

# ARKANSAS ENGLISH

**Fall 2022**

Newsletter for the Department of English at the University of Arkansas



*Professor Bryan Hurt Teaching “Pit Lit,” an August Intersession Course (Read more about this new class on p. 31.)*

## **MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT**

The Fall 2022 semester is now behind us. It began with an active August Intersession (Aug. 8 - 18). During an intersession, a faculty member can teach a full 3-credit-hour course (equivalent to a regular semester course) in eleven intensive days of class. Intersession courses have helped our students to spread out their course work (making their regular semester loads more manageable) and complete more hours each year (permitting them to progress through their degree programs in a timely manner)—especially valuable to our graduate students on assistantship.

Please read, below, what some of our current and past department members have been up to over the last few months. We’ve included several interviews and a number of program updates that we hope will be of interest to you.

The Department of English wishes you the very best as you start off 2023! Happy New Year!!!

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# Faculty Spotlight: Professor Laura Gray

*Professor Laura Gray, who is also an alum (Creative Writing/Poetry M.F.A. '00), has been a valued member of the Department of English for more than two decades. In that time, she has taught diverse literature and composition courses, facilitated multiple study abroad programs, guided and inspired her students to pursue a range of service-learning opportunities, and received numerous awards acknowledging the incredible impact she has had on our department and on the university. We recently asked her a few questions about her time at the University of Arkansas. Here are her responses.*



Laura Gray

***What is one of your favorite older poems (written before the 20<sup>th</sup> century), and what is a favorite poem of yours that has been written more recently? Can you briefly explain your appreciation/enjoyment of both?***

I'm partial to play, in ideas, sounds and energy, so I tend to be drawn to writers who mix thought and a good dose of passion. I "discovered" Lawrence Ferlinghetti's *A Coney Island of the Mind* before high school and was already deeply committed to my first crush poem, e.e. cumming's "somewhere i have never travelled." The leaps that still take me in any text are the ones that show an intimate confidence between reader and writer. Similar to John Donne, in "Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God," or "The Flea," there's power in that sort of affable arrogance, and a wink.

***How would you describe your own style of writing poetry, and what is one of your own poems that you especially love? Why?***

In my writing, it's me talking, mostly to the reader or maybe to myself—that's hard to tell, and tough to get away from—so there's some hint of a smile if not outright laughing in whatever I'm doing. I have a cancer poem about watching my mom go through a tough nine months of chemo, which was decidedly not funny. But there's sadness alongside a kind of joke and

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appreciation about clearance roses at Lowe’s, all of which was mostly true and all very much how it felt during the process, out of body hilarious—sometimes you take what you get and appreciate the connections. And my mom and I laughed at odd times along the way because it did seem like the better option. I am also working on completing a small pedagogical study of students’ writing comparisons between traditional assignments and experiential ones.

***You have been teaching full-time for the department since Fall 2000, and you have continued to be a highly respected faculty member, [receiving one of our department's Teaching Excellence Awards in 2019](#). Why do you enjoy teaching? What is one of your favorite pieces of literature to teach and why?***

I enjoy building new courses, developing ideas for curriculum, and collaborating with others across campus. On one current project, I work with computer engineering faculty and students to collect and study rural healthcare attitudes across our state.

I really enjoy teaching contemporary literature and often work it into writing courses, as it might apply. “Last Call” and “What Do Women Want” by Kim Addonizio are poems I

recently used to introduce general studies students to writing into issues for real audiences to develop their skills in subtle tone shifts toward more sophisticated delivery; in the poems, it’s translating what a speaker might say versus the feeling that comes through and understanding what’s not said and maybe why that would be.

In a medical humanities lit course I piloted recently, I picked fiction and poetry focused on the body and health issues, alongside non-fiction patient narratives and medical research about conditions, and invited healthcare providers from our community to visit the class and dissect the complex layering involved in medical issues and the relationships that evolve to care for people.

***In addition to having taught many English courses on our campus, you have taught for U of A study-abroad programs in both Belize and Vietnam. On your own, you've also [worked with the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan to teach a 30-hour course on English language learning](#)***



*Laura Teaching Technical Writing in Spring of 2018*

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[methods to faculty there](#). What has drawn you to these international teaching experiences over the years?



*Service-Leadership Program in Vietnam  
in January of 2016*

Work that affected me most was fieldwork in Belize in 2007 starting with the first site project of its kind on our campus (and in the country—there were other models alongside us, but we were onto an idea with only a handful then of other academic leaders like Harvard and Stanford in the U.S.), and then, later, in Vietnam, and over many years. Not only for the communities and individuals we visited but for the students, what I experienced were the ways strong focus and care between people made real change and created opportunities to apply critical thought and research in creative ways. The work fit the “flow” model for being aligned in a craft or sport that led to inspirations—deeply immersive and in a state where one can lose time. It’s the reason I wanted to become even more involved locally with community partners and to include as many students as I could in those kinds of experiential learning opportunities.

I piloted a technical writing curriculum so that there would be these courses for students to move beyond the walls of the traditional classroom and share their research and ideas with real audiences; they have created programming, funding, opportunities and change for our communities that have benefited so many across our state. So, aside from becoming more skilled writing practitioners, they have exchanged ideas and put worthwhile connections into their surroundings—many of their projects have been picked up and are ongoing. Listening to others, learning from them, finding connections and ways to move into new ideas and spaces is fundamental to the outreach of a university, and it makes my work life more meaningful.



*Laura with Students from Can Tho University,  
Vietnam, in January of 2017*



*Laura with English Faculty from Two Kazakhstan Universities in Summer of 2016*

*While you've taught courses on poetry and other literature for our department, it seems like your real passion is for teaching courses that encourage service learning opportunities among your students. You've taught *Technical and Report Writing (ENGL 3053)*, for many years, which allows class members to develop projects they could propose within real-world professional settings. In addition, you've taught for the university's Health Coaches program, offered by the university and the Washington Regional Medical Center, that "gives undergraduate students the opportunity for hands-on health care work early in their careers." And you were even named the recipient of the 2020-21 Outstanding Contribution to Service Learning Teaching Award by the university's Service Learning Initiative Committee. Why do you feel service learning courses are so important?*

Working with vulnerable patients to increase health literacy, many of whom I came to know in the Health Coaches Program, means a great deal to me. Because of my own experiences with our healthcare system, I find it crucial that we put energy toward the humanity of healing, using what we know about best practices for wellness, such as outlook and higher emotional states achieved in resilience and stability, food education and the availability for fresh and nutritious choices, exercise and the spaces we inhabit to encourage movement and fellowship, art and the things we can see and make when our basic needs are met. The course I look forward to teaching next incorporates literature with an interdisciplinary approach to health literacy and solutions for stronger community wellness.

*What is one course or professional activity you haven't taught yet that you would love to teach or pursue in the future?*

Currently, I am working with professors in art and in journalism, alongside community and government agencies, on an interdisciplinary pilot course that uses writing, graphic design and journalism to share research and solutions about global issues as they affect our local community.



*Laura Teaching Technical and Report Writing in Fall of 2019*

## Alum Spotlight: Sidney Thompson (M.F.A. '94)



*Sidney Thompson*

*Sidney Thompson graduated with his M.F.A. in Creative Writing/Fiction from the University of Arkansas in 1994. He went on to complete his Ph.D. in English at the University of North Texas. He now is a [Writing Consultant with the William L. Adams Center for Writing at Texas Christian University](#), and he teaches creative writing and composition to undergraduate English students as well as African American literature to graduate students at TCU. Thompson publishes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and he is the recent author of the children's book [Kudzu's Enormous New Life](#) and the historical fiction books in The Bass Reeves Trilogy: [Follow the Angels](#), [Follow the Doves](#); [Hell on the Border](#); and (in progress) The Forsaken and the Dead.*

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***You received your M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the U of A, focusing on Fiction, in 1994. Could you talk a little about one of the Creative Writing faculty members under whom you studied who greatly influenced your writing? What was one of your favorite classes, and could you talk about why you enjoyed it so much?***

Among the many outstanding memories of Bill Harrison, Jim Whitehead, Skip Hays, and Joanne Meschery, my mind today decides to light on my very first workshop experience at Arkansas. Skip was the professor, and my classmates have since proven to be as talented as they immediately appeared to me then. Everyone was turning in inspired, well-crafted stories, and I was eager to toss my hat in the ring. I'd been working on a story all summer prior to joining the program. It was set in Mississippi with African-American characters, including the narrator, because I had transferred in from Ole Miss. My mentor there, Barry Hannah, who had been the inaugural graduate of Arkansas's M.F.A. program, had decided for me that Arkansas was where I needed to go. "My Athens," he called the Fayetteville citadel. The story was titled "A Classical Education."

My classmates raked me over the coals for its meanness or lack of authorial candor: they wanted to know where I stood exactly on the issues of intraracial violence, vigilante justice, and appropriation, though without using these terms (we're talking about the 90s). The overwhelming sentiment of the class was that this white author was treading on sacred snakes, and my humor in the story was not helping. As usual, Skip shared his opinion only after everyone had committed to a point of view. "Well," he began, "I think Sidney's story is brilliant." My head didn't swell as much as heal as he proceeded to read favorite passages and explain the intentions of my humor and social commentary. The highest of his praise was his gravelly laughter, and then Skip turned my attention to pacing, a lesson of craft that had inexplicably escaped me. I had allowed character background to interrupt the dream of the story in crucial moments (for every moment is crucial). Skip taught me two lessons that day that I frequently draw upon: if I am the product of the stories I tell myself and gravitate to, then I am obligated to write these stories, and to do so, I must feel free to be me. But I also must protect my stories from self-inflicted wounds; I must remember and honor the truth that stories breathe with a cadence, and for them to have any hope of honesty, agency, and survival themselves, I too must get up off their necks.

***What are your favorite genres in which to write creatively, and why?***

My hometown is fiction. I love poetry for how it feeds and gives me shelter, but its inspiration does not always arrive in traditional dress. Its influence appears always in the music of what I write and in the leaps I've learned to take in fiction—in tone, time, and thematic rhyme. But

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why is fiction my favorite genre? Well, I choose to consider how I grew up around alternately masterful and awful storytellers. My parents were of the awful sort. My older brother was better, but his gift was with wry understatement. My uncles and grandparents, on the other hand, were the masterful ones. Their ability to tell a story or joke and captivate an audience led me, I'm inferring now, to an awareness of craft—to hear my parents differently and deconstruct what they could and could not do with language. Maybe, just maybe, that heightened attention led me to discover my parents' real value to me as a writer: they were larger-than-life characters, ones even more dynamic than the storytellers in my family were storytellers. Their polytonal minds were so distracted and conflicted, so hungry and brave and banal, simultaneously beautiful and perverse, I doubt I will ever lack characters.

***You've been teaching for over 30 years. In the last 10 years, you've also started working as an academic advisor and mentor in your role as Writing Consultant for the William L. Adams Center for Writing at TCU. How satisfying has your academic consulting work at the center been compared to your experiences as an instructor in the classroom?***

As a Writing Consultant, I tutor or advise undergraduate and graduate students and faculty alike on anything they have written or intend to write. I move from one tutorial to another, providing feedback on an essay in any given field to helping a professor publish a paper and obtain tenure, or perhaps the objective is a departmental scholarship or acceptance in grad school or medical school. But then there's Huy, an international student from Vietnam with whom I have been working for over a year. He came to TCU to earn a degree in marketing because that would please his parents, but in the States he discovered an obsession to write, ultimately deciding on a dual path with a degree in English and a long-term goal of writing a novel. His short-term goal quickly became honing a writing sample to apply to M.F.A. programs, which is why he sought my help at the writing center, once his fiction workshop professor recommended he see me.

Huy and I began meeting three times a week in hourly sessions, and it became an intense but unofficial independent study for three months. His only acceptance came from NYU, which was his school of choice, yet NYU could only offer him a half-ride. His family believed it was financially irresponsible to assist him with the other half, along with all the other expenses living in New York would demand. Few can. His parents, however, made a rather creative offer that regarded me. Huy could go back home to live a year expense-free in Vietnam to finish writing his novel, if I would continue to mentor him via Zoom three times a week. After several months, I can say that this one-on-one relationship has single-handedly become the crowning achievement of my career as a writing teacher. I have the time to address and engage in high-level craft discussions and debates I have never had the opportunity to broach in any

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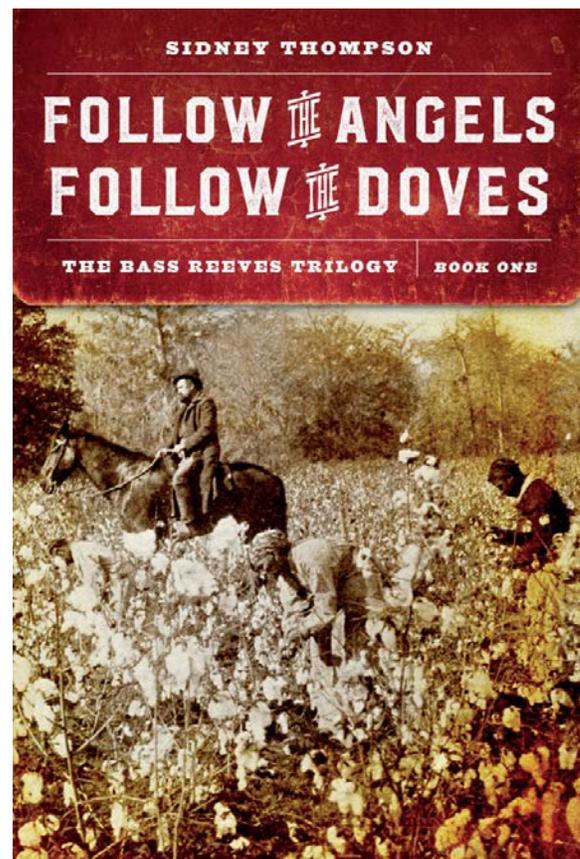
classroom or office appointment. The typical university structure can't bear what the writing center at TCU allows me to do for an enrolled student, much less for an alum.

Huy is a rare talent with rare dedication, and he's writing an exquisite, heartbreaking novel. Sometimes we fight like a married couple. Other times I'm a tough-love coach or parent who must pierce his pride so he will listen and learn and stop being complacent about moments in his story that he has taken for granted and not fully realized. These sessions enrich me as they enrich him because we admire the well-written word, the pitch-perfect flourish, the timely comma, and embrace all of it together with real love.

***How did you become interested in writing historical fiction about Bass Reeves, who—after being born into slavery—became the first black deputy U.S. marshal working (for over 30 years) in Oklahoma and Arkansas?***

When I heard Morgan Freeman declare in an interview on CNN in 2010 that Bass Reeves was his dream role, I suspected, like a good deputy with a hunch, that I had just found my next project, my next obsession. "You ain't hear a lot of stuff about Bass Reeves," said Freeman, appearing already to slip into character. "Nobody's ever tackled him. He was one of the most well-known deputy marshals in the West in his time. I want to do Bass Reeves." Without delay, I ordered the only two books I could find online that existed on the subject of Bass Reeves—a novel for young adults and a scholarly compilation of court documents, newspaper articles, interviews, and legends. I had never attempted or even considered writing an historical novel yet found myself surprisingly open to the challenge.

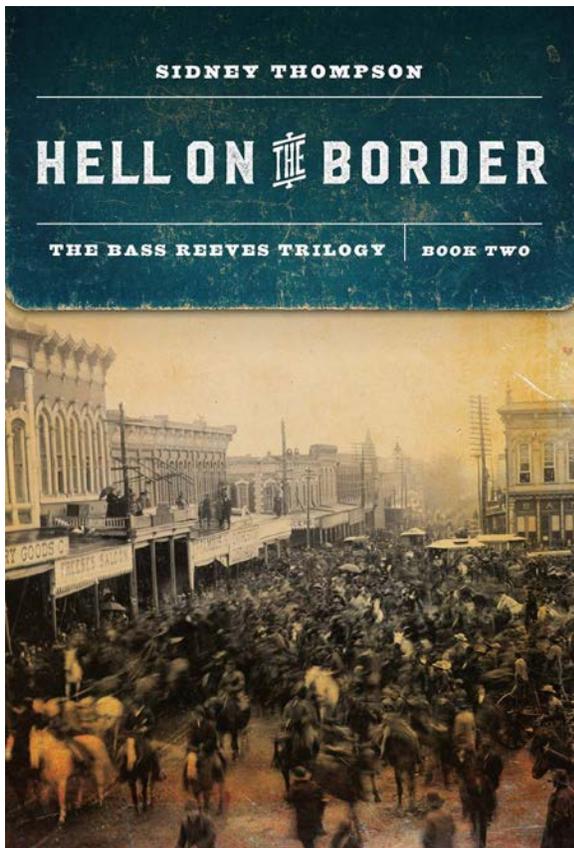
My newfound awareness of this whitewashed frontier hero, this innovator of undercover disguise and forensics, the noble Lone Ranger before the existence of radio, an antecedent no less to the Civil Rights Movement, gradually coalesced into a bullet of responsibility lodged in my entrails like the one Bass carried in his leg from a point-blank shootout. I couldn't turn away,



*Book One of The Bass Reeves Trilogy*

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choose not to explore his life and psyche and attempt to write his story to the best of my ability to render it. And the story needed to be a comprehensive one to include the full scope of his American life, from slave to fugitive to deputy to Teddy Roosevelt’s secret service agent; his nation owed him that. I owed him that, to do my part to preserve his national impact and help others understand his unique mind and gifts and achievements in the context of his many disadvantages. That would mean, I decided, that to do his story justice I would need more education, not research and faith in my ability alone. So I went back to school and earned a doctorate with a specialization in African-American narratives. To turn away from the project would have been one more passive act of privilege and aggression against the man. That was and remains my honest take.



*Book Two of The Bass Reeves Trilogy*

***Could you briefly explain how writing historical fiction about Reeves differs from writing a nonfiction, biographical text about him?***

When I write imaginative fiction, I’ll call it, its literary and psychological truths are the final measures of its merit. For that work, I turn inward to recall what I’ve learned, witnessed, or experienced. But when I write historical fiction, I must turn outward. The prep work proceeds slowly due to extensive research. I read until I have no more foundational questions and I just can’t retain any more information, but once the writing part of the process actually begins, it comes easier because my research has given me a starting point for settings, characters, props, situations, limitations on diction and decorum, etc.

I’ve learned to assign historical fiction in my fiction workshops because the task of inventing everything from scratch can prove too daunting to most undergraduate writers. Also, every writer

deserves a lesson on the importance of marketability. Once these writers produce a story, they immediately acquire a built-in audience preoccupied with their story’s subject. We as teachers owe it to them to be in the business of building careers.

*We were excited to learn that 101 Studios/Paramount+ is currently producing a mini-series (Bass Reeves) based on your first two books of The Bass Reeves Trilogy (Follow the Angels, Follow the Doves, published in 2020, and Hell on the Border, published in 2021) and that you are a creative consultant. What has it been like so far to serve as a creative consultant on the series, which is scheduled to air in the fall of 2023?*

I have had the time of my life reading each episodic script and providing feedback about story, characterization, and historical accuracy. Everyone on Taylor Sheridan’s crew demands excellence. For example, in preparation for a Civil War battlefield scene, they wanted to know how many men were present so that the casting director would hire the proper number of extras. That attention to detail extends no less to the actors. For months I have been in routine contact with David Oyelowo, who will star as Bass Reeves. Oyelowo is a meticulous artist who has requested all the obscure information I can feed him so that he has the best possible understanding of Bass’s psychology, his habits and foibles, anything large or small.

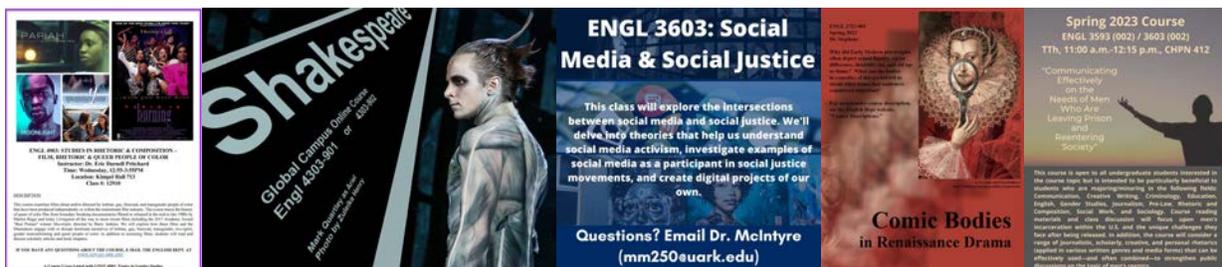
*Can you tell us about any new creative writing projects that you will be working on in 2023?*

I am returning to a project that I had started before I heard Morgan Freeman utter Bass Reeves’s name, back when I was a car salesman—a job I had taken more for the material than the money (because I doubted I would ever survive the work, the cruelest in retail). I lived in Alabama at the time and was struggling to find a full-time teaching job, so I decided to make the grandest of all possible poetic leaps and said goodbye to the equally absurd world of adjunct academia. I wrote a novel based on my experiences and obtained an agent, but I could never sell it because it frankly wasn’t good enough. Later, I disassembled the novel as if it were a hooptie, stripping chapters and scenes out of it and publishing them as stand-alone stories, both traditional and flash. That process of paring down and repackaging vastly improved every narrative moment. By examining them out of context, I could more easily spot the lazy lines and the opportunities I had missed for deepening my characters. Now, my mission is to rebuild the novel with improved purpose and ride.

*Been a while since you’ve taken courses in the English Department?*

*Want to know what we’ve been teaching lately?*

Go [here](#) to review our recent undergraduate and graduate course descriptions!



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# English Department Program Updates

## News from the Brown Chair in English Literacy Initiative

[The Brown Chair in English Literacy Initiative \(BCELI\)](#) has wrapped up a busy second half of 2022 and is looking ahead to an event-filled Spring 2023 semester for both it and its primary program, the [Community Literacies Collaboratory \(CLC\)](#). The staff of the Office of the BCELI and CLC are **Dr. Eric Darnell Pritchard** and graduate assistants **Jackie Chicalese** and **Jamie Padgett**.

This past July, the BCELI issued a call for contributors to the CLC's new digital publication, *Outside-the-Box: Short Papers, Big Ideas*. The purpose of *Outside-the-Box* is to offer community literacy practitioners an opportunity to publish memos and reports on current literacy-related issues, providing guidance to the public as well as others who are also doing work in the field.

Several papers were submitted. The texts that were selected for publication cover topics including disability literacies, queer literacies, and the experiences of continuing education students in first-year writing courses. The inaugural issue of *Outside-the-Box* will be available on the CLC website in February 2023.

Early August, then, brought the BCELI's announcement of the first cycle of the [CLC's grant program](#) (funded by the BCELI). The two types of grants—seed and growth grants and literacies research grants—are designed to fund a range of literacy-related efforts, especially programs and research being done in Arkansas.

Professor Pritchard, who is also the Brown Chair in English Literacy and the Founding Director of the CLC, was pleased with the number of people who applied for grants in the first application cycle, as well as the range of projects that were proposed. Announcements of the 10 programs and projects awarded grants for the first application cycle will be made at the end of January 2023. The deadline for the next round of grant applications will be February 28, 2023.

Also in August, the CLC invited proposals for a topic and the names of several facilitators for its Spring 2023 "Possibilities Hub" Literacies Seminar. This annual 6–8-week program is intended to increase awareness about what literacy work can look like as well as what all it can accomplish. The inaugural seminar, which took place in the spring of 2022, focused on abolition and literacies, with participants from across the country taking part in the event. The seminar topic for this upcoming spring will be "Coalitional Literacies," and the co-facilitators will be Professor

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Natasha Jones from Michigan State University and Professor Laura Gonzales and Professor Victor Del Hierro from the University of Florida. Applications for the limited seats in this Spring’s seminar will open at the beginning of February 2023.

Finally, the first biennial BCEL and CLC symposium, co-convened by Professor Pritchard and Professor Carmen Kynard (Texas Christian University), took place over October 27-29. The Tracing the Stream Virtual Symposium was attended by 367 educators and students and featured over thirty speakers. The keynote speech was given by Professor Emerita Jacqueline Jones Royster (Georgia Tech), author of [\*Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women\*](#) and numerous books and articles. In addition to the symposium, the website now has more than 12K hits with the syllabus, program, etc. shared over 500 times across social media, with more people still visiting the site and engaging the digital workspace created by Dr. Pritchard and Dr. Kynard.

Below are several images taken at the virtual symposium event. (Participants in the top right image—clockwise from top left—are Interpreter Crystal Lowe, Professor Royster, Professor Kynard, and Professor Pritchard.)



## News from the Program in Rhetoric and Composition

Over the course of the fall semester, the [Program in Rhetoric and Composition](#) held a series of listening sessions and curriculum forums to get feedback from TAs and instructors about the program's current Composition curriculum and overall approach to teaching writing at the University of Arkansas.

The Program in Rhetoric and Composition will be hosting additional forums in the spring as well as a series of workshops. If you have requests or suggestions for workshop topics, please reach out to **Professor and Director of the Program in Rhetoric and Composition Megan McIntyre**.

In addition to the Composition Pedagogy (ENGL 5003) course's being offered to all of the department's incoming graduate instructors this fall, taught by Professor McIntyre for the first time, two new Composition courses were offered: **Professor Maggie Fernandes** taught the undergraduate course Introduction to Cultural Rhetorics (ENGL 3603), and **Professor Pritchard** taught the graduate course Black Feminist Literacies, Rhetorics and Pedagogies (ENGL 5973/ENGL 6973).

As part of the Composition Pedagogy course, new graduate instructors attended a panel event focused on pedagogy and diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. Speakers, all from the U of A, were **English M.A. alum ('19) Coty Darst** (Trainer, Facilitator, Consultant for the IDEALS Institute, Division of DEI), **Anthony DiNicola** (Coordinator of Cultural Communities for the Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education, Division of Student Affairs), and **Romona West** (Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, College of Arts and Sciences).



**DEI AND PEDAGOGY  
SPEAKER PANEL**

**Tuesday, 9/27, 9:30 - 10:45 a.m.**

This speaker panel event will overlap with Dr. McIntyre's Composition Pedagogy course, and all members of that class will attend in their regular classroom.

Other graduate and undergraduate students in English are invited to attend virtually and have been sent a Zoom link through their department listservs.

**Coty Darst**  
DEI Trainer, Facilitator,  
Consultant  
Division of DEI  
University of Arkansas

**Anthony DiNicola**  
Coordinator of Cultural  
Communities  
Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education  
Division of Student Affairs  
University of Arkansas

**Romona West**  
Director, Office of Diversity,  
Equity & Inclusion  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of Arkansas

Topics to Be Discussed: how to enforce helpful DEI policies in the classroom; how to help undergraduate students with DEI issues and emergency leave process; and where graduate students can find DEI support on campus and in NWA community.

*Flyer for DEI and Pedagogy Speaker Panel Event*

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## News from the Undergraduate Program in English

Professor and Director of the [Undergraduate Program in English](#) Sean Dempsey has begun connecting undergraduate English students with for-credit internship opportunities, similar to the internship opportunities that our graduate students have been able to pursue for several years by enrolling in the Graduate Internship in English course (ENGL 5193). Our undergraduate students now can enroll in the Undergraduate Internship in English course (ENGL 4193) to get three hours of credit for semester-long internships. For Spring 2023, three undergraduate students in English will be completing internships for credit: two will be interning with the Magdalene Serenity House in Fayetteville, and one will be interning with the U of A Press.

In addition, **Sigma Tau Delta**, the honors society for English majors and minors, started the fall semester with new officers, pictured below from left to right: **Reagan Stanley** (Social Media Director), **Jed Black** (PR Specialist), **Eli Silliman** (Secretary), **Arden Malloy** (Event Management), **Kath Rees** (Creative Writing Liaison), **Marly Gourley** (President), and **Mackenzie Allen** (Creative Writing Liaison). The picture was taken at Sigma Tau Delta's Second Annual Poetry Share Event, which took place in early December.



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## Featured Undergraduate English Course: The Bible as Literature (ENGL 3623), Taught by Professor Lora Walsh



### **Texts Required:**

Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*

Robert Alter, *The David Story*

Robert Alter, *Strong As Death Is Love: The Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Jonah, and Daniel*

Bible (Online access is fine; recommended print version: New Oxford Annotated Bible)

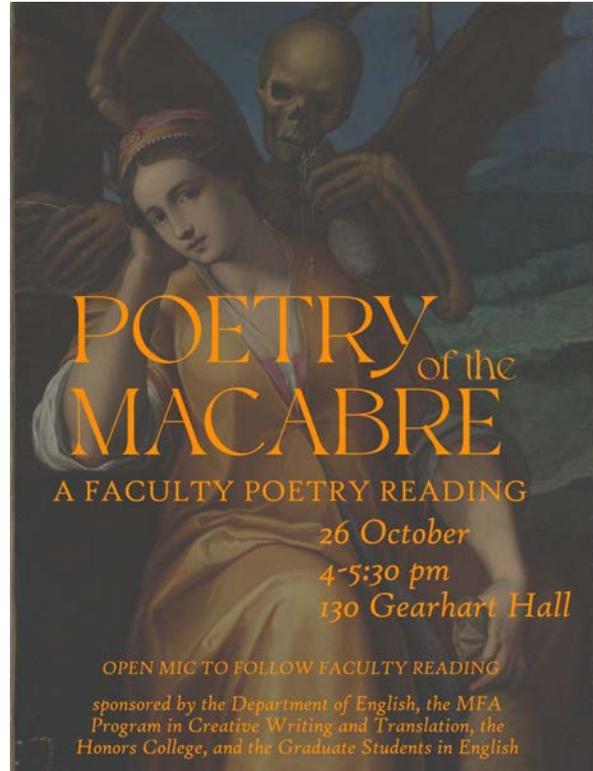
**Description:** This course introduces students to a variety of literary forms and techniques used throughout the Bible. Readings include the major narratives of Genesis and Exodus; the passionate poetry of the Song of Solomon; the shorter tales of Jonah, Ruth, and Esther; the provocative parables told by Jesus; and memorable stories about Jesus's birth and death, found in the gospels. The course offers an accessible entry-point for students who are reading biblical material for the first time, as well as a novel approach for those more familiar with biblical content.

**Essays, exams, and other major requirements:** Dynamic class participation, weekly short writing assignments.

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## News from the Program in Creative Writing and Translation

### Undergraduate Program



The first online Creative Writing I class was offered this fall through the university's Global Campus, taught by M.F.A. student **Kristin Entler**!

In addition, facilitated by **Professor Jane Blunsch**i, two undergraduate Creative Writing events were offered this fall. First, the annual Poetry of the Macabre get-together took place at the end of October, featuring poetry readings by a number of faculty members, which were followed by an open mic for undergraduate poets.

Then, in early December, [The Diamond Line](#), the university's undergraduate literary magazine, published by the Program in Creative Writing and Translation and developed by students in Professor Blunsch*i*'s Literary Magazine Production course, hosted a party for [the release of its sixth issue](#), focused on the theme of nostalgia! A number of contributors read their published pieces, and then several creative writers read their work for the open mic.

## THE DIAMOND LINE



VOLUME 6 : THE NOSTALGIA ISSUE



Above, left to right: cover of The Diamond Line's sixth issue; members of Issue 6's production team - back row, left to right: Ryan Baker, Julia McVey, Maverick Pollet, Andi Carey, and Audrey Rose Warner; front row, left to right: Isabelle Rogers, Ashlyn Darling, Professor Jane Blunshi, Jordyn Curry, Emma Furr, and Evian Keels.



Above, left to right: several sixth issue contributors reading or discussing their published pieces - Stevie, Nan Farrar, Jasmine Lee, Jackson Cook, and Miceala Morano.



Above, left to right: audience members, Arden Malloy presenting; sixth issue banner, created by Audrey Rose Warner.

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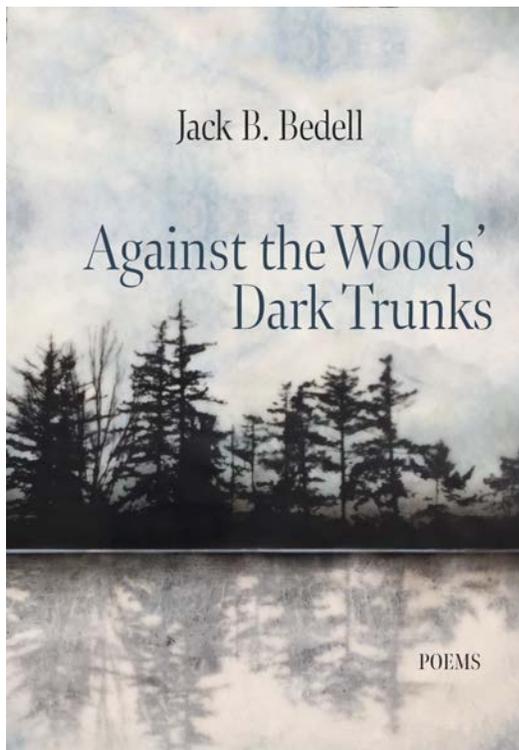
## M.F.A. Program

[The Creative Writing and Translation Program's](#) alum **Pamela Carmell (M.F.A. '84)** read "The Dead," her translation of Nancy Morejón's "Los Muertos," for *The New Yorker*. You can hear her by clicking [here](#). (Thanks to **Professor Emeritus John DuVal** for sharing this great news!)

M.F.A. student **Lily Buday** and alum **Joy Clark (M.F.A. '20)** were [awarded by the Arkansas Arts Council two of its 2022 Individual Artist Fellowships](#). They won two of the three statewide awards in the Literary Arts: Flash Fiction or Flash Creative Nonfiction category.



*Joy Clark and Lily Buday*



*Cover of Jack Bedell's poetry collection*

Lily Buday also [received an Artists 360 grant from the Mid-America Arts Alliance](#), as did alumni **Brody Parrish Craig (M.F.A. '17)** and **Sabine Schmidt (M.F.A. '93)**.

M.F.A. student **Vasanthambamurti** [received the 2022 C.D. Wright/Academy of American Poets Prize](#) for "Believe Me."

Alum **Peter Mason (M.F.A. '21)** was [selected as a finalist](#) for one of the 2022 Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowships.

The new poetry collection from alum **Jack Bedell (M.F.A. '90)**, *Against the Woods' Dark Trunks: Poems*, [is now available through Mercer University Press](#).

M.F.A. student **CD Eskilson's** ["On Hold, I Think About the Shape of Words"](#) was nominated for the Pushcart Prize by *Beloit Poetry Journal*.

M.F.A. student **Joaquín Gavilano** was [awarded a PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant by PEN America](#) for Gavilano's translation of *The Hostage*, written by Gabriel Mamani Magne, from the Spanish.



Joaquín Gavilano

M.F.A. student **Caitlin Plante** was [named a finalist in the fifth annual Sewanee Review Fiction, Poetry, and Nonfiction contest](#).

Alum **Mekiya Outini (M.F.A. '19)** and **Itto Outini (M.A. in Journalism '20)** launched their new blog, [The Datekeepers](#), which will [“serve as a platform for elevating the lives and work of people with disabilities around the world.”](#)

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS PROGRAM IN  
**Creative Writing and Translation**  
2022-2023 READING SERIES



**Ellen Doré Watson**  
6:30 pm, November 8th  
Fayetteville Public Library

Hailed by *Library Journal* as one of “24 Poets for the 21st Century,” Ellen Doré Watson’s poems include a Bronx Life Writers Award, fellowships to Yaddo and MacDowell, a Zeland Poetry Fellowship at Vermont Studio Center, and a National Endowment for the Arts Translation Fellowship.

Translator of a dozen volumes from Brazilian Portuguese, most notably the poems of Adília Prado, including *The Alphabet in the Park* (Wisconsin University Press), *En-Vite* (Tupelo Press), and *The Absent Beat* (Shearsman Books), which was short-listed for the 2015 European European Translation Prize. She has also co-translated contemporary Palestinian and Iraqi poetry from the Arabic with Saadi Simawe.

Her poems and translations have appeared widely in journals, including *American Poetry Review*, *The House*, *Crux*, *Field*, *Phosphorus*, *Griff*, *Coast*, and *The New Yorker*. New Poets translations have recently appeared in *Phases*, *Phosphorus*, and *The Nation*. Watson teaches at the Cuban Manuscript Conference.



**Ann-Marie MacDonald**  
7 pm, March 15th  
Fayetteville Public Library

Ann-Marie MacDonald is an author, actor, and playwright. Her first novel, *Fall for Your Knees*, a critically acclaimed international best seller, won the Commonwealth Prize, the People’s Choice Award, the Canadian Bookellers Association Libris Award for Fiction Book of the Year, and was short-listed for the Giller Prize. Ann-Marie’s second novel, *The Way the Crow Flies*, was published in 2009 and was an international bestseller and finalist for the Giller Prize. *Adult Friend*, Ann-Marie’s third novel, was published in 2014 and became a number one national bestseller. In fall 2022, her latest novel, *Forever* will be published.

In 2023, the stage adaptation of *Fall for Your Knees*, will premiere with a four-city tour. Ann-Marie was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2019 in recognition of her contribution to the arts, and her activism and advocacy for LGBTQ2S+ rights.



**The Arkansas International Featured Reader K-Ming Chang**  
7 pm, November 2nd  
Fayetteville Public Library

K-Ming Chang is a Kamelmann fellow, a Lambda Literary Award finalist, and a National Book Foundation 5 Under 35 honoree. She is the author of the New York Times Book Review Editors’ Choice novel *History* (The World/Farewell House, 2020), which was long-listed for the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize and the PEN/Hemingway Award. In 2021, her chapbook *River House* was published by Ball City Press. Her short story collection, *God of Stone*, is forthcoming from One World, as well as a novel titled *Ocean Means*. She lives in California. This reading is sponsored in conjunction with the Truist Fayetteville Literary Festival.



**Jane Hirshfield**  
7 pm, April 4th  
University of Arkansas Alumni House

Jane Hirshfield, in poems described by *The Washington Post* as “belonging among the modern masters” and by *The New York Times* as “transparent and radiant,” addresses the urgent necessities of our time.

Hirshfield’s honors include fellowships from the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Academy of American Poets (Columbia University’s Translation Center Award, The Poetry Center Book Award, and The California Book Award), among others. Her work appears in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Poetry*, and ten editions of *The Best American Poetry*.

Her nine poetry books include *Leagues*, *The Beauty*, long-listed for the 2015 National Book Award; *Green-Sage Green-Sage*, a finalist for the 2009 National Book Critics Circle Award; and *After*, short-listed for England’s TS. Eliot Award. The *Adagio: New & Selected Poems* (Knopf) will be released in September 2023.

mfa.uark.edu

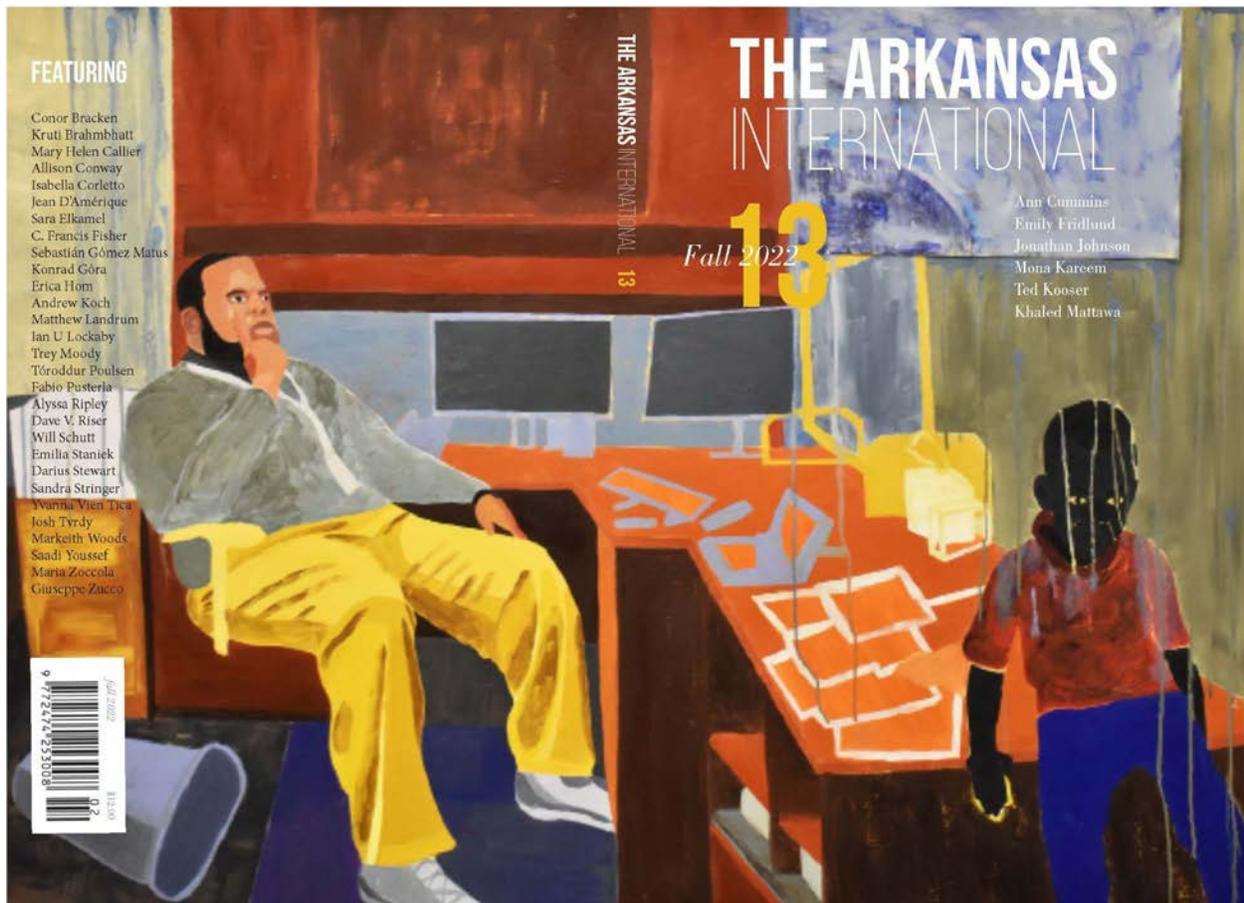
All readings are free and open to the public. Made possible by the J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of English, the Walton Family Foundation, the James E. and Ellen Welby Regier Professorship in Creative Writing, and the Fayetteville Public Library.

THE ARKANSAS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS J. William Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences Program in Creative Writing & Translation

In November, *The Arkansas International* and the Program in Creative Writing and Translation [hosted its 2022-2023 Walton Distinguished Reader, acclaimed novelist and short story writer K-Ming Chang](#). Chang is the author of *Gods of Want* and *Bestiary*. Later in the month, [translator and poet Ellen Doré Watson, the 2022-23 Walton Visiting Writer in Translation](#), gave a public reading. Watson translates from Brazilian Portuguese, and she has been lauded for her translation of Adélia Prado’s poetry. Watson also has co-translated with Saadi Simawe contemporary Palestinian and Iraqi poetry from the Arabic.

At the beginning of December, [The Arkansas International](#) released its [thirteenth issue](#). In announcing the release, *The Arkansas International* reinforced its mission “to put a range of U.S. writing in conversation with writing from around the world.” Issue 13 includes writings from authors in the U.S., India, Chile, and Poland. Its wonderful cover image is by [Markeith Woods](#).

Creative Writing and Translation  
Program’s 2022-2023 Reading Series



*Cover of Issue 13 for The Arkansas International, painted by artist Markeith Woods (picture title: In Trouble Again)*

## News from the Graduate Program in English (M.A. and Ph.D. Programs)

### Recent Doctoral Dissertation Defenses

**Christopher Borntreger** and **Tessa Swehla** successfully defended their dissertations and graduated from the Ph.D. Program in English this past summer. Borntreger’s dissertation project was titled “Media Ideologies and the Politics of Digital Literacy: Discourses on Media and Technology in a Small School District in the U.S. Heartland,” and the title of Swehla’s project was “The Child in the Basement: Debilitating Mechanisms in American Science Fiction.” In the fall, a third Ph.D. candidate, **Ann Riley-Adams**, also defended her dissertation project, “Elis Gruffydd

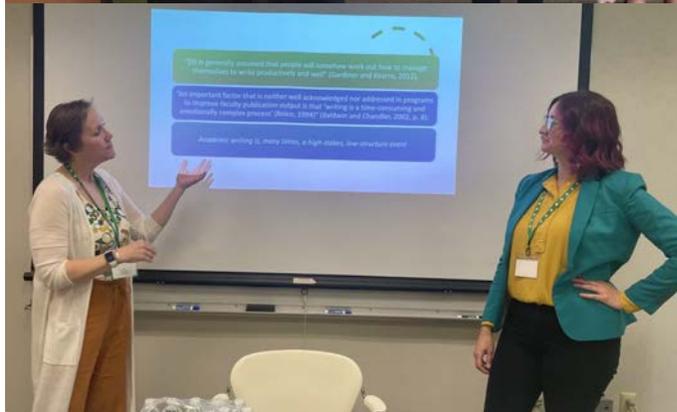
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and the Welsh Historical Tradition” and graduated. We congratulate all three of these outstanding students!

## Graduate Student Research, Presentations, and Publications

Seven graduate English students and one graduate English alum presented at this fall’s Arkansas Philological Association conference on the University of Arkansas at Monticello campus.

Pictured below are: (top row image, left to right) Ph.D. student **David Farris**, M.A. student **Ana Rodriguez-Mesa**, M.A. student **Abigail Ross**, Ph.D. student **Jessica Allee**, and M.A. student **Braden Taylor**; (second row images, left to right) Ph.D. student **Michel LaCrue** and Ph.D. student **Dana Blair**, alum **Dr. Christopher Bortrager**.



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This fall, M.A. student **Braden Taylor** also presented at The Victorians Institute's Golden Jubilee Conference, which took place at the University of South Carolina Upstate. Taylor's paper was titled "Educating the Modern Working-Class Through Victorian Idealism." Likewise, Taylor presented his paper "Hag Empowerment Through Feminine Magic" at the UVA Wise Medieval - Renaissance Conference XXXV. In addition, using funding he received through the Tiffany Marcantonio Research Grant, awarded by the [Graduate-Professional Student Congress](#), Taylor visited the Roycroft Campus in East Aura, New York, to conduct archival research and observe the town. The trip was part of Taylor's M.A. thesis research to better understand how a community centered around craft and betterment benefited those who lived there.



*Braden Taylor on the Roycroft Campus*



*David Farris at the Faulkner and Ward Conference*

Doctoral student **David Farris** presented his paper "The Dead Narrator in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*" at the Faulkner and Ward Conference at Southeast Missouri State University's Center for Faulkner Studies in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Farris also presented at the Popular Culture Association - South (PCAS) conference in New Orleans this fall. His paper was titled "Malcolm X: Civil Rights Icon or Pop Culture Reference in *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*?"

Doctoral candidate **Gracie Bain's** scholarly article on Frankenstein's female monster was published this fall by *Literature/Film Quarterly*. You can read "'Frankenbitch[es]': Adapting Frankenstein's Female Monster in Literature and Film" [here!](#)

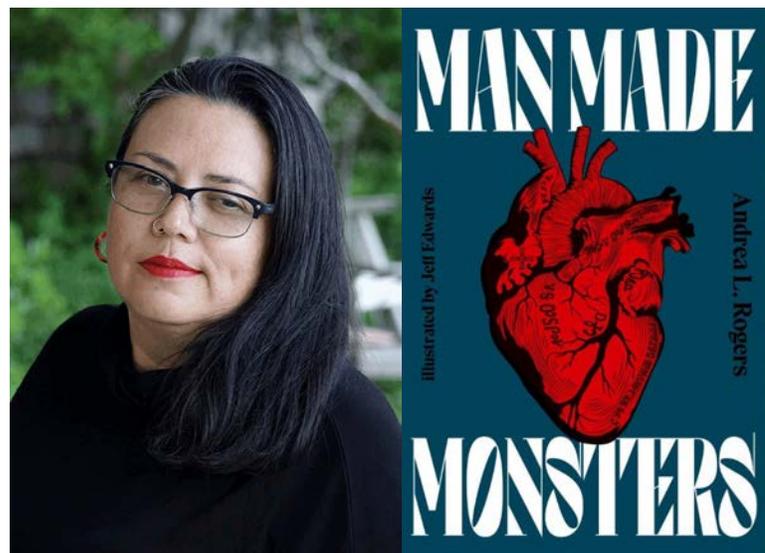
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Alum **Bethany Cole (M.A. '22)** published a book through Barnes and Noble Press this fall. In [The Wanderer: A New Translation for Middle Earth Readers](#), Cole offers a fresh translation of the Old English poem *The Wanderer*, recalling J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as Cole draws upon Tolkien's language and themes ["to bring out more of the beauty of the Old English."](#) Cole's book is also illustrated with beautiful watercolor paintings, all done by Cole.



*The cover of Bethany Cole's book The Wanderer: A New Translation for Middle Earth Readers; Cole and her dog, Baer*

In addition, doctoral student **Andrea Rogers's** [Man Made Monsters](#), a young-adult novel, [was released by Levine Querido](#) in time for Halloween this year. (Our local bookstore, [Pearl's Books](#), hosted a fabulous release party!) Rogers's book has been included in [Kirkus Reviews' "150 Most Anticipated Books of the Fall"](#) and was featured as an "October Pick" by Literati after being chosen and reviewed by activist, author, and Nobel Peace Prize winner [Malala](#).



*Andrea Rogers; the cover of Man Made Monsters*

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## Graduate English Curriculum

A few changes have recently happened in the teaching of several required English M.A. courses. This fall, **Professor Lisa Hinrichsen** took over the teaching of the Introduction to Graduate Studies course (ENGL 5203) required of all incoming English M.A. students and formerly taught by **Professor Sean Dempsey**. In addition, this coming spring, **Professor Lisette Szwydky** will be teaching our Portfolio Workshop course (ENGL 5213), required of all English M.A. students who have decided to conclude their degree programs with the portfolio option (versus the thesis option). The Portfolio Workshop course was formerly taught by Professor Hinrichsen.



*M.A. students juggle oranges in Professor Hinrichsen's Introduction to Graduate Studies course while learning about The Queer Art of Failure, by critic Jack Halberstam. Photos by Professor Hinrichsen.*

Also as part of the Introduction to Graduate Studies course this fall, English M.A. students had the opportunity to hear from several speaker panels—one on graduate internships and the other on career diversity (see below). We want to thank everyone who spoke at these events!

*Top row on screen - David Cajías Calvet (M.A. '21) and Amanda White (M.A. '18); bottom row - Coty Darst (M.A. '19) and Leighann Thone (M.A. '14); standing - Drew Walker (M.A. '13) and Molly Throgmorton (M.A. '11); not pictured - Morgan Scholz (M.A. '17).*



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# Updates from the GSE Organization

The **Graduate Students in English (GSE)** organization has started off another busy year! After introducing themselves to the incoming graduate instructors during the department's TA orientation week in August, the officers hosted a Welcome Back Picnic in early September, bringing together graduate students and faculty members as the fall semester got underway.



*Above: (back row, left to right) Professor Bill Quinn (GSE Sponsor), Elizabeth Bonkoski (Ph.D. Liaison), David Berg (Media Development Director), and John McManus (Student-Faculty Liaison); (front row, left to right) Ana Rodriguez-Mesa (Treasurer), Sarah Barch (M.F.A. Liaison), Anna Mercer (M.A. Liaison), Skye Oliver (GSE President), and Braden Taylor (GSE Vice President). Not pictured (Abby Ross, Historian/Secretary; Jessica Allee, RCO Liaison; and Kelsey Berkel, CLCS Liaison). Below: GSE picnic pictures, taken by Anna Mercer.*



The GSE also hosted its fall “Book and Bake Sale” in Kimpel Hall in early December, selling cool books and tasty treats to raise money for the organization. It was definitely a success! (Pictures, below, were taken by Skye Oliver.)



Finally, the GSE is currently preparing to host its 2023 interdisciplinary conference, open to both graduate student and undergraduate student presenters, on **Friday, March 4th!**

**LABOR AND WORK**

AS THEY WERE  
AS THEY ARE  
AS THEY MIGHT BE

University of **Arkansas**  
Graduate Students in **English**  
Conference **Spring 2023**  
In Person **March 4th**

abstract deadline - January 31  
length - 350 words  
contact - [uarkgse2023@gmail.com](mailto:uarkgse2023@gmail.com)

# Updates from the MRST Program

Were you aware that English Department members are active participants in the [Medieval and Renaissance Studies program](#) on campus? In fact, this year, **Professor Joshua Smith** is the program's director, and **Professor Mary Beth Long** is the colloquium coordinator.

Here is a list of the MRST events that happened just this fall (with more to come in the spring)!

- *September 7* - Professor Annie Doucet (French) and doctoral student **Mitchell Simpson**, report from the field: Paleography and Codicology Seminar at University of New Mexico
- *September 21* - **Professor Joshua Byron Smith** (English), report from the field: Writing a Middle Welsh textbook
- *October 8* - 46th Meeting of the Mid-America Medieval Association, *Fashioning the Middle Ages*
- *October 12* - Professor Frederick de Armas, University of Chicago (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures): "Cervantes' Architecture: The Dangers Outside"
- *October 25* - Professor Eric Goldberg, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (History): "The Sport of Kings: Hunting in the Time of Charlemagne"
- *November 9* - Program Manager Rebecca Fall, Newberry Library Consortium
- *November 30* - Professor Sasha Pfau, Hendrix College (History)

In addition, the MRST program regularly offers reading group meetings for those interested in Old French and Medieval Latin, attended by faculty and students from across campus!



At left, Professor Sasha Pfau (History, Hendrix College), presenting on "Leprosy in the Community: Shifting Ideas of Contagion in the Late Middle Ages"; at right, Medieval Latin reading group.

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# Recent Faculty News & Publications

We are proud to list below the most recently published texts by our department faculty members, as well as other items of exciting news about faculty achievements this past summer and fall!

## Recent Faculty Publications

**Professor Sean Dempsey's** book *Words Made Flesh: Formations of the Postsecular in British Romanticism* [was published by the University of Virginia Press](#) in August of 2022.

Then, in October, **Professor Jane Blunschi's** prose chapbook [was published by Belle Point Press](#). Included are two new stories: "San Miguel" and "Call the Carmelites."

Also this fall, **Professor Rebecca Gayle Howell** published a libretto in full score under binding, by Oxford University Press. *A Winter Breviary* was written by Professor Howell and composed by Reena Esmail. The libretto has been performed and/or recorded internationally, by choirs like the BBC Singers, The Sixteen, Voces8 & Apollo5, Kantorei KC, The Gesualdo Six, and Los Angeles Master Chorale. Go [here](#) to listen. Plus, check out the article that Professor Howell just published in December with *Oxford American* magazine, ["My Dear Companion: On Linda Ronstadt and Her Gal Pals"](#)!



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## Other Faculty News

We congratulate **Professor Jane Blunsch**i with the Program in Creative Writing and Translation for her recent Pushcart Prize nomination by [Feels Blind Literary](#) for her story “Hand to Mouth.”

In her review of *Shakespeare: The Critical Tradition: King Henry V*, Laura Kolb specifically commends **Professor Joe Candido**: [“Edited by Joseph Candido, the book covers criticism of the play from 1790 to 1945. Candido’s wonderfully informative introduction goes further, offering a brisk survey of the earliest criticism to the present day, from neoclassical complaints about Shakespeare’s flagrant violations of the three unities to recent analyses of this play’s rich ambiguities.”](#)

Over the last August Intersession, **Professor Bryan Hurt** [taught a “Pit Lit” course \(ENGL 4603/5243\) for the first time](#). Not only did Professor Hurt cover both canonical and more recently written texts of Pit Lit; he also showed Werner Herzog’s film *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* to his class and even took his students on a field trip to War Eagle Cavern in Benton County!

Last summer, **Professor Casey Kayser**, in her roles as both English faculty member and **Director of the Medical Humanities Program**, took part in a National Endowment for the Humanities institute, “Pandemics in History, Literature and Today.” This program [“featured an interdisciplinary team of university, medical and community experts who took participants through the 1918 influenza pandemic to consider how to integrate these lessons into history, science and literature curricula.”](#)

Also last summer, Yale University hosted a virtual talk with **Professor Yajaira Padilla**, focusing on her new book, [From Threatening Guerrillas to Forever Illegals: US Central Americans and the Cultural Politics of Non-Belonging](#), published in May 2022 by the University of Texas Press.

Last summer, as well, **Professor Eric Darnell Pritchard** was a guest on iHeartRadio’s podcast *Dressed: The History of Fashion*, [talking about the history of couture and the Fall/Winter 2022-2023 collections](#). More recently, Professor Pritchard contributed a critical commentary about designs by Patrick Kelly to the book *Delight: Selections from the Texas Fashion Collection*.

Finally, we are happy to announce that three of our faculty members - **Professor Bryan Hurt**, **Professor Sean Teuton**, and **Professor Kay Yandell** - were awarded Fulbright fellowships to do research at Cambridge University in Cambridge, England, for the 2022-2023 academic year. Dr. Yandell reports that she has been “researching fifteenth- through eighteenth-century interactions between Europeans and American indigenous peoples.”

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# Summer 2022 Graduates

We congratulate all of the following Summer 2022 graduates!!!

## B.A. Graduates

Lauren Dial  
Nikki Gross  
Erin Hoffman  
Quinn Maston  
Chance O'Neal

## Ph.D. Graduates

Christopher Borntrager  
Tessa Swehla

## Graduate Certificate in Technical Writing and Public Rhetorics

Jeremy Figgins

## Thanks to Our Students and Alumni

We want to thank our amazing alumni and current students who, repeatedly, show up to speak at various department events and provide other forms of support to our department community. They come in person; they join by Zoom; they make themselves available to those following in their footsteps. Some examples of these wonderful people are at right—six panelists for our “Writing Horror and Fantasy (On the Side)” event this past October: (on the screen) [Jeremy Billingsley](#)

(B.A. '12) and [Dylan Henderson](#) (M.A. '20); (at front) [Christopher Farris](#) (B.A. '20), [Andrea Rogers](#) (current Ph.D. student), [Bethany Cole](#) (M.A. '22), and [Jeff Ayers](#) (B.A. '11; M.A.T. '12).



## Stay Connected

Stay connected with the Department of English by liking [our Facebook page](#), and please consider [giving a gift](#) to support our current students at the University of Arkansas. Thank you!