



SPRING 2016 NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jason Haslam

As I write this, the phrase "what a difference a year makes" keeps springing to mind (after seeing it on our coordinator's Facebook page), for at least two reasons. First, looking back to last year's Spring newsletter, I'm amazed that I'm not shovelling snow right now. Second, and more importantly for our shared purposes, the Federal budget has come down, and for the first time in a while we're seeing a reinvestment in the core budgets of the Tri-Agencies, including SSHRC. (And yes, I'm valiantly trying to avoid the obvious "sunny ways" line that unites these two facts...).

Two Cents on Budget 2016

Expectations among academics were high as we headed towards this year's budget. As I reported in the previous Newsletter, Ted Hewitt from SSHRC indicated that the new government was signaling a more positive approach to research investment than what we have seen recently. And, indeed, that suspicion seems to have come true. On budget day, the Canadian Federation for Humanities and Social Sciences (CFHSS) hosted a teleconference with its member universities and associations (including ACCUTE) to outline the budget's specific relation to HSS research. The most significant announcement of the budget in relation to research was the \$141 million being added to the granting councils' budgets, with \$23

million going to SSHRC. Unlike recent investments, these amounts are not earmarked for particular programs or for private-public partnerships, but are instead directed at the core budgets. More on this below. CFHSS's briefing note (available [here](#)) contains much

of what we learned at the teleconference (you can also find their official press release, [here](#)). As you can see in the briefing, the budget also includes significant investment in areas related to the social sciences and humanities, and to our work in ACCUTE: specifically, significant amounts for the CBC and the Canada Council for the Arts. This is all good news, of course, and we should be happy at this sign of government reinvestment in foundational, non-targeted research and in arts

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and culture more generally.

Not every area was lit by these sunny ways, though. While there is much needed investment in primary and secondary education for Indigenous peoples, the budget was silent on Indigenous post-secondary education. Coming after the Truth and Reconciliation report, this is particularly disappointing, and I expect it will be a topic of conversation at Congress, when ACCUTE, CFHSS, and several other associations meet to discuss the TRC and the 20th anniversary of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

We should also pay careful attention to the government's commitment "to define a new Innovation Agenda for Canada—a plan to develop, through 2016-17, a clear strategy across departments for how the Government supports innovation and growth in partnership with other actors," as the CFHSS briefing describes it (2). While not necessarily worrying in and of itself (indeed, it could lead to positive changes), still humanities researchers know that we always have to work pointedly during such sweeping reviews in order to make our needs and the importance of our research heard over the din of any move to "impact measures" or the like. ACCUTE, as a central humanities association in the CFHSS, should take a central role in this effort.

As part of that effort, ACCUTE, our members, and our allied associations should also provide input to both the CFHSS and SSHRC leadership on how that new core funding should be used. In the teleconference, Jean-Marc Mangin, CFHSS's executive director, indicated (correctly to my mind) that these investments should be used in large part to correct the falling success rate in standard SSHRC programs, such as the Insight Grants program, citing concerns that the currently abysmal success rate is driving people away from applying altogether. I doubt many of us would disagree. However, speaking as ACCUTE president and as someone who values the singular importance of Congress to the humanities and

social sciences in Canada, I think we also need to use this opportunity to lobby SSHRC for a return of the Congress travel grant program in some form. Congress is the single largest gathering of humanities and social sciences researchers in Canada, and it is still shocking, to me anyway, that the vast majority of conferences at Congress are ineligible for any direct SSHRC grants for travel.

Yes, Congress itself receives funding, and I certainly don't want to minimize that. But Congress is only as strong as its constituent parts. For a relatively small investment, reviving the SSHRC Congress travel grant would have a profound effect on the research life of our disciplines and our interdisciplinary work, which Congress is especially well suited to fostering.

REVIVING THE SSHRC
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While ACCUTE has been able to redirect some of its money to continue to provide some travel funding, this is unsustainable in the long run, and even if it were sustainable, still it means that we cannot use those funds for other, necessary projects, partnerships, or to help build our association in other ways. I raised this issue (again) with the CFHSS leadership in our teleconference, and will continue to do so, and I know that some CFHSS board members are also doing so. We need to continue the work necessary to make revitalizing this fund a priority for the CFHSS leadership. But, perhaps the time has also come for ACCUTE and our allied associations to lobby SSHRC more directly. Congress, as you all know, is a truly unique academic and scholarly community which we need to support both in the whole and in the particular. We know what a difference a

year can make: let's see if we can make this difference happen for next year.

ACCUTE 2016

To take a sunnier turn, now: speaking of Congress and our conference, we have what looks to be another amazing set of panels and presenters lined up for our 2016 conference. I'm especially excited and humbled by ACCUTE's participation in Congress's special event, "Sharing the Land, Sharing a Future," held in recognition both of the 20th anniversary of RCAP and the recommendations of the TRC Report. ACCUTE will be represented by incoming president Manina Jones (Western), as well as member and campus representative Linda Morra (Bishop's); additionally, we reached out to our colleagues in the Indigenous Literary Studies Association, leading to our joint representation by Deanna Reder (SFU). The central event will take place on the morning of June 1st and will feature a plenary by Cindy Blackstock (First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, and member of the CFHSS Board of Directors). You can see the program for this event [here](#). At ACCUTE's suggestion, the associations that are working together on this event have opened up related panels of their conference to the whole of Congress and the public: as Lyn Bennett mentions below, these and all other special events can be found on the [online CFHSS program](#).

In addition to our intellectual work, our conference also features all of our usual fabulous events—the ESC bash, the Celebration of Research (after our AGM), and yes, the dance! Some of you may have heard rumours of the dance's demise (or at least taking a year's furlough), and indeed for a while it looked like we were headed there, due to a combination of rental and equipment/DJ fees, transportation headaches, the size of venue and/or ticketing required (due to the number of other associations asking this year to take part), and the unique

situation created by the fact that the Calgary Congress can't have beer tents, and so instead booked most of the campus pubs and bars as social meeting spaces. However, we managed to sort things out (just a few weeks ago!) thanks to the generosity of the local Congress hosts (I'd especially like to thank Anne Jaggard, Bart Beaty, and the Calgary conference staff, as well as our LAC, Jason Lee Wiens, and the venue's manager Tylor Getty). So, as Lynne Evans notes in her column, we'll be tripping the light fantastic at Calgary University's [Den and Black Lounge](#). This arrangement does mean the dance has changed somewhat: it's not an ACCUTE dance, for one; this year's is a Congress-booked social space that will have dancing, with ACCUTE helping by securing the always amazing DJ talent of past-prez Steven Bruhm (and a special thanks to Steven for being so understanding as we got this all sorted out!). Also, since the dance is on campus and is taking place during the Congress social space booking, it will be ending earlier than the last few years (though I'm sure our Tuesday morning presenters will be pleased to hear this).

Also, we have another very important Annual General Meeting, which we would like all members to attend. In addition to updating you on ACCUTE and ESC's activities and our financial health, we will also be electing a new president and vice president for ACCUTE as the office moves to Western University. Manina Jones is currently president elect, and the nominee for vice president is Madeline Bassnett. We'll also be electing two other new Board members. In addition, we hope to update you on ESC's transition to a new editor and home. After the AGM, we will move to the Celebration of Research where we will celebrate this year's F. E. L. Priestley Prize winner for best essay in the most recent volume of ESC. Then it's off to our separate dinners, followed by dancing.

I can't wait to see everyone, and hear all of your amazing work again this year! —Jason

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Lyn Bennett

Out here in still-chilly Halifax, we may be cold but our [program](#) is undeniably hot. All jokes aside, we do have a truly exciting conference in the works for Congress 2016. Featuring panels put together by us, proposed by our members, and organized by our allied associations, our line-up features several focusing on professional concerns, including a number on pedagogical issues, a Board-sponsored panel on collegial governance, and the always-popular events organized by ACCUTE's Committee for Professional Concerns. In the interest of "Energizing Communities" that is this year's Congress theme, we've again made it easy for you to find these in the "A" slot throughout the four days of our program. Also, if you're a member of the Grad Caucus, a Contract Academic Faculty (CAF) member, or one of ACCUTE's Campus Reps, you'll also want to consult the midday schedule on Sunday and Monday for lunch meetings that will both feed you and connect you with the larger communities.



(The Social Sciences building at U of Calgary, where many of our panels will be held. Credit www.ucalgary.ca)

Remember, too, that only at the ACCUTE conference can you hear panels on topics ranging from "Comics and Resistance" to "Milton

and Humanist Reading" to "Police States and States of Confinement" to "Unwriting" and many, many more. (We wonder if we may again find ourselves targeted by a *Globe and Mail* columnist who doesn't seem to believe that "Ideas Can.") But that's not all. As well as hearing plenary speakers Christine Bold speaking on "Indigenous Modernities: From Wild West to Vaudeville" and Stephanie LeMenager on "The Humanities in the Era of Climate Change," you'll also be able to take in events like our Joint Panel with the British Society for Literature and Science on "Museums, Collections, and Memory Objects" and a number of panels centred on indigenous issues (including "Contemporary Indigeneities," "First Nations Children's Literature," and "The Pen as Colonizer and Reconciler") that, as Jason mentions in his column, are also featured on the [Congress website](#).

When you're done taking in our varied program, you may want to check out evening events that include the Annual ESC Celebration on Saturday, the President's Reception on Sunday, and the Celebration of Research following ACCUTE's AGM on Monday. We're excited also to let you know that 2016 will see the Congress Dance Party, this year scheduled for Monday evening at the University of Calgary's Den & Black Lounge. Our renowned ACCUTE DJ, Steven Bruhm, has agreed to supply the tunes, so Dance Party fans definitely won't want to miss.

We look forward to putting the final touches on our program and seeing it off to the printer. We also hope that it's warmed up wherever you are, and hoping even more that the east coast's spring will soon be joining yours.

See you in Calgary!

—Lyn

COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

Lynne Evans

ACCUTE's 2016 conference promises an exciting line-up of scholarly and social events! Our conference program is available online at www.accute.ca, where you will also find a complete list of speaker bios and paper abstracts. Printed versions of the program will be available at the ACCUTE registration desk (see below).


ACCUTE's registration table will be located in the Social Sciences building, near room SS113; our panels are being held in the Social Sciences and Science Theatres buildings. Our AGM and Celebration of Research, on Monday, will be at the Alma Hotel, just a short skip across campus.

Please note that the ACCUTE registration table is NOT the same as the Congress registration area in the Jack Simpson Gym. When you first arrive at Congress, go to the Congress Hub in the Jack Simpson Gym to pick up your Congress folder, badge, etc. The ACCUTE registration table will have our final, printed conference program.

All ACCUTE conference presenters must register both for Congress and for ACCUTE. If you haven't yet registered for Congress, you may do so [here](#). In order to streamline the registration process at Congress, please make sure that your ACCUTE membership is up-to-date. You may renew your ACCUTE membership by following the links on our website under the "Join ACCUTE" tab or by clicking [here](#). Please note, if you are presenting a paper on a general pool panel or on a member-organized panel, you must be an active member of ACCUTE. If you are presenting on a Joint Association panel, you must be an active member of ONE of the associations.

Thanks to ESC's support of ACCUTE's office operations, we will be able to offer some travel funding to ACCUTE members who present at the conference: we hope to offer again up to 50% of travel costs (i.e., flight, train, gas for driving) to

Congress, depending on the amount of support requested and funds allowing. Graduate students and underemployed members will be reimbursed first, after which requests from full-time faculty will be considered. We ask that people who have access to other funds please use those rather than relying on ACCUTE, in order to help ensure the continued health of ACCUTE's finances. Travel-fund application forms will be available at the ACCUTE desk, and emailed to ACCUTE presenters.



To join or renew
your ACCUTE
membership,
please visit our
website:

accute.ca

Make sure your conference social calendar includes ESC's annual bash on Saturday evening starting at 5:30 pm at the Barcelona Tavern (501 8th Avenue SW). On Sunday, everyone is invited to the Federation's President's Reception which begins at 5:00 pm, and will be located in the EEEL (Energy Environment Experiential Learning) Building. On Monday, our annual Celebration of Research, where we announce the winner of the Priestly Prize for best ESC article, will be starting at 5:00 pm in the Senate Room of the Hotel Alma. This event follows on our AGM, which runs from 3:30-5:00 pm in the same room. Later on Monday evening don't miss out on the Congress-hosted Dance Party at the Den and Black Lounge on campus beginning at 8:00 pm. (A link to U of Calgary's campus map is [here](#); addresses for off-campus social events are listed in our program.)

See you in Calgary!

—Lynne

COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS MESSAGE

Veronica Austen (St. Jerome's)

Yesterday, it was Spring – playing bubbles with my niece and nephew outside, finding a viola in the garden already blooming; this morning there's a skiff of snow. That's the time of year it is. It's also the time of year when one contemplates the freedom that the end of term promises, all the while staring at the pile of unmarked essays that one has to return in two days. Literally, they're right there.

And then there's Congress, making travel arrangements, finding accommodations, looking forward to seeing people you haven't seen in a while, imagining the possibilities for that paper you proposed, wondering if the world will stop long enough for you to actually manifest those possibilities.

As I look through the draft program for our upcoming ACCUTE conference, I am excited to see not only the amazing variety of literary scholarship that will be showcased, but also the number of panels that will consider matters relevant to our profession. For instance, a number of panels will consider pedagogy. I see such member-organized panels as "Researching our Teaching Practices" (organized by Karen Manarin), A Roundtable on Pedagogy in the English Classroom (organized by Tyler Evans-Tokaryk and Jason Lee Wiens), "Teaching Literature, Teaching History" (organized by Moberley Luger), and the Christianity and Literature Study Group's Roundtable on Pedagogy, "The First-Year Challenge: Teaching Christian Reading" (organized by Tina Trigg). There's also "Pedagogy in Practice." And then there are other professional matters to discuss. The Grad Caucus Panel will consider "Professionalization within/beyond Academia"

(organized by Elissa Gurman) while another panel will contemplate "The Silence of the Academics" (organized by Julia M. Wright).

The Committee for Professional Concerns will contribute to the conversation as well with its two panels. "The Spectrum of the Professoriate and the Rise of the Teaching Stream" will query the implications of teaching stream positions. Do such positions offer the promise of less precarity in the academic sector or do they threaten to perpetuate the erosion of tenure? In a system that traditionally values research over teaching, how can we work to upend such hierarchies? "(Not) Speaking the Realities of Academic Labour" will query the limitations we face when wanting to speak of the realities of academic labour. How do we speak openly about our experiences when the public perceives academics as privileged? How do those in tenurable/tenured positions speak openly about the realities of their workloads without seeming to take their privileges for granted?

The kinds of questions that all of these professional issue panels will raise are so very vital at this time when post-secondary education seems to be in a state of perpetual crisis. With increasing corporatization, continued reliance on precarious labour, declining enrollments (particularly in Arts faculties), among other dire developments, our post-secondary world seems too wounded to heal. We know the problems. We can state the problems. But solutions are consistently hard to come by. How do we achieve meaningful change? How can we become less Chicken Little and more picker-up of the pieces? I don't yet have the answers to these questions, and I'm frustrated that these questions more often than not seem unanswerable. Nevertheless, with the ACCUTE Conference continuing to be a forum to discuss the most vital issues facing academia, I hope that at the very least we have a way forward and the venue that we need to find our way towards action.

—Veronica

CONTRACT ACADEMIC FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE MESSAGE

Erin Wunker (Dalhousie)

Since my last report as Contract Academic Faculty (CAF) representative, we have seen precarity in academia take a brief spotlight in the mainstream media. February 25th marked the first National Adjunct Walkout Day ([#NAWD](#)). While this was a movement that originated in the United States, and while American media outstripped Canadian media in attention paid to the issue, we did see the issue [taken up](#) here in Canada. Not long after the day of action contract workers at York University and Teaching Assistants at the University of Toronto went on strike. These instances of job action in conjunction with the call for adjuncts to walk out caught the attention of the *Globe & Mail*, which ran a series of surprisingly sympathetic pieces on the reasons for the strikes, as well as a Saturday focus section on the experiences of contract faculty and precarious workers in the Canadian context. The special section ran in print in the Toronto area and [online](#) for the rest of Canada.

Through a bit of happenstance, I found myself rather active in these public discussions during February and March. I was interviewed by the *Globe & Mail*, and I wrote a suite of posts for [rabble.ca](#) on [seeing contract workers](#), [the crisis in Canadian academia](#), and [some starting places for productive change](#). Of course, I also wrote a series of posts for [Hook & Eye](#).

I'll let you in on something that makes me feel a bit sheepish: I felt pretty proud of all the writing and public discussion I was doing. There I was, an underemployed—indeed, unpaid—PhD-holding former Assistant Professor (limited term for five years) with seven years' experience in undergraduate and graduate classrooms—

university teacher talking about how CAF issues are sustainability issues... *and I was doing it in a public forum!* Sure, it feels lovely to have friends like my articulate-and-righteously-angry Facebook posts about CAF issues. Yes, it's nice to look at the reader statistics for *Hook & Eye* and see that a few people have read my posts, but really in the grand scheme of public pedagogy these social media forums fall under the umbrella of preaching to the choir. None of us should be surprised to hear that while you may change hearts and minds on Twitter (albeit for between thirty seconds to two weeks, which is the span of a hashtag going viral) *you do not change the material working conditions of a group of people by liking or retweeting*. As college and university teachers of English we'd do well to remember that we need both the contemporary modes of dissemination that social media offers *and* the sustained academic modes of communication and dissemination we've honed for decades. We need intergenerational collaboration at the level of people and process.

Let me say this again: I feel sheepish admitting I felt proud about my thirty-seconds in the *Globe and Mail*. Why? Because I thought, for one brief minute, that the whole issue might gain more traction.

Wrong.

In Nova Scotia, where I live, pay taxes, and, this year, draw Employment Insurance, the government just deregulated tuition. Elsewhere this could be perceived as a positive move that might free up some funds for hiring. This will not be the case in Nova Scotia, where we already have the third highest tuition in the country. Instead, this will likely result in a loss of out-of-province students and a heightening of austerity measures. As I write this, faculty, students, and allies in Halifax are gathering to protest Bill 100, the misleadingly named [Universities Accountability and Sustainability Act](#),

which radically restricts the ability to grieve and allows for the total effacement of extant collective agreements, should they contravene a given institution's "revitalization plan."

These are devastating moves, especially for precarious workers. Already, CAF workers are at risk of not having full union protection, if indeed they work in provinces that allow union organization at all. Once your 4- 9- 10- or 12-month contract finishes, you're no longer a union member. No union, no collective format for addressing systemic injustice on the personal or collective level. Unfortunately, this scenario of marginalization is replicated at the national level. For all the good work and support that CAUT can offer, there's not a lot happening to actively address CAF issues at the policy level much less on the level of material working conditions.

So where does this leave us? Enter the navel-gazing: for me, it has meant using the only tools I have—writing and communication—to continually talk about these issues in public. The result of my talk has already fundamentally negatively affected my attempts to secure stable work, by the way. I expect a public piece of writing like this one will be one more nail in the coffin of my academic career. So be it. In fact, let me be very clear, because I quite literally have nothing left to lose: unless tenured faculty members and precarious workers make CAF issues a central focus nothing will change. Why? Because precarious workers are not in positions of power to start or sustain policy-changing conversations. Because precarious workers are vulnerable. Because precarious workers know speaking out and speaking up pigeon-holes them as the squeaky wheel (do you know what my actual academic research focuses on? Not precarity.) Because precarious workers are either too over-worked to be involved in these discussions, or too invisible. Because precarious workers are being asked to fill in legitimate holes in departments without being made stable members of that

department. [Because right now, in April](#), precarious workers are either gearing up to teach three spring courses to maintain their precedence and pay their rent, or they are applying for EI, or they are packing up to move to another city to follow the work and the dream that just doing all the things will make positive changes.

I'm here to tell you, things *will* change, but not in generative and sustainable ways. Students, [graduate students](#), and especially precarious workers are living the materiality of the changes that are afoot. These changes to working conditions affect our everyday lives. We are not complainers; we are the test subjects for austerity measures. We aren't leaving the profession; we are being forced out.

I genuinely believe that the membership of ACCUTE cares about precarity, sustainability, and the future of our profession as a whole. We have a collectivity that could, if we choose, make a difference. I just hope I am around to help with that struggle, if indeed it does happen.

This is my second and final year as the Contract Academic Faculty Representative for ACCUTE. It has been my privilege to work with the executive, and to work on behalf of my fellow precariates. I've been afforded some incredible opportunities, including an invitation to speak on the plenary panel of the MLA SubConference on Academic Labour in Austin, Texas this past January. I've also been reminded, once again, of the affective labour that comes with being both a part of an organization with relative power—that's the ACCUTE Executive—and a member who does not have the institutional security of a tenured or tenure-track professor, nor the institutional frameworks of recognition that graduate students have (or should have). I'll write more about this in my final missive as your CAF representative. What follows are a few of my thoughts on presenting at the MLA SubConference as a Canadian and as a precarious worker. As ever, I welcome any commentary or questions!

I don't usually go to the MLA for a few reasons. First, as a Canadianist the fact that the organization has cut the number of Canadian panels means its not a particularly disciplinarily relevant conference for me. Second, despite the shift in the MLA's timetable the conference still falls in the first week of classes for me. Third, the context, by which I mean the Americanness of it, is both complicated and, for the most part, alienating. The people who come to the panels I am on tend to be my Canadianist colleagues, and while it is always amazing to see my friends and colleagues I'd rather do it context that didn't feel so structurally oppositional. I go to conferences to talk with people about their work, to present my own work and, hopefully, have a few people who want to talk with me about it. I don't usually go to conferences to interview for jobs, thank goodness (though there is a shift towards this tactic). And, for the most part, the conferences I do attend aren't predicated on a kind of ferocious posturing that seems to be the new normal requirement for being in this long neoliberal moment on the job market.

This January, however, I was in Austin, Texas for the MLA. Specifically, I was on the plenary panel of the [MLA Subconference](#), which has for the past three years operating alongside and as an oppositional critique of the international conference. There were, of course, the usual frustrations ranging from the ubiquitous shock of many presenters who realize, OMG, that yes, you should bring your own dongle. And there was, of course, the frustration of being on a panel where almost *no one* but the young scholars--especially the young women and the young scholars of colour--stick to time. Yes, really.

It was a very long trip from Austin to Halifax, and I am sessional teaching two big courses this term. As I left I wondered if it was going to be worth it, the effort of finding guest lecturers, of navigating child care, of exhausting myself so

early in the term. Upon reflection, I am again recognizing that, yes, the trip was worth it. I was tired, yes. Not quite finished my lectures for the very next day, yes. But I feel lucky to have been there and grateful to the Executive for making my attendance possible.

I'm feeling positively reflective about my trip to the MLA for a number of reasons, most of which stem from thinking about differences between the American and Canadian academic contexts. Here are a few that I will be thinking about for a while to come:

1) "Let's Not Forget the Violence Caused By and Uncritical Academic Fetishization of Borders"

At the Subconference I was on the [plenary panel](#) with seven other people. In any context that's a lot of bodies on stage together sharing the spotlight. The most amazing performance of all my co-panelists came from [Jesus Valles](#), who is a [Latinx](#) performance poet and high school teacher at a predominantly Latino high school in Austin. After an hour and a half of presentations that provided differing degrees of practical and navel-gazing considerations of the neoliberalization of the concept of the public Mr. Valles stood up and delivered the most incredible piece of spoken word I have heard in ages. He took up the theme of the Subconference and situated his mediation on the question of whether the classroom was a public or private space. In seven minute he taught the audience about the ways in which an uncritical academic fascination with metaphors of movement and displacement were fundamentally disenfranchising for immigrant, refugee, and undocumented peoples. It was, for me, as a listener, a vital instance of the power of performative poetics and pedagogy. My hair stood on end, my tears welled up, I felt angry and fearful not because what Mr. Valles described was my experience, but because he made room for all of us to listen to what it means to be Latino

in Texas in a classroom and a city right now.

2) Borders Were Clearly Marked at the MLA

When I go to Congress each spring I dutifully spend my dollars on my membership and my conference registration. I get my badge and I wear it, most of the time. But I never worry about being barred from accessing a panel if I don't have my badge on, nor do I think any more than usual about the possibility of encountering a gun on campus. At the MLA there were signs in every room, hallway, and doorway that declaimed the necessity of wearing a badge. I didn't wear mine when I went to listen to my friend and colleague Jordan Abel speak about Indigenous histories and colonial violence. I was nervous I'd be asked to leave, and told Jordan. He gave me the job of turning the lights on and off at a key moment in his performance, thus making me part of the presentation team. We laughed about this, but my concern was valid: without a badge the implication was that you would be barred from access or be forcibly removed. I thought of the half-million dollar salary the President of the MLA pulls in, and I thought of Mr. Valles's students. I thought about who would benefit from listening to panels on conceptual poetics and the politics of race, and who could afford to go listen to them.

I also thought about the ways in which gun control differs between America and Canada. There were signs discouraging open carry at the MLA. *Discouraging*. I'm just going to leave it at that.

3) Public and Private Mean Differently in Canada and That, As It Turns Out, Has Consequences

In my own presentation I talked about teaching from a position of decolonization as a means of moving beyond reproducing colonial violence

within the institution. I explained to the audience that in Canada the vast majority of post-secondary institutions are ostensibly public institutions. If we are failing the mission statements of post-secondary institutions in Canada we are failing the institutional project, not just the public.

This took the Americans in the audience by surprise. Indeed, there was (unsurprisingly?) not much interest or uptake in talking about cross-border coalitions or organization because the majority of the audience seemed unwilling to make the conceptual reach to collaborative thinking from different contexts. Since this is my second year in a row being invited to the MLA to talk about issues of precarity, austerity, and the institutional mission I am starting to feel more than anecdotal when I say that we Canadian university and college teachers and graduate students and precarious workers will not gain much meaningful hands-on support from our American counterparts. We need to organize on our own terms and on our own campuses, and then share our organizational tactics with others. But the contexts are, I think, too different and the stakes, paradoxically, equally high right now.

What I do know is this: without the institutional support of the ACCUTE Executive I would not have been able to afford to go, participate, present, listen, or think any of these things. Most of my precarious colleagues cannot afford to do this work. That weighs on me. It compels me to act. It compels me to write and think with you here. And it compels me, once again, to invite suggestions or strategies for collective and generative organization across employment categories and experiences.

—Erin

[Ed. note: don't forget that all contract faculty are invited to the catered CAF Lunch at our conference, Monday, 30 May, 12:15-1:30]

GRADUATE STUDENT CAUCUS MESSAGE

Elissa Gurman (U of Toronto)

For some of us, it feels like spring has sprung and we all know what that means – conference season is upon us! We at the Graduate Student Caucus are very excited to welcome so many excellent graduate students to this year's ACCUTE Conference in Calgary. Graduate students form a substantial portion of ACCUTE presenters and we at the GSC have been working hard to plan events that will make this year's conference a collegial, informative, and enjoyable experience for graduate students. Here is what we have in store (mark your calendars!):

Pub Night

On **Saturday May 28**, we will be hosting a pub night (location TBA). Stop by to socialize, and have a bite to eat with your English department colleagues from across the country! We will send out an email with more information when we have it, but there will definitely be some FREE FOOD (hurrah!).

Professionalization Panel

On **Sunday May 29** from **10:30 am** to **12:00 pm**, we will be holding a panel on "Professionalization within/beyond Academia" that is sure to be of interest to graduate students. Marjorie Mather, Publisher and Editor of English Studies at Broadview Press, will offer insights and advice about entering a publishing career with a graduate degree; Brent Ryan Bellamy, SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow at Memorial University, will speak to interdisciplinary work and professionalization within and outside the academy; and Kate Lawson, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of English at the University of Waterloo, will speak about the process of academic professionalization and academic labour. Please come join us for what is sure to be an informative panel.

Grad Caucus Lunch

On **Sunday May 29** from **12:15 pm** to **1:30 pm** (directly after the Professionalization Panel) we will be hosting the Grad Caucus Lunch. At this lunch meeting, there will be FREE LUNCH, and we will discuss issues relevant to English graduate student across Canada. We'll hold our elections for next year's GSC executive (for more information about these positions, please feel free to contact us), and we'll disseminate the results from last year's surveys. Not to be missed!

Other Information

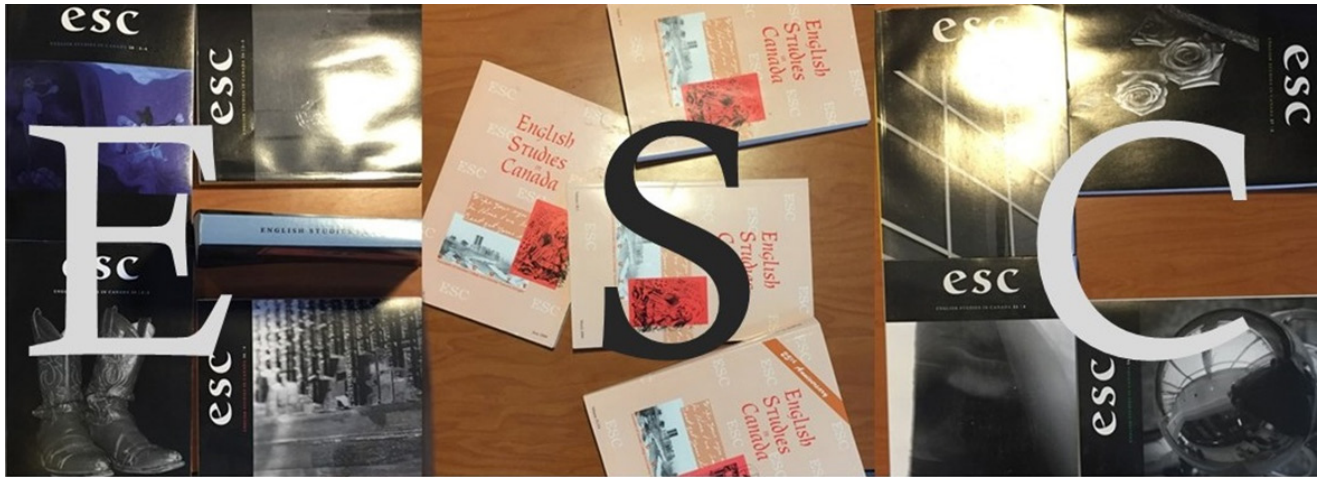
For more information about the GSC, and to stay up to date with our happenings, follow us on Facebook by joining [our group](#),) and liking [our page](#). You can also read more about the GSC on the [ACCUTE website](#) and contact us at the caucus [email account](#).

We hope to see you in Calgary!

—Elissa Gurman, President —Elizabeth Bernath, Vice President
—Kala Hirtle, President-Elect —Shawna Guenther, Secretary

NEWS FROM ESC: ENGLISH STUDIES IN CANADA

Mark Simpson, Michael O'Driscoll, Co-Editors



ESC: *English Studies in Canada* has a full slate of activities upcoming at the ACCUTE Conference in Calgary, May 28–31, 2016. The ESC Advisory Board will hold its annual meeting at 12:15 on the first Saturday and the EAB members are encouraged to join us. Reviews Editor Cecily Devereux will be moderating this year's ESC Roundtable at 1:45, Saturday, May 28th. The theme this year is "Proliferation" and the panel is busy generating an ever-increasing number of great ways to think about that topic. As always, ESC's annual gathering will take place on the Saturday: come join us for "The Ten-Gallon Bash" at Barcelona Tavern, 501 8th Avenue SW, 5:30-7:30pm. The Barcelona is a mere three minute walk from Calgary's famous C-Train, which will take you straight from campus to the downtown area. This is a great chance to gather with your friends and colleagues, enjoy some camaraderie, and then head out for a sample of Calgary's outstanding restaurant scene. Be sure to join us at the ACCUTE AGM on the Monday at 3:30, to be followed by the Celebration of Research where the ACCUTE/ESC Priestley Prize will be announced! Looking forward to seeing you in Calgary.

Warm regards from the ESC team.

—Mark and Mike

Read articles from English Studies in Canada online, through the ESC Archives, including winners of the F.E.L. Priestley Prize for the year's best essay. The 2015 Priestly Prize will be awarded at ACCUTE's Celebration of Research.

FROM OUR BLOG

Report from the OCUFA 2016 conference

Ross Bullen (OCAD)

I arrived at this year's OCUFA conference two hours late. I work just down the street at OCAD University, but I also teach a Thursday morning class, and my only option – other than cancelling – would have been to ask one of my TAs to cover for me. I'm not comfortable asking somebody who is more precariously employed than I am to do that, particularly if I need them to do it because I want to attend a conference called "Confronting Precarious Academic Work." And so, regrettably, I missed the first keynote presentation by André Turcotte (Carleton) and Heather Scott-Marshall (Mission Research). I mention this not simply to castigate myself for skipping what I'm sure was a fascinating talk, but because it is a good example of how precarity affects everything we do as employees within the contemporary academy. Like all power structures, precarity functions as a hierarchy, where contingent employees experience unequal access to resources, benefits, and job security. I have more of these things than my TAs do. Tenure-line employees have far more than me. The one thing that is consistent across the board is that precarity is creeping further into every aspect of academic life. This fact alone made this OCUFA conference vital and very, very necessary.

If I learned one thing in grad school, it was to always accept free food. The food situation at this conference was very good, and so with an armful of free croissants and a steaming mug of hotel-quality coffee, I settled in for the first of four panel discussions. In many ways, this panel's presentations were emblematic of the themes that would come up over and over again during this two-day conference. From Robyn May (University of Melbourne) we learned that the culture of

precarity and contingency in Canadian universities matches trends in Australian higher education (later that day Jonathan White would present scarily similar information about the UK). From Jamie Brownlee (Carleton) we learned how university administrators are reluctant to disclose information about the number of precarious workers they employ, and – based on an angry comment from an administrator in the audience – how much they dislike being called out for this kind of deliberate obfuscation. And from Cynthia Field (OISE, University of Toronto) and Louise Birdsell Bauer (University of Toronto) we learned about some terrifying statistics, gathered in both cases from interviews and surveys with sessional faculty members. Each talk was fascinating and informative, even if they largely served to confirm what everyone in the room already knew: that universities are increasingly relying on sessional faculty, that sessional faculty have limited opportunities for professional advancement (as everyone knows, the more time you spend working as a sessional the less likely you are to land a tenure-track job, because – for some reason – in academia practical work experience counts against you), and that sessional faculty are stressed out and exploited.

If one thing was clear over the course of this conference it was that the problems associated with precarious academic work are well known. Many presenters qualified their comments by pointing out that earlier speakers had already covered the same material. So we all know about the nature of the problem. How about some solutions? Here, understandably, there was far less confidence or consensus. A particularly divisive topic was the role of faculty unions, with some attendees claiming that unions were the only way to "fight back" against the neoliberal university, with others claiming that the rigidity of unions was one of the causes of the corporatization of universities in the first place. There was a general agreement that faculty unions are useful and

necessary (it was an OCUFA conference, after all), but given the spread of precarity and contingency in Canadian higher education over the past two decades, there was also a healthy dose of skepticism about what traditional organized labour can accomplish. A more productive topic, to my mind, was an ongoing discussion about how full-time, tenure-track and tenured faculty can be good allies to their precariously employed coworkers. Readers of this newsletter will be please to know that several speakers mentioned ACCUTE's [Best-Practices Checklist](#) as a positive example of this kind of thing.

Perhaps the most exciting proposal, though, was a call, shared by the second and third keynote speakers, for Basic Income equality. The first speaker to bring this up was Guy Standing (University of London), who is well known internationally for his writing on "the precariat" and his work with the Basic Income Earth Network. Standing's talk was interesting, even if it did deal in broad strokes that weren't always obviously applicable to the problem of contract labour in Canadian universities. It's also worth noting that when one audience member asked Standing a very good question about the dangers of reading precarity through the lens of class rather than race, Standing's answer was, shall I say, inadequate (a paraphrase: "racism is the province of the old white working class, but educated progressives aren't racist"). On the whole, though, Standing's talk provided a powerful spark for conversations about the global struggle against a corporate shift toward permanent contingency and vulnerability. Building on some of these ideas, but reframing them within the context of Canadian higher education, was Karen Foster's (Dalhousie) excellent talk on "A World without Precarity." Foster shared her research on Contract Academic Staff in Nova Scotia, conveying several powerful messages, including the need for tenure-line faculty to acknowledge that their relative

privilege is only made possible through the exploitation of other workers, and the impact of universities' over-reliance on precarious labour on the next generation of university students. After all, what are undergraduate students supposed to learn from schools that mostly employ contingent faculty who "embody and perpetuate" the neoliberal political economy of the modern university? Foster didn't claim to have any firm solutions, but she did raise the important question of how Basic Income equality for everybody would change, for the better, the culture of Canadian universities for both faculty and students. It was an exciting and inspiring thought to dwell on at the end of the conference.

On the whole, OCUFA's "Confronting Precarious Academic Work" conference was a great opportunity for people who already know far too much about how universities exploit contract faculty to meet, share their stories, and begin to think about possible solutions. My only real complaint is that it required a hefty registration fee, which obviously served as a barrier for many precarious faculty members who would have liked to attend (I wouldn't have gone if ACCUTE didn't foot the bill). As much as I loved the free food (croissants! a catered lunch!), I would have gladly given it up if it meant that everybody who wanted to attend this meeting would have been able to do so for free. It is ironic that a conference on academic precarity would replicate the exclusionary logic of a typical academic conference by charging fees that most tenure-track faculty (and some grad students) will be reimbursed for, but which virtually all part-time faculty members will have to pay out of pocket. The culture of contingency truly does run deep in Canadian higher education.

—Ross

Would you like to comment on this piece? You can by clicking [here](#).

2016 AGM AGENDA

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Approval of Minutes (2015 AGM)
3. Matters Arising
 - a. Motion, re. members' dues and Federation database (motion to follow)
4. President's Report (Jason Haslam)
5. Vice President's Report (Lyn Bennett)
6. Financial Report (Lynne Evans)
 - a. Motion to approve financial report (motion to follow)
 - b. Motion to appoint public accountant to prepare 2015-16 financial documents and reports (motion to follow)
7. Report of Editors of *ESC: English Studies in Canada* (Michael O'Driscoll and Mark Simpson)
8. Report of the Committee for Professional Concerns (Veronica Austen)
9. Report of the Contract Academic Faculty (CAF) Representative (Erin Wunker)
10. Report of the Graduate Student Caucus (Elissa Gurman)
11. Report of F. E. L. Priestley Prize Committee (Laura Robinson)
12. Report of the President of the Canadian Association of Chairs of English (CACE) (Lisa Vargo)
13. Election of New Members to the ACCUTE Board of Directors (motions to follow)
14. AOB
15. Motion to Adjourn



Snowdrops: yes, even the small signs of Spring in Halifax have to mention "snow"

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

In addition to the election of a new president and vice president, the ACCUTE Board will see two other members finish their terms at the 2016 AGM: Joel Faflak (member-at-large) and Erin Wunker (Contract Academic Faculty Representative). The board will be making and accepting nominations (and self-nominations) for these positions. These positions are usually held for two years and are likely to involve monthly conference calls, preliminary vetting of general pool proposals, attendance at the ACCUTE Conference (including Executive meetings), advocacy, reports to the membership in newsletters and at the AGM, and other duties specific to the portfolios. Please send any nominations or self-nominations to Lynne Evans at info.accute@gmail.com by April 30, 2016.

Thank you to Erin and Joel for your service!

The ACCUTE Board of Directors

Jason Haslam (President)
Lyn Bennett (Vice President)
Manina Jones (President Elect)
Elissa Gurman (Grad Caucus President)
Erin Wunker (CAF Representative)
Veronica Austin (Member-at-Large, Prof. Concerns)
Laura Robinson (Member-at-Large, Priestley Prize)
Joel Faflak (Member-at-large)
Mike O'Driscoll (Co-editor, ESC)
Mark Simpson (Co-editor, ESC)
Lisa Vargo (CACE President)

ACCUTE Coordinator

Lynne Evans

Research Assistant

Brittany Kraus

With thanks...

As always, the ACCUTE office thanks the ACCUTE Board of Directors for all of their work, and Dalhousie's Department of English and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences for their invaluable support.

And thank you for your support, and please don't forget to renew your membership. It's quick and easy, and you can do it [online!](#)

(All photos by the prez, unless otherwise noted)