

Spring 2026

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



Alyssa Belknap, double major in Professional & Creative Writing and Language & Literature, writes: I am a transfer student and currently live in the mountains of Leavenworth, Washington, where I work as a Forest School Educator. I was awarded a foundry10 grant for Experimental Research and Immersive Studies, which provided me the opportunity to attend the Association of Writers & Writing Programs conference in Baltimore to inform my SOURCE research project “Beyond Western Individuation: Mother-Daughter Dyads in Diasporic Contemporary Literature.” I served as fiction editor for the *Manastash* literary journal,

which also included my first published poem “The Orchard.” My creative work and research explore mother-daughter dyads, inheritance, girlhood, and the commodification of bodies. My long-term goals are to enter a graduate program, write something that matters to someone, and combine my loves for education and literature through academia.

English was well represented at the Symposium of University Research & Creative Expression (SOURCE) with our students winning multiple awards! English undergraduate presenters included **Alyssa Belknap** (BA PCW/LLIT), **Nick Gutierrez** (BA ELAT), **Hannah Jamieson** (BA PCW), **Josie Price** (BA PCW), **Jordan Sheeres** (BA LLIT), and **Anatalia Sicsic** (BA ELAT). Anatalia Sicsic was selected for both SOURCE and English outstanding undergraduate presentation awards, Nick Gutierrez was selected for SOURCE outstanding undergraduate presentation award, Josie Price was selected for English outstanding undergraduate creative writing award, and Alyssa Belknap was selected for ReSOURCE award.

At the College of Arts & Humanities award night, **Viktor Volkov** (BA PCW) was selected for the Undergraduate Achievement in Writing award.



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For graduate school, **Mady Eason** (BA PCW) and **Cedee Wilson** (BA PCW) were both accepted to the MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University, **Maelim Lunaris** (BA PCW) was accepted to the MFA program at Hamline University, and **Viktor Volkov** (BA PCW) was accepted to the MFA program at Western Colorado University.

GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Kirsten Rohla graduated this Spring from the MA Professional & Creative Writing program. She teaches high school English and dual credit English classes in Wallowa County, Oregon. She writes fantasy stories, poems that are personal or inspired by classical literature, and research essays on 19th century British literature. At SOURCE 2025, Kirsten presented “Reading Anne Brontë’s Helen Huntingdon Through the Neurodivergent Lens,” which received the English outstanding graduate presentation award. At SOURCE 2026, she presented “The Bible Is Not Against Homosexuality: the exploration of mistranslations, misunderstandings, and LGBTQ+ discrimination” and “*Cult of Fury: A Fantasy Novel First Chapter Reading*.” She has presented her poetry at a Lion Rock student reading and as a featured reader for the Fishtrap Fireside series, and she has an essay published in the latest *Manastash* student literary journal. Kirsten is grateful for her experiences in the program that have made her a better writer and teacher, as well as the encouragement to seek publication, which will be a focus after graduation.



English graduate presenters at SOURCE included **Mushfique Ahmed** (MA LITT), **Jordan Cagle** (MA PCW), **Savannah Cottingham** (MA PCW), **Jaime Hernandez** (MA LITT), **Millie Land** (MA LITT), **Rachel Riffel** (MA LITT), **Kirsten Rohla** (MA PCW), and **Lydia Smaciarz** (MA LITT). Both SOURCE and English outstanding graduate presentation awards went to Jordan Cagle, and English outstanding graduate student creative writing award went to Savannah Cottingham.

At the College of Arts & Humanities award night, **Rachel Riffel** (MA LITT) was selected for the Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

Mushfique Ahmed (MA LITT) was selected for a Graduate Student Summer Fellowship to work on his project “Playing Through the Haunted Tongue: Video Games, Language Loss, and Multilingual Rhetoric as Pedagogical Entry into First-Year Composition.”

Jordan Cagle (MA PCW) had his story “Walnut Liqueur” selected for honorable mention in prose by the 2026 AWP Intro Journals Project.

Savannah Cottingham (MA PCW) had a craft essay on Melissa Febos’ *Girlhood* accepted for publication in *True Magazine* and a creative nonfiction essay “The Mother Plant” accepted by *Columbia Journal*. You can read a graduation profile of Savannah in [Central Today](#).

Alden Nagel (MA LITT) had a personal narrative essay accepted for publication in *Vagabond City*.



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FACULTY NEWS

Maya Jewell Zeller's *The Wonder of Mushrooms* won the Midwest Book Award, Buyers Choice Award from the Museum Store Association, and Silver IPBA Book Award for Small Format Design. She gave multiple author talks this spring throughout the PNW for her memoir *Raised by Ferns*, which was also picked for the [KUOW & Seattle Public Library book talk](#) and an interview in [New Ohio Review](#). She has a hybrid craft essay that will appear in the next *Poetry Northwest* and two speculative prose works—an essay and an autofiction—coming out in *Gulf Coast*.

Katharine Whitcomb had a poem published in the Spring edition of [On the Seawall](#). She was awarded a Residency Fellowship at Moulin à Nef (Virginia Center for Creative Arts) in Auvillar, France, for Fall. Her new poetry collection *The Earth Clock* will be published by Anhinga Press in early 2027.

Josh Welsh had two chapters accepted for publication in collected editions: “Listening Online: What Students Have to Tell Us About Participating in Online Classes” in *Teaching and Learning with Rhetorical Listening* forthcoming from Parlor Press, and “Human Audiences and Machine Authors: How Generative Artificial Intelligence Impacts the Rhetorical Situation” in *Philosophy of Technology in Rhetoric & Writing Studies*.

Candace Walsh won the SOURCE undergraduate mentor of the year award and CAH award for outstanding faculty service. Her creative nonfiction essay collection *Late Is the New On Time* is a semifinalist for publication with Sundress Publications. She has a poem published in [JMWW](#) and another forthcoming in *Coastlines Review* later this month. She was selected to teach at the Sappho Women's Festival in Lesbos, Greece, this Fall.

Dan Martin co-presented with graduate teaching assistants **Mushfique Ahmed**, **Jordan Cagle**, and **Millie Land** on teaching First Year Writing at the University of Washington Praxis Conference. Dan was also awarded a faculty research grant to investigate disinformation in AI platforms.

ALUMNI NEWS

Melissa Brouwer (MA English) was hired as a tenure-track Assistant Professor at Big Bend Community College, after teaching for fifteen years as Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in English at CWU.

L. Saige Johnson (BA ELAT) had her poetry chapbook *Internal Salvation* published by [Bottlecap Press](#).

Miranda Manzano (BA PCW) earned her MFA from Eastern Washington University, and she has been teaching as an English Instructor at EWU and North Idaho College.

Paige Milatz (MA PCW) has poems published in [The Bluebird Word](#) and [Boudin](#), a creative nonfiction piece in *Trestle Creek Review*, and a poem in the anthology *Cascadia Works* from Empty Bowl Press forthcoming in Fall. She was selected to attend the Bread Loaf Environmental Writers Conference.

Brittney Poston (BA PCW) was hired to teach 7th Grade English Language Arts at Cypress Creek Middle School, after teaching for three years as a Lecturer at CWU.

Tyler Thomas (BA LLIT, MA TESOL) was hired as the Writing / Math Tutoring Manager for the Learning Commons at CWU.

Victoria Thomas (MA TESOL) will enter the PhD program in Linguistics at George Mason University.

Michele White (BA LLIT, MA LITT) has been accepted to the PhD program at Louisiana State University.

LION ROCK VISITING WRITERS SERIES

Our Lion Rock Visiting Writers Series for Spring offered a slate of craft talks and readings by poet **Elizabeth Bradfield**, creative nonfiction writer **Nora Wendl**, and fiction writer **Sonora Jha**.



Elizabeth Bradfield, a poet and naturalist, read from her most recent collection *SOFAR: Poems*. **Marina Sanchez** (BA ELAT) was the student reader. The craft talk and reading drew 126 attendees (combined in-person and on Zoom for both events) with a give-away for students of Bradfield's co-edited collection *Cascadia Field Guide: Art, Ecology, Poetry* through support from Friends of Brooks Library. Co-sponsors included Biology, Sustainability Office, Douglas Honors College, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Nora Wendl, an essayist, artist, and professor of architecture, read from her architectural history as memoir *Almost Nothing: Reclaiming Edith Farnsworth*. **Kirsten Rohla** (MA PCW) was the student reader. The craft talk and reading drew 86 attendees (combined in-person and on Zoom for both events) with a give-away for students of Wendl's book through support from Art + Design, History, and Engineering Technologies, Safety, and Construction.



Sonora Jha, author of four books and formerly a journalist in India and Singapore, read from her most recent novel *Intemperance*. **Colton Phifer** (BA PCW) was the student reader. The craft talk and reading drew 112 attendees (combined in-person and on Zoom for both events) with a give-away for students of Jha's novel *The Laughter* through support from the College of Arts & Humanities.

MANASTASH

The 36th edition of [Manastash](#) student literary journal was published in Spring with the theme *Rebirth* and was a collaborative project of students in the *Manastash* practicum courses, 48 contributors, and graphic design students from Art + Design. Copies can be purchased through the [CWU Bookstore](#).

The *Manastash* reading at this year's SOURCE was hosted by managing editor **Jordan Cagle** and featured readings from student contributors: **Alyssa Belknap**, **Savannah Cottingham**, **Devon Hulteen**, **Lesly Portugal**, **Josie Price**, **Rachel Riffel**, **Kirsten Rohla**, and **Jordan Sheeres**.

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

STUDENT CLUBS & ACTIVITIES

In April, nine undergraduate and graduate students from PCW and LLIT programs, plus English faculty **Maya Jewell Zeller**, **Candace Walsh**, and **Seanse Ducken**, attended *GetLit!* in Spokane.

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.

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