

"It is an affront to treat falsehood with complacency." Thomas Paine

CAMPUS REPORT

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THE ABCs OF THE MLA (H-V)

By Malcolm A. Kline and Spencer Irvine

How English professors learn the
alphabet

If you want to see how far the English major is removed from actual literature, watch a bunch of English professors in action. We've been doing this annually during the 30 years Accuracy in Academia has been in existence by making annual forays to the Modern Language Association (MLA) convention and getting a fairly representative sampling of what is offered in English courses and textbooks around the country.

Thousands of English profs gather at these confabs and listen to hundreds of panels and presentations by their peers and budding PhDs who are soon to join their ranks and turn their theses into classes. To show you the wide range of interests of these scholars, most of which fall outside the realm of the literary, we decided to present to you our latest findings, from the MLA 2016 conference in Austin, Texas, alphabetically.

(We began this process in our last issue but only got up to the letter "G." Accordingly, we pick up where we left off in February.)

Hunger Games @ the MLA

A panel of professors at the Modern Language Association's annual convention, this time held in Austin, Texas, argued about feminism and sexism in today's young adult (YA) novels in "The Hunger Games" and other similar dystopian novels.

Erin Kingsley, an associate professor of English at King University (Tennessee), said that Katniss Everdeen, the main character and heroine of 'The Hunger Games' series, "uses her body to shoot those wicked arrows" throughout the three-book series. She pointed out the gender role of women in the novels, where feminism kowtows to masculinity. A constant problematic theme, in her mind, "like Katniss picking up her arrows," offended her. She said, "I don't even know what to be offended for" in reading these novels. Kingsley stated, "A thin, white attractive woman" is the new normal in YA novels. She brought up the mini-controversy of Rey, a main female

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Director's Corner

By Malcolm A. Kline, Executive Director of AIA



March 2016

Voodoo Anyone?

How to Understand Economics Without Really Trying



by
Christopher T. Warden

Forewords by M. Stanton Evans & Malcolm A. Kline


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Please remember AIA in your will.

Dear Reader,

As you can see, in this issue, we complete the alphabet as interpreted by the Modern Language Association (MLA). We devoted two issues to laying this out, not to mention the half a week we spent actually bonding with MLA members, because the MLA pretty much represents most of the English professors in this country. Thus, the lectures professors give on panels at the MLA's annual convention give a pretty good indication of what they teach in class.

This realization always depresses us. For one thing, we have the nagging suspicion that the presenters at the MLA never read the books they are dissecting. For example, I covered one bright young lady who gave a talk on Dickens' use of glass imagery in his last novel, *Our Mutual Friend*. I counted 10-15 uses of the word glass in about 800 pages of the book.

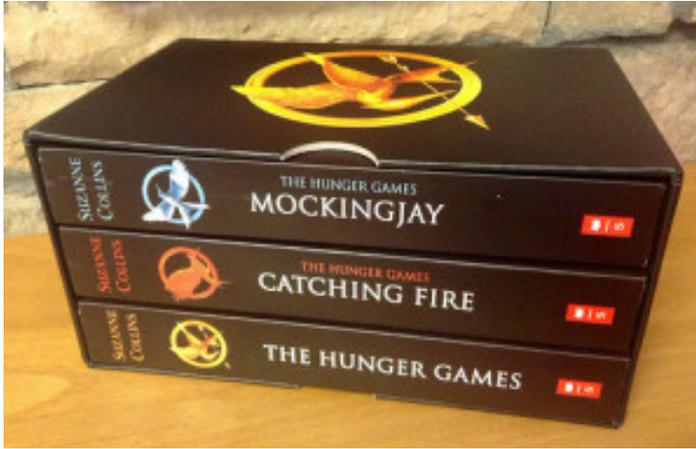
At a minimum, avoiding primary source material sets a really bad example for students. More alarmingly, it sets the stage for graduates to go into professions, such as journalism, in which consumers expect accurate information. Should these practices continue, it is unlikely that readers and viewers will actually get "news they can use."

Since we cling to such quaint notions as accuracy in academia, we do strive to give you information you can rely on before you make that donation to your alma mater, or, more perilously, send your children there.

All the best,

Mal Kline,
Executive Director

character in the most recent Star Wars movie, where she is “noticeably absent from toy aisles.”



She tried to rouse the audience, “That’s the new normal people, let’s get angry!” Kingsley asked, based on YA novels and the Rey controversy, “The female gender still operates in direct ability to inspire attraction in the male sex?” She said, “Does it matter that Rey is a Jedi...not just a girl?” Kingsley criticized this “heteronormativity” because “each experience [has] the same cultural policing” of fatness and homosexuality.

Kingsley continued on this topic, “In an age where diversity is given much lip service, there is diversity that does not appear.” She told the audience, “I would encourage you to do a Google search on fat” and see the dominance of “heterosexual love” in YA novels. Too often, in her mind, this dominance of heterosexual love “means that the female must be passive.” “Young women,” she said, “have been empowered to destroy their preordained roles.”

She criticized the media’s refusal to talk about fat bodies. “Rarely does popular media...privilege the fat body” and Kingsley noted her expertise because, “I read YA novels voraciously.” Kingsley felt that bodies typically “conform to stringent standards,” even when there are deviant characters in today’s YA novels which feature “hetero-normatively attractive” characters. Also, she was unhappy with YA novels, where “It was the same story wherever I looked.” She blamed this uniformity in YA novels on the U.S., where “dominant in America is heterosexual policing.”

Race @ the MLA

Reasonably intelligent young people can ascertain what it takes to succeed in the word-salad bar that is academia today. Yet and still, they might run into problems in their encounters with the outside world (the real one, that is) if they take their academic efforts too seriously.

“Despite Beyonce’, Obama and Oprah, we have riots in Baltimore and Ferguson and a disproportionate amount of black men in prison,” Roberta Wolfson, a Ph.D. candidate from the University of California at Santa Barbara proclaimed at the latest Modern Language Association (MLA) meeting in Austin, Texas. “Black lives are still highly undervalued in American society.”

She gave no numbers or sources to support these claims and laid out a bill of particulars that stopped well short of carnage. For example, she claimed that there is “a dichotomy between athletes as role models and commodifying and fetishizing their bodies.”

“Her research interests include risk theory, critical race studies, contemporary U.S. ethnic literatures, post-colonial and Anglophone literatures, science and speculative fiction, and popular culture,” her website helpfully tells us. “She is currently working on a dissertation that examines the ways in which contemporary U.S. ethnic literatures challenge the racialization of fear in contemporary U.S. risk discourses.”

On that same panel, Christian Haines, an assistant professor of English at Dartmouth, tried to link the shooting of aggressive shoplifter Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri by Officer Darren Wilson to the armed conflict on Israel’s border.

“Is it possible to connect the killing of Michael Brown to Israel’s assault on the Gaza Strip?,” he asked rhetorically, then pretty much answered in the affirmative. “The only way that Darren Wilson can describe Michael Brown is as demonic and Israel describes the Palestinian Authority as a geopolitical

threat,” he said to a crowd of 15, including yours truly.

Haines’ “primary research and teaching interests are American literature (especially nineteenth-century and post-WWII), critical theory, continental philosophy, queer theory and gender studies, and utopian studies,” according to his website. “My current book project, *A Desire Called America: Biopolitics, Utopia, and the Literary Commons*, examines how representations of bodies/biologies in nineteenth-century and contemporary U.S. literature develop a utopian imagination of post-capitalist, post-nationalist Americas.”

“Additionally, I am doing research for a second book project on finance capital and culture, tentatively entitled *Finance as a Way of Life*.”

Sex @ the MLA

Don’t get excited. We don’t actually describe it, but they do. The Modern Language Association (MLA) gave new meaning to the term “in-depth study” at the annual MLA convention in Austin, Texas in January. “What *Crime and Punishment* is really about is aberrant male sexuality and matricide,” Northwestern University professor Susan McReynolds claimed in an MLA panel on “Reading Dostoyevsky, Dostoyevsky Reading.”

Gee, Amazon only tells us that “Drawing upon experiences from his own prison days, the author

recounts in feverish, compelling tones the story of Raskolnikov, an impoverished student tormented by his own nihilism, and the struggle between good and evil. Believing that he is above the law, and convinced that humanitarian ends justify vile means, he brutally murders an old woman — a pawnbroker whom he regards as ‘stupid, ailing, greedy...good for nothing.’ Overwhelmed afterwards by feelings of guilt and terror, Raskolnikov confesses to the crime and goes to prison. There he realizes that happiness and redemption can only be achieved through suffering.”

Before McReynolds gave this insight, one of her co-panelists, Alexander Burry of Ohio State University, examined the similarities between Pushkin’s poem about sticky leaves and Dosotyevsky’s reference to same in *The Brothers Karamazov*. “The stickiness could relate to semen or moisture,” Burry observed. Both McReynolds and Burry are professors in their universities’ Slavic Languages Department.

By the way, it was interesting to see a professor at the MLA use the words “aberrant” and “sexuality” in the same sentence. That usually doesn’t happen. In another panel at the MLA, one panelist focused on a gay Puerto Rican cowboy movie, which was not listed in the MLA program.

Replete with pornographic images, Ruben Rios Avila of New York University had a PowerPoint presentation to prove his point about this topic’s importance. He

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highlighted the symbolism of forbidden lust between two “vaqueros,” which in Spanish translates to “cowboys.” Several movie scenes, presented via screenshot images on PowerPoint slides, involved nude men swimming in a pool and two half-dressed men wrestling each other in a bedroom.

Avila asserted that the societal stigmas of Hispanic culture prevent men from acting on lust and was pleased to point out the end of the film, where the two cowboys walk along a road together, separated by elegantly-dressed female dancers.

Meanwhile, in another panel at the MLA, Simone Chess, an assistant professor of English at Wayne State University, praised infertile couples for helping create homosexual families. Her own self-professed “cuckold, bastard perspective” found new possibilities for a variety of so-called family structures: “conceptual polyamory” and “non-reproductive heterosexual.” Chess continued, “Infertile and unstable bodies allow for query of marriage, sex and family” because “Queers often depend on technology” for sexual reproduction. She did not mention that it is both unnatural and physically impossible for a gay couple to conceive naturally. Instead, she drew on her own experiences in the queer community: “My experience in queer baby-making and living in a community of queer baby-making” taught her that it can be done, although there are many legal hoops to jump through. For example, homosexual couples have to be prepared for the possibility of a sperm donor donating to multiple couples. This means that this donor could have multiple children who are biological siblings, which creates a difficult situation for parents. She concluded, “If crippling in fertility allows for family formation...it gets crippled [as well].”

Chess diverted her attention from the topic of infertility and legal implications to focus on Machiavelli’s interpretation of the intersection of infertility and homosexuality. In the play, *Mandragola*, Chess claimed that the infertility of the main characters, a

couple, validated homosexual family creation. The couple agreed to an extramarital arrangement in order to conceive a child, which in Chess’s mind validated homosexual couples using technology to procreate. This “rather frank acknowledgement [of] non-reproductive heterosexual sex” was important for Chess, who added that the wife in the play was “queering her heterosexual marriage.” This “queering,” said Chess, actually creates “polyamory” in the play. “This queer family structure,” she noted, “signaling instability [and a] non-monogamous relationship” adds to the validation of non-traditional family formation.

On the heterosexual side, the MLA's new punching bag is due process, as one session in their annual convention demonstrated.

She praised Machiavelli because the play illustrated similarities, while in today’s world, “queers adjusting their baby-making budgets” is commonplace and the play present[s] the queer option in medical terms.” Chess claimed that a priest character in the play also made a pro-homosexual argument. In her words, the priest’s remarks, “These fears are worse than evil themselves,” validates the couple’s extramarital affair (an evil) in order to procreate (a fear of sinning on the part of the couple). Chess added, “The queerness that is made process through the medicalization of fertility” has been made manifest in the play.

On the heterosexual side, the MLA’s new punching bag is due process, as one session in their annual convention demonstrated. In the session entitled “Narrating College Sexual Assault,” Donna Potts, a creative writing professor at Washington State, shared her own experience as a young college freshman who was raped by a professor. The paper she read aloud as her presentation had the title “‘Sick of Hearing All This Shit about Harassment’: Dispelling Myths about Sexual Violence.”

Potts’ main point was that students should be “entitled to an education in an environment that is not hostile to them.” Her rape as a college freshman has been recounted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, but she also shared it in the panel session. Her rapist was a powerful college professor who said that if she reported

it, it would not matter. She also said that the hospital psychologist told her that she was pretty and attracted men, then prescribed anti-depressant medicine for her.

It is time to “dispel the myths” about rape for both students and professors because too often, “graduate students and faculty encounter indifference when they report” it to others and their supervisors. Instead, people “spread gossip and hearsay.” Today, “rape narrative is reconstructed in a novel context” because of the perception that “women’s capacity to gossip [and] embellish [is] undermining women’s narrative in sexual violence.” Also, an unintended consequence of Department of Education policy is that “insisting that words alone can constitute harassment.”

The general public is uninformed, hinted Potts, as the typical reaction of “the public to decry the PC [politically correct] universities.” The public complains, “PC feminists whining about words,” which she takes issue with. She cited “Syllabus-Gate” on Fox News regarding political correctness in the classroom, where a male college professor and two female graduate instructors said that the words “tranny,” “male,” and “female” were banned from their classes. Potts claimed “all three were targeted for attack by Fox News.” She was livid when, in her department, “a couple of white, male colleagues felt” that they should support the embattled professor (but not the two female graduate instructors). The two female graduate instructors revised their syllabus after public outcry, yet Potts admitted she was leaning towards supporting the graduate instructors over the professor.

Potts cited the controversial documentary on rape and sexual assault on college campuses, “The Hunting Ground,” to support her point. She blasted criticism of the documentary, where “19 Harvard Law school professors, 15 of them male” came out against the documentary’s claims. Potts singled out conservative writer Jonah Goldberg’s take on the fraternity controversy from *The Rolling Stone* at the University of Virginia (UVa) and said his comments were not appropriate. Instead of pointing fingers, she suggested that Americans should look into the “systematic handling” of rape and college

sexual assaults by universities.

After the debunking of Jackie, the key witness in *The Rolling Stone* gang rape story at UVa, Potts said, “[Victims] almost always have inconsistencies because they have trauma.” She acknowledged that between “two-to-eight percent are false, like any crime,” but that based on her knowledge, “[There are] plenty of precedents at UVa...nonetheless there are accounts of gang rape” regardless of how *The Rolling Stone* story ended. Due process was not referred to once in her remarks.

By the way, sex is about the only thing that could get the MLA to show any interest in the military. In a presentation to an MLA panel on sexual violence, Ariana Vigil, a women’s studies professor at North Carolina-Chapel Hill, linked a military deserter and his perspective on the military to the homosexual agenda.

Author Jose Zuniga, a former member of the U.S. armed forces who refused to deploy to Iraq in 2003, was the focus of her paper. Zuniga, who is openly homosexual, published a book in the early 1990s to influence then-President Bill Clinton to not implement ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.’ Vigil admitted that Zuniga was “politically liberal” and as a result of refusing to deploy, “spent a year in Leavenworth prison” and was court-martialed. Zuniga is also “very active in socialist and very anti-war organizations.”

Vigil believed that “the hetero patriarchy of the family to the military family” is something she was interested in studying, based on recurring themes in Zuniga’s book. She saw him compare the concept of a family to the military family. “For him, the family metaphor can justify being a part of the military family while opposing the sexualized violence, gender-based violence of the US mission to Iraq,” she said.

She highlighted the “homophobia within the U.S. armed forces” based on a book “Road to Ar Ramadi,” and how “language used to break down soldiers [was] also used to break down enemy combatants as well.” She cited a documentary, “Invisible War,” and the presence

of “military sexualized trauma (MST)” and in the military, “when rape happens, it is akin to incest.” The victims, in her mind, “are often blamed for breaking up the familial unit.” The filmmakers of “Invisible War” were also the same who filmed the controversial “The Hunting Ground,” but that did not deter Vigil from recommending it to the audience.

Vigil compared the military mindset regarding sexual violence to that on college campuses, “Both of these movements, against military sexual assault, campus sexual assault... this is institutional betrayal that these survivors have faced and faced retaliation and indifference to what they’ve faced.” She said, “I’m uneasy with that rhetoric. I cannot deny its usefulness as a tactic” for universities to use to create a community through this family rhetoric. She concluded, “But for me, I feel like the history of the institution of marriage and family is too interverted with hetero-patriarchy [and] misogyny...I would caution relying too heavily on this rhetoric ourselves.”

At the end of her talk, we still did not know if the sexual violence she talked about was real or metaphoric.

Video Games @ the MLA

No they don’t actually play them, at least while we’re there. #GamerGate and feminism in gaming were the subjects of a paper at an MLA panel at their annual convention in Austin. Anastasia Salter, an assistant professor of digital media at the University of Central Florida (UCF), said that gaming is “about silencing women.”

She noted, correctly, that “games have become such an [engrossed] part of culture” in today’s American society. She added, “The rise of mobile gaming of all of these forms draw people in.” Salter cited data which found only “13% of women among game designers” and that women are still not being employed in the gaming industry in large numbers. She believed, “These

demographic problems of the industry spread out to the games [themselves].”

Salter brought up GamerGate and warned the audience, “People on Twitter, please don’t tweet #GamerGate!” She displayed a slide, “Tropes vs. Women: Video Games” and described how the feminist movement within gaming had “immediately attracted negative attention.” Salter was surprised that gamers get upset when academics and activists examine rhetorical aspects of gaming. She pointed out that online harassment focuses more on women than men, citing #BlackLives Matter, “The horrific trolling and attacks in that space [of BLM].” She shifted back to GamerGate, “[It was] very impressive for what started as a guy who broke up with a girl.” Today, “It’s a war over identity and over language” and “the very definition of gaming...has been radically changing.” “The GamerGate hashtag,” she said, “is one gate” of criticism and rhetoric in gaming.

“Invisibility,” Salter said, “thanks to online social media spaces, is becoming a lot more recognized.” However, “the incredible, overwhelming numbers of supporters in a hashtag can effectively drown out any rational discourse.” “It has,” Salter admitted, “also made it a space that has become very dangerous.” She praised the likes of activists of Briana Wu, Anne Sarkisian and Quinn in dealing with the “Internet hit mob” of GamerGate.

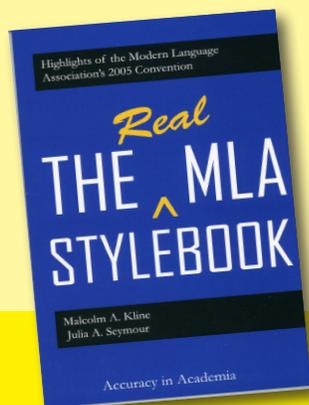
She continued, “Games research has been accused of being a monster organization seeking to impose feminism [on gamers].” There was a “witch hunt,” in her words, called “Digging-DiGra,” where people were “trying to destroy the credibility of feminist game research.” Salter said, “This type of attack is really over who gets to really speak.” She concluded, “[This is] the perfect example of a movement, it takes the best thing about social media and public spaces and silences and destroys [the opposition].”

By the way, sex is about the only thing that could get the MLA to show any interest in the military.

The REAL MLA Stylebook

To show what college and university English Departments are really teaching, Accuracy in Academia compiled *The REAL MLA Stylebook*, filled with quotes from a recent convention of the Modern Language Association (MLA) where thousands of English professors gather to push their politically correct, radical agenda. Outsiders who attend this event expecting to learn more about Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare are in for a rude awakening when they discover that panels are more likely to focus on topics such as “Marxism and Globalization,” “What’s the Matter with Whiteness,” and “Queering Faulkner.”

This book is must-reading for anyone interested in learning more about the mindset of faculty members who are tasked with teaching the great works of the English language to our nation’s students.



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