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Hoberman Honored with EIU's 2006 Distinguished Faculty Award

May-05-2006



Ruth Hoberman

Although Ruth Hoberman was thrilled to learn she had been named Eastern Illinois University's 2005-2006 Distinguished Faculty Award recipient, she also felt "a little silly over it."

"Eastern has a lot of distinguished faculty, ones who are just as deserving as I am," the English professor said. "To be recognized by them for this honor is extremely meaningful."

Hoberman will formally receive her award – a plaque and monetary gift – during the noon commencement ceremony on Saturday.

Eastern's Faculty Senate unanimously approved Hoberman as this year's award recipient at the recommendation of the Distinguished Faculty Award Committee. Criteria for the award mandate that nominees excel in the areas of teaching/performance of primary duties, research/creative activity and service.

Hoberman, who's at a loss when asked which she enjoys more, says only that she's "very proud" that both her teaching and research efforts were taken into consideration for the award. Her colleagues were more vocal about her accomplishments.

Fellow English professor Susan Bazargan calls Hoberman "a first-rate scholar who has made significant contributions to her field of specialty in the form of her many publications.

"I find her work always astute, original, intellectually rigorous and challenging," she said, adding, "(Hoberman) is an exceptional teacher with innovative ideas and (a) fierce sense of dedication to her students. A demanding, challenging instructor, Dr. Hoberman receives rave reviews from her students who often call her their 'favorite teacher.'"

Hoberman, who arrived at Eastern in 1984, recalled that the job was her first after receiving her doctorate. Having previously lived in New York City, Hoberman appreciated the cultural changes she experienced when she moved to the local area.

"I love New York, but it's a draining place to live," she said. "I found it was really easy to live here."

And, she added, the job "was just the kind of job I was looking for. I would be teaching a wide range of students in a large English department. It was exciting to do those things that I had trained for. I was very lucky to end up here."

Hoberman, who received her bachelor's degree in French from Oberlin (Ohio) College, spent three years working for a New York publishing company before pursuing her graduate degree. Her job was to read hardcover books being considered for paperback publication.

"A lot of things I read were really, really bad," she said. "I finally I decided I wanted to read great literature rather than bad books."

She enrolled in New York City's Columbia University, achieving first her master's degree and then a doctorate in English, with an emphasis on 20th century English literature.

Hoberman now teaches English courses to majors and non-majors alike. In addition to numerous essays, she's written two books, "Gendering Classicism: The Ancient World in 20th Century Women's Historical Fiction" and "Modernizing Lives: Experiments in English Biography, 1918-1939"; co-authored "The McGraw-Hill Guide to World Literature"; and co-edited a published collection of essays, "Trespassing Boundaries: Virginia Woolf's Short Fiction."