

Cheers From the Chair

In our final edition of Reading Matters for the year, we highlight the accomplishments of our graduate students and programs – and this is an unusually rich edition. That’s largely thanks to the tremendous work of **Professor Jennifer Buckley**, in her debut year as Director of Graduate Studies. It’s a big job (**Stephen Voyce** won’t mind me saying that steering the grad ship through the Covid added one or two specks of distinguished grey to his beard: think Taika Waititi, as the leather-clad pirate Ed Teach, a.k.a. Blackbeard, in *Our Flag Means Death*, and you will understand the Fall 2020 vibe). In the relative calm of the post-Covid seas, Professor Buckley has made some important changes (I will drop the pirate references now, not mentioning either her swashbuckling style, or describing our new graduate coordinator **Tara Atkinson** as her new first mate). These include a new Phd + Mlis program, a 4+1 Ba+MA, a carefully reworked graduate handbook, a reinvigorated Dissertation Workshop, and an all-but-final fast-tracked MFA+PhD program.

This last item was carefully discussed with Professor **Inara Verzemnieks**, in her new role as Associate Director of the NWP, alongside new and returning director **John D’Agata**. Between the two of them, they not only gave us a blockbuster year in the new building, but generally improved nearly every process in an already stellar program. DGS Buckley and I often marveled at, and borrowed from, the communication and culture they worked so hard to create.

Our individual graduates – well, you should look below to see all that they accomplished. They won prestigious fellowships like the ACLS, they landed incredible jobs, they organized important service-learning projects with local schools (thanks **P.J. Zaborowski**, **Jamie Chen**, and GEL Director **Bluford Adams!**). They dominated this year’s Outstanding TA awards. They organized a blockbuster Craft Critique Culture Conference, setting the stage for that event’s 25th anniversary next year (thanks **Adare Smith**, **Kaden St. Onge**, **Sarah Barringer**, and **Sarah Frank!**). They served important roles on departmental committees, such as IDEAS (thanks **Darryl Moten!**) In brief: our graduates are doing remarkable work, as are their faculty mentors.

Final note from me: thank you to everyone in the department for making this the best place I could have possibly had a career as a faculty member. I truly think there’s nowhere you’ll find more talented, creative, and above all more decent and caring people, than Iowa English. Every day of the past 15 years has been a gift.

Best,



From the Director of Graduate Studies

Serving as the Director of Graduate Studies this year has enabled me to work with a much wider range of students (PhD, MFA, and MA), faculty, and staff than I have at any other point during my ten years in this department. This is one of the great gifts of the job: I get to see much more of the excellent work that you all do in EPB and outside it.

I have read so many wonderfully compelling grant and fellowship applications, and I've beamed at my laptop screen as I've clicked on the "Approve" button for Comprehensive Exams and MFA thesis and dissertation defenses. I've read the syllabi for graduate courses I myself would be eager to take. I've mock-interviewed several students and come away thrilled by the clarity and confidence with which they explained the skills they have gained or honed here, and shown how they can be applied and extended in academe and beyond. I launched the Dissertation Workshop, which meets monthly and offers all PhD students an opportunity to experience the process of writing and revising "the Diss" (which turns out to be far less scary or isolating than you would think).

I've learned from the AGSE board (**Sophia Craig**, **Darryl Moton**, **Aileen Tierney**, and **Ellie White**) how graduate students think and feel about the work they do here. I've been able to assist them as they continued the Career Diversity Speaker Series, which featured among its guests **Rachel Walerstein** (PhD '20), now at the AIDS Foundation. We have hosted informational meetings – open to all students, including NWP – on grants and fellowships, and one demystifying the comps and dissertation prospectus. I also co-hosted a workshop on CVs and résumés with **Brady Krien** (PhD '22) of the Grad Success Center, which is one of the best resources on campus for all grad students.

That CV-résumé session will be folded into a new monthly Career Workshop that will commence in September 2024. I thank Prof. **Adam Hooks** for the fine work he did as the Graduate Career Adviser this year. But it's time to make the process of preparing for and finding work (all kinds of work!) beyond the MA and PhD more collaborative. Every student can benefit from attending these meetings, and so I very much hope many students do join us. NWP students have a whole course that serves similar purposes, but they, too, are very warmly invited to join in.

Speaking of collaborations, I was beyond fortunate to be able to work with and learn from DEO **Blaine Greteman**, the Graduate Steering Committee (**Profs. Boos, Hooks, Glass, Lavezzo, and Wittenberg**), recently retired and much-missed Graduate Program Coordinator **Cherie Hansen-Rieskamp**, wonderful new GPC **Tara Atkinson**, and **Barb Pooley**, who expertly answered all of my (many) financial and logistical questions. Prof. **Harry Stecopoulos**, Director of Undergraduate Studies, completed a small mountain of paperwork to open the brand-new U2G program, and I am excited to welcome a small group of BA-MA students with him in Fall 2024.

Also joining our graduate programs in Fall 2024 are eight PhD students, two MAs, and 10 NWP MFAs. I look forward to their arrival, and another year spent working alongside you all.



2024 MFA Graduates

Aaron Pang, “Herein Lies the Truth” (Andre Perry, dir.)
Bela Shayevich, “Notes for *The Actress*” (Bennett Sims, dir.)
Hannah Bonner, “Bree, An Autobiography” (Louisa Hall, dir.)
Logan Naylor, “Take No Prisoners” (Tisa Bryant, dir.)
Martha Strawbridge, “There’s Every Place Like Home” (Kerry Howley, dir.)
Rebecca Flowers, “Thalassophillia” (Inara Verzemnieks, dir.)
Sarah Khatry, “Endless Wilds” (Melissa Febos, dir.)
Spencer Wilkins, “SUGAR, SUGAR” (Sarah Minor, dir.)

MFA Publications, Presentations, & Awards

Hannah Bonner published two reviews: “Illuminations: Elsewhere/Here,” for *Reserve Shot*, and “Intimate Inscriptions,” for Open City Documentary Film Festival.

First year NWP student **Sarah Bari**’s essay “Prelude to a Classic” was selected for this year’s Prairie Lights Prize! The award for “best essay” is selected by Prairie Lights staff and comes with a \$500.00 gift certificate to the store.

Aaron Pang (NWP 2024) performed his MFA thesis as a one-man show at Riverside Theater over two weekends of performance: April 18–28. *Herein Lies the Truth* has been described as “a genre-bending piece that will challenge your understanding of disability, sex, and relationship with your body... wild and tender and fun!...A thesis project that breaks the boundaries of the page and preconceived notions of writers working in solitude!” I recently overheard Andre Perry (NWP class of 2008) describe the piece like this: “Boom! Ready for his Netflix special!”

Second year NWP student **Jenny Singer**’s essay “Novel Lovers” has been selected for this year’s Roxanne Mueller Award! The award honors Roxanne’s passion as a writer for the visual, performing, and literary arts, and comes with \$500.00.

Spencer Jones’s paper “Transgressive (Un)Scripting: Metajournalistic Discourse and ‘Sonic Friendship’ in The Trojan Horse Affair” is forthcoming in *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*.

MFA Fellowships and Departmental Awards

CLAS Visiting Writer in Nonfiction 2024-2025

Hannah Bonner

Marcus Bach Graduate Fellowship

Caelainn Barr

Spencer Jones

Iowa Arts Fellows 2024-2025

Jacob Fidoten

Bethany Kaylor

Nikka Randhawa

Riley Ryan-Wood

Digital Scholarship & Publishing Studio Summer Fellowship

Connie Chen

Liv Kane

MFA Summer Fellowship 2024

Caelainn Barr

Richard Frailing

Jenny Singer

Stanley Award for International Research

Richard Frailing

Spencer Jones

Stephanie Krzywonos

Mofiyinfoluwa Okupe

Herodotus Awards

Isaac Engleberg

Heidie Senseman

Roxanne Mueller Award

Jenny Singer

Edwin Ford Piper Memorial Scholarship

Mofiyinfoluwa Okupe

Buckley Fellows

Sarah Bari

Caelainn Barr

Richard Frailing

Kyra Goldstein

Liv Kane

Magdalena Award

Liv Kane

Mofiyinfoluwa (Fi) Okupe

Prairie Lights Prize in Nonfiction

Sarah Bari

2024 Incoming MFA Students

Austin Araujo

BA, University of Arkansas-Fayetteville (2018)

English and Spanish

MFA, Indiana University (2021)

Poetry

Alayna Becker

BS, Portland State University (2023)

Arts & Letters - Nonfiction & Philosophy

Lauren Childs

BA, Marylhurst University (2012)

English Literature & Creative Writing

Ese Emmanuel

BSc, University of Benin (2021)

Animal & Environmental Biology

Jacob Fidoten

BA, Oberlin College (2019)

Creative Writing

Bethany Kaylor

BA, University of Oregon (2016)

Comparative Literature

Eliza Levinson

BA, Oberlin College (2017)

Art History, Cinema Studies

Nikka Randhawa

BA, University of California-Berkeley (2015)

Rhetoric, Art Practice

MJ, University of California-Berkeley (2019)

Riley Ryan-Wood

BA, Brown University (2017)

Visual Arts

MS, Columbia University (2022)

Narrative Medicine

Patrick Tunnell

BA, University of the Pacific (2013)

English

JD, University of San Diego (2018)

PhD Graduates

Annie Burkhart, “The ‘New Person’: Radical Desire in British Literature, 1880-1930” (Florence Boos, dir.)

Maria Capecchi, “Performing Early Modern Women: 1610-1680” (Blaine Greteman, dir.)

Matthew Helm, “Transmediations: Queer Literature, Media Technology, and the Archive” (Harry Stecopoulos, dir.)

PhD Qualifications

Sophia Craig

Jennie Sekanics

Sarah Frank

Aileen Tierney

Aidan Kendrick

Ellie White

Madelyn Matsubara

PhD Comprehensive Examination Completed

Sarah Barringer

Carolyn Gonzalez

Sydnee Brown

Riley Hanick

Camille Davis

Thelma Trujillo

Incoming PhD Graduate Students

Jacqui Alpine

BA, Bennington College (2017)
Music, Literature
MFA, University of Iowa (2020)
Poetry

Ruben Cota

BA, University of California-Irvine (2019)
English
MFA, University of Iowa (2021)

Caite Dolan-Leach

BA, Trinity College-Dublin (2009)
European Studies
MA, American University of Paris (2011)
Cultural Translation

Michelle Garcia

BA, University of Houston (2024)
English

Casie Minot

BA, Georgia State University (2021)
English
MA, Florida State University (2024)
English

Khaled Rajeh

BA, Lebanese American University (2019)
English
MA, University of Iowa (2021)
English-Literary Studies
MFA, University of Iowa (2023)
Literary Translation

Maxim Sonin

BA, Haverford College (2019)
English
MA, University of Chicago (2022)
English

Parker Watson

BS, University of Iowa (2010)
Environmental Sciences
MS, University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley (2015)
Biology
MA, San Diego State University (2023)
English

Incoming MA Graduate Students

Paige Berg

BA, University of Northern Iowa (2018)
English, TESOL

Rachel Poppen

BA, University of Iowa (2021)
English, Spanish
MS, University of Texas-Austin (2023)
Information Studies

2024 PhD Fellowships and Departmental Awards

Lulu Merle Johnson Fellowship
Michelle Garcia

Ballard and Seashore Dissertation Fellowship
Annie Burkhardt
Joshua Foley

Graduate College Post Comp Research Award
Pedro Martinez
Thelma Trujillo
Sarah Barringer

Graduate College Summer Fellowship
Sarah Barringer
Pedro Martinez
Katherine Randazzo

T. Anne Cleary International Dissertation Research Fellowship
Tove Conway

CLAS Graduate Assistantship
Jennie Sekanics

Graduate College Tuition Scholarship
Carolyn Gonzalez

Digital Scholarship and Publishing Studio Summer Fellowship
Aileen Tierney

Blough Dissertation Fellowship
Jamie Chen

Valerie Lagorio Dissertation Scholarship
Thelma Trujillo

Edwin Ford Piper Memorial Scholarship
Sarah Barringer

Helen Fairall Scholarship
Adelina Pineda Canganelli
Tove Conway
Bryanne Estes
Riley Hanick
Darryl Moton

English Department Best Essay Prize

Department and College Teaching Awards

This year GEL recognizes two graduate instructors who have contributed years of excellent instruction and service to the program: the Gerber Award for Excellence in Teaching GEL is awarded to **PJ Zaborowski** and the WR Irwin Award for Excellence in Teaching GEL is awarded to **Darius Stewart**. Both awards come with \$1,000. Heartfelt thanks to both!

The Council on Teaching selected four of our graduate students to receive the 2023–2024 Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award. This award recognizes teaching assistants who have demonstrated outstanding abilities at the University of Iowa. Awardees receive \$1,000 and are presented with a certificate at the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Awards Reception. Our awardees are MFA Candidates in Nonfiction **Grace Morse** and **Mofiyinfoluwa (Fi) Okupe** and PhD candidates **Sarah Barringer** and **Jamie Chen**. Hearty congratulations to all!

Heidi Senseman and **Spencer Jones** received the **Doug Trank Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching and Mentoring** from the Department of Rhetoric.

Rebecca Flowers received the Carl Klaus Teaching Award.

PhD Publications, Presentations, and Awards

Jamie Chen completed her Prospectus Meeting at the beginning of spring semester, and presented her paper, “Beyond the Patriarchal Principle: Plotting Pleasure Through Intertextuality in Angela Carter” at the MLA Conference in Philadelphia. Her article, “The Ends of Imagination: Trauma Narrative in Arundhati Roy’s Prose and Politics” is in the Fall 2022 issue of *JMMLA*, which is now available after a pandemic hiatus. She is currently working on her dissertation chapters, and she will be presenting a version the second chapter, “Focalizing Reading: Marginal Literacy in Anil’s Ghost,” at the International Society for the Study of the Narrative Conference in April; and a more developed version at MLA 2025 in New Orleans. She has earned a certificate with the Center of the Book and completed trainings for the BUILD certificate, and is completing her CIRTL certifications. She is looking forward to attending the Deleuze & Guattari Conference & Camp hosted by TU Delft in July, as well as planning the courses she will teach with the Blough Dissertation Fellowship.

Darius Stewart has been awarded a 2024–2025 Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Innovation Fellowship for his project “Erotic Discretion: Toward a Speculative Memoir on Desire, Betrayal, and Black Gay Monogamy.” He’s also been invited to participate in the IWP’s Lines & Spaces tour to Colombo, Sri Lanka, which is funded by a grant from the State Department’s Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and brings four American writers abroad to give readings, teach creative writing workshops, and work with young LGBTQ+ writers in the Queer Muslim Project.

PhD Publications, Presentations, and Awards

Katherine (Katie) Randazzo successfully passed her Dissertation Prospectus in September of 2023, and is now officially ABD. After the Dissertation Prospectus, she completed the first full chapter of her dissertation in January of 2024, exploring the formulations of kinship bonds between friends and "found family" in Hirohiko Araki's manga *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Golden Wind* and its *anime* adaptation. On the publishing front, she wrote a book review for *The Journal of Fandom Studies*, which is set to be published in the near future. Katie presented an in-progress draft of her most recent dissertation chapter at the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts in March of 2024. For her Summer 2024 plans, Katie has selected to present in a roundtable about *Buffy The Vampire's* role in emotional healing at Slayage+, the premiere *Buffy* and Whedonverse media conference. She also has been accepted to give a panel introducing Fandom Studies to a non-academic audience at the anime convention Colossalcon. Using the Summer Dissertation Fellowship that she was awarded from the Graduate College, she will continue her dissertation work.

Thelma Trujillo was awarded the Post-Comprehensive Research Award, the Valerie Lagorio Dissertation Scholarship, the Belle da Costa Greene Award from the Medieval Academy of America, and the Rising Star Grant from the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship to support her dissertation project on racial worldmaking in medieval hagiography.

Maria Capecchi successfully defended her dissertation, "Performing Early Modern Women: 1610-1680," and is graduating in May. In August she will begin her new job as an Assistant Professor of English at Elmhurst University.

Reid Dempsey translated a short story by Saša Stanišić for the Spring 2024 issue of *The Kenyon Review*.

Staff Matters

NWP coordinator and fiction writer **Sanjna Singh** was accepted into the Tin House Summer Workshop for fiction.

Faculty Matters

Florence Boos, Jen Buckley, and Jon Wilcox were honored with faculty mentor awards from AGSE.

May will bring the publication of two new books from **Christopher Merrill**: *After the Fact, Volumes 2 & 3: If & When* and *Here & Now*, a poetic collaboration with the late Marvin Bell (Buffalo: White Pine Press), and *Thinking Window Verses*, by Kim Ryō, translated from the Korean by Lee Hyeonwu, Won-Chung Kim, and Christopher Merrill, (Paramus: Homa & Sekey).

Emeritus faculty member **Patricia Foster** received the Hall-Waters Prize for Distinguished Southern Writing on April 12 at Troy University where she gave a reading, participated in a fabulous Q & A led by students, gave two radio interviews and a TV interview. Much pleasure and exhaustion! Her essay "Onslaught" is included in the anthology, *Old Enough: Southern Women Artists and Writers on Creativity and Aging* (UGA Press). Two of her essays are forthcoming in *The Linden Review* (U. of Nebraska Medical School). She will be a writer-in-Residence at Wolff Cottage for the month of August.

The Obermann Center invites applications for a summer Humanities Without Walls Faculty Externship on Graduate Career Diversity for up to 10 faculty members. The goals include helping faculty feel better prepared to advise and support graduate students interested in diverse careers, especially careers in the nonprofit sector. Participants will receive a \$1,000 honorarium. We anticipate the program will require about 25-30 hours total during June and July, 2024 including the June 3 orientation. **Brief applications are due May 14.** See details [here](#).

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

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

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