

# Humanities Newsletter

March | 2018

In this issue: Featured Alumni Natalie Grandy;  
Writing & Rhetoric Studies Student Claudia Sauz Mendoza;  
Communication Assistant Professor Sara Yeo; and  
Preserving a Legacy with Floyd O'Neil

# ALUMNI FEATURE

## Natalie Grandy

BS | English



Natalie Grandy's love of writing from a young age made deciding upon an English major an easy choice. The small class sizes and rigorous expectations of some of the world's best professors trained her for a successful career immediately after graduation. She had always loved the U for its cosmopolitan atmosphere, easy access to world-class skiing, and high academic ranking, and receiving a leadership scholarship solidified her choice to join the ranks of her fellow Utes.

She later returned for an MBA at the David Eccles School of Business. "Many of my fellow MBA students had math or business undergraduate degrees, but my English degree gave me a different way of analyzing projects that was always highly valued in group projects. MBA students are constantly encouraged to 'think outside the box,' which was easy for me," she said.

"The U has so much to offer," she reflected. "The creativity of English professors like Kathryn Stockton and Jackie Osherow, who mixed poetry with film and theory, impressed and motivated me. I also took opportunities to get involved on campus and served on the ASUU committee that brought Spike Lee and others to speak to the U community. I joined the Pi Beta Phi sorority, which exposed me to a group of strong and motivated women. As a feminist and women's studies minor, this was very important to me."

"My English major helped me secure a journalist position at the *Daily Utah Chronicle*, which led me all over campus to interview professors and administrators," she said. "After I graduated from the U, I secured a job at an educational software development company. While my boss complained about my feminism, he always took my advice. He simply could not understand why some of the schools in New York and Chicago described his programs as racist or sexist. Through my women's studies and critical theory training, I was able to help him analyze his programs and make the necessary improvements."

Natalie was soon promoted from research assistant to designer, and began traveling to the five boroughs of New York City to beta test sites, including East Harlem,

the South Bronx, Washington Heights and Bedford Stuyvesant, which she recalls as "all impoverished, rough areas." During this time, she would suggest changes to the program based on her observations of the children who used it and the comments of the teachers and administrators. When the program was finally finished, they sold it to Addison Wesley Longman Publishing.

At the age of 24, Natalie launched a team of consultants across the United States to teach educators to use the program she'd helped build and perfect. "It was an exciting job filled with opportunities for a new graduate," she recalled.

Today, Natalie is the mother of two teens, who will soon be leaving for college. She does occasional writing and market research for local companies and enjoys volunteer work and serving on community committees and boards. When her kids leave for college, she plans to pursue a full-time marketing management position.

"Follow your passion and the rest will fall into place," she advised. "I encourage students to become highly involved in the campus activities to expand their horizons, especially if they would like to write creatively. Part of learning to write creatively is to have interesting life experiences. Students should not only read the literary cannon, but understand the emotions and circumstances that create great art, and the only way to do that is to live life to its fullest potential."

# STUDENT FEATURE

## Claudia Sauz Mendoza

Undergraduate Student | Writing & Rhetoric Studies



Claudia Sauz Mendoza knew something had clicked. She had just completed her first course in Writing & Rhetoric Studies and knew that she had found her intellectual home. She wasn't really planning on taking any writing courses, but she decided to take the "Write for U" course, which connected her

to resources and professors on campus. In that course, she said she "just started going with her gut" and began to write memoir-like essays that were well received by

her peers and professors. She loved learning to express herself and to convey her experiences in ways that resonated with others. Her professors' and classmates' enthusiasm for her work encouraged her to major in Writing & Rhetoric Studies. She remembers, "They gave me just the right push. I felt confident and decided to pursue a degree that matched what I enjoyed."

Claudia loves her major because it allows her to take courses in a number of subject areas. "I enjoy the breadth of topics offered in the courses, from grammar and stylistics to photography," she said. She acknowledges that her education in the humanities does not end in the classroom. She has learned how to articulate how she feels in her community, as well. "We can all make positive social changes in our communities."

Claudia's professors have been a key component of her academic success beyond the classroom. "I really appreciate the time and expertise that my professors have given to me during office hours. There, they help me to better understand the material I am learning and not only listen to my concerns, but take the time to address them."

Office hours have been an opportunity for Claudia to get to know her professors outside of a formal setting and to learn more about them on a personal level. This comfort level has helped her grow as a student and to reach out to others around her, too. "I know that they're interested in me as a human, not just as a person in their classroom. I like to afford others the same generosity given to me," she said.

Claudia plans to pursue a graduate degree in Writing & Rhetoric Studies so that she can encourage other students to develop their writing talents, just as she benefitted from professors that helped her to develop her own abilities.

Her background gives her a unique view of how humanities skills can help anyone in any field, no matter what degree they pursue. She knows that her colleagues and students have made her a better academic. "I deeply value my interactions with scholars in the humanities. They have improved my teaching and scholarship in social sciences."

Much like Yeo has adapted to a field tangential to the one in which she was trained, she enjoys helping her students think about novel perspectives. Students are often familiar with "stepping into another's shoes" when they interact with classmates or in their communities, but it can be forgotten when they're writing about different groups. She reminds students that when they know they clearly grasp a concept, they can help their peers understand it.

Students in her class are asked to collaboratively design a research study, collect and interpret data, and present their work to other groups. Through this process, her students learn a variety of valuable skills.

Yeo puts a lot of thought into helping students build a variety of skills in her classroom. For instance, she says that when she teaches about research methods, "there are two levels on which I hope my students are learning. First, content-related skills. Those include the ability to clearly define and measure abstract concepts such as perceptions, attitudes, and opinions." The second set, which she calls "broader skills," are related to critical thinking and technology use: "My students learn to use sophisticated statistical software to make sense of complex data," she said. "I recognize that acquiring these different skill sets can be quite difficult, and find it most rewarding when I see students take responsibility for their own learning and developing efficient work habits. It is encouraging to see such levels of maturity in students."

## FACULTY FEATURE

### Sara Yeo

Assistant Professor | Communication



Sara Yeo, Assistant Professor of Communication, did not intend to work in the humanities. Yeo is a social scientist with a background in the sciences, where she received her bachelor's and master's degrees in Oceanography and her PhD in Science Communication at UW-Madison.



## **Jane Hacking, Associate Professor of Russian, Receives Award for her Outstanding Contribution to the Profession**

February 2, 2018, Jane Hacking was presented with the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and European Languages (AATSEEL) 2017 Outstanding Contribution to the Profession award, at the President's Reception and Awards Ceremony during AATSEEL's annual conference in Washington DC.

Along with teaching Russian, Hacking also serves as the co-director of L2TReC, The U's Second Language Teaching and Research Center, housed in the College of Humanities. Hacking has spearheaded a large number of successful grant applications of significant scale that have allowed Utah to grow programs for its students and to contribute significantly to national Language Flagship Program teacher training, and other important

initiatives. At AATSEEL she has served on the Program Committee and as Vice President (for linguistics). She served on and chaired the Executive Committee of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages at the Modern Language Association (MLA).

Across these organizations, Hacking has contributed to professional development initiatives, and has devoted considerable effort in the area of pipeline development at the K-12 level as a consultant in the organization of the Russian Dual Immersion initiative in Utah and as an instructional consultant and trainer for the STARTALK Russian Program.

AATSEEL was founded in 1941 to advance the study and promote the teaching of Slavic and Eastern European Languages, literatures, and cultures on all educational levels, elementary through graduate school.



## **Preserving a Legacy**

At 90 years of age, you'll still find Floyd O'Neil in his book-filled office in the University of Utah's [American West Center](#), where he has worked since 1966 and where he served as director for 11 years. As director emeritus, his institutional knowledge and ability to remember every name, date, book and fact is priceless to the 54-year-old center.

"Floyd's impact on the center is impossible to overstate," said Greg Smoak, the current director of the center and former student of O'Neil's. "As a staff member and then assistant director and director, Floyd was largely responsible for building and maintaining the center's ongoing relationship with American Indian peoples. I also know of no better mentor. He created an environment at the American West Center based on teamwork and respect that allowed young scholars to do important work."

A career leading to the preservation of American Indian history started when O'Neil was just a child growing up on a reservation near Fort Duchesne, Utah. A third of his class were American Indians including his seat mate, whom he grew to be great friends with. The relationships he established would eventually inspire a career lasting more than half a decade. [Continue Reading](#)



## **Professors and Librarians Using Digital Humanities to Teach Class on Immigration**

Students in a new course, "Coming to America," taught by a German and a Spanish professor, are learning about immigration. The course combines this timely topic with cutting-edge research in the digital humanities in a hands-on way. Professor of German, Karin Baumgartner, and Associate Professor of Spanish, Gema Guevara, are co-teaching the course. With the close collaboration of librarians in the U's Marriott Library, students in the class are learning about digital humanities tools that will enhance both their research skills and their final projects. [Continue Reading](#)



Our theme for the year reflects a powerful truth: **Humanities Gives You the Edge.** Alumni of Humanities not only lead lives of extraordinary fulfillment, but they also excel at whatever they do. Our thousands of alumni unanimously tell us that **Humanities gave them the edge** that helped them succeed as excellent communicators; multi-lingual and culturally sophisticated global citizens; critical, ethical, and logical thinkers; and outstanding creative partners. And research backs this up! Studies show that Humanities students find careers that provide financial security and job satisfaction that matches those of students in nearly every other major. Employers increasingly seek employees who have strong skills learned in Humanities (writing, problem solving, listening, speaking, critical thinking, etc.). Humanities gives people the edge they need to thrive today. How does Humanities give YOU the edge?

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