

WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
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APRIL SHOWERS

We've got a special issue here for this important first day of April! We wish to inform you, inspire you, and shower you with a little April fun. This is the *Writers Bloc*, a space where we welcome your written expression. Share your opinions, ideas, and creative writing. You can also follow us on Facebook!



SEND WRITERS BLOC

SUBMISSIONS TO

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Views expressed in the *Writers Bloc* are not necessarily the views of GSU.

CONTACT FACULTY AT

www.glenville.edu/departments/language-literature

GUEST AUTHOR APRIL 15

The **Little Kanawha Reading Series** will host author Ann Pancake on Tuesday, April 15, at 4:00 p.m. in the RFK Library. Here's a bit about our guest:

Ann Pancake is concerned with the environment and social issues involving the underclass and diverse social and gender groups. She won the Whiting Award (2003), the Pushcart Prize (2004), the Weatherford Award (2007), the Chaffin Award for Appalachian Literature (2010), and the Appalachian Heritage Writer's Award (2023), funded by the WV Humanities Council. She was the 25th Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence at Shepherd University and 2023 One Book One West Virginia Common Read Author.



"She grew up in Summersville and Romney, West Virginia, where both of her parents' families came from. After attending West Virginia University as an undergraduate (BA, 1985), she taught English in Japan and Samoa and then returned to the US to earn a master's degree in English at the University of North Carolina (MA, 1992). After another sojourn teaching, this time in Thailand, she completed her doctoral studies at the University of Washington (PhD, 1998), writing a dissertation on the representation of Appalachia in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and film."¹

She will read from her book *Strange as This Weather Has Been*. Set in present day West Virginia, this novel tells the story of a coal mining family—a couple and their four children—living through the latest mining boom and dealing with the mountaintop removal and strip mining that is ruining what is left of their hometown. As the mine turns the mountains "to slag and wastewater," workers struggle with layoffs and children find adventure in the blasted moonscape craters.

When asked to characterize this novel, she said, "The purpose of the novel was to educate people about mountaintop removal and its effects on people who live in southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky under these big mines. So I traced the families, especially from the kids' point of view, to try to immerse the outside reader, a person who is not from southern West Virginia and doesn't know anything about the mines, into the culture and the experience of living with the mines. At the time, in my idealistic way, I had hopes that it would help contribute to the movement to abolish mountaintop removal, but that has not happened."¹

In discussing West Virginia and its people as the subject of her book, she said, "The language of the characters in the novel is my home language, their voices the voices of my childhood in West Virginia. . . . The natural world is sacred to me. That's where I get spiritual nourishment. West Virginia is my home—it sunk deep, deep into my body and psyche, and it'll always be there. I love that land in a visceral way. The natural world is sacred to me. That's where I get spiritual nourishment. West Virginia is my home—it sunk deep, deep into my body and psyche, and it'll always be there. I love that land in a visceral way."²

¹ Williams, J. Jeffrey. "Politics, the Environment, and the Novel: An Interview with Ann Pancake." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 55, no. 1, Spring 2023, pp. 93-108.

² Brown Spiers, John. "Fiction that Performs as Only Fiction Can: An Interview with Ann Pancake." *Georgia Review*, Winter 2024, www.thegeoriareview.com/posts/fiction-that-performs-as-only-fiction-can-an-interview-with-ann-pancake/.



EXCERPT FROM
*STRANGE AS THIS
WEATHER HAS BEEN*
BY ANN PANCAKE

The hardest part was next, trotting the whole mile down Yellowroot Road without anybody seeing me. Everybody knew everybody back then, and everybody knew I had no business running down the road on a Saturday night in the dark. But then three miracles happened, two for me and one for Mom. First, I made it to Route 9 and had my thumb out before a single neighbor saw me. Second, a man in a Lantz truck picked me right up and drove me all seventy-five miles to the Civic Center without a word about my age, my parents, or why I was hitchhiking. And third, and least surprising, given the time and place, the Lantz truck man didn't do me any harm.

I didn't get to the game until the last quarter, but I was there. After we lost, Paula's mom took me home with everybody else, called Mom before we left once she figured out I hadn't ridden in with them. I was the last one they dropped off, and it wasn't until we were all the way down to just me and Paula in the van that I started thinking about what was going to happen once I got home. But I wasn't scared. and I sure didn't feel guilty. Just mad at Mom, it was her fault. If she'd let me go the regular way, I wouldn't have had to hitchhike. Right there I decided I wouldn't let her get me.

I trudged back up the Ricker Run in a dark so pure I could hardly see my feet at the end of my legs. Then I saw the porch light. Mom waiting there with her long wooden spoon. I stopped out in the yard, just beyond where the light fell. "Get your rear end up here. Now," Mom said, and there wasn't nothing else I could do.

When she went at it, though, something was different. Once I had that don't-get-me in my head, I dodged that whipping like a boxer who fought from his behind. I danced, swinging out on Mom's grip on my arm, I arched my back and fast-footed, I spun and I leapt, to where every lick either missed me or barely grazed. Mom wore out faster than me. Then we both stood there, her panting, me feeling the wind through the spreading rip in my jeans.

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<https://wvdeli.overdrive.com/media/477982>

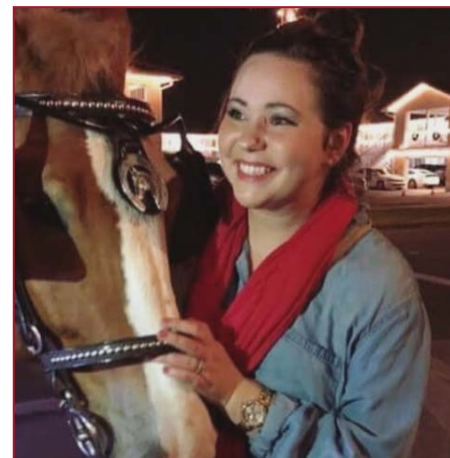
JUMP STARTING A DEGREE

Contributed by Amberlyn Wroten, Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit

I have lived my entire life in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, and am in the high school graduating class of 2025 at Point Pleasant Jr./Sr. High School, where I took A.P. Government, A.P. Language, and A.P. Biology.

Now I am a dual enrollment/dual credit student at GSU. My classes have included psychology, sociology, and English. I want to make Business Administration Pre-Law my major for the Fall 2025 semester of college.

The Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit Program is helping me get a jump start on my degree. The director of this program is Rachel Clutter. She is one of the most important people to know when it comes to Glenville's dual enrollment courses. I met with Ms. Clutter in an MS Teams meeting to talk about her work in the program.



Like the young people she advises, Ms. Clutter was once a student at Glenville State

I first asked her, "What drew you to working in a higher education, and specifically your role in Glenville State University?" She told me that she actually was a student at the university and really enjoyed the interactions she had among the staff on campus. Because of these interactions, she has strived to be like them.

I asked her, "How long have you worked at Glenville State University, and what are some of your major responsibilities in your current position?" She told me that this is her seventh year as the director of dual enrollment/dual credit. In her position, her main duties are advising students who want to register in Glenville's dual enrollment program and setting up that dual enrollment with students in many high schools.

When I asked, "What's the most rewarding aspect of working with college students that may surprise people outside of academia?" Ms. Clutter responded that it may not be that surprising, but it was seeing the first group of associate degree members complete the course. Not their getting the degree, but seeing how hard those students worked to gain those degrees.

The next questions I asked were "How has your role evolved since you first started working at Glenville State University?" and "What major changes have you witnessed"? She answered by stating that she started as a dual enrollment counselor. In this position she had less partnership work. She also said that she started out with 230 students and now currently has 500 students. Taking on the role of Director of Dual Enrollment and Dual Credit is her biggest change.

I also asked Ms. Clutter, "How does your department contribute to students' success in ways that may not be immediately obvious to the campus community?" She answered by stating that online students receive the same benefits that on-campus students get, such as a 504 plan. She also stated that her department contributes to students' success by giving them many options and opportunities to help them succeed.

Lastly I asked Ms. Clutter, "What advice would she give to students who want to make the most of the resources your department provides?" Her response was to just simply sign up for these classes. This is because these classes are so much cheaper than in-person classes; it is a great opportunity for people to really know if they are college-bound, and even if they do not think they are, the experience may lead them to college. And it is just a great opportunity all around.

Learn more here: <https://www.glenville.edu/academics/off-campus/pioneer-early-entrance-program>

ENROLLMENT 'NEWS'

1 APRIL 2025: In an unprecedented admission decision, GSU welcomed its first equine student admitted for fall enrollment. Thunder, a five-year-old Thoroughbred, has enrolled in a full course load, which includes several new offerings: History of Hay, Introduction to Canterring, and Advanced Lyrical Neighing.

"We believe in diversity," said Vice President of Enrollment Duane Chapman.

Provost Mari Clements noted, "While Thunder's application letter was written entirely with hoof prints, it demonstrated remarkable depth."

Campus facilities are being modified to accommodate the new student, including wider doorways and water troughs. When asked about his academic goals, Thunder responded by eating his registration papers.



ENGLISH MAJORS 'NEWS'

1 APRIL 2025: A group of sleep-deprived GSU English majors has stunned audiences with their documentary film *Whispers at the College Farm: The Secret Lives of Hiking Boots*.

The 47-minute film follows abandoned hiking boots in their "natural habitat," documenting how the footwear allegedly forms complex social hierarchies and mating rituals when humans aren't watching.

"We spent 16 nights hiding in bushes to capture authentic boot behavior," explained the film's director Jacob Bonds, who admits the project began as a Red Bull-fueled study session during midterm week.

The documentary features dramatic narration scripted by Allison Boggs describing boots "migrating" between trails and "communicating" through squeaking noises.

Despite being created on a budget of \$17 (for pizza), the film has been nominated for the university's "Most Questionable Use of Campus Equipment" award.

PUBLISHING 'NEWS'

1 APRIL 2025: Our own Dr. Jonathan Minton recently returned from the Paris Catacombs where he visited the ossuary and, with the aid of a magic fire circle and a medium hired from Craig's List, he transcribed the "poésie fugitive" and "occasional verse" poetry of thirty-seven amateur 18th-century poets from their own voices. "The French authorities gave us six hours—midnight to dawn—to hold a dandy little séance," Minton stated. The poetry collection, which will be titled *Quit Gawking at My Bones*, is scheduled to be published on Bastille Day in 2026.



DEBATE CLUB 'NEWS'

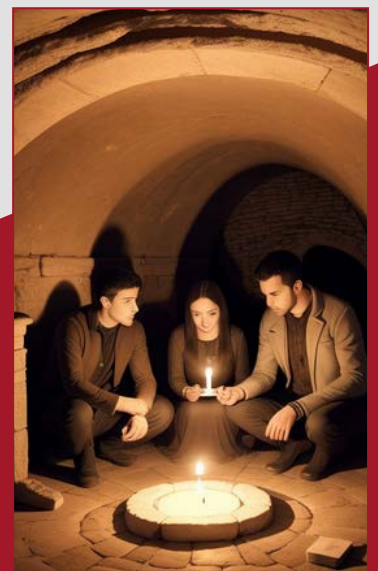
1 APRIL 2025: A GSU student and member of the Pioneer Debate club was recently granted a National Science Foundation award for discovering a new species of nematode while eating a snack that he kept in the science lab refrigerator. The creature, *Sushi prandium venenum*, was named for the event that led to the discovery. The nematode has now settled in his brain, where it married, bought real estate, and is currently raising a family of eight hundred children and a golden retriever name Bob. Revolutionary new brain scan imagery has provided a close look at the student's current brain (pictured left). Said Pioneer Debate director/coach Brian Johnston, "At least this student can now practice debate with himself—he has plenty of voices in his head."

CURRICULUM 'NEWS'

1 APRIL 2025: Dr. Amanda Chapman shocked students in her Reading Children's Literature class when she announced a new required unit on dragon training. "Children's literature is full of dragons," she explained, adjusting her singed eyebrows. "Practical experience is essential." The department funded a "dragon habitat" (suspiciously resembling the boiler room) where students practiced feeding techniques of tossing hot dogs into the darkness. "The dragon is simply shy," Chapman insisted when students pointed out they'd never actually seen the creature. "He's sensitive about his scales."

Director of Purchasing Joyce Riddle became suspicious after repeated requisition forms for "flame-retardant academic robes" and "dragonfruit for diplomatic purposes" crossed her desk. The teaching unit collapsed when Campus Service Worker Kati Hall discovered Chapman's elaborate puppet system and smoke machine.

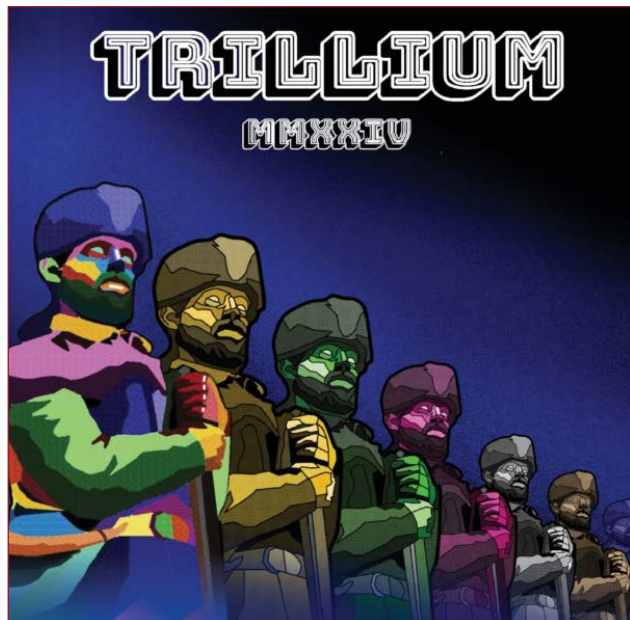
Chapman defended herself: "I was merely providing an immersive educational experience about metaphor!"



TRILLIUM READING

RFK LIBRARY * APRIL 30

Mark your calendar for a very special afternoon featuring the launch of the 2025 *Trillium*, GSU's annual literary arts journal. Contributors and supporters will be invited to read prose and poetry from the *Trillium*. Help us celebrate the creative voices of our campus and community. Enjoy the reading and pick up your free copy of the *Trillium*, which also includes artwork by talented contributors.



DUAL CREDIT ONLINE

Contributed by Samantha Miller, Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit

As a dual enrollment student at Glenville State University, I have had a very unique experience with my online learning experience. At the beginning of the year it took a while for me to adjust from learning in class with a notebook, a bunch of physical copies of course materials, and seeing in person what is being taught quickly develop to everything being right at my fingertips. Some things that I have enjoyed about online learning is the flexibility and how I can learn at my own pace. In class, it takes a week or two to get through a module and have a test to see if it was learned and where to improve. Online, however, I am able to keep learning at a pace where I am most comfortable and keep working without having to worry about going too far ahead of the class. Another great advantage of taking online classes is how cheap it is. Classes only cost close to \$75 per semester and books are close to \$100, compared to thousands of dollars in tuition. Although those are some of my favorite advantages, the greatest advantage for me is the accessibility to the course material. I always worried about how my notes were going to lack important information or how it was crowded with unnecessary information. Now I can take notes at my own pace to the best of my ability, while slowly getting ready for in-class lectures of my freshman year. These advantages have given me a unique experience with my online courses at Glenville.

WEIRD QUESTION *of the* WEEK

Spring is finally here! "If you hibernated like a bear and woke up from a long winter snooze, what would be the first thing on your mind (after the 'bear necessities')?"

Jonathan Minton

Professor of English
"That's easy. Coffee!"

Jennifer Wenner

Senior Lecturer of Communications
"Probably my cell phone to check the weather."

Grace Capron

Program Assistant, Off-Campus Programming
"If I woke up after hibernating all winter, the first thing on my mind would be a really good cup of coffee!"

Nichole Flowers

Criminal Justice Major, Online
"What book I was going to read first. I'm a girl who loves to read, and going a long time without it—that would be the first thing on my mind after waking up."

Allison Boggs

English Major
"I would say that food would be on my mind."

Schuyler Chapman

Associate Professor of English
"I probably would want to brush my teeth as soon as possible."

Melissa Gish

Associate Professor of English
"Since my dog would most likely nap with me, I'd have to take her out to the state park so she could sniff everything she missed over the winter."



Weird Question of the Week Images by Perchance



WATER

Water moves endlessly.
A simple touch causes ruckus.
A cold day eliminates this.
Water turns rock hard.
Don't be like water.
Stay loose and relaxed.
Never let adversity take your flow.

— Eli Rickard
Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit