

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

FACULTY, STUDENTS, ALUMNI
2025-2026



It's been a productive year for the Department of English, and we're proud to share our accomplishments!

First, we've selected a new chair, **Professor Monique Haley**. A former director of WMU's Institute for Intercultural and Anthropological Studies, Professor Haley holds a joint appointment with IIAS and the Department of Dance. Her teaching and research focus on African cultural values, ethos, and the importance of cultivating ritual in contemporary jazz dance pedagogy. We're excited about the creative thinking and passion for the arts that Professor Haley will bring to our department.



We've also hired a new faculty member, **Dr. Caroline Gottschalk**, who joins us as Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies. Coming to us from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, Dr. Gottschalk brings a unique knowledge base and skill set to our department: her teaching and research are based in experiential learning opportunities and community partnerships, supported by external funding, and result in public-facing interdisciplinary research and co-authored publications with her undergraduate and graduate students.

This past year, Professor Shonda Buchanan and Dr. Alen Hamza revived the **Gwen Frostic Reading Series**, with an impressive slate of visiting writers who are department alumni: Melba Joyce Boyd (Poet Laureate of Michigan), Traci Brimhall (Poet Laureate of Kansas), Kai Harris, and Iliana Rocha. The year's final event, co-sponsored with the University Center for the Humanities, featured award-winning poet and essayist Ross Gay.

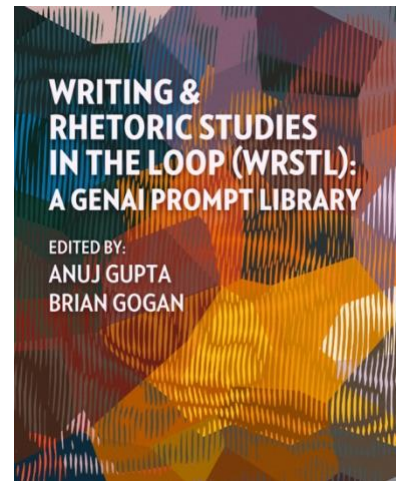
Our students also did some outstanding work this past year. An unprecedented 19 members of our **Sigma Tau Delta** chapter were accepted to present their creative and scholarly work at the organization's 2026 national convention in New Orleans, thanks to faculty advisor Dr. Adrienne Redding (see page 6). Another 15 graduate student staff members represented **Third Coast** magazine at this year's AWP (Association of Writers & Writing Programs) convention in Baltimore. We also had the largest number of English students in memory—10 undergraduates and 1 graduate student—invited to join **Phi Beta Kappa**, the nation's oldest and most prestigious honor society.

Please read on to learn more about our faculty, student, and alumni highlights this past year.

1. Faculty Recognition, Mentoring, & Outreach

Shonda Buchanan was recently named President of the Michigan Poetry Society. In March, she did a book signing at the AWP (Association of Writers & Writing Programs) national convention in Baltimore, gave the keynote address for the California Association of Teachers of English in Los Angeles, and participated in a World Poetry Day international YouTube broadcast via the Poetry Society of Virginia. In April, she recorded Instagram book recommendations for the Los Angeles Public Library, served as Guest Poet at Hampton University, and was a workshop leader and reader at the Pulp & Press Lit Arts Fest in Vicksburg, MI. In May, she'll be a panelist and workshop leader at the 2026 Santa Barbara Literary Festival. On top of all that, she won the 2026 Black Caucus of the American Library Association Best Poetry Award for *The Lost Songs of Nina Simone*.

Brian Gogan was named Co-Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Writing Analytics*. He also co-edited a collection titled *Writing and Rhetoric Studies in the Loop (WRSTL): A GenAI Prompt Library*, which will be published soon with the WAC Clearinghouse. In addition, Brian co-authored an article with alumna Savannah Xaver (PhD '23) titled "Composing Success: Rhetoric, Reality, and Photovoice," which will be published in *College English* this summer, and another with PhD student Jamie Bienhoff, titled "Tapping the Tree Prompt: A Quantitative Visual Analysis of Emerging Genre-ing," which has been accepted for publication in *Data-Driven Approaches to Generative AI and Writing Research*. Finally, Brian's co-authored chapter with Shannon McMorro (College of Health and Human Services), titled "Making Meaning of Wellbeing in First-Year Writing: A Photovoice Analysis of 1,461 Multimodal Compositions," has been accepted for publication in *Wellbeing and Writing across the Curriculum*.



Alen Hamza presented "Finding Hope Within Immigrant Experiences of War and Exile" at the Midwest MLA Conference in Milwaukee. He organized a panel on "Poetry and Poetics of War" at this year's Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference in Baltimore, at which he served as a moderator and presenter. Alongside KVCC's Julie Stotz-Ghosh, Alen moderated a discussion with poet Reginald Dwayne Betts during Betts's visit to Kalamazoo. In April, Alen was a featured reader at the Kalamazoo Poetry Festival. He also had work published in the literary journal *AGNI*.

Richard Katrovas won the 2024-2025 Faulkner Society Gold Medal in Poetry for his forthcoming collection *Riffs on My Mother's Soul: New and Selected*. He also organized the thirty-third consecutive offering of the Prague Summer Program for Writers to run for the month of July. This year's faculty will include Patricia Hampl, Mark Slouka, Robert Eversz, and Katrovas. Approximately two thousand established and aspiring creative writers have attended the PSP. Past faculties have included

some of the most celebrated American and international Anglophone literary artists of our time.

Todd Kuchta's essay "The Climate of Partition: Drought and Deluge in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*" appeared in *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. He also participated in a roundtable panel on "Anthropocene Forms: Precarious Imaginaries from Transnational South Asia" at the Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison, WI.

Jil Larson gave a lecture on "Artificial Intelligence and the Complexities of Love and Creativity in Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun*" for WMU's Center for the Study of Ethics in Society.

Meghann Meeusen presented "Technology, Ingenuity, and Illumination: Creating Far Away Spaces at the Walt Disney World Parks" at the Pop Culture Association Conference in Atlanta and "Dreaming of a Classroom Free from Grades: Utilizing Ungrading in English Classrooms" at the National Council of Teachers of English conference in Denver. She also served this year as Faculty Fellow for Graduate Teaching Assistant Success in the WMU Office of Teaching and Learning.

Chris Nagle gave a recent conference presentation on Race and Romanticism for the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies annual meeting in Philadelphia. His review, "The True, Blazing History of the Porter Sisters," just came out in the latest issue of *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*.

Adrienne Redding was honored with WMU's 2026 Timothy Ryan Hurttgam Faculty Award. Tim Hurttgam, a WMU student who died in 2007, was active in a number of local causes across Michigan. After his death, his parents created an endowment to honor his memory and the causes he loved. The endowment supports a faculty member from Political Science, History, English, and Environmental Studies on a rotating basis. The main criterion for the award is that the recipients are "making the world a better place."

Nate Robinson was accepted into the PhD program in Educational Leadership: Higher Education at WMU. He will continue to serve as our undergraduate advisor while pursuing his PhD.

John Saillant has continued his work on transatlantic abolitionism and race relations with three essays, "Antislavery, Amnesia, and the Archive? A Sermon on Paul in Captivity in Caesarea," (*New American Antiquarian*), "Fictions of Freedom: An English Antislavery Novel and the Art of Jean-Étienne Liotard, 'Le Peintre Turc,'" (*Huntington Library Quarterly*), and "Walking as Englishmen and Running as Africans in 1830s Trinidad" (*Nineteenth-Century Contexts*). "Walking" was his seminar project, crafted alongside his students, in a section of ENGL 6900, Research and Writing in the Profession. One of his earlier journal articles, "A Sailor's Kin: Faith, Sexuality, and Antislavery, 1840–1856," was reprinted in a new collection, *Kinship as Critical Idiom in Oceanic Studies* (Routledge). Following his move into modern literature, including teaching ENGL 3210 – American Literature II, in Spring 2025, he

will give a talk, “Sterling Brown, Son of a Preacher Man,” at the 2026 American Literature Association annual conference, and he has agreed to contribute a chapter on the phenomenon of apprenticeship to literary giants to an *Oxford Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*. “Son of a Preacher Man” was another seminar project, written alongside his students in ENGL 5220: Harlem Renaissance.

Grace Tiffany has a chapter forthcoming this year in the *Routledge Companion to Shakespeare and Bio-Adaptation*. Her article “Magic as Metaphor on the English Renaissance Stage,” adapted from her keynote address at the 2025 South Central Renaissance Association meeting, is forthcoming in the journal *Renascence*. Her paper “Macbeth, Herod, and the *Ars Moriendi*,” first presented at WMU’s 2024 Medieval Congress, appeared in volume 38 of *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* (2025). In November, 2025, she presented a paper on Ben Jonson and Cervantes at the MMLA (Midwest Modern Language Association) in Milwaukee. In March, 2026, she gave the annual lecture on Shakespeare and Christianity at Wheaton College in Illinois. And this past semester, Grace taught a Shakespeare course at the Lakeland Correctional Facility, in Coldwater, for WMU’s Higher Education for the Justice-Involved (HEJI) program. For more on HEJI, see the [cover article](#) of the latest *Encore* magazine.

Allen Webb has a couple of book chapters in press: “Youth Climate Activists Transforming Schools and Communities,” and “Climate Fiction and Student Critique of Fossil Capitalism in Our Time of Climate Emergency.” Allen gave a number of talks at this year’s annual National Council of Teachers of English conference in Denver and at the Michigan Council of Teachers of English conference in Lansing, where five of his students also presented.

Faculty Administrators

English department faculty continued to fill a number of prominent administrative roles at WMU in 2025-2026:

Jonathan Bush	Faculty Director, WMU Essential Studies
Cynthia Klekar-Cunningham	Director, School of Communication
Meghann Meeusen	Faculty Fellow, Teaching and Learning
Staci Perryman-Clark	Director, Institute for Intercultural and Anthropological Studies
Adrienne Redding	Faculty Fellow, Teaching and Learning
Nicolas Witschi	Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

2. Student Accomplishments, Awards, Milestones

Undergraduates

Janine Adamski (right, with Dr. Adrienne Redding and President Russ Kavalhuna) was the Department of English 2026 Presidential Scholar, the highest academic honor that WMU bestows on its undergraduate students. A senior English major in Literature and Language, Janine has a minor in Psychology and is currently in the Accelerated Master's in Teaching program. She is also the president of the Aspiring Educators of Michigan and this year's co-president of our Sigma Tau Delta chapter.



Emma Greathead's essay "The Summer My Stove Knobs Were Stolen," based on a project from Shonda Buchanan's Literary Publishing class, was accepted for publication in *Red Cedar Review*.

Anna Kavanaugh's essay "Her Own nature" received an honorable mention for the Association of Writers and Writing Programs' 2026 Intro Journals Project.

Ashlyn Merrit received an internship with Seasons Press in Kalamazoo, thanks to work she did in Shonda Buchana's Literary Publishing class.

Phi Beta Kappa Undergraduate Invitees

Janine Adamski
Ava Bos
Kyra Cochran
Emily DeLano
Anna Kavanaugh
Taylor Mroz
Zoe Presnal
Olivia Reeder
Madalyn Rockwell
Abby Ware

Third Coast Undergraduate Interns (Spring 2026)

Nora Clement
Bridget Hesse
Khloe Kempker
Rosey Minnick
Cash Rabley

Sigma Tau Delta Members Accepted to Present at 2026 National Convention

Janine Adamski	The Breakup Saga (Poetry)
Shahana Afsar	Of Half Cut Lemons (Poetry)
Lucas Barnes	Guilt Worth Saving (Prose Fiction)
Phoebe Brand	The Wife of Bath (Prose Fiction)
Chris Colegrove	The Nebulousness of Truth: How the Act of Translation Reflects the Themes of Michaux's <i>Plume</i> (Critical Essay)
Emily Daniel	Attempting Home (Poetry) – <i>Won Second Place for Isabel Sparks President's Award for Original Poetry</i>
James Edgeworth	Latency Dies by the Final Direction (Poetry)
Devan Edwards	Say Again (Prose Fiction)
Jenna Ellis	Facing the Poppies (Prose Fiction)
Hayden Gough	The Trusting of a Stranger (Prose Fiction)
Grey Halverson	I Don't Know Why My Friends Stopped Playing Pretend with Me (Poetry) – <i>Won Honorable Mention for Stemmler/Dennis LGBT& Award for Creative Work</i>
Isabella Hamade	You Are Welcome to the Room (Poetry)
Amelia Koch	Female Autonomy and Maternal Figures in <i>Frankenstein</i> (Critical Essay)
Shayne Miller	To the Girl in the Mirror (Poetry)
Ella Reynolds	"Say Yes to Life": The Intersection of Misogyny and Internalized Homophobia in the 1950s Society in James Baldwin's <i>Giovanni's Room</i> (Critical Essay)
Juliana Smith	"I'll Write 'til I'm Right with God": Confessional Poetry in Kendrick Lamar's <i>To Pimp a Butterfly</i> (Critical Essay) – <i>Won Honorable Mention for Isabel Sparks President's Award for Children's Literature, Film, Popular Culture</i>
George Stoy	Queer is for a True America (Poetry)
Bailey Tenney	Of Life and Death (Poetry)
Elliot VerLee	Retellings and Reflections (Poetry)



Sigma Tau Delta in NOLA!

Members of our Alpha Nu Pi chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, with faculty advisor Dr. Adrienne Redding, at the organization's national conference in New Orleans last March.

Graduate Students

Hannah Arvanigian (MFA – Poetry) published her first poetry collection, *Milk, Mess, and Magic*, with Kelsay Books in April. Her second book, *Inner Spaced*, is forthcoming in 2027 with Finishing Line Press. Hannah was featured in [a September article for Voyage Michigan magazine](#).

Heather Augustyn (PhD – Creative Writing – Nonfiction) is the winner of the department's 2026 Edward Galligan Memorial Scholarship for achievement and promise in the study of American Literature. She also won Gwen Frostic Graduate Award in Creative Nonfiction for her personal narrative "In the Shadow of the Mills," which is forthcoming in the journal *glassworks*. Heather has an article forthcoming in the *CLR James Journal*, and she will be presenting an essay about Claude McKay and Cab Calloway at this year's American Literature Association conference.

Fez Avery (PhD – Creative Writing – Poetry) published poems in *Passages North*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *The Shore*, *149 Review*, and *swamp pink*. His poem "I Am Going to Find the Finest Rotisserie Chicken" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His debut poetry collection, *CLAYBOY* (forthcoming from Write Bloody Publishing) won the Jack McCarthy Book Prize.

Latifa Ayad-Hall (PhD – Creative Writing – Fiction) recently defended her dissertation, a short story collection titled *WATER, MUD, INK, BLOOD*. She was awarded a 2026 All-University Graduate Teaching Effectiveness Award for her exceptional contribution to WMU's teaching mission, as well as a Gwen Frostic Graduate Award in Fiction. Latifa organized a panel on Literary Writers and Genre Fiction for the 2026 Association of Writers & Writing Professionals Conference. She is completing her term as Editor-in-Chief of *Third Coast* magazine, and she will begin a tenure track position with Utah Valley State University this fall.

Kyle Battle (PhD – Creative Writing – Poetry) published a Creative Nonfiction essay in *Vita Poetica* and [an article on building literary community](#) — featuring Shonda Buchanan, Jon Riccio, and Alyssa Jewell — for the recurring column "The Big Conversation" in the *AWP Writer's Chronicle*. Kyle has accepted the position of Editor-in-Chief for *Third Coast* magazine for 2026-2027.

Jamie Bienhoff (PhD – Literature) was awarded a 2026 All-University Graduate Research and Creative Scholar Award for her exceptional contribution to WMU's scholarly and artistic mission. This is her second All-University award, after winning one of last year's Teaching Effectiveness Awards. This year she presented at the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts and at the Children's Literature Association conference and published a book review in *European Comic Art*. Jamie also has several publications forthcoming about artificial intelligence and education.

Emily Brown (PhD – Literature) is a winner of the department's 2026 Graduate Teaching Effectiveness Award. Emily's dissertation explores Aeneas's descendent Brutus as the founder of Britain in middle English literature.

Emily Colby (PhD – Creative Writing – Poetry) recently published poems in the *Walloon Writer's Review* and *Barstow & Grand*. She served this year as an Assistant Director of First Year Writing.

Chris Colegrove (PhD – Creative Writing – Fiction) has a flash fiction piece forthcoming in *Half and One*, and he had a flash nonfiction piece accepted in *The Argyle Literary Magazine*.

Emily Daniel (MFA – Poetry) won Gwen Frostic Graduate Awards in both Poetry and Creative Nonfiction this year, as well as a department Graduate Teaching Effectiveness Award and an All-University Research and Creative Scholar Award for her exceptional contribution to WMU's scholarly and artistic mission. She published poems this year in *Rogue Agent*, *Stirring*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and *Pinyon*. Another poem, published in *The Porter House Review*, was nominated for Best of the Net. Emily has additional poems forthcoming in *Watershed Review*, *Clarion Poetry*, and *Unbroken Journal*.

Kristen Field (PhD – Creative Writing – Playwriting) is a winner of the department's 2026 Graduate Research and Creative Scholar Award, as well as a Gwen Frostic Graduate Playwriting Award, her third. Kristen's full-length play *sex/work* received its world premiere at Playhouse on the Square in Memphis, Tennessee, and she produced a short play festival at last year's Dormouse Theatre that showcased the work of current and former WMU writers. Kristen has been offered a residency at Renaissance Theatreworks in Milwaukee.

Sophia Khan (PhD – Creative Writing – Fiction) will defend her dissertation, a prose retelling of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* set in pandemic-era Pakistan, in May. She will also be concluding her roles as Managing Editor of *Third Coast* magazine and Assistant Director of First Year Writing. This past year, Sophia organized a successful open mic reading series for WMU undergraduates and co-organized the Michigan Magic Symposium for sci-fi and fantasy writing. She also published work in *The Indiana Review*, *action/spectacle*, and an anthology of twenty-first century Pakistani short stories in English with Alhamra Publishing.



Fun at AWP!

English graduate students Joseph Niduaza, Sophia Khan, Donald Pasmore, Latifa Ayad-Hall, and Kyle Battle with Professor Shonda Buchanan at this year's Association of Writers & Writing Professionals conference in Baltimore.

Tayler Mercil (MFA – Fiction) has poems forthcoming in *Making Waves* and *Third Wednesday*. She is the winner of the College of Education and Human Development's 2026 Strengthening Community Connections Award and has been named an adviser for the College's new chapter of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America.

Joseph Niduaza (PhD – Creative Writing – Fiction) won a 2026 Gwen Frostic Graduate Award in Fiction and was recently awarded a 2026-2027 Gwen Frostic Doctoral Fellowship. He is currently writing his dissertation, a novel titled *Anamnesis*. His most recent published story appeared in *Blood+Honey*.

Donald Pasmore (MFA – Poetry) won a 2026 Gwen Frostic Graduate Award in Poetry. His debut chapbook, "Dulled Bodies," was a semi-finalist for the 2025 Iron Horse Literary Review Chapbook Contest. His work is recently published or forthcoming in *The Laurel Review*, *storySouth*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Sugar House Review*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *The Shore Poetry*.

Syeda Rizvi (PhD – Literature) had her essay "Gender Myths in the *Southern Literary Messenger* and Edgar Allen Poe's Subversive Responses in 'Morella' and 'Ligeia'" published in *The Edgar Allen Poe Review*. She was also invited to join Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and most prestigious honor society.

Sam Ruff (MFA – Poetry) was recently named Managing Editor of *Third Coast* magazine and Student Coordinator for the 2026-2027 Gwen Frostic Reading Series. She won a 2026 Gwen Frostic Graduate Award in Playwriting.

Ellyn Ruhlmann (PhD – Literature) published an article in *GradEdge*, the newsletter for the Council of Graduate Schools. "Speaking the Unspoken: Lessons Learned from an ABD Student" shares Ellen's experiences working on the WMU Graduate College's COMPASS project.

Amanda Scott (PhD – Creative Writing – Fiction) has been accepted into the prestigious Sewanee Writers' Conference for their summer 2026 session in fiction, where she will be workshopping her novel-in-progress. Amanda has also been selected to be a writer-in-residence at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, VT. Her two-week residency will take place this summer.

Morgan Shiver (PhD – Literature) recently defended her dissertation, "Recognizing and Theorizing the Older Other in Children's Literature and Media." This fall she will begin a tenure track position as assistant professor of English Pedagogy at Middle Tennessee State University. Morgan recently published "Of Metaphors and Measurements: Cross-Disciplinary Learning in K-8 English Language Arts and Mathematics" in the *New Jersey English Journal*. She also has essays forthcoming in the *Journal of Children in Popular Culture* and *Sphaira: Journal of Arts and Humanities*.

Alyssa Start (MFA – Poetry) published poems in *Moon City Review* and *Oyster River Pages*, and she has another forthcoming in *1-70 Review*. She served as the Coordinator for this past year’s revived Gwen Frostic Reading Series.

Justin Timmerman (MFA – Fiction) published in *Cathexis Northwest Press* and has an autoethnography forthcoming.

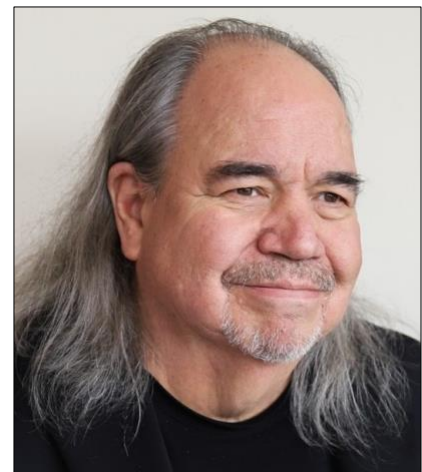
3. Alumni Achievements

Luanne Castle (MA, MFA) has published a new hybrid flash memoir collection, *Scrap: Salvaging a Family*, which primarily takes place in Kalamazoo, where she grew up. *Kirkus Reviews* calls it “a powerful, painful family saga that slowly gives way to hard-won understanding. A richly detailed, harrowing account of household mayhem and the struggle to forgive.” Luanne has been a Fellow at the Center for Ideas and Society at the University of California, Riverside, and now lives with her husband and three cats in Arizona along a wildlife corridor.

Alyssa Jewell (PhD '24) was hired as assistant professor of English at Grand Rapids Community College.

Ephraim Scott Summers (PhD '16), currently an associate professor of English at Winthrop University in South Carolina, has a new book of poems about living with chronic illness. *Diabetic Gumdrops* was written in the early days of his diagnosis with type-one diabetes and uses the ode form to find hope and joy in the experience of medical challenges. Readers will find him singing praise songs to needles, to the spouses of diabetics, to his phlebotomist, to tubing down a mountain stream, to his father’s guitar, to apocalypse Mondays, to broccoli, and even to how difficult it must be for doctors to deliver bad news. Pulitzer Prize winner Jericho Brown writes “I’m completely jealous of the odes that make *Diabetic Gumdrops* such a passionate and profound book of poems on love, loss, and physical well-being.”

Mark Turcotte (MFA '08) was named sixth Poet Laureate of the state of Illinois in 2025. Mark is Distinguished-Writer-in-Residence in the English Department at DePaul University and the author of *The Feathered Heart* (1998); *Songs of Our Ancestors* (1995); a chapbook, *Road Noise* (1998); *Le Chant de la Route* (bilingual, 2001); and *Exploding Chippewas* (2002). His work has been widely published and anthologized.



This now makes three WMU English alumni who are current state Poets Laureate, following Traci Brimhall (PhD '14) of Kansas and Melba Joyce Boyd (BA '71, MA '72) of Michigan.