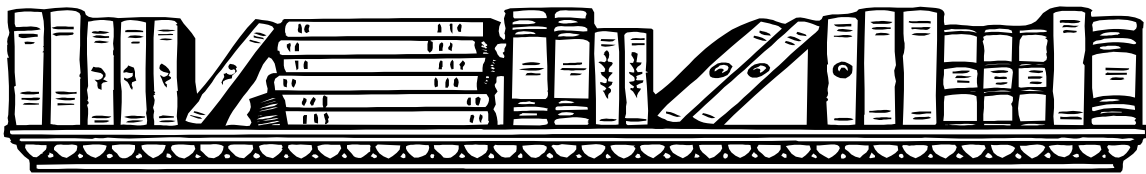


# Graduate Assistant Handbook

Updated 11 May, 2004

By Chrystine Webb Shearouse



## **On Your Mark, Get Set, GO!!!!**

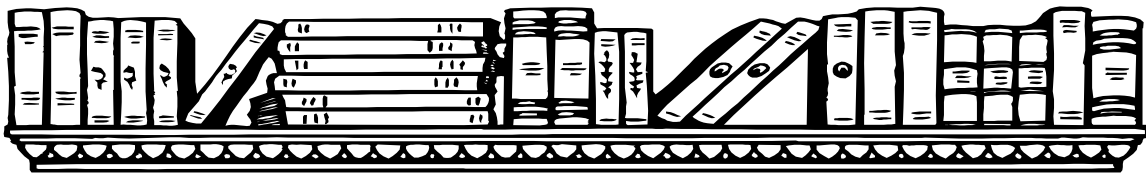
So now you are the English Department's Graduate Assistant. Congratulations. As was done for me, I would like to impart some of my knowledge onto you so that your time in this position is as profitable and enjoyable as possible.

Besides reading this handbook, my OTHER first suggestion is to read over the new Graduate Student Handbook, which contains important information that other students, even if they are given the Handbook. You need to be able to tell them this information.

Also, note that the next two years are going to be an incredible challenge and you will not emerge from the position as the same person. The graduate assistantship changed my perceptions and led me to reassess my priorities.

I want to make things as simple as possible for you, giving you templates and examples of my flyers and communications with faculty and students so that you will have a general flavor of your position here.

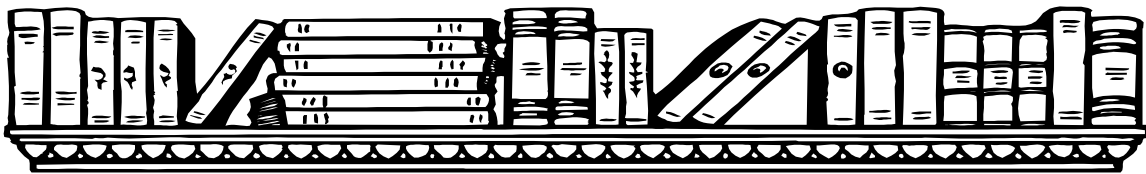
Enjoy the disk with most things you will need already on it. If you need help, I am available by phone.



## **Duties that may be included in your Graduate**

### **Assistant responsibilities**

- Assist secretaries with help in the office
- Proctor student evaluations. (see example of schedule included in this handbook)
- Make flyers for faculty-run events
- Go to the Graduate Open House with Linda. They are usually held once a semester. They are held either in the Student Center or in Hobart Manor. See the special section of this Handbook on the Open House.
- Assist the Graduate Program Director with various activities connected to recruitment and retention
- Conduct small research projects for faculty and committees
- Proctor exams for professors
- Show movies for professors
  - ❖ Professors arrange everything with the Audio Visual Department of the Library. Always call to confirm with the Audio Visual Department the day of the class to make sure they have the correct location and time.
- Substitute-teach a class here and there
- Assist the Graduate Program Director with organizing the workshop in writing the thesis proposal, and with the flyer for the Summer Writing Institute
- Assist the Graduate Program Director in arranging the fall and spring graduate colloquia: designing flyers, contacting colloquium participants.
- Assist the Chair organize various departmental events
- Write the Newsletter
- Create and moderate two Listservs – one for undergraduate English major, another for graduate students
- Provide technical assistance for faculty and staff



## **Letter of Introduction**

- When you begin working as Graduate Assistant, the first thing to do is to write a letter introducing yourself to the faculty.
- Include a brief bio, your skills and provide a rough idea of your schedule, where you can be found and how to contact you (phone number, and email address).
- You will need to email your bio to the entire faculty in the department. You may also want to make approximately 55 copies of this and put it into everyone's mailboxes since some professors might not check their email regularly.

## **Your Mailbox**

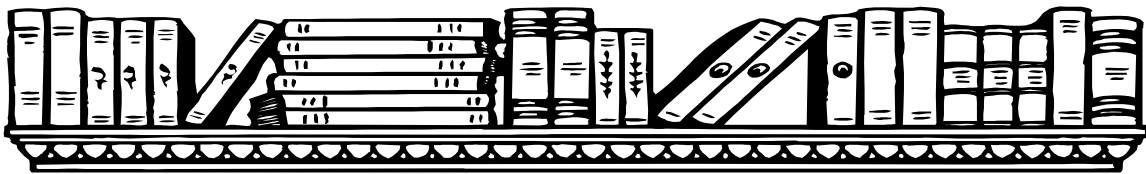
- Make a label with your name on it and put it next to the label that marks the **Graduate Assistant** mailbox.
- Check your mailbox when you come in each day. Linda may leave items there for you to work on.

## **Your Schedule**

- After you have had a week or two of classes, make a schedule of when you will be on campus.
- You will have to ask Linda about setting weekly days and times to meet with her.

## **Where to Sit?**

- If there is a faculty member on sabbatical or on leave you can ask Kim in the office if you can sit there and then ask the faculty member who shares the office if it would be ok if you sat there.
- Kim can give you the missing faculty member's key or, if necessary, she can give you a key request form which is sent to Campus Police. Getting a key will take a long time, so keep on top of it if you don't get immediate results.



- If you ever forget your key, go to the Dean's office and ask Pat or someone there very nicely if you may have the master key.
- When Linda is not on campus, in a class or attending a meeting, you can use her computer. If you call the help desk they will set you up with a faculty/staff email account so that you can log in as yourself.

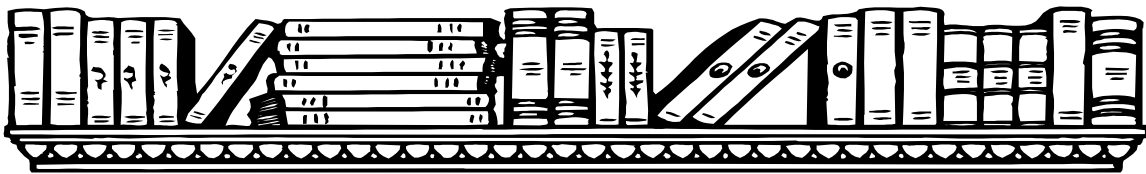
## **Phones and Voice Mail**

- I never had an extension all to myself but instead asked people to call me at whatever number I was sitting at and if I was there I would answer it. I asked them that if I did not answer, not to leave a message but to call the English office and leave a message with Kim or Geeta if it is school-related. Also, I gave my home number to people—even school related- so as not to bother Kim and Geeta. This is entirely optional. If you don't want to give out your personal telephone number, you certainly don't have to.
- Dial a 9 to reach an outside number. On campus you only need the extension – even when registering for classes.



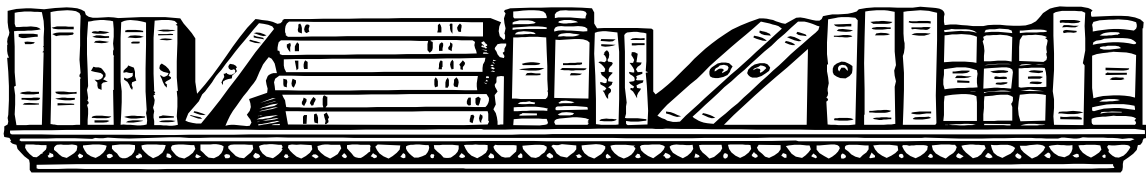
## **Photocopying**

- Kim or Geeta can show you how to use the photocopier.
- You will need an access code, which keeps track of the amount of copies that the Graduate Program uses.
- Extra paper for the copier is found in the locked filing cabinet in the Copy Room. Kim or Geeta have keys for it.
- Keep a ream of copy paper stashed where only you can access it so that if the English office is closed, or it is after hours or on a weekend, you won't be frustrated.
- The paper in the copier runs out often and is often left empty.
- In an emergency, if you need one or two copies, you may go to the Dean's office (down the hall, past the mailboxes, on the left) and ask Pat or someone there if you can use their copier.
- There have been occasions when I have had a huge copying job (Colloquium programs) just when the copier started acting up. I called the Print Shop, located in Entry 1, Lot 1 to ask if I could bring the Colloquium flyer there to have 60 or so (double sided, collated) copied. Jerry was in the middle of something but since mine was urgent, he was kind enough to copy the program for me.



## **Prospect Letters**

- Linda regularly receives labels with the names and addresses of students who have expressed interest in finding out more about the Graduate Program in English. She will give you these labels so that you can send letters to prospective students.
- The letter is in Linda's computer and on a disk in a file folder called "Prospective Students." Keep this disk handy and put the letter on the desktop of wherever you are sitting so you can access it often. There are at least two letters a week, often more.
- There is one mail-merge letter template called "Prospective Letters" in Word.
  - ❖ Ask Linda at the beginning of each semester if she would like to review the letter so that it is up to date with current information about the program.
  - ❖ After a Graduate Open House, Linda may want to send out a similar letter to the students who attended the Open House. Save this letter as a separate document.
- The corresponding database is in Excel. The Excel database is called "Prospective Students" also.
- There are fields with all the pertinent info that you need to fill in with the info on the labels that Linda will give you.
- Save the Excel database each time you add a new name so that you have an accurate file of how many letters you send out. Also, sometimes you may get duplicates or names of students who are already in your classes.
- Either Mail-Merge the letter from the Excel database that you've kept (if you are unsure how to do this, feel free to call me and I will walk you through it), or you can insert the information into each letter separately – which is a lot more time consuming. Make sure to keep only one copy of the letter and one copy of the Excel file or else you might not be keeping updated information.

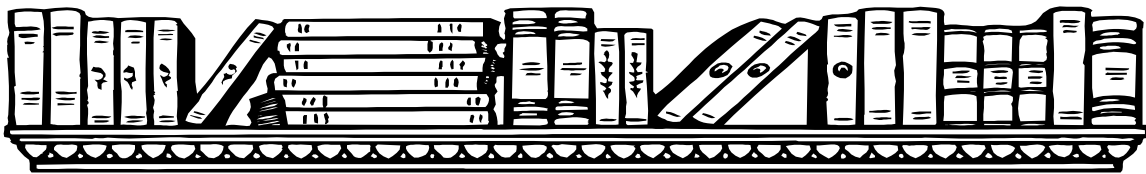


## ***The Newsletter***

- The **Graduate Assistant** is responsible for publishing the department Newsletter once each semester, in October and March. A separate section of the Newsletter is devoted specifically to graduate program announcements, deadlines, and new course offerings.
- Your Timeline:
- The **Graduate Assistant** does the layout, handles traffic between the Print Shop and the Mail Room, and oversees the general distribution of the Newsletter. You need to balance your responsibilities as a Graduate Assistant with the demands of your graduate courses. Make sure to carefully plot out your semester so that you don't have the last edits to the Newsletter due the same week as midterms or any other big assignments.

## ***What goes into the Newsletter?***

- ❖ Events sponsored by the department
- ❖ News about faculty and students
- ❖ Announcements about new courses
- ❖ Deadline reminders
- ❖ An interview with either a faculty member or student. The **Graduate Assistant** conducts, transcribes, and edits this interview.
- The Flyer requesting information from fellow students should be posted on the pillars in the English Department first thing each semester. See examples in this handbook.
  - ❖ Ask for information about workshops, conferences, publications, poems, short shorts, award winners and recently tenured or newly appointed faculty.
  - ❖ Request information and academic achievements from fellow students and faculty via email first thing each semester, also. This may require some prodding of the

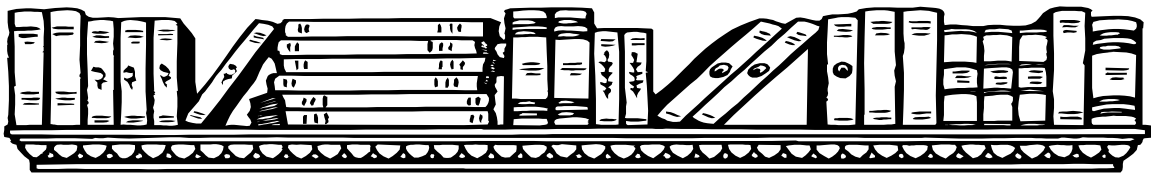


faculty. Make sure that you have a private deadline so that when the faculty sends you stuff after the public deadline, you can still include it.

- The Letter from the Chair
  - ❖ Ask Donna for a letter from the Chair first thing each semester.
  - ❖ Remind her halfway to your deadline and thereafter.

### **Information Checklist for the Newsletter**

- ❖ Interview with a Faculty Member (Donna might suggest the subject)
- ❖ Faculty news (usually takes two pages)
- ❖ Degree application deadlines
- ❖ Graduate program writing and literature requirements for the degree.
- ❖ Upcoming courses (next three semesters – Linda always knows)
- ❖ WAC program information
- ❖ Letter from the Chair
- ❖ Poems from students (Optional)



## **Example of Letter requesting Newsletter**

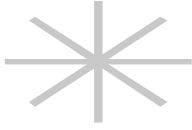
### **Content:**

Subject: FW: I have a Request. This is not a Poem.

- > Please.
- > You know what I want this time, right?
- > I know you must have done something
- > interesting or productive in your
- > summer activities.
- > I also know that you MUST have
- > interesting things planned for
- > the future. Interesting things that
- > the students of WPU would love
- > to read about.
- > So I would like to find out about
- > these activities so that they can be
- > listed in the Fall Newsletter
- > My "faculty" deadline is the 15th.
- > Please. Thank you.
- > CWS, Graduate Assistant



Example of Flyer Announcing request for



Newsletter Content:

The William Paterson  
University  
English Department  
Spring 2002  
Newsletter



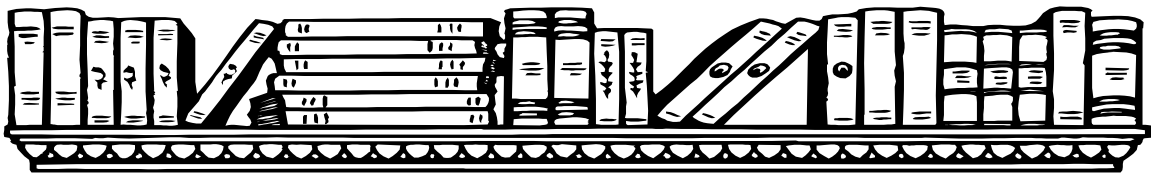
is a call for UAR Submissions!!!

Poems, Events, or  
Contributions, to:  
hotmail.com



## **The Newsletter Process:**

- Two weeks before your “to the Print Shop” deadline:
  - Sort through the information you have.
  - Remind professors who haven't sent you anything yet.
  - Remind Donna about the Letter from the Chair.
- Design:
  - The print shop prints only in black and white so don't use color in your Newsletter design. If you use shades of gray, make sure they contrast with both the black and the white so that they will be visible once printed.
  - You can choose any color paper for the Newsletter. Make sure the print shop has enough for you to do all 600 copies in one color.
  - When you design the Newsletter, it is important to consider page count.
    - ◆ The Newsletter is printed on large sheets of paper so that four 8 ½ x 11 fits on one large sheet. When folded, it will be four separate pages.
    - ◆ Eight 8 ½ x 11 pages fit onto two large sheets (see past issues).
    - ◆ Six 8 ½ x 11 pages would fit onto one large sheet and one inserted sheet. It is best to do eight or more pages since this middle page would only lie inside the other sheets, unattached.
  - Make sure to leave at least half of one side of the back page blank for mailing information to be printed and labels attached.
- After you are done designing the pages you should have someone else proofread the Newsletter. Next, give the pages to Linda, who will have the last



look to catch anything you might have missed. It is important that there be no typos whatsoever in your Newsletter.

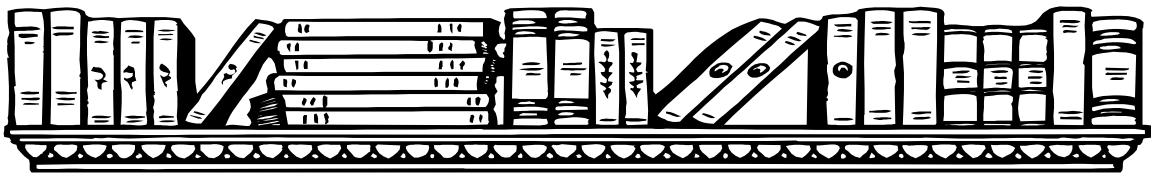
- When the Newsletter has been thoroughly proofread, bring the Newsletter to the Print Shop.

### **The Print Shop:**

- Jerry and Peggy (x 3499)
  - Talk to one of them before bringing the Newsletter over to the Print Shop. Bring a sample of an old Newsletter as an example of similar pagination to explain what you want done.
  - Peggy will want to know how many copies you want, which is 600.

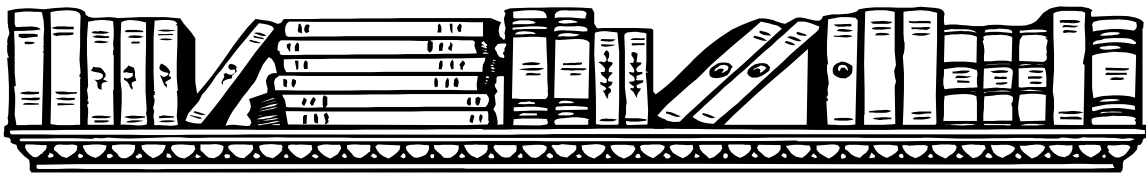
### **Labels:**

- Requesting them
  - Early in the semester, call Michael Boroznoff (x 2349).
  - Request labels for ALL English Majors and Graduate Students to be sent to you IN ZIP CODE ORDER!!!! This is important because when you send them to the mailroom, they will send them back if they are not in zip code order and that is a pain and a huge use of valuable time!
  - He will send them to you by interoffice mail. It should take at least one week. When you receive them, open them up and make sure they are in ZIP CODE ORDER!



## *The Mail Room*

- Once ALL the labels are on the Newsletters, bring the crates of them to the English Office, and tell Kim or Geeta that you are finished and that they are ready. Ask them where you should put your boxes of Newsletters that are in ZIP CODE ORDER so that the Mailroom can best pick them up.



## **Example of Email to First Year Professors to set up Student Evaluations:**

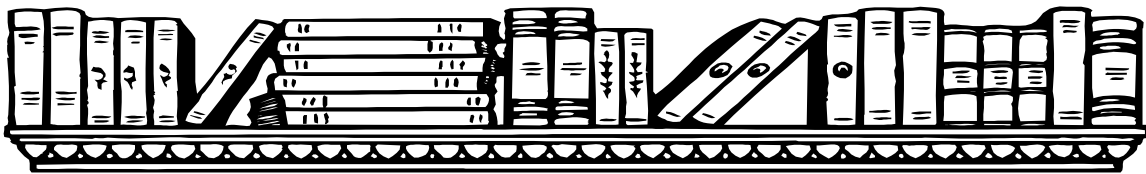
- Kim or Geeta will tell you the professors who need evaluations done for them and the date these have to be done by as well as provide the materials to hand out to the students.

Hi! I would like to set times to administer student evaluations.

I have your schedules and I want to know if you would prefer/mind before the class or after, and which day. I would like to try to consolidate days so if you have no preference, that is important (but I would bet that you do).

I would like to do something for the next Newsletter about your time here so far. I need your ok's so that I can list these things in the "in the next issue" section.

Let me know about these issues as soon as possible, please. Feel free to call and leave a message on my home phone if email is too much/not accessible or convenient: 973-783-3627. Thanks.



## **Example of Email with Tentative Student**

### **Evaluation Schedule**

- This can be changed as the professors need or wish. Sometimes you schedule an evaluation right after a midterm or big paper has just been turned in or given back. Professors like a little more breathing time in between these events since the evaluation is very important to them.

Please see the schedule below for your students' evaluations.

If there are any conflicts, please let me know and accept my apologies ahead of time.

Monday:

2:00pm: rossman - R315

3:00pm: makman - W232

3:30pm: rossman - R209

Tuesday:

4:15pm: suess - R207

6:00pm: jackson - W111

Wednesday:

9:30am: rossman - W130

10:30am: suess - W233

11:00am: makman - R301

12:00pm: suess - Y125

1:30pm: jackson - H202\*\*\*

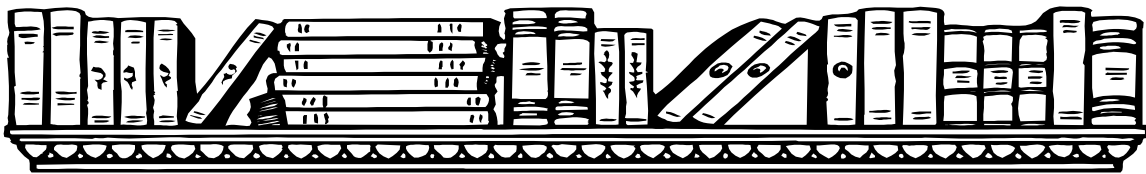
3:00pm: suess - Y125

Thursday:

4:00pm: rossman - W221

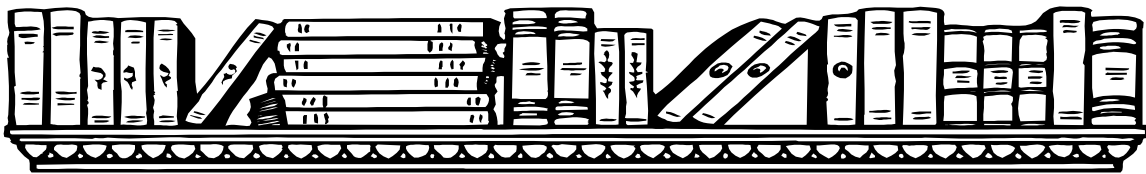
6:00pm: makman - W108

Looking forward to hearing from you all. If you need to reach me on my answering machine, it's 973-783-3627. Have a great weekend!



## **Graduate Open Houses**

- Graduate Open Houses occur about two times a year, once each semester, usually on weeknights. They are about three hours long, and usually occur in the Student Center Ballroom or in Hobart Manor.
  - You accompany Linda to the Open House to answer questions from prospective students who are looking into the Graduate Program at William Paterson University. Linda answers the technical questions while you get to respond from a student's point of view. Your reasons for choosing William Paterson University and how you are finding the program so far are helpful to the prospective students.
  - Bring some reading or schoolwork with you in case it is a slow night.
- To make the Open House successful, we try to encourage prospective students to attend.
  - A week before the Open House, ask Linda for a list of telephone numbers of prospective students who have already received informational letters.
  - When you call each student, a basic script is useful – especially since you'll usually speak to many answering machines:
    - Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am the English Department's Graduate Assistant here at William Paterson University. Our Graduate Program Director, Dr. Linda Hamalian wanted me to call you in the hope that you will come to our Graduate Open House on \_\_\_\_\_ (date). The Open House



will be held in the Student Center Ballroom (or other location). If you have any questions, feel free to call Dr. Hamalian at (973) 720-3056. We hope to see you on the \_\_\_\_\_th.

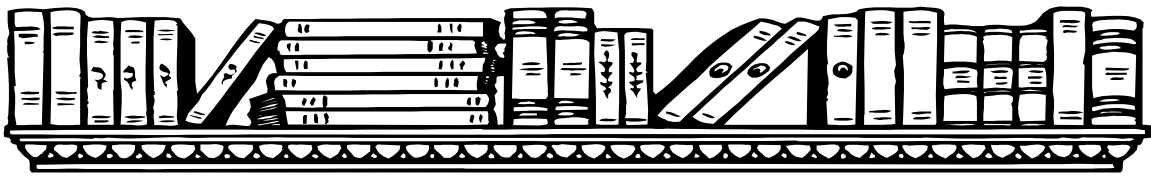
- Check with Linda if there are any materials that you can carry over to the Open House. If there are extras, you can bring some department newsletters, either yours or the past assistants’.
- Graduate Catalogues and Department newsletters are already set up for you at your table at the Open House when you get there so there isn’t too much to carry over.

## **The Graduate English Colloquium**

The Graduate English Colloquium is scheduled at the end of each fall and spring semester. Students prepare for this event in ENG 699, the Research and Thesis Writing Seminar. The Colloquium provides graduate students with an opportunity to present their master’s thesis and to celebrate their accomplishments.

The event begins at 6pm and takes place at Hobart Manor. Department faculty, graduate students, prospective students, and guests of the graduating students attend. At the end of the presentations, master’s candidates may take questions from the audience, the thesis advisor, and seminar leader. A light supper is served.

Hobart Manor, the Tudor-style, 40-room mansion is nestled in a hollow at the southeastern end of the University's 320-acre campus. Today, the Manor houses the offices of the President, Institutional Advancement, Development, and Alumni Relations.



Its refurbished public rooms include the original dining room, drawing room, library, billiards room, and central foyers.

## **List of Things to Do in Preparation for the**

### **Colloquium:**

- Two months before:
- Ask Linda if Audrey at Hobart Manor has our reservation
- Two weeks before:
- Make Colloquium flyer announcing date and time and location
- Put up flyers in Atrium, and in Hunzinger
- Give extra copies of Colloquium flyer to Linda to hand to Research and Thesis class for their friends and family
- Put flyers for Colloquium into all faculty mailboxes
- Make Colloquium Programs (60 copies)
- Include introduction or bio of each presenter and the synopsis of each selection being read
- The day of:
- Arrive at Hobart Manor an hour in advance (with programs to hand out) to make sure the chairs are set up properly and the food has arrived.

**ENJOY!**