Robert Warrior Comes Home

DISTINGUISHED NATIVE STUDIES PROFESSOR ENRICHES KU, RETURNS TO HIS ROOTS

KU English is now home to Robert Warrior, “one of the world’s leading scholars in Native American and Indigenous Studies.” That’s according to Stephanie Fitzgerald, herself a distinguished scholar in the field. Fitzgerald says that Warrior’s “published works have had a major impact on the fields of literary study, history, religious studies, film studies and visual culture, and indigenous political thought. His presence at KU will add to the growing prestige of the department.” She is not alone in her excitement at welcoming Robert Warrior to the KU English fold.

Robert Warrior is the new Hall Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Culture, and at KU he’ll split time between English and American Studies. He’s had a long and distinguished career, beginning in his Valley Center, Kansas childhood with his father’s contagious love of books. Warrior studied speech as an undergrad and theology as a graduate student, though he says “All through college and graduate school I fostered a growing interest in literary study.” His interest sparked when he discovered the field of Native American and Indigenous Writing, thanks in no small part to his staggering list of teachers, which reads like a greatest-hits of contemporary thinkers. He explains, “I was incredibly fortunate to have exceptional teachers, including Cornel West, James Cone, William Cronon, Jean Franco, and Edward Said, with Said being the one whose definitions

....continued on page 3
of being a critic and an intellectual have had the most lasting influence.

As a researcher/Warrior thinks of himself as a reader first, or more specifically, “as some one working through the process of deriving meaning from those things that are made, whether books, paintings, songs, or clothes.” Occasionally, though, departures from that mode have proved profitable. Warrior writes in an email that “The biggest departure from that critical mode was my book Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee, an archival and oral histor ically-based account of the watershed years of American Indian activism at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. As a work of collaborative, nonfiction writing, that departure ended up giving me tremendous insight into the history of Native American nonfiction, which continues to be a focus of what I do as a writer, intellectual, and critic.”

Warrior, like any academic of his stature, currently has his hands in a lot of projects. He’s working on what he calls “a book with a great title—Indigenous Intellectual Health—that has been slowly simmering for years.” The book is on the back burner for now, he says, as he’s delivering the presidential address at the Native American Studies Association whose theme is “Home/Not Home: Center ing American Studies Where We Are.” He says the theme “is challenging me to compre hend not only homecomings but also the per vasiveness of material, psychic, spiritual, and intellectual reality of homelessness, discon nction, and anonymity (all important senses of not home) that define modern life locally, region ally, nationally, hemispherically, and global ly.” Doing this is as he relocates to KU, is a meaningful challenge—he says, “Trying to do justice to such big themes while struggling to find a dog-ored copy of a favorite book in the midst of unpacked boxes makes the theme all the more appropriate!”

KU English is excited to have Dr. Warrior, and he’s thrilled to be here. He writes, “have ting terrific colleagues in two really great and interesting departments endorse my work by recruiting me to Spooner Hall and Professor is wonderfully gratifying at lots of levels. As an Osage scholar with roots in this particular place that go back centuries before the KU campus was here, I experience coming to KU as a homecoming (beyond the conceptual side of that homecoming, it’s also great to be so close to the Osage Reservation, which is about a four-hour drive south from Lawrence). Seeing things from that standpoint makes coming here as an Americanist all the more exciting.” Join us in welcoming Robert Warrior to his new home, in many of that word’s connotations and meanings.

In December 2015, the First and Second Year English (FSE) program held an inaugural showcase of student writing projects, highlight ing participants’ talents, imagination and achievement. The Writers’ Faire encompassed fifty undergraduate writing projects, which included zines, children’s books, posters, video essays, public service announcements, and photographic essays. The event, held on campus at Spooner Hall, was an opportunity for students to present their work to an extended audience beyond the scope of the writing classroom and university. The showcase was open to both KU and the Lawrence community, encouraging others to see the types of projects being done in our FSE program.

The Writer’s Faire was initiated by Frank Farmer, the FSE Director, alongside help from FSE intern, Shane Wood. The planning process began in September 2015 with an initial call for student projects going out closer to October. The event was inspired by showcases at other universities, the different types of multimodal projects teachers were assigning in our own classrooms, and the recognition of the great work being done by our students.

The event was set up in a gallery format, inviting attendees to explore the projects at their own pace. Definitions of terms—multimodal, zines, and other concepts—as well as student quotes about their writing processes were hung on the walls surrounding tables illuminating student projects. A mix of rock and indie music—Band of Horses, Radiohead, Weezer, Pixies, and Haim—filled the space. At the end of the gallery was a graffiti wall. Attendees were invited to share their own art, create their own compositions, and provide their own voice.

Overall, the Writers’ Faire was a huge success with around 200 attendees. Hopefully, it will be the first of many. The event was made possible through the support of the English department, our faculty and staff, graduate teachers, and, ultimately, the good work of our students.
KU English’s Alumni have lived and worked across the globe, relying on skills and lessons they learned in Lawrence to thrive anywhere they land.
Global Jayhawks have a world of job experiences

When we put out a call for KU English alumni who’ve lived in diverse places around the globe, we were struck by the range of responses, from Dallas to China and everywhere in between. Also amazing was the range of work that people have found after leaving KU English. Let this put to rest once and for all the falsehood that “you can’t do anything” with an English degree!

Elizabeth Thames Willard: Freelance Writer
Katie Oberthaler: Marketing Manager and Banjo Player
Sridhar Reddy: Hematologist/Oncologist
Krista Gampper: Freelance Writer and Editor
Kayla Overby: Editor and Production at Sterling Publishing
Jeff O’Neal: CEO & Founder, BookRiot.com
Sara Trautman-Yegenoglu: Fundraiser for Arts & Culture Organizations
Ariel Taskargy: Attorney
Maria Maldonado: Social Worker
April Benson: Assistant Attorney General, State of Washington
John Kuhn: Professor of English
Katy Seibel: Freelance Writer and Creative Entrepreneur
Hayley Jozwiak: Managing Editor at MacMillan Children’s Publishing Group
Kellen Bolt: Ph.D. Student at Northwestern
Luke Thompson: Political Consultant
Lara Law: Teacher
Kelsey Murrell: Legal Analyst, Deputy Director of Rhodes Project
Matthew Friedrichs: Copy Editor
Kelly Tankard: Anesthesiology Resident Physician
Caitlin Thornburgh: Writer and Adjunct Professor
Bernadette Myers: Grad Student at Columbia

Alex Nichols: Writing Content for Google, Comedy by night
Emma Hoyle: Nonprofit Fundraising
David Wilcox: Curriculum Consultant for Literacy Nonprofit
James Mardock: Associate Professor
Anna Chang: Physical Therapy
Becky Howlett: American Indian Law
Will Dale: Labor Organizer
Rachel Seitz: Finance and Social Media Management for a Startup
Debby Evans: Middle School Teacher
Emily Donovan: Reporting for Chicago Lawyer Agency
Kathryn Hoven: Healthcare
Lauren Steward McDermott: Digital Consultant
Jen Beck: Designer
Keri Behre: Assistant Professor
Michael Wade Smith: Director for Marketing and Advancement for University of Kansas
Dori Sobel: Speech Language Pathologist
Sarah Henry: English Teacher in Japan
Phoebe O’Brien: Teacher
Anna VanCleave: Head of Capital Division of New Orleans Public Defenders
Kalti Shipley: Project Manager, New York Times
Betsy Tampke: Researcher at Dartmouth
Katelyn Basye: Product Designer
Justin Ward: Research Science
Rachel Pisciotta: Librarian

Erin Woods shows her Jayhawk Spirit at Stonehenge in England during the 2016 British Summer Institute.
Farewell, Professor Carothers
Matt Pello, Class of 2016

It has been 46 years since Professor James Carothers first taught at the University of Kansas. After a long and illustrious career, Professor Carothers is in the final stages of his last semester before entering into retirement. Carothers first started teaching at the University in the Fall of 1970. I got a chance to sit down with him and discuss his career here: his favorite parts, what he remembers, and what he will miss the most. Professor Carothers’ favorite part about teaching English here at KU was the fact that he “…had the opportunity to read literature and talk about it with students and faculty.” Early on in his teaching career he focused on topics like the Modern American Novel and American Short Story with a particular focus on William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway. He told me that one of his favorite parts about teaching here at KU was that they afforded him the opportunity to teach a variety of courses. In other words, he wasn’t restricted to just that one focus, and was given several opportunities to branch out into other realms of the English Program. He particularly enjoyed teaching Fiction Writing, and was involved in the creation of the Creative Writing focus for the English Department. Of all the classes he had the opportunity to teach he told me that teaching Shakespeare was his favorite: “It’s a class with him, I got to see firsthand what makes a teacher like him so remarkable. He has this astounding wisdom and grasp of the subject matter; he understands the material and the students, and has the ability to connect with both on a professional and personal level. There are plenty of professors and instructors on college campuses across the country that are good people and good teachers alike, but to find one the caliber of Carothers is truly a gift—a remarkable gift. He told me that his philosophy with teaching is “Try if you’re able to have a little fun with it, I’ve tried,” he said, “and I have.” It is always sad to have to say farewell to a man like Professor Carothers. He’s a friend, faculty member, and mentor to so many—a man who has made such a lasting impression on the English Department at KU. From myself, the faculty, and I’m sure the alumni as well, we all just want to say thank you Professor Carothers, one last time for sharing your knowledge, passion, and kindness with so many of us over the past four and a half decades. We wish you the best of luck with all of your future endeavors, wherever the road ahead may lead.

When discussing his inspiration for creating such a unique course he told me “I wanted to see what it was like to use methods and assessments of literary analysis on a popular culture subject.” Baseball just happened to fit because of his personal interest and the literature available about the sport. The impact that professor Carothers has had on the English Program here at the University of Kansas is profound. Having had the opportunity myself to take a class with him, I got to see firsthand what makes a teacher like him so remarkable. He has such astounding wisdom and grasp of the subject matter; he understands the material and the students, and has the ability to connect with both on a professional and personal level. There are plenty of professors and instructors on college campuses across the country that are good people and good teachers alike, but to find one the caliber of Carothers is truly a gift—a remarkable gift. He told me that his philosophy with teaching is “Try if you’re able to have a little fun with it, I’ve tried,” he said, “and I have.” It is always sad to have to say farewell to a man like Professor Carothers. He’s a friend, faculty member, and mentor to so many—a man who has made such a lasting impression on the English Department at KU. From myself, the faculty, and I’m sure the alumni as well, we all just want to say thank you Professor Carothers, one last time for sharing your knowledge, passion, and kindness with so many of us over the past four and a half decades. We wish you the best of luck with all of your future endeavors, wherever the road ahead may lead.

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Are you getting together? Let us know!
If you’re having an alumni gathering, no matter how big or small, east coast, west coast, or in between, let us know! Mary Klayder might even make a guest appearance. Email your plans to mklayder@ku.edu

English Major Pens Historical Novel about Family

KU English senior Crystal Bradshaw has already released her first novel, a thoroughly-researched investigation into previously unknown family history.

When Bradshaw was 16, she was assigned yet another family history project, something she had to do yearly. Having done all previous family history projects on her mom’s side, she decided to look into her dad’s side of the family and found…very little. Bradshaw explains, “My sophomore year I really wanted to focus on my dad’s side, and that’s when I realized they absolutely knew nothing. They didn’t even know how they got to Jetmore, Kansas, which is where the Bradshaws still live.”

The lack of information led to an awkward class meeting on presentation day. Bradshaw says, “there’s absolutely no information and it was very embarrassing in class, because I couldn’t really say anything. That gave me the motivation to start doing all this research.”

Over the next five years, Bradshaw combined library and internet research to piece together her family’s story, and eventually it turned into her first book, Eliza: A Generational Journey, based on the story of her “times 5 great-grandmother,” a slave from Kentucky who, though Bradshaw doesn’t want “to give too much away,” came to Kansas after Emancipation.

For Bradshaw, after discovering this family history, a simple project wasn’t enough: “I didn’t want to simply just put it in a binder and kind of get forgotten…why not write a book?” Bradshaw loves English, and has always wanted to be an author. This desire, combined with some pretty impressive research into census records and other genealogical material, led to Eliza, which Crystal self-published in late 2015.

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Crystal Bradshaw signs copies of her novel, Eliza: A Generational Journey, at the Kansas Book Festival in Topeka, September 10 2016.

Crystal Bradshaw signs copies of her novel, Eliza: A Generational Journey, at the Kansas Book Festival in Topeka, September 10 2016.

Meredith Wiggins, who reviewed the novel for the Project in the History of Black Writing’s blog, says “Eliza weaves together Bradshaw’s considerable historical research with her imaginative recreation of the circumstances of her ancestor’s life. Using close first-person narration for the vast majority of the novel, Bradshaw places readers directly in her protagonist’s head, allowing us to experience the world as Eliza experiences it.” In his review of Eliza, Galen R. Boheme writes that “Even though the novel will appeal to any age group of readers, the novel has great importance to the young adult interested in historical culture” adding that Bradshaw “uses quality writing skills - blending the factual with the fictional to create a very readable account to preserve the history of our ancestors.”

While at KU, Crystal has served as a communications specialist and office manager for the Project in the History of Black Writing, working closely with Distinguished Professor Maryemma Graham. Graham has nothing but kind words to say about working with Crystal, saying “Rarely do I encounter undergraduates with Crystal’s level of maturity, commitment to her a collective work ethic and a career, who are extraordinarily talented with demonstrated leadership potential.”

Crystal promises that Eliza is the first in a planned series, but for now, you can order an ebook version of C through Amazon, or a physical copy through Crystal’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CrystalBradshaw-Writing.
**A Note about Giving**

Why English?

I think about the value of my undergraduate degree in English almost daily. My degree connected me to the world, to a diverse set of ideas, and to experiences far different from my own. In this way, engaging with books both exposed the gap and informed the creation of a bridge between the world and me. James Baldwin wrote that, “It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive.” In this world that seems plagued by the growing pains of becoming more socially just, I have a wish for and a request of all people—read more.

The KU Department of English is answering this call for many people that are actively aiming to engage with diverse narratives and experiences and discover even more about our shared and divergent human experiences.

Some alumni have noted that critical thinking, argument construction and analysis, synthesizing content from varied sources, and the ability to write a compelling narrative are among the transferrable skills that an English degree provided them. One professor shared that our field of study is empowering us to “fight for our right to read.” All of these things are true, but are still only an expression of a small fraction of the value our English degrees provide.

We need your help to continue to positively impact our students' our faculty’s teaching and research. Will you donate today to help the KU Department of English?

We need your financial support to be able to provide students with the same life changing experience you received in the KU Department of English. With state support for the institution below 25% and likely to decline further in coming years, it is more critical than ever that we show our support for the department at whatever level we are able. In the coming year, please consider a gift to the KU Department of English. Your gifts will make an impact on students’ ability to study abroad, conduct undergraduate research, and experience high quality, nationally ranked graduate study at an AAU Research I institution from world-class faculty.

Will you consider making a gift today of $15, $150, or $1500?

Your gift will immediately be put to work to help more students fully experience an elite program at an elite institution. If so, please visit the KU Endowment Association website at www.kuendowment.org and click Make a Gift. Make sure to direct the gift to the KU Department of English.

Thank you for your continued support of the Department of English. With your help, we will be able to impact even more students, professors, and communities with our exploration of a common humanity through the written word.

Rock Chalk,
Michael Wade Smith