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Service Learning Book Wins ISU Teaching Literature Book Award

POCATELLO – The Idaho State University Department of English and Philosophy has announced “Service Learning and Literary Studies in English,” edited by Laurie Grobman (Penn State University, Berks) and Roberta Rosenberg (Christopher Newport University) as the winner of the 2017 Teaching Literature Book Award.

The Teaching Literature Book Award is an international prize for the best book on teaching literature at the college level. The award is presented biennially by the faculty in the graduate programs in English at Idaho State University. The winning books are judged by a committee of external reviewers.

Jessica Winston, ISU professor of English and chair of the award committee, said that “the prize committee sought out books that offered timely and effective approaches to teaching literature at the college level today.”

The winning book presents a variety of approaches to service learning, she explained. For instance, one essay describes a Shakespeare class, where students work with an afterschool program in a Title I elementary school to develop a production of “As You Like It.”

Members of the award committee praised the book’s “well-articulated rationale for service learning as well as practical advice for teachers interested in implementing service learning in their courses.”

According to Winston, “The book is a resource for practical ideas and a challenging work of literary analysis.” She added that the book is also timely, since “the service-based expansion of education is at the center of debates about the very nature of the humanities and the cultural role of higher education.”

Another strength of the book is that it “covers service learning in courses at a variety of institutions aimed at a wide range of students. From first-year undergraduates to students working at higher levels of the curriculum, the book addresses the needs of students and community populations from a wide range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.”

She concluded, “While the book is written for college teachers, many high school teachers will also find it useful.”

Editors Grobman and Rosenberg jointly commented, “We are delighted that our book has earned this important recognition, and we hope that this will draw more attention to service learning possibilities in literature courses, and throughout the university.”

The winning book was published by the Modern Language Association in 2015.

The Award committee also gave an honorable mention to “Teaching Early Modern Literature from the Archives,” edited by Heidi Brayman Hackel (University of California, Riverside) and Ian Frederick Moulton (Arizona State University), and published by the Modern Language Association in 2015.

That volume was deemed particularly noteworthy, Winston said, as it “offers a variety of hands-on and practical essays for incorporating archival materials in classrooms addressing Renaissance literature.”

While the book focuses on English literature, it provides useful and inspiring lessons for any teacher seeking creative ways to employ traditional and digital archives in the classroom.”

This year’s committee included Jesse Matz, William P. Rice Professor of English and Literature at Kenyon College; Tison Pugh, Professor of English at the University of Central Florida; and Laura Wright, Professor of English at Western Carolina University. Jessica Winston and Matthew Levay, assistant professor of English, also served on the committee at ISU.

The editors of the winning book will visit ISU in fall 2018 to host in-service trainings and workshops on connecting humanities teaching with public outreach.

More information about the Teaching Literature Book Award is available at www.isu.edu/english/.

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