



the Collage

Kutztown University's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

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Faculty highlight

Many writers dream of publishing their own novel, but there are countless steps between the inception of the dream and it becoming a reality. For Professor of English Jeffrey Voccola, the dream is about to come true as he completed every step despite setbacks, and he is now only a few weeks away from publishing his first novel.

During his fifteen years' tenure in the KU English Department, Voccola says that teaching and student success have always been a priority for him. However, during the last year, he has also had to focus on the final edits for the publication of his novel *King's Row*.

The novel follows two young men, their different paths in life, and



Professor Jeffrey Voccola | English

consistent writing schedule, and that can take up a lot of your personal life. If you're only going to write once in a while, it's hard to finish something."

Voccola started looking for publishers and agents once he polished his

to begin editing in summer 2019. "I was ready to do that," he said. "I was anxious in fact. And it never happened. We didn't get started on it until the middle of the fall semester which was the worst time for me to start on it." That semester was overwhelming for him with constant revising, editing, and making decisions. The editing continued into the new year, and the book is now ready to be released.

Voccola and his copy editor worked together to carefully review the manuscript for typos and inconsistencies. After he and the copy editor worked through the manuscript, the editor of Hidden River Press also went through the manuscript many times. Using her suggestions, Voccola worked on expanding, cutting, and changing various scenes.

Receiving critiques on your writing can be very challenging, and making drastic changes to something you have spent a lot of time on can be very hard to do. But Voccola is a professional at handling feedback. "I've been doing this so long, none of that bothers me," Voccola said. "I'm always happy to look at something I've written and reconsider it. That's part of being a fiction writer. Revision is writing." He found that all of their suggestions were well thought out and only helped improve his novel.

Publishing a novel can be a very difficult but also rewarding experience. For Voccola, the most frustrating part was the waiting. From sending the manuscript to publishers to see if they were interested in his novel to waiting between rounds of editing, the process is tiring. But, once it all comes together, the published novel makes it all worth it.

King's Row will be widely available for purchase, including at the Kutztown University bookstore and Firefly. Once the novel is out, Voccola will hold readings at Kutztown University, his Alma Mater Southern Connecticut State University, and other locations such as Firefly bookstore.

"That's part of being a fiction writer. Revision is writing."

how they tragically intersect. The novel also explores elements of race and class divisions in a small-town setting. According to Voccola, "You see this tragic story unfolding from different points of view, and I hope that gives a clearer perspective on everything that occurs in the novel."

Voccola started writing *King's Row* in 2008, and he wrote on and off between teaching and other obligations. Finally, in 2013, he was awarded sabbatical leave at KU and finished the novel.

One habit Voccola believes in and practices is writing every day. "It helps if the people around you are supportive with what you're doing," said Voccola. "Writers have to maintain a

manuscript, and many publishers rejected his manuscript. According to Voccola, book publishing is an extremely competitive business, and publishing companies are often reluctant to take a chance with new writers. However, through researching different publishers, a writer can find the right fit for their novel.

After a few dead ends and finally getting an agent—only to lose the agent when he quit the agency—Voccola entered and won the 2018 Blue Mountain Novel Award which included a publishing deal with Hidden River Press.

In the publishing process, there is a lot of waiting. After Voccola won the award, his team made a tentative plan



Paul Barton | Philosophy & Mathematics

Time is important, so use it for something productive. Don't always assume you are going to have enough time to do what you want. Don't waste it and work hard," said Kutztown University student Paul Barton. Paul has found a unique academic path as a Philosophy and Mathematics double major with a minor in Studio Art. Despite being pulled a million different ways each day, Paul is happily following the busy life and his passions to make the most of this time at Kutztown.

Paul always had an interest in studying the history of religions in different cultures, but he did not take it seriously until his thirties. He started reading different philosophical theories underlying these ideas, and he kept reading. Then, through mathematical philosophers, such as Aristotle with symbolic logic, Paul got into mathematics as well. He started reteaching himself math

topics he learned in high school, and from there, he decided to go back to school. He didn't have any path set in stone; he was still trying to figure out exactly what he wanted to major in.

After community college, Paul chose KU because he is from the area, and he knew the programs were high quality. "I just really took my first year to figure out what I wanted to do before I proceeded," he said. He took some art classes to de-stress from philosophy courses, and after a few semesters at KU, he settled on his very unique combination of majors and minors.

Paul enjoys philosophy because he loves that it attempts to answer the most fundamental questions that have been asked all over the world. What is the way to live a good life? What is ethical? What is right? How do our minds interact with something physical? Is there a spirit or soul? He enjoys these esoteric debates and how philosophy overlaps with many other realms of study, especially

mathematics. Some of his favorite classes have been Philosophy of Language and Philosophy of Science.

Paul enjoys the practical applications of mathematics because math can model reality. He likes the way that mathematics can solve real world problems that affect our everyday lives. "I just think it's a fascinating

Student highlight

part of our human culture condition," said Paul. "That people all over the world have been working on these problems for thousands of years."

With majors in different fields, it may be hard to decide what to do post-graduation. Once he graduates in Spring 2022, Paul plans to go to graduate school to pursue a master's degree in Applied Statistics. From there, he hopes to work in a field where he can combine a focus in environmental ethics from his philosophy background and statistics from his mathematics training. He may work in academia or with an organization for public health or epidemiology—a decision not yet made.

Paul no doubt has a busy schedule with a heavy work load every semester,

"I just really took my first year to figure out what I wanted to do before I proceeded."

and it sometimes might be hard to get it all done. But he is making it work. "If you're really focused on something and you enjoy it," he said. "you will find the discipline you need to accomplish that." Paul has a burning desire to learn and better understand the world, and his personalized academic track will help him do just that.

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The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean's Office hopes everyone stays safe and well during this challenging time. We are excited to continue to celebrate our fantastic faculty, staff, and students for all the amazing accomplishments they achieve every single day. We look forward to a time when we will be able to be together again. #GoodToBeGolden



The April 2020 edition of The Collage was designed, edited and written by Courtney Morstatt '21, Professional Writing major, under the supervision of the CLAS Dean's Office.