

Dr. Barry Laga

Department Head: Literature, Languages, and Mass Communication / Professor of English

Education

1997 Ph. D. English, Purdue University, Indiana.

Dissertation: "Posthistory: Negating and Negotiating Representations of History." Director: Dr. Patrick O'Donnell.

1990 M.A. English, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Thesis: "Subverting the Victorian World of Fairy: A Sociohistorical Critique of George MacDonald's Fairy Tales." Director: Dr. Steven Walker.

1988 B.A. English/English Ed. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

NCATE (Secondary Education Accreditation) for English and French

Administrative Appointments

2011-present: Department Head: Languages, Literature, and Mass Communication

Colorado Mesa University, Grand Junction, Colorado

Institution

Colorado Mesa University is a public comprehensive university serving western Colorado and the southwest region. CMU is organized into 13 departments that serve over 11,000 students, 28% of whom identify with underrepresented groups. Our students pursue certificates, associates, bachelors, and masters degrees.

Responsibilities

As Department Head of Languages, Literature, and Mass Communication, I report to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs. I am responsible for the academic and administrative leadership for the second largest department on campus, and my responsibilities include English, Mass Communications, Liberal Arts, Philosophy, six foreign languages, a partnership with Rocky Mountain PBS, and a \$3 million budget. I am also responsible for faculty and instruction on a satellite campus 65 miles away as well as a collection of high school concurrent enrollment teachers. Academic programming includes six majors, six minors, a graduate certificate, and a new certificate in Editing and Technical Communication. I supervise over 60 full and part-time faculty.

Key Accomplishments

- Supervised three program reviews and implemented improvements.
- Created “field-research” funding to initiate scholarly projects.
- Mentor and support undergraduate participation in local and regional conferences.
- Improved faculty evaluation process.
- Supervised design of Student Learning Objectives and student assessment programs.
- Created department guest-scholar/writer program.
- Created position of Composition Director and monthly in-service meetings.
- Collaborated with Academic Council to craft framework defining teacher-scholar model.
- Supervised a dozen faculty searches, and most notably, diversified the department in terms of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
- Created new retention strategies that included “career pathways,” newsletters, and career seminars.
- Fostered collaborative relationship with Rocky Mountain PBS.
- Facilitated the creation of a graduate certificate in English.
- Collaborated with faculty to create a new certificate in Editing and Technical Communication.
- Redesigned and increased the number of internships for LLMC students.
- Developed and now operate a strategic plan to improve recruiting.

2008-2011: Assistant Department Head: Languages, Literature, and Mass Communication

As Assistant Department Head, I supported the Department Head and acted on his behalf when necessary.

Key Responsibilities

- Scheduled courses.
- Redesigned all promotional material for English program.
- Created career seminars.
- Observed and evaluated faculty.
- Evaluated graduation petitions.

Academic Appointments

2007-present: Professor of English

Colorado Mesa University, Grand Junction, Colorado

2013-2014: Fulbright Scholar

University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

2002-2007: Associate Professor of English

Mesa State College, Grand Junction, Colorado

2002: Fulbright Scholar

Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen and Lessius Hogeschool, Antwerp,
Belgium

1997-2002 Assistant Professor of English

Mesa State College, Grand Junction, Colorado

Fields of Specialization and Interest

- American Literature: Origins to Present
- Literary and Cultural Theory
- Ethnic American Literature
- Modern and Contemporary American Fiction
- Postmodern Literature and Culture
- Film History and Theory
- Avant-garde Literature

Courses Taught

- Senior Seminar: The Avant-garde
- Senior Seminar: Difficult Texts
- Senior Seminar: American Immigration Narratives
- Ethnic Experiences in US Literature
- Twentieth-Century American Literature
- American Literature: Origins to Late 19th Century
- American Literature: Late 19th Century to Present
- Postmodern Culture
- Major Authors: William Faulkner
- Introduction to Literary Theory
- History of Literary Theory and Criticism
- Fairy Tales, Ideology, and the Political Unconscious
- Introduction to Fiction
- Deconstructing Disney
- Introduction to Literature
- Sports and Literature
- Introduction to Film Studies
- Cinema and the Arts

- Breakthrough Cinema
- Literary Language and Everyday Life
- Adolescent Literature
- Politics of Fairy Tales
- Advanced Professional Writing
- Advanced Expository Writing
- Honors Writing
- Introductory Writing I & II
- Online Composition
- Basic Writing

Publications

• Books

Using Key Passages to Understand Theory, Literature, and Criticism.
Routledge, 2018.

• Scholarly Articles (refereed)

“In Lieu of History: Mormon Monuments and the Shaping of History.”
Dialogue 43.4 (2010): 131-153.

“Making the Absent Visible: The Real, Ideal, and the Abstract in Religious Art.”
Dialogue 40.2 (2007): 47-77.

“Maus, Holocaust, and History: Redrawing the Frame.”
Arizona Quarterly 57.1 (2001): 61-90.

“Decapitated Spectators: Posthistory, *Barton Fink*, and Cinematic Pleasure.”
Postmodernism in the Cinema. Ed. Cristina Degli-Esposti. Providence: Berghahan Books. 1998. 181-201.

“A Postmodern Quest for More Discourse: Gerald Vizenor’s *Heirs of Columbus*.”
American Indian Quarterly 18. 1 (Winter 1994): 71-86.

• Scholarly Articles (non-refereed)

“Cultivating Identities: Reflections on Mormon Root Metaphors.”
Sunstone. March/2004. 32-39.

“Weaving a Novel Nation: Metaphors of Belonging.”
Fulbright at Fifty. Ed. Rudiger Kunow. University of Potsdam. 2002.

• **Creative Non-Fiction**

“Swapping Memories” (nonfiction narrative)

Weber: The Contemporary West (Fall 2015) 32.2: 48-52.

• **Reviews**

Review of *The Jewish Graphic Novel*.

Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies. 29.2 (2011): 169-71.

Review of *Comics as Philosophy*.

MELUS 32.3 (2007): 308-309.

Review of Kimberly M. Blaeser’s *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*.

Mid-America Folklore. 25.1 (1997): 40-41.

Review of Gerald Vizenor’s *Manifest Manners*.

American Indian Quarterly 20.1 (Winter 1996): 119-121.

Review of Gerald Vizenor’s *Shadow Distance*.

American Indian Quarterly 20.1 (Winter 1996): 121-123.

Publications in Circulation

“Layers of Possibilities in Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Tree of Codes*.”

Submitted for publication

“Memento Mori”

Submitted for publication

Conference Presentations

“Universals and Particulars and the Envious Yet Questionable Space Between”

South Atlantic MLA conference, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2017

“The Avant-garde and the Utopian Aesthetics of Literary Appropriation”

South Atlantic MLA, Jacksonville, Florida, November 2016

“Delighting in Absence: Transforming Loss into Art”

Cultural Studies Association, University of California, Riverside, May 2015

“On Postmodernism”

Public lecture for American Studies program in Bamberg, Germany. 2014.

“Teaching American Exceptionalism”

Public lecture for Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.
2014

“American Ideas of Freedom”

Public lecture for Community Management Society, Leipzig. 2014

“Monuments and Museums: Representing the Holocaust in Berlin.”

Rocky Mountain European Scholars Consortium. University of Utah,
October, 2012

“Defying the Digital: Making Sense of Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Tree of Codes*.”

Conference on Adaptation and Transformation. University of Western
Georgia. 2011.

“Circumscribing Meaning: Mediating Religious Experience.”

Sunstone Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah. 2011

“The New Cosmopolitanism.”

U of West Virginia Philology Colloquium, Morgantown, WV, Oct 1-2. 2010

“Out of Context: Rewriting Religious Narratives.”

Sunstone Conference, SLC, August 5-7. 2010

“Universals and Particulars in Charles Johnson’s *Middle Passage*.”

Cultural Studies Association, Kansas City, April 2009.

“Mormon Monuments.”

Sunstone Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah. August 2009.

“Are We There Yet? Nomads, Wanderers, and Post-foundationalism.”

College English Association, St. Louis, 2008.

“Boring (Through) Students”

Sunstone Conference, Salt Lake City, 2009.

“Memory, Memorials, and Monuments”

Southwest Texas Conference on Pop Culture and American Culture,
Albuquerque, NM. February 2007.

“Countering Memory: Peter Eisenman’s Berlin Holocaust Memorial.”

Rocky Mountain European Scholars Consortium. BYU, October, 2006

“Crossing the Creative/Critical Divide.”

Aims Community College Conference on Communications, April, 2006.

“Frontier Transgression: The New Nomads and the American Cowboy.”

International American Studies Association. Ottawa, Canada. August 2005.

“Tame Transgression.”

MELUS. Chicago, Illinois. April 2005.

“Invention and Heuristics in Critical Theory Courses.”

College Composition and Communications. San Antonio. March 2004.

“Romanticizing Nowhere: The New Nomads and the Quest for Transcendence.”

Arts and Humanities Conference. Honolulu, Hawaii. January 2004.

“‘Weaving a Novel Nation’: America as Transnational Community.”

International American Studies Association. University of Leiden. Leiden, Netherlands. May 2003.

“Reviving the Progymnasmata.”

Conference on Best Practices. Colorado Conference on College English. University of Colorado, Greeley. Greeley, Colorado. April, 2003.

“Trans-National Metaphors.”

Transnational Cultures: Globalization and the United States at the Turn of the Century. University of Potsdam, Germany. June 7, 2002.

“Teaching ‘The Yellow Wall-Paper.’”

Centre Universitaire de Luxembourg. Luxembourg City, Luxembourg, April 16, 2002, and Royal Library. Brussels, Belgium. April 17, 2002.

“Decoding Disney’s The Jungle Book.”

Conference on American Institutions. Higher Institute for Translation & Interpretation, Antwerp, Belgium. April 23, 2002.

“Decoding Disney’s The Jungle Book.”

Conference on American Studies. Lessius Hogeschool, Antwerp, Belgium. January 29, 2002.

“The Line Between Disdain and Exploration: Building a Community of Experimental Writers.”

Conference on College Composition and Communication. Denver, Colorado. March 15, 2001.

“Blurring Boundaries: Mystery and Academic Discourse.”

University of Iowa Conference on Craft, Critique, and Culture: Writing in the Academy. Iowa City, Iowa. September 2000.

“Redeeming the Dead: Memory and the Holocaust.”

University of Wyoming Conference on Autobiography and Biography.
Laramie, Wyoming. June, 1998.

“Gerald Vizenor and His Appropriation of the Western Outlaw.”

West Virginia University Conference on Literature and Film. “Twentieth-Century Retrospective: Critical Theory Examines a Hundred Years of Literature and Film.” West Virginia University, October, 1997.

Awards Fulbright Scholar: University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

September 2013 - August 2014

Mesa State College Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching, Scholarship, and Service

Mesa State College, May 2003.

Fulbright Scholar: Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen, Antwerp, Belgium

January 1- June 30, 2002.

Languages

- **French: “Proficient Speaker” B2-C1, European Scale**
- **German: “Independent Speaker” A2-B1, European Scale**
- **Dutch: “Elementary Speaker” A1, European Scale** (Well, I was at this level once.)

Grants Office of State of Colorado Education Grant: Funds for Film Technology, Mesa State College, 2000

Office of State of Colorado Education Grant: Funds for Joint Project/Wingate Elementary,

Mesa State College, 2000

Office of State of Colorado Education Grant: Funds for Joint Project/Central High School,

Mesa State College, 2000

Office of State of Colorado Education Grant: Funds for Building Film Library

Mesa State College, 1999

Office of State of Colorado Education Grant: Funds for Building Film Library

Mesa State College, 1998

Selected Service

(a sampling during my career at
CMU)

- Department Head: LLMC
- Assistant Department Head: LLMC
- Chair: VPAA Search Committee.
- Manuscript Evaluator: *Studia Angelica Posnaniensia*
- Member: Grievance Committee
- One Book Presentation. Mesa County Library
- Composition Pilot Program: East Middle School
- Faculty Work Allocation Committee
- Board Member: Ellinwood Foundation
- Community Reading: "Memento Mori"
- Holocaust Awareness Week Presentation (yearly)
- Alpha Chi Keynote Speaker
- Library Focus Committee
- English Department Writers Conference Presenter
- Teacher 2 Teacher Conference Presenter
- Early Scholar Orientation Training Presenter
- Academic Grade Appeal Committee
- Guest Speaker: District 51 Schools (many, many times)
- Chair Digital Media Search Committee
- Reader for American Indian Quarterly
- Chaired Introduction to Literature Assessment Committee
- Co-writer of Department of English NEH Focus Grant: "Kennedy's Death to Nixon's Demise: A Decade of Disillusionment and Empowerment in American History, Literature, and Art."
- Member of Composition Assessment Committee
- Member American Literature Curriculum Review Committee
- Library Skills Committee
- Member of Psychology Program Review
- Member of Faculty Evaluation Committee
- Created and advised the Mesa State Film Society
- Faculty Development Committee
- College Curriculum Committee
- Scholarship Distribution Committee
- Board Member: Museum of Western Colorado
- "Creating Documentaries." Pomona Elementary
- CSAP Writing, Redlands Middle School
- "Celebrating African American Literature." Museum of Western CO
- "Introduction to Storytelling" at Wingate Elementary
- "Metaphor and Riddle Poems" at Wingate Elementary