

Jessica R. McCort, PhD
Department of Literary Arts, Point Park University
706B Lawrence Hall
201 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Current Position

Assistant Professor of Composition and Rhetoric, Coordinator of Writing Intensive Program,
Department of Literary Arts, Point Park University, Fall 2015 to Present

Education

Ph.D. in English and American Literature, Washington University in St. Louis, December 2009
Washington University Dissertation Fellowship
Dean's Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching
Dissertation: "Getting Out of Wonderland: Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, and Anne Sexton" (Committee Members: Vivian Pollak – Chair, Robert Milder, Sarah Rivett, Miriam Bailin, Stamos Metzidakis, and Gerhild Williams)

MA, English and American Literature, Fall 2002
Washington University Graduate Scholarship

BA, English Literature, Pennsylvania State University, 1999
Summa Cum Laude with Highest Distinction, Schreyer Honors Program
Penn State Nominee for Rhodes and Marshall Scholarships
College of English Student Marshall

Book Projects

Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children's Literature and Culture (recently published) is a collection of essays that seeks to consider horror texts for children with the respect such texts deserve, weighing the multitude of benefits they can provide for young readers and viewers. It refuses to write off the horror genre as campy, trite, or deforming, instead recognizing that many of the texts and films categorized as "scary" are among those most widely read/viewed by children and young adults. It also considers how adult horror has been domesticated by children's literature and culture, with authors and screenwriters turning that which was once utterly horrifying into safe, funny, and delightful books and films, along with the impetus behind such re-envisioning of the adult horror novel or film as something appropriate for the young. Especially today, when dark novels, shows, and films targeted toward children and young adults are proliferating with wild abandon, understanding the methods by which such texts have traditionally operated, as well as how those methods have been challenged, abandoned, and appropriated in recent years, becomes all the more crucial. I am the editor of this project and have contributed, in addition to the book's introduction, the essay entitled "'In the darkest zones': The Allure of Horror in Contemporary Revisionist Fairy-Tale Novels for Children." This essay focuses on the recent fairy-tale novels *Coraline* and *A Tale Dark and Grimm* as examples of gruesome, morally impactful modern fairy tales. I situate these particular books in relation to twentieth-century women authors' dark fairy-tale revisions that emphasize identity development and the current cultural moment, a time in which mainstream American culture is obsessed with the darker side of fairy tales and the resurgence and rehabilitation of the fairy-tale villain.

I am also presently working on a collection of interviews with the author Sylvia Plath for the Conversations with series. This book is also under contract with the University Press of Mississippi.

Teaching Experience

Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition, Fall 2015-Present

ENGL 101: College Composition (Honors and Non-Honors Iterations)
ENGL 146: Writing Lab
ENGL 295: Advanced Composition: Fairy Tale Visions and Re-Visions
ENGL 328: Major American Authors: Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton

Instructor of Writing, Duquesne University, Fall 2011-Spring 2015

UCOR 101: Thinking and Writing Across the Curriculum
UCOR 102: Imaginative Literature and Critical Writing (Fantasy and Reality: Fairy Tales and Fairy-Tale Revisions; Fantasy and Reality: The Supernatural and the Real)
IHP 104: Honors Inquiry 1 (Freshman Honors Seminar in Writing)
English 201: Literature for Children and Young Adults
English 300W: Critical Issues in Literary Studies (Gateway Course to the English Major)

Adjunct Faculty, Duquesne University, the University of Pittsburgh, Carlow University, Wheeling Jesuit University, Waynesburg University, Fall 2008-Spring 2011

UCOR 101: Thinking and Writing Across the Curriculum (Duquesne)
UCOR 102: Imaginative Literature and Critical Writing (Duquesne)
ENGCOMP 0200: Seminar in Composition (University of Pittsburgh)
ENG 105: Process of Composition (Wheeling Jesuit University)
UCOR 030: Research and Information Skills (Duquesne)
ENG 101: College Composition I (Waynesburg University)
ENG 102: College Composition II (Waynesburg University)
ENG 305: Research Writing Skills (Waynesburg University)
LIT 120: Literary Foundations, Methods and Genres (Wheeling Jesuit University)
HS-205: History of American Women (Carlow University)
HS-304: Popular Culture Studies: From Amusement Park to MTV – Girls' Cultures (Carlow University)
ENG 356: Crime and Punishment in Literature (Waynesburg University)

Instructor, Institute of Reading Development, Summer 2010

Taught in an intensive summer session that offered classes at eight program levels, reaching students from four years old through adulthood. Classes focused on promoting a wide range of skills, from the building blocks of reading for the very young to critical engagement with texts and notetaking for adult learners. For this position, I was required to complete over 125 hours of training, both from a distance and at a week-long training session onsite in Dallas, TX. Institute teachers have a number of responsibilities during the summer, including teaching students and parents, reviewing lesson plans and

preparing to teach, managing teaching materials, reporting key data online about their students, and actively communicating with their supervisor.

Teaching Fellow, Washington University in St. Louis, Fall 2002-Summer 2007

Composition and Rhetoric II

Praxis 111: Communication that Works (Course specifically designed for business students with an increased focus in the Liberal Arts)

University College: Composition and Rhetoric I and II (Courses for students enrolled in the evening and special-programs division of the College of Arts and Sciences; part-time, evening, and summer-school students of all ages)

College Writing I

Writing II: Practice in Composition (Developed and taught the pilot version of this course, the University's follow-up course to Writing I)

Expository Writing (Condensed version of Writing I for students taking summer courses, several of whom required intensive ESL instruction)

ELIT 2152: Introduction to Literary Study: Modern Texts, Contexts, and Critical Methods

Teaching Awards/Honors

Student Essays Selected as *First Class* Winners, Spring 2015, Spring 2014, Fall 2014, and Spring 2013 Duquesne University

These students' winning essays were published in the *First Class* journal, a publication put out by the Department of English every year to showcase exemplary student writing in the First-Year Writing program.

Student Essays Selected as Learning Community Essay Winners, Fall 2012 and Fall 2013, Duquesne University

These students had the opportunity to pose questions to and have dinner with the visiting speakers whose books were chosen by the College of Liberal Arts as common texts. In the years my students won, these speakers were Karen Stohr and Maggie Jackson.

Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching as a Graduate Student, 2003-2004, Washington University

Publications

Conversations with Sylvia Plath. University Press of Mississippi. Forthcoming.

Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children's Literature and Culture. University Press of Mississippi. June 2016.

"Breaking the Glass Slipper." *The Flourishing Academic*. Duquesne University Center for Teaching Excellence. 4 May, 2015.

“Edward Gorey: The Humour in Children’s Horror.” *Inis: The Children’s Books Ireland Magazine* 40 (Winter 2013): 8-13.

“‘A Red-Blooded American Girl’: Gender, American Culture, and Sylvia Plath.” *Critical Insights: Sylvia Plath*. Ipswich: Salem, 2013. 117-140.

“Sleeping Beauty Awake: Sylvia Plath Through the Looking-Glass.” *Plath Profiles* 5 (Summer 2012): 147-157.

“Interview with Joyce Carol Oates.” *Arch Literary Journal* 2 (February 2009).

“Alice in Cambridge: Sylvia Plath, Little Girls Lost, and ‘Stone Boy with Dolphin.’” *Plath Profiles* 1 (Summer 2008): 175-186.

Conference/Seminar/Colloquium Presentations

PCA/ACA National Conference, New Orleans, April 2015

Paper Presented: “‘Poisonous Fruit’: Cannibalistic Fairy Tales in *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*”

PCA/ACA National Conference, Chicago, April 2014

Paper Presented: “‘A New Chapter of Torture’: Gothic Horror in *The Hunger Games*”

Featured Speaker, Sylvia Plath Commemoration, West Chester University Poetry Center, October 2013

Speaker, Colloquium, Duquesne University, October 2013

Paper Presented: “Bringing the Fairy Tale Back to the Horror Realm: Adam Gidwitz’s *A Tale Dark and Grimm*”

PCA/ACA National Conference, Washington, DC, April 2013

Paper Presented: “Edward Gorey: The Humor in Children’s Horror”

American Literature Association Symposium on the Gothic, Savannah, GA, February 2013

Paper Presented: “The Importance of Being Frightened: Gothic Elements in Children’s Literary Culture”

Mid-Atlantic PCA/ACA Regional Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, November 2012

Paper Presented: “Defeating the Dragon: The Role of Horror in Children’s Books”

Sylvia Plath Symposium, University of Indiana-Bloomington, October 2012

Paper Presented: “‘This Smith Cinderella’: Breaking the Glass Coffin in *The Bell Jar*”

American Literature Association National Conference, San Francisco, May 2012

Paper Presented: “‘The interrupted story’: Children’s Literature and Elizabeth Bishop’s Exploratory Aesthetics”

PCA/ACA National Conference, Boston, April 2012

Paper Presented: “‘Off with her head!’: Children's Literature and the Wonderland of Horror”

SWTX PCA/ACA Regional Conference, Albuquerque, March 2012

Paper Presented: “‘Hansel and Gretel’ and Elizabeth Bishop's ‘The Farmer's Children’”

Girls’ Culture Studies Seminar, Annual Conference of the American Cultural Studies Association, New York University, May 2008

Presented work-in-progress as panel member in seminar on Girls’ Culture Studies at the Annual Conference of the ACSA

Sylvia Plath 75th-Year Symposium, Oxford University, October 2007

Paper Presented: “Alice in Cambridge: Sylvia Plath, Little Girls Lost, and ‘Stone Boy with Dolphin’”

(Dis)junctions 2007, University of California Riverside, April 2007

Paper Presented: “Sylvia Plath and Fairy Tales”

Community Appearances/Presentations

Pittsburgh Today Live, October 2016, KDKA

Appearance on local television program, discussing the subject of my recent book *Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children’s Literature and Culture*.

Administrative Experience

Writing Intensive Program Coordinator, 2015-Present, Point Park University

Oversight of the Writing Intensive Program at the University. Responsible for recruiting instructors, scheduling courses, and providing training in WI course development and teaching WI courses.

Coordinator of IHP 104, Honors Program, 2014-Present, Duquesne University

Weighing input from fellow instructors, responsible for selecting a theme for the IHP 104 program and choosing common texts for the courses. Also coordinate staffing and scheduling of sections. This year, I, along with Kathleen Roberts, worked to bring local author David Harris-Gershon to campus as a visiting speaker. Harris-Gershon spoke to over 100 students at the event this past October, and seven students (whose essays were selected as exceptional work by their instructors) had dinner with Harris-Gershon, the Provost, the Director of the Honors Program, and their instructors.

Coordinator of Community-Engaged Learning, 2011-Present, Duquesne University, Orbis Learning Community

Responsibilities include organizing and overseeing the Service Learning component for the Orbis Learning Community in the College of Liberal Arts. This requires the scheduling and managing of conversation hours that include students in both the ESL program and the Orbis Learning Community (participants numbering between 70 and 100 students each hour).

Member of Editorial Board, 2011-Present, *Plath Profiles*

Responsible for soliciting and helping to edit essays for publication in *Plath Profiles*, an online, interdisciplinary journal devoted to the study of Sylvia Plath. Also perform administrative tasks,

including advertising the journal in select publications, correspondence between overseeing editor and the rest of the board, and other tasks as they arise.

Coordinator of University Writing Assessment, 2006-2007, Washington University

During the pilot year of new assessment procedures for the university, worked in cooperation with the Director of Writing Courses in order to evaluate assessment essays written by students in both the freshman and senior classes. Responsible for organizing assessment readings, planning calibration exercises, developing new assessment standards and scoring guides, recruiting readers, collecting assessment data, and drafting the report of students' demonstrated capabilities to be presented to the University Assessment Committee, as well as offering suggestions for improvement to the assessment process for the following academic year. In the second year, implemented changes to the procedures and performed duties listed above.

Curriculum Development Assistant, 2004-2006, Washington University

Assisted the Director of Writing and the Writing I Program Administrator. Duties included helping to train and mentor instructors in their first semester of teaching, researching topics relevant to the development of the Writing I curriculum, assessing placement exams written by freshmen, and reading and assessing transfer students' portfolios in order to decide whether or not students required further writing instruction and, if so, to determine placement.

Convener, Writing I Program, 2005-2006, 2003-2004, Washington University

In Spring 2006, served as Convener to groups of both experienced and first-year instructors. In Fall 2005, served as Joint Convener along with the Writing Program Administrator for a group of instructors in their first year of teaching. From Fall 2003-Spring 2004, served as Convener to group of instructors in their first-year of teaching. Responsible for leading discussions regarding classroom management, course development, and pedagogy, observing instructors' teaching, and closely mentoring those who required assistance in order to develop their teaching skills.

Academic Service

Teaching College Now Students (Independent Study and in Honors Class)

Event Coordinator, Literary Arts "Sin"posium, April 2016, Point Park University

Search Committee, Creative Non-fiction Faculty, 2016, Point Park University

Search Committee, Center for Media Innovation, 2016, Point Park University

Safe-Zone Representative, 2015-Present, Point Park University

Campus representative for SafeZone, a program implemented on university campuses across the nation to provide training to faculty, staff, and students to become better allies to the LGBTQ community and to become more aware of gender and sexuality issues.

Book Reviewer, 2015, *Children's Literature* (<http://childrenslit.com/>)

Reviews of recently published children's and young adult books. Reviews appear both at *Children's Literature* and as editorial reviews at the Barnes and Noble website.

Member, UCOR 102 Committee, 2014-2015, Duquesne University

Serving on committee charged with examining the role of the UCOR 102: Imaginative Literature and Critical Writing in Duquesne's writing sequence.

Member, Faculty Advisory Committee for the Learning Communities, 2012-2015, Duquesne University

Serving on committee devoted to the examination and enhancement of the Learning Communities in the College of Liberal Arts. This committee is responsible for choosing the common text for the communities, discussing and addressing issues that arise in the communities' operation, and suggesting new and innovative directions for the program.

Member, First-Year Writing Committee, 2009-2010, 2011-2014, Duquesne University

Served on committee made up of various individuals teaching in the First-Year Writing Program. In recent years, the board assessed the UCOR 102 course (Imaginative Literature and Critical Writing) and selected a new primary textbook for the UCOR 101 course.

Panel Member, Library Resources for UCOR 102, First-Year Writing Workshop, 2014, Duquesne University

First Class Judge, 2011-2014, Duquesne University

Along with a panel of several other instructors in the Writing program, judged the student essays submitted for inclusion in the *First Class* publication that celebrates the best essays written throughout the fall and spring semesters.

Instructor, Orbis Learning Community, 2011-Present, Duquesne University

Teaching member of the Orbis Learning Community, in which I work collaboratively with other professors to plan assignments and coursework that concentrate on connecting students' learning through the freshman year.

Panel Member, Grading Strategies, First-Year Writing Workshop, 2012, Duquesne University

Facilitator, The Big Read Program, 2007, Washington University and the Community of St. Louis

Program funded by the National Endowment for the Arts to promote reading among the general public. Program was spearheaded in the St. Louis community by Washington University. Led discussions amongst sixth graders regarding the Holocaust-themed play *Hannah's Suitcase*.

Writing 1 Board, 2004-2005, Washington University

Served on Writing I Board made up of various members from the university community, including full-time lecturers, faculty teaching the course, convenors, and others, such as the Director of the Writing Center. Board members discussed issues related to curriculum development, provided support to instructors, and helped maintain focus on the aims of the course.

Faculty Associate, 2004-2005, Washington University

Volunteered, on recommendation of a former student, to work with Resident Advisors and a floor of about 20 first-year students in a Residential College during the academic year. The Faculty Associates

Program is designed to provide undergraduate residents with role models and mentors and to encourage students to use faculty as resources for information, referral, and informal advising.

Freshman Reading Program, 2004, Washington University

Led discussion regarding book of common readings related to “Freedom” with a group of incoming freshmen. This program is designed to introduce freshmen immediately to the spirit of intellectual debate that the University hopes to develop among its students.

Blog

The Owl's Skull. <http://theowlskull.blogspot.com>. Syndicated by the BlogHer Network. Personal lifestyle blog. I like to think of *The Skull* as one of those World Treasures of Children's Literature books that includes a little bit of everything for a lot of different tastes. I open there the pages of my life, my home, my family, and my favorite books from the genres of children's/young adult literature, the Gothic, and, every once in a while, horror.

Professional Development

On Introductions: Helping Students Establish Purpose in Their Writing, Fall 2016, Point Park University

This session focused on ways to help students improve the introductions to their papers. We'll consider different types of introductions for different kinds of essays, strategies to help students get started, and thesis statements.

Writing Clear Assignment Prompts, Session Leader, Fall 2016, Point Park University

In this session, we focused on designing writing prompts that help facilitate student success in a given assignment. We covered the key elements of good assignments and offered strategies for guiding the writing process.

WI Breakout Session: Audience and Purpose in Student Writing, Summer Faculty Academy, Session Leader, Summer 2016, Point Park University

This session provided an overview of the resources now available on the Blackboard Writing Intensive site for those either teaching or thinking about proposing a WI course. We will also focus on tactics to use in assignments and classroom activities to help students develop audience awareness and a greater sense of purpose in their written work.

Effective Peer Review in WI Classrooms, Session Leader, Spring 2016, Point Park University, Center for Teaching Excellence

In this session, we discussed how to sequence peer-review tasks throughout the course of the semester and specify tasks for peer review. We also concentrated on how to model effective commenting using workshop sheets or criteria lists before the peer review sessions, as well as how to build in incentives to encourage helpful comments.

Pathways to Advising Success, Spring 2016, Point Park University, Center for Teaching Excellence

This workshop was for new faculty to go over the CORE, course sequences, degree requirement forms, and the roles of the Student Success Center and Faculty Advisors. It also provided tips on how to help students and the differences between academic advising and career advising.

Inclusion and Diversity Training Focus on Transgender People, Spring 2016, Point Park University

Preparation for Teaching at a Distance, Fall 2015, Point Park University, Center for Teaching Excellence

This online course is designed to prepare professors and instructors to teach online and hybrid courses at the University.

Setting up a Gradebook with BlackBoard, Fall 2015, Point Park University, Center for Teaching Excellence

Session on setting up the gradebook, assignments, responding to student assignments online, etc.

Getting Started with BlackBoard, Fall 2015, Point Park University, Center for Teaching Excellence

Session on using the BlackBoard site effectively and efficiently.

Composition Workshop: (Way) Beyond the Red Ink: Strategies for Working with L2 and Basic Writers, Fall 2015, Point Park University, Department of Literary Arts

Session targeted toward strategies for working with L2 and Basic writers, especially regarding feedback on global issues in student writing.

Performance-Based Assessments Workshop, Fall 2015, Point Park University, Center for Teaching Excellence

Participant in a session devoted to moving beyond assessing what students know to assessing what students can do with their knowledge. The workshop concentrated on learning how to plan and evaluate assessments that ranged from performances to game-like activities to scenarios that mimic realistic situations in students' career fields.

Composition Workshop: Using Classtime Wisely, Fall 2015, Point Park University, Department of Literary Arts

Session on making the most out of class time, as well as using all of the allotted time in class sessions. Provided ideas regarding different instructional strategies.

Summer Faculty Academy, Summer 2015, Point Park University

Presentation: "Getting 'Intensive': How to Design a Writing Intensive Course Without the Red Ink"
Also participated in sessions on problem-solving, online learning, and BlackBoard integration.

Learning Communities Institute, 2011-2014, Duquesne University

Yearly, semester-long training sessions designed to promote self-assessment among instructors and to encourage redevelopment of the Learning Community courses with each incoming class. In recent years, the Learning Communities Institute has focused on Service Learning, assessable Learning Outcomes, and integrating collaborative writing across the curriculum.

First-Year Writing Panels, 2011-2014, Duquesne University

Attendance at and participation in various panels designed to enhance teaching skills among full-time instructors, adjuncts, and graduate students. In recent years, the panels have focused on grading strategies and the use of library resources, especially with regard to the UCOR 102 course.

Teaching in the Flex-Tech Classroom Training, 2014, Duquesne University

Attended training sessions for the newly designed and implemented Flex-Tech classrooms at Duquesne, after offering to be among the first group of teachers to make semester-long use of the classrooms.

Development of Targeted Guides to Research, 2013-Present, Duquesne University

Worked closely with librarian Ted Bergfelt to design and create research guides targeted to my specific courses. See <http://guides.library.duq.edu/ucor102-mccort-14> as an example. This process really enlightened me as to what resources were indeed available to my students when they were writing their researched papers for the course and how to direct students to those resources.

BlackBoard Training, 2011, Duquesne University

Completed training in BlackBoard in order to learn how to use the program effectively.

Languages

Completed Intensive Translation Courses for Doctoral Degree in both French and Spanish