

Cheers From the Chair

Dear Colleagues and Coworkers,

Welcome to the 2023 Undergraduate Issue of Reading Matters! This issue marks the first year of **Kaveh Akbar's** term as Director of the ECW Major, and we can already see the benefits of his inspirational leadership. We also welcome the arrival of **Christine Norquest**, who joins **Kate Torno** as Academic Advisor to our undergraduate majors. And we celebrate, with some sadness, the retirements of **Anne Stapleton**, who has sponsored our ATI chapter with distinction and dedication, and **Phillip Round**, who has steadfastly directed our Undergraduate Program this year. We will miss them both! Also indispensable and inspirational this year have been **Doris Witt**, as Director of our Honors Program, and **Matthew Brown**, as Chair of the Scholarships Committee. My heartfelt gratitude to all.

Word to the English front desk staff, who directed traffic at our busy intersection: **Mikey Waller, Spencer Yost-Wolff Braja Servin, Lauren Sanyal, Sam Mayer, and Grace Champagne**; and to the dedicated corps of Undergraduate Ambassadors: **Kyler Johnson, Jalen Carter, Jacqueline Wahl, Ellen Fox, Natalie Muglia, M Clark, Alexandra Kautzman, Ella Rupe, Summer Carlson, Vaishnavi Kolluru, and Madison Johnson**.

And, finally, Kudos to the Class of 2023: you have survived and thrived through unprecedented challenges while achieving wonderful things, as this issue documents. Please know that we will support and cherish you wherever you go and whatever you do. And Keep In Touch!

Loren

From the Director of the English and Creative Writing Major

When people ask how I'm enjoying teaching at Iowa, I always share the same story. Last semester, new to Iowa and to our students, I distributed the syllabus for my first class, "Writing the Divine," a jaunty survey through forty-three centuries of human spiritual writing beginning in ancient Sumeria and ending among a small cadre of living writers. Reading over the syllabus, my students all began vocalizing variations on the same theme:

"Oh, we have to read Gilgamesh again?"

"I just read the Tao last year!"

"We've already done Milton in two other classes!"

Suffice it to say, this kind of response among undergraduates (or grad students, for that matter) has not been typical in my teaching experience. It's a testament to the extraordinarily driven, curious students we draw as a destination program for the entire university, of course. But it's also testament to the kind of rigor to which this faculty holds our students. There's never been a substantial writer who wasn't also a substantial reader, and our entire curriculum, philosophy, is shaped to reflect that idea. It's such an occasion for gratitude to be among you all. That's the word I keep using—among, amongness.

Toward that end, we are all still floating from the good news of **Melissa Febos**, **Harry Stecopoulos**, and **Louisa Hall** receiving official BOR approval for their promotions! Having them in our department dignifies and distinguishes every one of us. Richly deserved congrats, each and all! And warm welcomes are due to new faculty, **Professors Tisa Bryant**, **Sarah Minor**, and **Thomas Mira y Lopez**! It is our good fortune to get to be in your midst.

This year, we began several new programs for our majors designed at fostering conviviality and community. We began our first ever reading series designed specifically for our undergrads, bringing in contemporary literary titans Carmen Maria Machado and Paul Tran to read to and chat with our students directly. Both Machado and Tran gave unforgettable readings as well as Q&A's and class visits.

Professor Donika Kelly spearheaded a once-a-semester craft talk series, featuring faculty speaking directly to students. In the Fall, **Professor Bennett Sims** gave a luminous talk about horror fiction to a standing-room-only crowd of undergrads; while in the Spring, **Professor Paige Lewis** lead their group through a survey of poetry comics, ending with faculty and students alike making their own comics in collaboration. Both were wild successes.

Michaeljulius Idani and the **CLAS Postgraduate Visiting Writers** began a "lunch with writers" program, wherein writers and translators in the greater Iowa City community got to chat (and eat!) directly with our undergrads. These were can't-miss events, illuminating without feeling overly serious, offering practical nitty-gritty experience, advice, and hope to our students in a truly fun, warm environment.

We're also thrilled to announce the winners of our UI English Department undergraduate writing prizes. Congratulations to **Benjamin Romero**, whose poem "Nice at Night, Florida," was selected by guest judge Joy Priest as winner of the department's Excellence in Poetry writing prize, and to **Anthony Kestner**, whose "Surrogacy" was chosen as our fiction prize winner. Both honors come with \$250 cash prizes, as well as recognition English Department Ceremony on April 28th. I've had the privilege of reading both pieces and can say without hyperbole either would fit right in at most any prestigious professional literary journal in our field. Thanks too to **Professor Matthew Brown** for imagining these prizes into being.

It takes a village to make any of this happen, let alone all of it, so I wanted to offer special thanks and acknowledgement to **Andrea Cramer**, **Cherie Hansen-Rieskamp**, **Barb Pooley**, **Kate Torno**, and **Shannon Yost**. They make us all look good, and so many of the most joyful moments I experienced this year in the Iowa English community were made possible by their hard work behind the curtains. Thanks too to **Josephine Geiger-Lee**, our extraordinary new undergraduate Social Media Manager, who ensuring everyone knows about all the great things we're doing!

Finally, on a personal note, I wanted to thank you each and all for making Paige and I feel so welcome here at Iowa, in the Iowa City community at large. It is the great privilege of my professional career to be here, among with you all. More, more —yes!

Your very grateful,

Kaveh

Undergraduate Matters

Warm congratulations to this year's seniors graduating with departmental honors! All have excelled collectively in challenging seminars, including offerings taught this year by **Corey Creekmur, Florence Boos, Kathy Lavezzo, Louisa Hall, Derek Nnuro, Donika Kelly, Jen Buckley, Eric Gidal, Bennett Sims, Paige Lewis, and Sarah Minor**. Many have excelled independently in unique capstone courses supervised by the generous faculty listed below. Their ambition, talent, energy, and enthusiasm are a model for us all, as has been the unflagging support for the English Honors Program provided by our Director of Undergraduate Advising, **Kate Torno**. It has been a great privilege to work with such a wonderful group of students. My colleagues and I will eagerly await updates about the many adventures that the future surely holds for each.

Senior Graduating with Honors in English, 2022-2023

Anna Alldredge (adv. Claire Fox), Summer Carlson (adv. Corey Creekmur), Kendall Earles, Ellen Fox Abigail McCusker, Emily Miller, Holly Smith (adv. Kathy Lavezzo), Jacqueline Wahl

Senior Graduating with Honors in English and Creative Writing, 2022-2023

Meghan Anderson (adv. Derek Nnuro), Rose Arrigoni, Morgan Corbett (adv. Bruce Elgin), Parker Crandall, Danny Cummins (adv. Derek Nnuro), Olivia DiCicco, Kacie Frederick (adv. Greg Landini), Jordan Geriane, Alec Glisson (adv. Louisa Hall), Bailey Graus, Emma Greco (adv. Brooks Landon), Kendyl Green, Lydia Hecker, Noreasa Higgins, Casey Hodson (adv. Inara Verzemnieks), Kyler Johnson (adv. Inara Verzemnieks), Alexandra Kautzman, Callan Latham, Kiara Lingenfelter, Cheyenne Mann (adv. Amanda Thein), Sydney Mayes (adv. Donika Kelly), Madeline McCourt, Cheyenne McGuire, Samantha Murray, Riayn Nutkevitch, Rin Swann (adv. Will Rhodes), Mikey Waller, Hunter Wienke

Doris Witt

Director of the English Honors Program

Undergraduate Matters

I am delighted to share ATI President **Nora Higgins**'s recap of the chapter's activities this semester:

“Alpha Tau Iota (ATI), the University of Iowa chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, International English Honor Society, has had an exciting and productive spring. We kicked off the semester in January with an Interest Introduction and Semester Overview event. In February, ATI members crafted bracelets to be donated to the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital, organized a book drive for children's books to be donated to the Domestic Violence Intervention Program and Shelter House, and attended a live reading with poet Paul Tran. March highlights included an induction ceremony for 12 new members and an event featuring the pieces accepted to the 2023 Sigma Tau Delta Convention, just before eight members headed to Denver, Colorado, to present their papers and research. In April, ATI will be hosting an event to craft Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) bookmarks (to be donated to the local Iowa City Public Library) and a celebration for seniors, which will be the same evening as ATI's annual election. We also plan to continue this year's new tradition of hosting a pre-final week study space in the EPB, with snacks to fuel the minds and bodies of English students.”

Anne continues: I would like to congratulate Alpha Tau Iota's 19 (!) members who were inducted this academic year: **Finnegan Angelos, Cameron Barnett, Elisa Burba, Summer Carlson, Sophia Considine, Andre Eisele, Emma Erlbacher, Josephine Geiger-Lee, Olivia George, Sabrina Lacy, Nicholas Layeux, Aurora Michael-Caceres, Anthea Rose, Ella Rupe, Lauren Sanyal, Olivia Shick, Amritha Selvarajaguru, Madison Sukalo, and Spencer Yost-Wolff.**

Thanks to the Department's generous support, ATI also sent the largest contingent of Iowa students in the chapter's history to the Sigma Tau Delta International Convention this year—kudos to them! Please pass on your good wishes to **Meghan Anderson** (Dec. graduate), **Margaret Dalton, Sabrina Lacy, Ella Michael, Miranda Miller, Anthea Rose, Rin Swann, and Jacqueline Wahl.** They are currently preparing a convention report to share with the Department, replete with photos.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all graduating seniors and thank officers **Noreasa Higgins** (President, Secretary, and Membership Officer), **Rin Swann** (Vice President, Treasurer, and Publicity Officer), **Ella Michael** (Historian), **Meghan Anderson** (Alumni Liaison, fall 2022), and **Sabrina Lacy** (Alumni Liaison, spring 2023), all of whom have done an excellent job organizing activities and leading our Iowa chapter throughout the year. Seniors, we will miss you and wish you all the best as you set forth from the University of Iowa!

Anne Stapleton

Alpha Tau Iota's Faculty Sponsor

Undergraduate Matters (Photos from ATI Happenings)



Students headed to the Sigma Tau Delta International Convention.



ATI's newest members, spring induction 2023.

Undergraduate Matters- Scholarship/Awards

Helen K. Fairall Scholarships: For Iowa born and educated juniors or seniors with preference to students interested in literature from 1900 to the present.

Jaden Bartlett, Paris Fietsam, Olivia George, Raquel Valladolid

Helen Aicher and Kenneth Ward Nelson Scholarship: This award is for individuals who intend to teach at the high school level following completion of their studies.

Ella Rupe, Amritha Selvarajaguru

Undergraduate Matters- Scholarship/Awards

Darwin T. Turner Award: Established in honor of Dr. Darwin T. Turner, chair of the African-American World Studies Program and Professor in the Department of English. The award recognizes outstanding students of color who best combine Dr. Turner's devotion to literature and scholarship with his exemplary qualities as teacher and leader.

Elyse Bonds

Margaret Leuz and Fred Einspahr Scholarship: Established by John Einspahr in honor of his parents Margaret Leuz and Fred Einspahr. Margaret graduated from Iowa in 1912 with high honors in English, and this award recognizes excellent students who plan to pursue a career in teaching.

Taylor DeGroot, Emma Erlbacher, Lauren Sanyal

Ruth Gulden Holsteen and Charles Sophus Holsteen Memorial Scholarship: Established by Jon Holsteen and Nancy Holsteen Lerner in honor of their parents, Charles Sophus and Ruth Gulden Holsteen, natives of Burlington, Iowa. Mrs. Holsteen graduated with a degree in English and this award honors students who share her commitment to excellence in the field.

Sydney Smithgall, Maya Torrez

Louise P. Herring Scholarship: Established in honor of Louise P. Herring, who earned her master's degree from the University of Iowa in 1930 and her doctorate in 1932. It recognizes excellent students with a commitment to English studies as a preparation for life.

Sabrina Lacy

Sherry Simmons Loring Memorial Scholarship: Established by Eric Loring in honor of his late wife, Sherry Simmons Loring, who earned her BA in English at Iowa in 1970. The award recognizes students who, like the Lorings, have demonstrated their commitment to and pleasure in the life of the mind at the University of Iowa.

Josephine Geiger-Lee

Undergraduate Matters

Emily Wagner Scholarship: This award honors Emily Wagner, who received her B.A. in English from the University of Iowa in 2002. After graduating, Emily pursued her love of reading and writing by joining the Teach for America Corps, and continued her career as an inspiring English teacher, challenging and engaging middle-school students until her death in 2010. This scholarship supports an English major who shares Emily's love of literature, demonstrates academic excellence, and is a graduate of an Iowa high school.

Emma Erlbacher, Karaline Schulte

Melvin J. Blough Scholarship: Established in honor of Melvin J. Blough, this award is given to support students studying in the English Department.

Elysse Bonds, Charlotte Brookins, Elisa Burba, Mason Gordon Danaher, Katherine Davis, Taylor DeGroot, Noelle Franzone, Jose-phine Geiger-Lee, Lillian Giddings, Emma Gullen, Jonathan Hernandez, Vaishnavi Kolluru, Samantha Mayer, Kelsey Ortner, Emma Pech, Tessa Ramsden, Madeline Riske, Naomi Rivera, Josephine Roy, Ella Rupe, Lauren Sanyal, Jennifer Schmitt, Amritha Selvarajaguru, Olivia Shick, Sydney Smithgall, Natalie Tegtmeier, Darrin Terpstra, Maya Torrez, Megan Wilcoxon

Scott A. Anderson Memorial Scholarship: Scott Anderson received his B.A. in English with highest distinction from the University of Iowa in 1984. He was an honors student, a member of Phi Be-ta Kappa, a winner of the Hancher-Finkbine Medallion, and, after graduation, he worked as a writer for the UI Foundation and in the television industry in New York and Los Angeles. This scholarship honors students who share his love of writing.

Mason Gordon Danaher, Katherine Davis, Noelle Franzone, Lillian Giddings, Emma Gullen, Vaishnavi Kolluru, Madeline Riske, Naomi Rivera, Josephine Roy, Jennifer Schmitt, Olivia Shick, Natalie Tegtmeier, Darrin Terpstra, Megan Wilcoxon

Sean Wu Memorial Scholarship: This award was established by Dave Wu and Una Yang in honor of Sean Wu and is used to support a freshman English and Creative Writing major who shows promise in this area.

Katherine Davis

Undergraduate Matters

Elizabeth Dietz Essay Prize: This award is given for the best essay on poetry, in honor of Elizabeth Dietz, who was a poet, a professor of Renaissance Literature at Rice University, and a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop and the doctoral program in English.

Elisa Burba

Miriam Gilbert Award for Shakespeare Studies: This award is given each year for the best essay on Shakespeare, renaissance literature, or drama and performance, in honor of Professor Gilbert, who taught Shakespeare at Iowa until 2013.

Daniel Cummins

McGalliard Medieval Prize: Established by his former student, Professor Dolores Warwick Frese of Notre Dame University, in honor of John McGalliard, a widely known scholar and teacher of Old English, Old Norse, Old Irish, Chaucer, and other medieval subjects at the University of Iowa for more than forty years, from 1931 to 1975. This award is given to an English or comparative literature major who submits the most outstanding essay on a medieval subject.

Emma Erlbacher

The Fiction Prize: The UI English department's annual excellence in fiction writing prize for their story "Surrogacy."

Anthony Kestner

The Poetry Prize: The UI English department's annual excellence in poetry writing prize for his poem "Nice at Night, Florida."

Benjamin Romero

Undergraduate Matters

The Essay Prizes: The UI English department's annual excellence in critical writing prize with an emphasis on interdisciplinarity for their essay "Queer Futurity and Embodied Subjecthood in Children of Men."

Meg Mechelke

The UI English department's annual excellence in critical writing prize with an emphasis on pre-1900 historical contexts for his essay "Freedom Through Asserting Dominance: Moral Suasion, Violent Resistance, and Masculinity in Frederick Douglass' Fight with Covey."

Will Slawson

The UI English department's annual excellence in critical writing prize with an emphasis on postcolonial studies for his essay "Reflective Purity and the Corruption of Apolitical Action: KONY 2012 in the Context of Susan Sontag's Regarding the Pain of Others."

Sam Kahan-Harth

Faculty Matters

The Midwest Victorian Studies Association awarded **Florence Boos** a Lifetime Achievement Award at their 2023 annual conference, with several former Iowa Ph. D.'s participating in the ceremony (Professors Deirdre MacMahon, Michelle Taylor, Kris Swenson, Dallas Liddle, and Joanne Jensen).

Eric Gidal's study, "The Conceptual Structure of Ossianic Space," co-authored with Michael Gavin (University of South Carolina) has been published in a special issue of the open-access journal [Literary Geographies](#) dedicated to "Mapping as Process" and edited by Rebecca Hutcheon (Lancaster University).

Loren Glass has a chapter called "Institutions of American Poetry: From the Pound Era to the Program Era" in *The Cambridge Companion to American Poetry and Politics since 1900*, just published this month.

Postgraduate Visiting Writer, **Kathleen Maris Paltrineri**, will be a [USF Verftet](#) artist in residence in Bergen, Norway this summer with support from an Artist Catalyst Grant from the Iowa Arts Council.

Staff Matters

Cherie Hansen-Rieskamp has been selected by the Staff Council for one of the University of Iowa's Outstanding Staff Awards for 2013. She is one of the university's six recipients.

Staff member and fiction writer **Corey Campbell** was awarded an Artist Catalyst Grant, an award supported by the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, and by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Graduate Student Matters

The Council on Teaching has selected **Jennie Sekanics** and **PJ Zaborowski** to receive the 2023 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award.

Hannah Bonner had a poem appear in the latest issue of *The Hopkins Review* and five poems published in the latest issue of [Cutleaf](#).

Bronwyn Stewart has been selected as a pilot GA in Performing Arts Marketing and Communications in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Alumni Matters

Emily Duffy recently joined Ahlers & Cooney, P.C. as an Associate Attorney in the Government Law Practice Area. Emily, a native of Des Moines, Iowa, received her B.A. degree from the University of Iowa and graduated from Drake Law School with highest honors.

UI English alums, [please let us know about your career](#).

The English Department welcomes your generosity, give [online](#) anytime.

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The University of Iowa The University of Iowa | Department of English | 308 English Philosophy Building | Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1492 Office Hours - Monday-Friday: 8:00am - 4:30pm | Phone:319-335-0454Fax: 319-353-2392 | english@uiowa.edu

