

IC seminar helps connect students with authors

BY M MINTON

After two years of holding Ithaca College's New Voices Festival strictly online, the organizers are hoping to hold this year's festival in person with a virtual element, for the 10th anniversary of the festival.

The festival was created in 2013 by Chris Holmes, chair and associate professor of the Department of Literatures in English at the college, and Eleanor Henderson, chair and associate professor of the Department of Writing at the college, with the purpose of connecting students with up-and-coming writers.

With the seminar being added during the sixth year of the New Voices Festival, student guides take a two-credit reading course that familiarizes them with the work of the authors along with a one-credit development course that helps them with planning and executing the festival.

This year, the festival will take place from April 27 to 29.

The invited authors include Mona Awad, Alexandra Kleeman, Gina Nut, Lauren Oyler, Jenn Shapland, poet Maya Phillips and playwright Liza Birkenmeier.

The festival typically includes seven-minute readings by seven authors called the "Short Short" at Buffalo Street Books, and will feature a staged reading of a play by visiting playwright Birkenmeier at the Cherry Artspace.

Holmes said student guides in the New Voices Seminar read the works of one visiting author

assigned to them. Each student guide then writes an introduction to be read aloud when announcing their author at the festival.

"[The student guides] have read the works of that author, and are very invested in that author's work," Holmes said. "By the time that author shows up on campus, they know more about that author than 99.99% of people living on the planet."

Holmes said the festival has had to make do with a cut budget over the last few years because of the college's economic hardships.

"The festival has become a real fixture of the year that a lot of people look forward to every April," Holmes said. "I really hope that we'll be able to return to a fully-funded festival."

Henderson explained how enrolled students are involved at every level of the festival from student directors to student guides.

"It's a unique experience because students get to be involved in a rich literary discussion of texts," Henderson said. "They also get to be behind the scenes planning what this significant literary event is going to look like."

Junior and assistant student director Abby McGuire said that the New Voices Seminar is a very fun and exciting time where students can read new works and be able to discover many new authors together.

"I'll be helping [the guides] get comfortable with the material and... with their position in the festival," McGuire said. "So that once we get to that weekend in April, every



From left, professor Eleanor Henderson, student assistant director Abigail McGuire, student director Amulya Ravitej Bachala and professor Chris Holmes will hold the New Voices Seminar in April.

NOLAN SAUNDERS/THE ITHACAN

student feels prepared."

McGuire said that something she really loves about the festival is the collaboration between different majors on campus.

Students from the Departments of English and Writing in the seminar collaborate alongside students from the School of Music and the Department of Theatre Arts.

"The guides don't have to all be writing majors or English majors, we have a lot of people from different schools who are genuinely curious to read new work," McGuire said. Junior Amulya Ravitej Bachala,

student director of the New Voices Festival, said she loves the atmosphere of the festival because of all the different types of writing that students enjoy.

"If you want to go to the festival, you can read whichever [genre] you like," Bachala said. "I feel it's perfect for literature nerds."

Bachala said the class that student guides take is like a regular literature class with the added aspect of festival planning.

Students read and analyze the work of the invited authors alongside working together to plan and organize the festival.

"There's ... underlying excitement because you know you're going to meet the authors and that you're going to talk to [the authors]," Bachala said. "That part of the class is really nice because you know that there's something a lot different to look forward to."

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Physics professor meets with a 'Queer Eye' star

Deborah King, professor and graduate program chair of the Department of Exercise Science and Athletic Training, recently had the opportunity to meet with famous hairdresser and TV personality Jonathan Van Ness, most commonly known from the Netflix series "Queer Eye: More Than a Make-over," on their podcast, "Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness." The podcast episode, titled "Can Figure Skaters Defy Gravity? with Dr. Deborah King" released Jan. 12.

King's area of expertise is in biomechanics of human movement and sports performance. Staff writer Emma Kersting met with Dr. King to discuss her experience speaking on the podcast.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Emma Kersting: Could you give an explanation of what biomechanics is?

Deborah King: It's studying the mechanics of a living system. I look at the mechanics like forces and movement of the human body. It could be sporting events like figure skating, but also mechanics would cover walking, balance and posture. You can think of strength and conditioning and lifting. It's functional activities as well as athletes and sports skills.

EK: As the chair of exercise science and athletic training, how often are you practicing or teaching biomechanics?

DK: Not as often as I would like to be. Most of the research projects I'm doing now are

in the lab, so I haven't been on the ice rink in several years. Before COVID, ... we were working on that figure skating boot [with a computer chip in it] ... I had been out to the ice rink in Lansing primarily with a skater from Cornell because the boot fit her, but we had been working with skaters from the Ithaca College skating club and the Cornell skating clubs.

EK: How did studying biomechanics bring you to figure skating?

DK: It was not necessarily an intentional route, but it worked out well. Around the end of my master's degree, I hadn't decided what I wanted to do, and I think my adviser knew that ... so they asked if I was interested in a research assistant position at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. They used to have positions where they would bring in master's or PhD students into the sport science and technology program where they also had staff but also brought in the graduate students ... you provide sport science services to either the athletes who are in residence at the training center or teams that would come through for training camps. Our job ... was to provide video services for them... There was a coach there who wanted to do a research project on the triple axel because this was a time when, particularly for men's single skating, the triple axel was like the element that was breaking out. ... to medal at the next Olympics, you really needed to have a good triple axel, and



Deborah King, Ithaca College professor in the Department of Exercise Science and Athletic, training talks about the physics of ice skating with Jonathan Van Ness.

ANA MANIACI MCGOUGH/THE ITHACAN

there weren't that many men who were doing them yet.

EK: How did you come about the opportunity to meet with Jonathan Van Ness and have this interview with them?

DK: I am going to say producer/executive director, his people, from the "Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness" series reached out to me. I guess he was familiar with the work I did with figure skating. One, because he likes figure skating and figure skates, so he has pretty much read everything there is to know about figure skating and so he was

familiar with my name from some research I've done.

EK: How was your experience meeting with Van Ness?

DK: It was hilarious. Actually, they came to campus at one point, which was pretty cool. He's just really enthusiastic and interesting and fun, we just had a wonderful time talking to each other.

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