



UW MADISON ENGLISH ANNOTATIONS



Letter from the Chair

"What are you doing with your English degree?"

Spring Celebrations!

2022-2023 Award Recipients

**2023 Madison Literature and Language
Conference**

Remembering Susan Stanford Friedman

A Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends,

Graduation was last week, and it was wonderful to see students in gowns and mortarboards walking around campus with their families. One hundred and seven seniors graduated with an English major this year, and we sent them off with many cheers—and with impressive skills in writing, research, analysis, and connection-making.

Now, relative quiet has descended on campus, but things are not so quiet in the English Department. Instructors are busily preparing for summer courses, faculty and graduate students are off to archives and research sites, and English majors are beginning internships in Madison and around the country. The pages of this newsletter showcase just a small portion of the energy spreading outward from Helen C. White Hall. All of this activity happens, in part, because of people like you who support the department. We are immensely grateful for your commitment to the good work happening in English.

Speaking of good work: this coming year, the University will celebrate its 175th anniversary. For our part of the celebration, the English Department will sponsor research aimed at learning more about our history, particularly the contributions made by students during their time on campus and in subsequent years. Starting next spring, you'll see the results of that work here in *Annotations* and on our website and social media.

I've already gotten a head start on the project: Helen C. White's faculty file is sitting on my desk, and I have taken little breaks to learn about her trajectory from graduate student to chair of the English Department—and the first female full professor in the College of Letters and Science! I look forward to sharing more of what I learn from her file and others' in future newsletters.

We were so glad that many of you replied to my last letter and shared what you've done with your English major (see the next pages for some examples). This time, we hope those of you who are alumni will tell us stories about your time on campus: What were your classes like? How did you participate in campus life (or major campus events)? What surprises did you encounter? What did you appreciate about your favorite teacher? What memories connect you to UW-Madison?

As we wrap up the 2022–2023 school year, we look forward to hearing more from you about your years at Madison!

Forward!

Christa

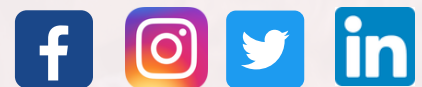


Professor Christa Olson
Chair of the English Department

Stay connected with the English Department!

We love hearing from alumni! If you have any questions or comments about this issue of *Annotations*, please contact us at webadmin@english.wisc.edu.

We would also love for you to follow us on social media for updates on department life. Click the icons below to visit our social media pages.

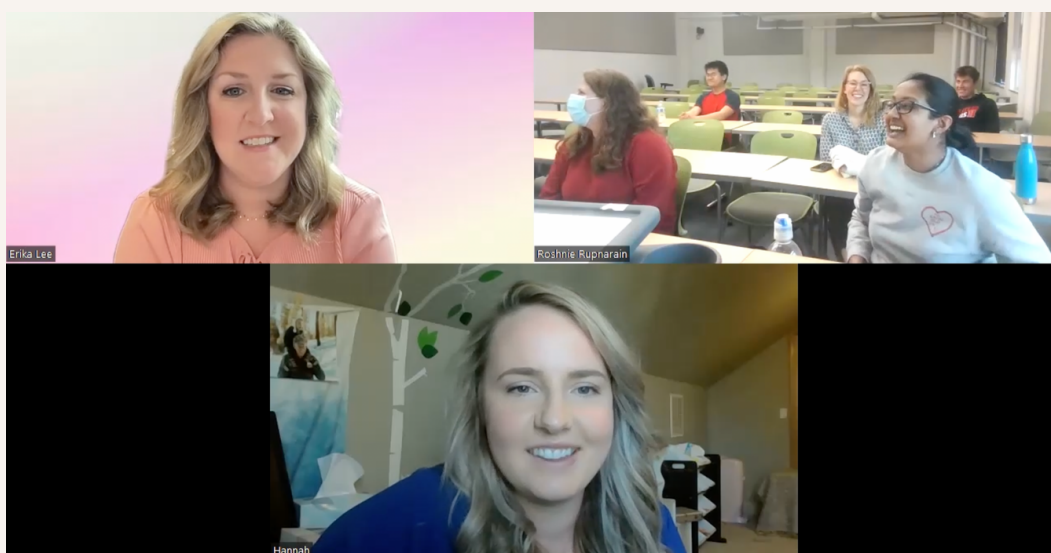




LAST ISSUE WE ASKED...

"What are you doing with your English degree?"

Are you curious about what our English majors are doing after graduation? In our last newsletter, department chair Dr. Christa Olson asked alumni to reach out telling us what they were doing with their English major. Responses to the newsletter's query were striking for the breadth of industries and careers our alumni represent.



Rafe Offer graduated in 1985 with a dual degree in English and Political Science; a foundation in English helped him as an entrepreneur, giving him the tools to communicate effectively and consider different solutions and methods. Jan Castro, who majored in English and History, has worked as an author, curator, lecturer, and editor over the course of her career and has conducted interviews with and written essays on dozens of artists, including Isabel Allende, Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, and Gabriel Garcia Màrquez. Jon Grand, whose undergraduate degree was in English literature, entered the Water Resources Management Program at the University of Wisconsin before going on to work at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Rob Casper did his MFA at UW and currently works as the head of poetry and literature in the Literary Initiatives Office at the Library of Congress. Jonah E. Bromwich, a 2011 graduate of the English Department, is a Pulitzer-nominated journalist covering criminal justice for *The New York Times*. Ellen Samuelson Young, graduating in 1987 with degrees in English and Cultural Anthropology, has been involved in public-policy making and legislative strategizing on local and national levels, including campaign experience from caucus level to fundraising.

1963 grad Bette Bearden credits her English major with preparing her for Harvard Law School, with an English degree allowing her to hone her clarity of expression and create organized analytical arguments. Philip Blackwell, after graduating with a major in English in 1966, went on to pursue a master's degree in theological studies. "For 45 years words were essential to me," wrote Blackwell, "probably 2500 sermons for Sundays, homilies for weddings and funerals, weekly newsletters, nightly committee meetings, occasional public discussions, and perhaps most difficult for finding the right words, personal conversations at times of loss and disappointment."



The English Department recently honored three young alumni who have demonstrated exceptional success in their chosen field within the first ten years after obtaining their degree. This year's recipients of the Early Career Alumni Award were Erika Lee, BA English 2014, an attorney and the Assistant Director of New Media Rights; Devin Lowe, BA English (Creative Writing) 2016, the Manager of Development Communications for the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee; and Hannah Nelson, BA English (Creative Writing) 2015, a critically-acclaimed writer of speculative fiction.

Despite the breadth of careers represented, a common thread emerged: many alumni stressed the tangible as well as the intangible benefits of the study of literature and writing. From starting book clubs that resulted in lifelong friendships to engaging in critical conversations about social problems and ways to solve them, an English degree fosters empathy, which enables human beings to see things from someone else's point of view and to care about perspectives different from their own.



SPRING CELEBRATIONS!



At our award ceremony this spring, some of our many exceptional graduating English majors were also recognized for their achievements. We also recognized the three recipients of our early career alumni award. Thank you to the benefactors of the scholarships and awards we have awarded this past year! Your generosity is sincerely appreciated.



Gifts of any size are most welcome and gratefully received. All our funds welcome contributions and bequests from alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations.

To give securely online, please visit supportuw.org/giveto/english.

EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

This year, the English Department continued our tradition of winning campus-wide teaching awards



Photo courtesy of
Althea Dotzour

Professor **Mark Vareschi** is the 2023 recipient of the **William H. Kiekhofers Teaching Award**. Professor Vareschi specializes in eighteenth-century British literature, a topic that might initially seem intimidating to many students. He asks students to connect to the material, however, by “dwelling in the weirdness and unfamiliarity” of such texts.

“I think a lot of critical insights can come from just recognizing that this is a time that is distinct from our own,” said Vareschi. “But I also point out that within that unfamiliarity, we’re also recognizing, if not similarities, at least precursors to our own present. A Pynchon or Joyce novel actually have more similarities than differences to eighteenth-century novels. So I’m really interested in dwelling on that weirdness and then actually making it approachable.”

Vareschi’s students attest to the success of his teaching strategies, noting that his ability to connect the specific topic of the course to contemporary texts and modern issues made the course especially engaging.

“While both courses were rooted in and classified as eighteenth-century literature, Dr. Vareschi did not limit the scope of the courses solely to literature and criticism from that century. The foundational pieces of eighteenth-century fiction were complemented by a series of twentieth- and twenty-first-century essays and fiction,” explained former student Kelsey Stanczak. “This exploration of theme throughout the centuries laid the groundwork for my passion for literary theory and Romantic literature.”

Students also noted that Professor Vareschi’s enthusiasm for the class material, as well as his supportive approach to teaching writing, transformed their relationship to literary studies and academic writing.

"With Professor Vareschi, each writing assignment is an opportunity to hone your skills as an author; it is not an apathetically-motivated Herculean task lacking long-term benefit," said former student MK Denton. "I no longer see papers as a source of anxiety and distress. Now, I see them as an opportunity to improve as a writer. I owe this positive mindset transformation entirely to Professor Vareschi."

Both MK and Kelsey took multiple courses with Vareschi, a testament to his transformative teaching. To Vareschi, the ability to how see students grow from one semester to the next is one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching at UW.

"I try to talk to my students a lot about what our goal in the English classroom is and it's primarily just getting good at noticing stuff: patterns, rhetoric, odd syntax, odd diction - we're training how to notice things and then eventually trying to get from observation to developing an argument," said Vareschi. "When I've had students over a couple different courses, they know the types of questions we ask and they start formulating their own questions and offering their own arguments and theories. Ultimately we want independent thinkers and students with independent critical sensibilities so it's really exciting to see that happening."

PhD Candidate **Sara Gabler Thomas** is the recipient of a **Capstone PhD Teaching Award**. This award recognizes TAs who have performed as outstanding teachers throughout their UW–Madison tenure.



Sara has regularly taught Intro to College Composition as well as been a teaching assistant for literature courses such as Wild, Threatened, and Toxic; and Revolutions and Counterrevolutions.

"My teaching philosophy is grounded in two principles: inspire curiosity and foster collaborative thinking," Sara said. She added that curiosity and collaboration come together, such as when a student of hers reflected, "When our group caught hold of a thread beyond the text, we were given the time to discuss it further...It felt like all of us were rediscovering the text, viewing it differently because of the multiple perspectives represented."

STAFF EXCELLENCE

Our staff members were recognized for their leadership and excellence with campus-wide awards

Spring Sherrod, Department Manager **Winner of an Outstanding Woman of Color Award**

The Outstanding Woman of Color Award recognizes honorees whose advocacy, activism, and/or scholarship has positively transformed their organizations and/or community, and whose efforts advance equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging for people of color.

Spring Sherrod has led the UW–Madison Department of English as Department Manager since 2004. Spring holds a Master of Science in Education from the University of Wisconsin. In her position, she brings leadership to a large and academically diverse department with a staff of 40+ faculty, 40+ academic staff, 120+ graduate student employees, about 10 administrative staff, and annual expenditures of more than \$10 million. Spring advises the chair and the department in matters of administrative management, budgeting and financial management, human resources, and information technology management. She also supervises a staff of seven.

In 2018, Sherrod was one of the university members who visibly and determinedly pushed for renaming two Union facilities that bore the name of men who belonged to a UW–Madison campus group operating under the name Ku Klux Klan. Sherrod has also pushed the department to make concrete investments to support undergraduate and graduate students of color. She ensured that students entering the English PhD via a bridge from the African American Studies MA would receive the same level of funding as their peers earning an MA in English.



Andrew Leinberger, IT Specialist

Winner of an L&S University Staff Award

L&S University Staff Awards honor staff members for their excellence in the following areas: effectiveness, innovation, creativity, originality, leadership, climate, and service to the university. We asked Andrew to share some insights on his role at the English Department.



What's one of the most rewarding or worthwhile aspects of your job?

The joy and relief I can give to people when an issue they thought would ruin their day or sometimes months/years of work can be fixed. In academia people have so much of their life/career saved on that laptop, and being able to reassure them or help them recover something they thought was lost. It's a great feeling.

What are some of the challenges that have come up in your role?

I would say the most challenging would be the faster need to implement new systems. With the pandemic, programs like Zoom or more online usage of Canvas very quickly became the most important items to know. It usually knocks you on your heels a bit because as an IT person you should be the one who users go to for answers. Programs like English 100 where you have quite a few courses with so many different teachers would have been way more difficult to go remote without the work staff/professors already did in aggregating all the information needed.

What is something that the general public might not know about IT work that you think is interesting?

You actually have to read quite a lot in IT and when you read you really have to read not just skimming. There are so many new systems, new coding rules, and updated logs you have to go through. It helps to know so I'm the first person to know about a change or something that comes along.

What's your favorite part about working in the English department?

The people I interact with every day. I have worked at so many other IT jobs from private companies, national associations, and state departments and met many great people. But truly the people from the English department are the most appreciative and kind I've known.

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Our prolific faculty have won an amazing number of national fellowships, grants, and campus-wide awards. Here is just a sampling of the prestigious awards won by faculty this year.

Guggenheim Fellowship

Professor Elizabeth B. Bearden has been selected as a 2023 Guggenheim Fellow in Early Modern Studies. She joins 171 other scholars, scientists, writers, and artists from around the country, all chosen by a rigorous application and peer review process out of almost 2,500 applicants.

Professor Bearden's current project, titled "Crip Authority: Disability and the Art of Consolation in the Renaissance" (under contract, University of Michigan Press), builds on insights she gleaned from her award-winning monograph *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability* (University of Michigan Press, 2019). This project brings to light premodern disability narratives, or first-person narrative accounts of the lived experience of disability. It considers how early modern writers with disabilities draw on the ancient genre of consolation—texts that articulate advantages in adversities including mental and physical disability—to enhance their writerly authority.



National Endowment for the Humanities Grant

Professor Caroline Gottschalk Druschke and four colleagues won a grant for a project titled: "Whose Land Was 'Granted' to the Land Grant? Teaching Indigenous Dispossession in Wisconsin and Beyond." The grant will help fund an 18-month project to develop curricular modules focused on the 1862 expropriation of Native American lands in Wisconsin and their redistribution to land-grant universities in the state and nationwide.



National Endowment for the Humanities Grant

Professor Russ Castronovo won a fellowship for a project titled "American Insecurity and the Origins of Vulnerability." This fellowship will help fund the research and writing for a book examining how early American conceptions of national security are expressed in its literature and other media.



Vilas Early Career Professorship

Professor Ainehi Edoro was awarded a Vilas Early Career Professorship. This award recognizes research and teaching excellence in faculty who are in relatively early stages in their careers.



Vilas Associate Award

Professor Jacee Cho has been awarded a Vilas Associate Award for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years. This award recognizes new and on-going research of the highest quality and significance.



Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professorship

Professor Theresa Delgadillo has been named a Vilas Distinguished Professor. This professorship is among the most prestigious awards granted by the university and provides faculty with generous research funding.



PEN Open Book Award Finalist

Professor Paul Tran's 2022 poetry collection *All the Flowers Kneeling* has been named a finalist for the PEN Open Book Award. This award invites book submissions by authors of color and represents PEN America's commitment to racial and ethnic diversity within the literary and publishing communities.



EARLY CAREER ALUMNI AWARD

The Early Career Alumni Award recognizes UW–Madison English alumni who have demonstrated exceptional success in their chosen field within the first ten years after obtaining their degree. This can be demonstrated in several ways. Examples include, but are not limited to, professional achievements, contributions to society, service, or support of the University of Wisconsin. The honorees demonstrate the value that their English education has had on their lives and the rewarding paths that an English major may take initially upon graduation.

Erika Lee

Erika is an attorney and the Assistant Director of New Media Rights, a nonprofit legal clinic that provides free and low-cost legal services to creators, entrepreneurs, and internet users whose projects require specialized internet, intellectual property, privacy, media and entertainment law expertise. Erika also develops educational resources for New Media Rights and engages in public policy advocacy in regulatory proceedings at the Copyright Office. She is also an adjunct professor for California Western School of Law.

Erika received her Juris Doctorate from California Western School of Law, and her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. While obtaining her undergraduate degree, Erika worked for four years in the marketing department of Overture Center for the Arts in Madison, Wisconsin, where she assisted in programming projects and events that engaged local communities with the arts and promoted national Broadway and non-Broadway touring productions.



Devin Lowe



Devin Lowe is a storyteller from Apple Valley, Minnesota. She attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and worked for an engineering professor, the Wisconsin School of Business, the Wisconsin Union and University Communications while pursuing degrees in journalism, strategic communication and English.

In 2017, she started at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee as the Development Writer, crafting impact stories that show how philanthropic support changes the lives of Team USA athletes. She now produces communications touchpoints for donors at every giving level as the Manager, Development Communications. She is most passionate about inspiring those around her and sharing stories about how sport unifies, uplifts, and transforms people and communities.

Hannah Nelson

Hannah Nelson (pen name H.J. Nelson) is an Idaho native who graduated from the University of Wisconsin with degrees in creative writing and wildlife biology. She began writing on Wattpad in 2015, where her story *The Last She* garnered over 12 million reads. It became one of the most read Science Fiction stories on Wattpad in 2016 and 2017 and was acquired by Wattpad Books for publication as a three-book series.



Since then, Nelson has had her work optioned for television by Sony and translated for publication into French and Italian. *The Last She* and *The Last City* are available now, and the third book in the series, *The Last Creation*, will be published in 2024.

MadLit 2023

The 2023 Madison Literature and Language conference is an annual gathering of early career scholars hosted by the English Department at UW-Madison and organized by English graduate students

On April 15-16, the organizers of the Madison Literature and Language Conference, or MadLit, hosted by the UW English Department, welcomed student presenters from all over the world to deliver papers both in-person and virtually on the theme of **Ephemerals**.

Ephemerals, wildflowers marked by short life cycles, are the first plants to seed and grow in the new bare ground after a wildfire. Fast germinating, they spend most of their lives in a rhizomic state of seeded dormancy, waiting for ideal conditions to flourish. Ephemerals emerge, (re)produce, adapt, wait for the right material conditions, and bloom. Transitory, they fail and fade off, gather resources, reemerge.




Inspired by the way newness inheres within ephemeral thinking, organizers drew on the scholarship of José Esteban Muñoz:

I want to take some time to reflect on what I'm calling ephemera as a modality of anti-rigor and anti-evidence that, far from filtering materiality out of cultural studies, reformulates and expands our understandings of materiality...it is all of those things that remain after a performance, a kind of evidence of what has transpired but certainly not the thing itself...it is interested in following traces, glimmers, residues, specks of things.

UW-Madison's 2023 MadLit Conference explored the notion of ephemerals in relation to literary studies, practices, methodologies, and their ephemera (e.g. works that contend with non-literary forms such as film and television, music, video games, drama, digital and visual culture, and so on). Participants asked what happens to modes of knowledge production when this ephemeral approach is celebrated and what can be learned from embracing the transitory and transformative nature of literary work.

On Day One of the conference, MadLit organizers developed in-person working sessions based on two modes of desired writing feedback: "Dissertation Chapters," and "Papers." The workshops aimed to provide graduate students with the opportunity to intensively workshop a conference paper or one of their dissertation chapters with a panel of peers whose expertise closely matched the topic of the chapter and who were able to provide the highest quality feedback.






Day Two of the conference offered traditional panel presentations delivered both virtually and in-person at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Panel topics included Queer Receptions, Medieval Sounds, Kinship and Care, and more.

For a panel on Digital Materialisms, moderated by Assistant Professor of English and African Cultural Studies Dr. Ainehi Edoro, participants considered topics at the intersection of translation, new media, literature, and cognition. Participants discussed their respective understandings of what should be the core object of digital, material, and linguistic analyses, and Dr. Edoro urged speakers to untangle some of the principal theoretical propositions that compose the field of digital materialism.

A highlight of the weekend was MadLit's first undergraduate research panel, which featured the scholarship of junior Ria Dinghra and sophomores Kai Li and Natalie Bercutt (below). Moderated by Ph.D. student Cecilia Alfonso-Stokes, the panel provided undergraduates with invaluable paper delivery and presentation experience while promoting interaction between students and faculty. Dinghra, Li, and Bercutt fielded questions during the Q&A that allowed them to situate their interventions within the wider scholarly ecology of their research topics.





MadLit also hosted a panel on creative interventions that ranged from poetry and short fiction to playwriting. Helen Smith, a third-year Ph.D. student in Literary Studies at UW-Madison, shared poetry that models found documents. David Simes, a Ph.D. student at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, drew on a series of letters written by his grandfather to his grandmother to highlight how embracing and utilizing ephemera in theatrical productions allows for a deeper understanding of those we know, and those we wish to have known. Charlie Hope-D'Anieri, an independent journalist and writer, shared portions of his short fiction "Flowers," a work whose affective registers were found in examinations and appreciations of life's minutiae, either as joy in vital fulfillment or poignant recognition of the potential for life where it is inhibited.

The conference was capped off by a keynote address by Dr. Edgar Garcia of the University of Chicago (below). Dr. Garcia is a poet and scholar of the poetics and cultures of the Americas. He is the author of *Skins of Columbus: A Dream Ethnography* (Fence Books, 2019) and *Signs of the Americas: A Poetics of Pictography, Hieroglyphs, and Khipu* (University of Chicago Press, 2020). His MadLit address discussed the relation between divination and migration, and how these two things come together as twinned modes of risk analysis in scenes of temporal crisis.

Thank you to all organizers and participants for making MadLit a huge success!





Remembering SUSAN STANFORD FRIEDMAN 1943-2023

Susan Stanford Friedman, Virginia Woolf Professor Emerita of English and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, died February 26th at her home in Madison at age 79.

Professor Friedman was a trailblazing scholar, a leader recognized worldwide for her groundbreaking research, and a dedicated teacher and adviser to generations of UW undergraduate and graduate students. Professor Friedman's contributions as a mentor and friend were felt by the great many people with whom she shared the gift of her brilliance, wisdom, humor and unfailing support.

The former chair of the Department of English, past director of the Institute for Research in the Humanities, one of the founding members of the UW-Madison Women's Studies Program in 1975, and the author of four books and over eighty articles and book chapters, Professor Friedman was a towering figure in the fields of literary studies, gender studies, modernism, cultural theory, migration/diaspora studies, world literatures, and postcolonial studies.

Professor Friedman's influence on the fields of literary studies and gender studies was enormous, her contributions honored over the course of her career with named Professorships, the Perkins Prize for Best Book in Narrative Studies, the Wayne C. Booth Award for Lifetime Achievement in Narrative Studies, and numerous teaching awards. Known for recasting modernity as a networked, circulating, and recurrent phenomenon, she radically revised the scope of modernist critique and opened the practice to more integrated and interdisciplinary study.

Professor Friedman brought the Twentieth Century poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) back into critical conversation within the modernist literary landscape and in her groundbreaking work on feminist theory proposed a thoroughly multiculturalist and geopolitical definition of feminism.

Over the course of her career she lectured around the world, and her work has been translated into Chinese, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Serbian, and Spanish. Professor Friedman's more recent work turned towards Oceania and the islands and archipelagos of the Pacific, bringing into sharp focus the ecologically inflected planetarity and politics of women poets as she uncovered both the human and non-human dimensions of modernity across scales large and small, distant and proximate.

Her monograph *Sisters of Scheherazade: Religion, Diaspora, and Contemporary Muslim Women's Writing*, to be published posthumously by Columbia UP and edited by B. Venkat Mani, Professor of German and World Literatures at UW-Madison, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, Dean of Humanities and Professor of English at Rutgers University, explores the spectrum of Muslim feminisms, examines the impact of migration and diaspora on gender and Muslim identity, and uses intersectional analysis to see how religion interacts with identity categories like gender, race, class, sexuality, and national origin.

The English Department and the larger University of Wisconsin community mourn the loss of a beloved colleague, mentor, and friend and we send our heartfelt condolences to her family.