Asia, and other international writing. This minor may be a good fit for English, Linguistics, or Journalism and Mass Communication majors who are interested in learning more about globalization and international affairs.

**Writing** – With a minor in Writing, students will develop the skills needed to be competitive in today’s job market. They will learn to utilize time-honored intellectual approaches, composition techniques, and rhetorical devices. This will increase the ability to convey ideas effectively and communicate across a wide array of audiences and techniques. This minor may be a good fit for Linguistics and Journalism and Mass Communication majors.

**Literature** – A minor in Literature will increase students’ ability to think critically. Students will learn to decipher the meaning of complex works of literature and shape their ideas around the perspectives of other credible literary scholars. Courses in this minor will provide students with the skills to interpret nuanced rhetoric and analyze themes universal to the human experience. These courses will also help students to develop expertise in sustained and focused reasoning. This minor may be a good fit for Linguistics and Journalism and Mass Communication majors.

**Anthropology** – A minor in Anthropology will provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in today’s job market, which has shown an increasing demand for anthropologists in large corporations, governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This minor emphasizes the analysis and research of cultural dynamics in family and kin groups as well as the anthropological implications of war, religion, and many other cultural contexts. In an increasingly multicultural and global society, a strong foundation of anthropological knowledge will help prepare students to meet the needs of the job market today and in the future. For more information on the roles of Anthropologists in the corporate world, please visit <http://www.businessinsider.com/heres-why-companies-are-desperate-to-hire-anthropologists-2014-3>. This minor may be a good fit for English, Linguistics, or Journalism and Mass Communications majors.

Contact your academic advisor today to inquire about these new minors and the many other minors offered by Ashford University!

#### References

Slatella, M. (2008). What’s your minor? *The New York Times*. Retrieved September 15, 2015, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/education/edlife/guidance.html?pagewanted=all>.

### *Dori's Tips for Getting Read in the Magazines*

1. Find a magazine where you might like to publish your work. You should seek **audiences** with interests similar to your own.
2. Come up with an **original topic**. If you do pick a topic familiar to readers, look at it from a different angle.
3. Write a **query letter** to the magazine's editors. Goins describes these as short and formal letters. Some call this a **pitch**, or a brief summary of why your article will captivate the magazine's readers. (There are [YouTube tutorials](#) that can help one perfect a query letter.)
4. Even before the magazine shows interest in your ideas, you should **begin writing** your article. If you haven't already, that is!
5. Be open to **editorial suggestions**. Yes, it can be difficult to accept constructive criticism on a piece of writing. However, just remember that the magazine's editors know exactly what their readers want.
6. If the magazine does accept your work, it is important to honor the **deadline** that is given to you. Editors trust responsible writers and this can work to your advantage in the future.
7. Whether you get your first magazine publication or not, **keep writing!**

## The Key to Being Read: How Magazine Publishing Can Lead to Bigger and Better Things

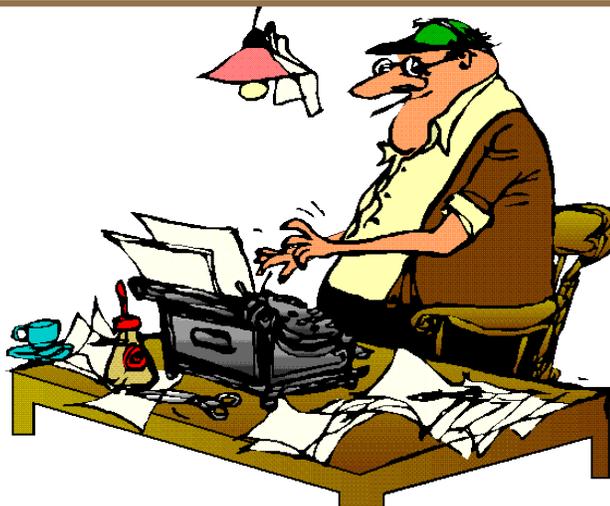
~ By Dori Biata, Student Editor

Nowadays, anyone can publish his or her writing on the Internet with the click of a button, but what about good old-fashioned publishing? Do people still desire having their works printed on a page or is the digital age here to erase the old-fashioned form of publication? Now, I'm not saying that the Internet isn't a good place to publish. In fact, it's great that the possibility of connecting with potential readers has become easier for writers who blog or self-publish their works. But how do writers who actually submit their work to editors get published at all? What does a young writer need to really think about before actually submitting a draft for print publication?

First, let's consider magazine publications. Googling "How to get published in a magazine" yields many answers. According to Jeff Goins (2015), the journey to publication is often gone about the wrong way because too many people want instant fame and a book contract. However, if one really wants to have a career as an author, he or she should start small, and then work his or her way up to the top.

What's one way to accomplish this? Writing for magazines: "Writing for magazines is a great way to learn a lot about how publishing works, what it's like to have your content edited, and how to hone your craft" (Goins, 2015). Contacting a magazine's editors, either by snail mail or through an email address provided by the magazine's website is the first step. An important part of becoming a writer isn't just about what you know; in fact, it's more about *who* you know. The more people a writer knows in the world of publishing—yes, even in magazines or literary journals—the better off he or she will be in the grand scheme of things.

(Continued on pg. 10)



### An Interview with Chris Hamm (continued from page 3)

consciousness” assignments and emails, I have honed my editing skills. I have found that I use the same process often when *rereading* another’s work, but never on the first read. The first read of something new is special, so it should be free of critical analysis. I struggle with mechanics, or, as I call it, the math of English, and I am a firm believer that content matters far more than mechanics. There is certainly a symbiosis between the two, but I believe that the one outweighs the other.

#### When you get writer's block how do you work through it?

I walk away. It is possible to be so close to something that you lose perspective. Throughout the day, I do a lot of writing in my head and anything that might be good I will jot down in my notes on my phone and then come back to it. I am not good at taking a week to write a paper, but I am really good at taking notes and putting it all together in a quick and intuitive binge over a couple of days. The way the classes are structured here at Ashford has made it possible for me learn to do bits and pieces of the larger assignments on given weeks so that I am only writing the main part at the end, which is how I like it. Formatting and putting together “research” for the first couple of weeks, and taking care of the boring technicalities at the beginning is advantageous to the writing process.

#### Do you like the accelerated speed of the five week classes here at Ashford?

I love the way that the classes are laid out and run. It does not feel accelerated to me. If I were taking a full load in a traditional brick-and-mortar setting, I would have just as much work on a daily basis, if not more. This is perfect for my lifestyle. I travel half of every month and to have access to everything, anywhere is perfect. I get bored easily, so I am told, so it is great to have to push through a class and to have something new waiting for me every few weeks; school feels constantly fresh and challenging.

#### How were you at English in high school?

According to grades and comments, I performed admirably. Loving literature and writing is something that has always come naturally, so I looked forward to my classes. It was not until my tenth grade English class that I noted a talent and a passion. I remember being given an assignment in class and starting to write immediately. My teacher took notice and she commented on my ability to just start throwing words out and that was that.

DID YOU  
KNOW



Learning to appreciate other cultures is one of the most important reasons why we study literature. With this in mind, Ashford offers ENG 317: International Voices. This is a course that surveys literature from across the globe and features some of today’s most celebrated authors. Talk to your Academic Advisor today and see if this class suits your degree needs!

*“What great writers do is turn you into the writer. In literary fiction, the incompleteness of the characters turns your mind to trying to understand the minds of others,”* Psychologist David Comer Kidd, *The New School for Social Research*, from a recent article in [\*The Guardian\*](#)

An Interview with Jonathan Wilson, PhD  
*Chair of the English Program*

~ By Jessica Acuna, Student Editor

**EE:** What is your vision for the future of the English program here at Ashford?

**Dr. Wilson:** My vision for the English program is the same as my vision for the university: to be best in class, to be a place of undoubted intellectual stimulation, and to be recognized as both. The English degree (or any degree, for that matter) should always serve the good of those who value it enough to undergo such rigorous study. I believe it is then our job to make sure that such a population is ready to apply that knowledge to real situations, jobs, etc.



**EE:** Should all of us English majors be on the lookout for any big changes?

**Dr. Wilson:** Do you mean in the job market or at Ashford? I cannot foretell the future of the job market, but yes, there are great changes for English majors at Ashford. ENG 303: Shakespeare has gone “live,” and two new minors (Writing and Literature) are now approved. The English Department wants its majors to be as marketable as possible. Thus, continuing to offer more course diversity and applicable minors has been one of our objectives, first and foremost.

**EE:** Do you foresee any problems or major impacts to the online program concerning the school's decision to close the physical campus?

**Dr. Wilson:** The campus closure will not affect the online program in any negative way, shape, or fashion. In fact, I hope that we can utilize the experience and knowledge of those faculty members who are going to join us online. Furthermore, the online campus is steadily growing: We are currently working on offering various new courses and degrees throughout the university. I do sympathize with the faculty and staff who were impacted by the closure and I hope that they are doing well transitioning into new roles within the university and in life. I began teaching at a traditional brick-and-mortar campus and loved the experience.

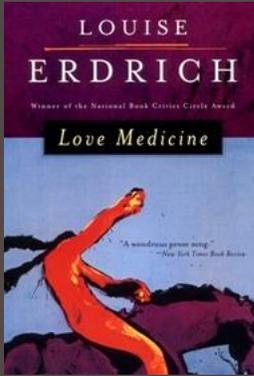
**EE:** How long have you been a professor at Ashford University?

**Dr. Wilson:** I began teaching for Ashford in the spring of 2013. However, I have taught in higher education since 2002. I began as a teaching assistant and became a full-time faculty member after completing my PhD.

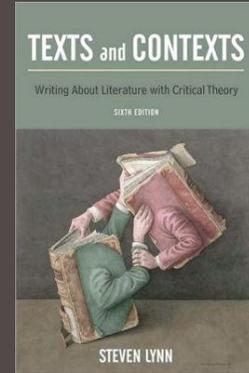
**EE:** What is your favorite piece of literature?

**Dr. Wilson:** That is a tough question. I love so many texts that it is hard to select just one. So I will have to supply you with three answers: My favorite novel is Louise Erdrich's *Love*

(Continued on next page)



*“My vision for the English program is the same as my vision for the university: to be best in class, to be a place of undoubted intellectual stimulation, and to be recognized as both.”*  
 ~Dr. Jonathan Wilson, *English*



*Medicine*. My favorite short story is David Foster Wallace’s “The Devil is a Busy Man,” and my favorite poem is T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” However, those answers might change tomorrow or even by the end of the day.

**EE:** What is your favorite class to teach?

**Dr. Wilson:** English 438: Literary Theory. I truly believe that one cannot study enough theory. It creates and opens doors for literary study that one might have never imagined.

**EE:** Are you working on any writing projects that you hope to publish someday?

**Dr. Wilson:** Yes, I have a piece submitted to the *Rocky Mountain Review*, which is the peer-reviewed journal of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association, and I am presenting at the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association conference in October and the Society for the Study of American Women Writers in November.

**EE:** If you could teach English students one thing, what would it be?

**Dr. Wilson:** To learn to love learning. I believe that ability is the single greatest factor in successfully completing a degree, doing a job well, and leading life to the fullest. If one does not love what they attempt or pursue, it is simply a forced action, but those who are life-long learners always seem to delight in new knowledge and excel in applying that information into their lives.

**EE:** What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

**Dr. Wilson:** Student interaction and seeing students thrive. Over the years, I have received many emails and calls from students who are now successfully working in the job field or are attending graduate school. Those messages are the most rewarding aspect of teaching for me. It proves that I have made a positive difference in someone’s life.

**Congratulations on your new position as Chair of the English program, Dr. Wilson!**

~ Jessica Acuna, *English Exchange* Editor

## The Countdown

### Ten Steps to Writing a Better College Essay

~ By Jessica Acuna, Student Editor

1. Set aside enough time to write and revise multiple drafts.
2. Make sure that your introduction ends with a strong thesis statement that you support throughout each body paragraph.
3. Use several trustworthy scholarly sources to add credibility to your ideas.
4. Stay on topic! Readers definitely notice when the writer has gone off on tangents that do not support the thesis.
5. End with a strong conclusion. It should restate the thesis statement, bring closure to the paper, and finally leave the reader with something to think about.
6. Use transitions words and phrases between ideas, paragraphs, and topics. Transitions help keep the reader engaged and your writing flowing smoothly.
7. Use some form of peer editing. The [Ashford Writing Center](#) offers peer editing, review, and suggestions.
8. Check your grammar. Ashford offers access to Grammarly.com, a quick grammar-checking tool.
9. Use Microsoft Word's Spell Check feature.
10. Reading a final draft aloud helps you catch simple mistakes that you might otherwise overlook.

It's important to remember that many writers who publish in magazines *do* become professional authors. (The great Edgar Allan Poe comes to mind as an example.) Believe it or not, the process of publishing a poem, short story, or novel isn't so different than the steps outlined on page 6 of this newsletter. The biggest difference? Well, first you have to actually write a polished draft of the book. Consider the revised essays that you submit in the final week of all of your Ashford classes. You really have to produce your best work!

Here, discipline becomes very important. If you want to get published the old-fashioned way, you need to write and rewrite. You need to research your topic, rewrite some more, polish, and then edit your sentences. Finally, it comes time to submit the work, and then you must remain patient. If an agent or editor is interested in your book, he or she will provide feedback on what you might revise in the manuscript. Yes, just like the initial stages of writing a magazine article, there will now be plenty of advice coming from the editors!

Overall, the journey for every writer is different. There will be some who hit it big on their first piece and there will be others who struggle for a while before they're able to be read by the masses. Remember that forms of self-publication such as blogging are also great ways to get your voice out there. The most important thing to do is keep writing. Because when it comes to reaching an audience in the first place, one needs to always be researching, writing, revising, and evolving with every typed word on the old keyboard.

#### References

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# A Note from the Editor

Happy fall season, everyone!

There's just something about this time of year that signals a fresh start, isn't there? The weather is cooling, the holidays are approaching, and if you're a football fan your favorite teams are starting a whole new season. As this issue of the *English Exchange* indicates, too, a lot of exciting changes are afoot in our ever-improving program. Faculty members are lending their expertise to continually enhance Ashford's courses. Programs are offering new minors to broaden students' professional skillset and viability on the job market. Oh yeah, the *English Exchange* has a new faculty editor, too. I'm honored to work with Ashford's students in this capacity and I hope that you enjoy the September issue as much as I enjoyed editing it. ☺

~ Michael Cooper, Faculty Editor, *English Exchange*



**Dr. Michael Cooper,**  
**Faculty Editor**

michael.cooper@ashford.edu  
Students, if you are interested in writing for this newsletter, please do send an email to the *English Exchange* account listed here: englishexchange@ashford.edu



**Dori Biata** is majoring in English with a minor in Psychology. Her interests include the field of education and she aspires to be a well-published author.



**Jessica Acuna** is a senior majoring in English. She enjoys Creative Writing and making up children's stories. Wilson Rawls's *Where the Red Fern Grows* is one of her favorite stories.



Everyone, please **welcome** our newest Student Editor, **Kristi Dougay**. Kristi is a senior and she is majoring in English with a minor in Child Development. Her favorite genre of writing is Contemporary Romance and her favorite works of literature include *The Circle Trilogy* by Nora Roberts, *Desperation* by Stephen King, and "The Change of the Light Brigade" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

