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Spring 2025

## ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

As we wrap up the academic year, this quarterly issue of the English Department newsletter highlights the work of our amazing undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and alumni. We encourage you to share your accomplishments with us so we can include them in our next newsletter.

**Christopher Schedler**, Professor and Chair

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



**Ashley Ayling** is a Professional and Creative Writing major who focuses on writing within community. She has pursued her goal of bringing people together through writing by serving as Vice President to Inklings writing club. Through the writing club, she workshopped pieces like “When Fiction Becomes Reality - A Short Story” that she presented at SOURCE 2024. Ashley continued to share her passion with her fellow writers as the PALS tutor for English Grammar, where she put a fun twist on the not-so-basics of the English language. She plans to take a gap year after college to explore the different directions writing can take her: to a technical field, marketing, or maybe even creative writing.

During that time, she will apply to Master’s programs in creative writing and looks forward to her open-road future full of opportunities for connection, inspiration, and never-ending writing.

English was well represented at the Symposium of University Research & Creative Expression (SOURCE) with our students winning multiple awards! English undergraduate presenters included **Hondo Acosta-Vega** (BA ELAT), **Stephanie Kerr** (BA PCW), **Zoe Prince** (BA PCW), who was selected for both SOURCE and English outstanding undergraduate presentation awards, and **Saige Johnson** (BA ELAT), who was selected for English outstanding undergraduate creative writing award at the *Manastash* launch and reading.

At the College of Arts & Humanities award night, **Hondo Acosta Vega** (BA ELAT) was selected for the Marji Morgan Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award.

**Lindzie Ashby** (BA PCW) will begin an MA program in Technical Communication at Texas Tech.

**Lee Beck** (BA PCW) was admitted to the MFA program at Western Washington University.



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## GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

**Kelly Wilbanks** graduated in June with an MA in English: Professional and Creative Writing. As a Teaching Assistant, she taught English 101 while completing coursework focused on writing pedagogy, rhetorical theory, and creative writing. Kelly balanced academic work with professional writing pursuits, managing a copyediting business and serving as teaching faculty at the West Coast Christian Writers Conference in Fall 2024. She has published poetry in *Tiny Homes and Tummy Tucks: A Spiritual Downsizing* (2024) and *El Roi: The God Who Sees* (2024), participated in Tupelo Press's 30/30 poetry project, and shared her work at Lion Rock Visiting Writers events. After graduation, she plans to continue teaching, writing, and building supportive spaces for neurodivergent and nontraditional writers. Through her creative business, Wild Ink Storyteller Studios, Kelly also plans to collaborate with her three daughters to publish their own children's books, fostering a new generation of storytellers.



English graduate presenters at SOURCE included **Jordan Cagle** (MA PCW), **Kirsten Rohla** (MA PCW), **Sheila Richardson** (MA PCW), and **Lydia Smaciarz** (MA LITT). SOURCE outstanding graduate presentation award went to Kirsten Rohla. English awards went to Sheila Richardson for outstanding graduate student presentation and Jordan Cagle for outstanding graduate student creative writing at the *Manastash* launch and reading.

At the College of Arts & Humanities award night, **Paige Milatz** (MA PCW) was selected for the Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

**Lydia Smaciarz** (MA LITT) and **Emily Kirpach** (MA LITT) presented with other Graduate Student Association officers at the Western Association of Graduate Schools conference. [Read the CWU news story.](#)

## FACULTY NEWS

**M. Eliatamby-O'Brien** was selected for the [University Distinguished Faculty Service award.](#)

**Paula Colluci** was selected for the CAH Outstanding Non-Tenure Track Faculty Award.

**Katharine Whitcomb** published her poem "Summer :: Siskin Green" in a collaborative broadside with artwork by Jennifer Moses in the current issue of [Broadsided](#). She gave an offsite reading from her poetry collection *Habitats* and had a book signing event at the AWP book fair.



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**Maya Jewell Zeller** had a book signing event at the AWP book fair for her poetry collection *Out Takes/Glove Box* and her *Advanced Poetry* textbook.

**John Ribó** co-led a manuscript workshop at the Global Dominicanidades II conference on “The Scholar as Insurgent: From Crisis to Future Thinking in Dominican Studies.”

**Dan Martin** co-presented with graduate teaching assistants **Kelly Wilbanks**, **Emily Carter**, **Sheila Richardson**, and **Lydia Smaciarz** on "Graduate Teacher Training, Grading, and Feedback" at the 6th Annual Grading Conference.

## ALUMNI NEWS

**Matt Martinson** (MA English) was selected for the [University Distinguished Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Teaching award](#).

**Lucas Peters** (MA English) published a [travel guidebook on Southern Spain](#) for Moon Travel Guides.

**Spencer Virden** (BA ELAT) is currently a high school English teacher and published author, who was recently featured in a [CWU profile story](#).

A number of English alums were spotted at the AWP Conference in Los Angeles: **Weston Morrow** (MA English), who teaches at Ohio State University; **Brittany (Helmick) LaPointe** (BA LLIT/PCW), Marketing and Sales Manager for University of Akron Press; **Chris Rose** (MA English), who serves as Dean at Portland Community College; and **Denise Massar** (MA English, author of *Matched*).

## LION ROCK VISITING WRITERS SERIES



Spring quarter began with an online reading by **Jesse Lee Kercheval** on April 10. She walked us through a live interactive Q&A session, divulging her process for creating *French Girl: A Graphic Memoir*, in which she boldly communicated a series of stories created with authentic calligraphy and expressionistic colors.

As the campus bloomed into Spring, **Elaina Ellis** took the hybrid stage on May 1 to discuss romance and editing, “From Poetry to Romance—Editing Across Genres.” She read excerpts from contributor stories published in her edited collection *Someplace Generous: An Inclusive Romance Anthology*. The event took place in the Brooks Library and was also live streamed to an online audience on Zoom.





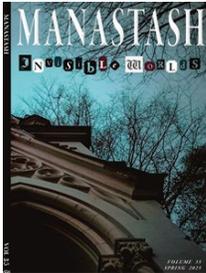
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Our Spring series concluded on May 20 with **Tara Campbell**, an award-winning writer, teacher, Kimbilio Fellow, and fiction co-editor at *Barrelhouse*. Drawing on her sixth book, *City of Dancing Gargoyles*, she brought together a group of English students in an online setting to discuss “deliberate paradoxes” and “cozy dystopia” in a speculative fiction writing workshop.

As part of our Virtual Visits series, essayist and poet **Kate Lebo** visited Maya Jewell Zeller’s creative nonfiction class to discuss Lebo’s *Book of Difficult Fruit* as an example of how creating an abecedarian structure and mining a range of documents aids the nonfiction process. Her class visit allowed students to discuss her essays directly with her, as well as ask questions about the writing life and professionalization.

## MANASTASH



The 35<sup>th</sup> year anniversary edition of [Manastash](#) student literary journal was published in Spring quarter with the theme *Invisible Worlds* and copies can be purchased through the [CWU Bookstore](#). This volume of *Manastash* was a collaborative project of students in ENG 484 and ENG 485 *Manastash* practicum courses, 24 contributors, vendors, and the support of many CWU departments. The *Manastash* launch and reading party at this year’s SOURCE was hosted by managing editor **Sheila Richardson** and featured readings from student contributors: **Saige Johnson, Jordan Cagle, Tyler Dahl, Christian Bauer, Lesly Portugal, Emily McNealy, Johanna Deletti, and Vince Wilkinson.**

Next year’s *Manastash* student literary journal is open for [submission](#) on the theme of *Rebirth*.

## STUDENT CLUBS & ACTIVITIES

[Inklings](#) is Central Washington University’s very own student-run writing club! In Inklings meetings, students complete writing activities, writing sprints, and workshops both online and in person. This club is the best place on campus for writers to get together and talk about what they love most: writing! For the past two years, Inklings has taken a trip to Bellevue for the Seattle Writers Conference, a valuable experience for any writer, new or experienced. Join a community of writers, make writing friends, and feel inspired to take the next step in your writing journey with Inklings.

English students have been active on- and off-campus: Maya Jewell Zeller’s creative nonfiction class took a fieldtrip to the Wildcat Farm, where they learned about sustainable farming as an archive and guideline for writing, and a hike in Robinson Canyon to learn about native and edible plants. **Sam Woods** (BA LLIT) led a Nature Journaling workshop at the Wildcat Farm, where students also volunteered for Spring planting. English students, faculty, and staff joined the march to protest proposed cuts to Services & Activities fee funding for *Manastash*, Lion Rock, *Observer* newspaper, *Pulse* magazine, and Theater/Film production.



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In April, several undergraduate and graduate students from across our PCW and LLIT programs, along with Inklings members and English faculty, attended the *GetLit!* festival in Spokane. One student wrote: “The writing and publishing field can be opaque, particularly for students looking to break into these industries. *GetLit!* offers opportunities to engage with writers, journals, and presses to provide clarity and a path forward. I am extremely grateful to have had the chance to attend.”



## MAKE A DONATION

To make a donation to the [English Department](#), use the **Give to English** button on any of the department webpages. You can donate to our general department Fund for Excellence, Scholarships, Lion Rock Support Fund, or *Manastash* Student Literary Journal.

Our #GiveCentral annual day of giving raised \$735 from 14 donors for the English Department’s **Access & Opportunity Scholarship** and unlocked a \$5000 donor gift to our English department scholarship endowment!

## FOLLOW US



Our MA PCW program was selected for the [most affordable online master's in creative writing](#) in the US. Evaluators note: “CWU offers an MA in Professional and Creative Writing in a fully online, asynchronous format with no residency. Students can tailor their coursework across fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, rhetoric, research writing, and technical communication. It culminates in a portfolio and can be completed in just four quarters.”



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