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Winter 2026

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our Winter 2026 issue of the English Department newsletter, which 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



Solar McClellan writes: I'm a double major in English Language Arts Teaching and Secondary Education, with a Teaching English Language Learners minor. I was drawn to teaching because of the teachers I grew up with, the ones who made learning feel meaningful, personal, and worth showing up, which is why I want to create classrooms where students feel supported, challenged, and seen. Outside of my coursework, I serve as the Vice President of the Inklings Writing Club. Most of my club work involves designing activities and creative prompts for our members, which lets me blend my love of writing with my interest in building community. It's a space where writers of all genres can experiment, share, and grow together. As a writer, I'm especially passionate about horror, particularly psychological

horror. I love exploring fear, tension, and the emotional pressure points that make a story linger long after it's read. I'm excited to continue my learning here and keep developing both as an educator and a writer. Every quarter gives me new tools, new perspectives, and new ways to imagine the kind of teacher I want to become.

Alyssa Belknap (BA Language & Literature and Professional & Creative Writing) and **Josie Price** (BA Professional & Creative Writing) both received OUR grants to attend the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) conference and present their work at SOURCE.

Maelim Lunariz (BA Professional & Creative Writing) has been accepted to MFA programs at University of San Francisco, Hamline University, Chapman University, and Sarah Lawrence.



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GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Lydia Smaczarz (MA Literary Studies & Teaching) is a graduate teaching assistant and Vice President of the Graduate Student Association. Her academic interests include psychoanalytic theory, critical theory, and pedagogy. She is currently working on a journal-ready thesis that places *The Wolf of Wall Street* in dialogue with Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*, examining themes of excess, desire, and moral economy. Lydia has presented at multiple conferences with a paper on "Dependency in Romantic Relationships: Bloom's Other in *Ulysses*" for SOURCE, a panel on graduate student experiences at primarily undergraduate institutions at the Western Association of Graduate Schools conference, and a panel of first-year writing teaching assistants at an online grading conference. She will present her paper "The Real(ity) of Grief: Joan Didion and the Lacanian Orders" at the Popular Culture Association conference in April. After graduation, Lydia hopes to continue teaching English at the college or high school level.



Jordan Cagle (MA Professional & Creative Writing) will present his paper "The Fate of the Simulacrum in the *Blade Runner* Universe: More Human Than Human" at the Popular Culture Association conference in April. He has been accepted to PhD programs at University of Minnesota and Ohio State University.

Savannah Cottingham (MA Professional & Creative Writing) published her creative nonfiction essay "Thanks, I Thrifted It" in [Folio](#) literary journal, and she has been accepted into MFA programs at Vermont College of Fine Arts and Warren Wilson College (with a Rona Jaffe Foundation Fellowship).

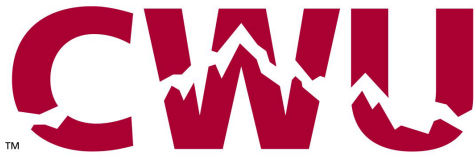
Emily Kirpach (MA Literary Studies & Teaching) will present her creative nonfiction essay "What We Carry When We Leave" at the Popular Culture Association conference in April.

Rachel Riffel (MA Literary Studies & Teaching) will present her paper "Found Communities: Black Childhood Redefined in the Pages of the Harlem Renaissance" at the Children's Literature Association conference in May.

FACULTY NEWS

Taneum Bambrick was hired as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at University of North Carolina, Greensboro, after teaching for ten years as Lecturer in English at CWU.

Xavier Cavazos will present a [poetry performance](#) with alum **Karla Maravilla** (BA English double major in Literature & Language and Professional & Creative Writing) at the University of Notre Dame, where Karla is an English PhD student and Distinguished Fellow in Latino Studies.



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John Ribó participated in a roundtable titled “Doom Patterns” on speculative fiction and representations of violence at the Latinx Studies Association conference in March.

Christopher Schedler and **Millie Land** (MA Literary Studies & Teaching) presented in a panel of CWU faculty and graduate students on “New ABCs for Graduate Students: Access, Belonging, Community, and Success” at the Western Association of Graduate Schools conference in April.

James Seth presented his paper on “Cross-Cultural Performances at the East India Factory in Hirado” at the Renaissance Society conference in February. He signed a contract with Routledge to publish his second book, *Authority and Disruption in Early Modern Maritime Theatre: Mock Kings at Sea*, which will be substantially completed during his sabbatical this year.

Sarah Sillin presented her paper “Getting Gender Wrong: Jokes on Grammar and Natural Gender in 19th Century Newspapers” at the C19: Society of 19th Century Americanists conference in March.

Candace Walsh had an AWP book signing and offsite reading for her poetry collection [Iridescent Pigeons](#). Her essay “The Light Within,” recently published in *Ekphrastic Review*, was spotlighted in the [Memoirland](#) newsletter.



Katharine Whitcomb has poems published in current issues of three journals: [Bear Review](#), [Bennington Review](#), and [Plant-Human Quarterly](#). She had an AWP book signing and offsite reading for her poetry collection [Habitats](#), and she was selected for an artist residency at the Vermont Studio Center in May.

Maya Jewell Zeller's memoir [Raised by Ferns](#) was just published by Porphyry Press, and she has been on book tour at ASLE, AWP, and throughout the inland Northwest. You can read more about her work in this [CWU news story](#). Her essay “Poverty Fires” appears in a new [Environmental and Nature Writing](#) anthology from Bloomsbury, and her recently published book [The Wonder of Mushrooms](#) is a finalist for a Foreword INDIE Award in the Adult Nonfiction Nature category.

ALUMNI NEWS

Weston Morrow (MA English) had an AWP offsite reading for his poetry collection *Cloud Builder*.

Megan Willow Rose (BA Professional & Creative Writing), one of our first cohort of online English majors, will have her poetry chapbook *A Fawn in the Spotlights* published by Finishing Line Press.

Kendra Rodriguez (MA Professional & Creative Writing) has a poem published in the current issue of *Orichalcum Tower Review*.

Michele White (MA Literary Studies & Teaching) has been accepted to PhD programs at Idaho State and University of New Mexico.

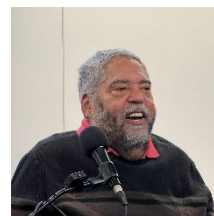


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LION ROCK VISITING WRITERS SERIES

In Winter, [Lion Rock Visiting Writers Series](#) hosted a craft talk/presentation, student reading, and collaborated with the Multicultural Center on a student poetry workshop.

On February 18, visiting novelist **David Haynes** presented a deeply moving craft talk and public reading. Haynes' craft talk on creating an arts-centered life was appreciated by students from diverse disciplines, with one student responding, "Making a life, and then making space for art in that life, is what David says [about] supporting yourself in the arts. I think for young people... that is something we need to hear." **Noah Lux** (Lion Rock intern) served as emcee, **Alyanna Ayala** (BA Language Arts Teaching) offered the land acknowledgment, and **Nicole Martinez** (BA English Language Arts Teaching) was guest student reader. The events drew in students, faculty, staff, and community members with 78 in-person attendees and a Zoom audience of over 60.



Between the two Lion Rock events, English department faculty **Candace Walsh** and **Xavier Cavazos** partnered with Multicultural Center staff **Andesha Birch** and **Shadae Ingram** to present an in-person poetry workshop for over 25 students, featuring the work of Black poets such as Ross Gay, Audre Lorde, Angel Nafis, Danez Smith, and Patricia Smith. Given the event's success, Walsh and Cavazos will continue to offer writing workshops between craft talks and readings for the three upcoming Lion Rock visiting writer dates in Spring.

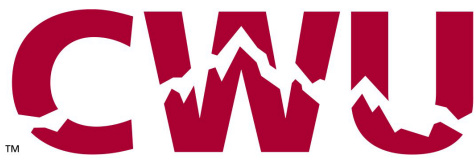
On March 10, the Lion Rock student reading organized by interns Nicole Martinez and Noah Lux was a resounding success with 33 total participants (readers and attendees). The following graduate and undergraduate students read their poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction: **Savannah Cottingham**, **Ash Gray**, **Alexis Hidalgo**, **Nick Jijina**, **Noah Lux**, **Rachel Riffel**, **Kirsten Rohla**, and **Cindy Sage**.

MANASTASH

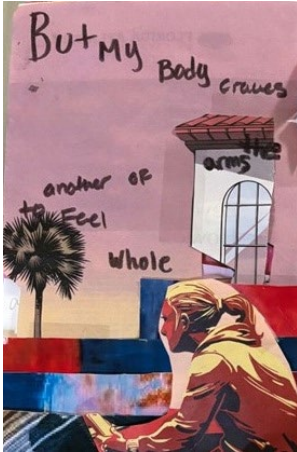
This year's [Manastash](#) student literary journal will be published in Spring 2026 with the theme **Rebirth**. A launch party is scheduled for May 20 at the CWU [SOURCE conference](#).

STUDENT CLUBS & ACTIVITIES

[Inklings Writing Club](#) students engaged in their quarterly writing workshop, a collaborative murder mystery activity, writing exercises for distinctive dialogue and show vs. tell, character interviews, metaphor/figurative language work, and a word challenge where writers had to include six to eight randomly generated words into their work.

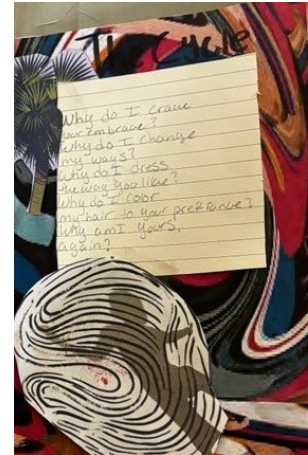


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Xavier Cavazos and Candace Walsh collaborated with the Multicultural Center and APOYO (Allied People Offering Year-Round Outreach), which supports local Latinx communities, to offer a hands-on creative writing and zine-making workshop. Over 30 college and high school students used paper, glue, scissors, stickers, old magazines, and journals (donated by Brooks Library) to design unique, vibrant zines reflecting their passions. We look forward to collaborating with APOYO on future events.

Zine designs by **Jane Sybert** (BA English Language Arts Teaching)



[Ellensburg Shakespeare Project](#) (with **James Seth** as dramaturge) will perform *The Merry Wives of Windsor* this summer, with inspiration from *The Real Housewives* and *The Bachelorette*.

A group of English students and faculty will attend the [GetLit! Literary Festival](#) April 17-19 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.

April 23 is the #GiveCentral annual day of giving for CWU. You can make a donation to the English Department's [Access & Opportunity Scholarship](#) to provide educational access to English majors from diverse school districts and Tribal Compact Schools. Every dollar donated through #GiveCentral will be matched up to \$5000 with a donor gift to our English department scholarship endowment!

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