

Meet the 2020-21 English Department Award and Scholarship Winners



Muhammad Manzur Alam

HOMETOWN: Bangladesh

MAJOR: Ph.D. in English

Eberly College Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant

Blaydes Family Summer Fellowship

I love reading books, listening to jazz music, playing tennis, travelling, and cooking. Besides, I am passionate about reading and writing poems.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Everything about English and English courses intrigues me. I am fascinated by narratives, forms, rhetoric, creative expressions, and critical depths in writings, as well as by the alternative worlds, or the worlds within the world, that writers create for us. Shakespeare, Melville, Allen Ginsberg, Amitav Ghosh, and many others are my favorite writers.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

After graduation, I plan to continue my teaching career and immerse myself in creative and scholarly pursuits.



Emily Aman

HOMETOWN: Bridgeport, West Virginia

MAJOR: Neuroscience and Psychology with an emphasis on Behavioral Neuroscience

Winner of the Jon Scott Nelson First-Year Writing Award

When I am not studying, I love to play the piano or the guitar and sing or spend time with my three younger sisters.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Having the ability to share a piece and have it read by a professor that cares about all aspects of it is one of my favorite things about taking English courses.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

After getting my undergraduate degree, I plan on going to WVU's medical school and aiming to become a pediatric psychiatrist.



Avery Ballard

HOMETOWN: I'm from all over the United States, from West Jordan, Utah, to Coosbay, Oregon, and even Chicago, Illinois.

MAJOR: Aerospace Engineering with an emphasis in Astronautical Engineering

Third-place winner of the Jon Scott Nelson Freshmen Creative Writing Award

Growing up I took part in a lot of sports and school activities. My favorite thing was dance, I danced competitively for 12 years. One year of high school I was even the dance team captain. I love to expand my knowledge and grow everyday, just savoring what life has to offer.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Being an engineer major, my course load can get very tough. However, my favorite thing about being in a poetry class is that I get a nice break for the day. I love being able to convey my thoughts and feelings on a piece of paper.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

If all goes well, I hope to become a mission control specialist for NASA.



Georgia Beatty

HOMETOWN: Weirton, WV

MAJORS: English (Creative Writing concentration) and German Studies

MINOR: History

Winner of the Appalachian Writing Award

I'm a graduating senior and a German language enthusiast, writer, painter, poetry fanatic, and proud foster mom to many cats. I'm passionate about environmental literature and LGBTQ+ stories.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

English at WVU has taught me how to consider the world holistically; it's taught me how to think critically about literature and history, and how to be a better person, really. I've especially cherished my time in Creative Writing workshops; they've been invaluable in helping me grow and learn in my craft, and any time I get to talk about writing fiction is a good time. I value the connections I've made in those courses, as well.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I'm taking a gap year to work and teach English (TESOL) before returning to Germany for graduate school.



Rachael Bradley

HOMETOWN: West Bloomfield, Michigan

MAJOR: MFA in Creative Writing

Honorable-mention of the Russell MacDonald Creative Writing Award—Nonfiction Division

I am pursuing an MFA in creative writing, and my primary genre is creative nonfiction. I love the sense of community and trust that I find in the writing workshops here at WVU.



Leah Brennsteiner

HOMETOWN: Johnstown, PA

MAJOR: English (Creative Writing and Professional Writing & Editing concentrations)

Winner of the Eleanor Tucker Donley Memorial Scholarship

My interests are writing, reading (in true English major fashion), running and buying succulents. I'm a barista at Starbucks, a Writing Studio Tutor and am a member in many clubs: AMOM, Chimes, & Jane Austen book club.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love that reading different literature will allow you to connect to various aspects that can jumpstart self-realizations. English is so expressive and forces you to reflect and use your own voice, and this is so beneficial.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

After I graduate, I hope to continue my education by getting a Masters in Publishing. After that, I would love to be a book publisher and possibly write some of my own.



Valerie Browne

HOMETOWN: Martinsburg, WV

MAJORS: English (Creative Writing concentration) and Russian Studies

MINOR: Political science

Winner of the Waitman Barbe Creative Writing Award—Poetry Division

I love reading, writing poetry, making music, baking, traveling and adventuring in the natural world. I am also passionate about words! English words! Russian words! German words! Language, with its ability to move and almost primordial creative potential absolutely fascinates me.

Favorite thing about English and English courses:

I think my favorite thing about the English courses I have taken thus far is the way they expand your perspective and develop your thinking through amazing literature. I am an avid reader and a deep reflector; I deeply appreciate the way my English courses have challenged me to think about the world (and language itself) in new ways— all while honing my writing skills!

Jordan Buechler

HOMETOWN: Fairfax County, VA

MAJOR: Mechanical Engineering

MINOR: English (Creative Writing concentration)

First-place winner of the Jon Scott Nelson Freshmen Creative Writing Award

I love to read, swim, and garden.

Favorite thing about English and English courses:

My favorite aspect of English courses/English is diction choice and the congruent subtlety and power of words.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

My future plans include working in the aerospace industry and writing a fictional book series.





Storey Clayton

HOMETOWN: I grew up moving around in the west, have lived in eight states and the District of Columbia, and had spent four years in New Orleans most recently before enrolling at WVU.

MAJOR: MFA in Creative Nonfiction

Winner of the Russell MacDonald Creative Writing Award—Nonfiction Division

I worked as a youth counselor, debate coach, strategic analyst, development director, rideshare driver, and poker player. My nonfiction has appeared in more than twenty literary journals, including *Pleiades*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Mud Season Review*, *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, and *Blue Earth Review*. Learn more at storeyclayton.com.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I have spent the last three years in awe of my peers, both the quality of their writing and their character as human beings. We have built a tight bond in the MFA program and everyone here is part of a mutually supportive team that celebrates our successes and pushes each other to do our best work. I am so grateful for their feedback and encouragement and plan to rely on it well after graduation.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I am currently applying to nonprofit and university positions, primarily in administration and development. This builds on my work as a GA in the Eberly College Research Office. My hope is to continue writing essays and pitching my thesis project as a book while working full-time. My wife and I are also raising our first child, who was born in Morgantown last December!



Erica Cottrill

HOMETOWN: Quiet Dell, West Virginia

MAJORS: English (Creative Writing concentration) and Acting

Winner of the Eleanor Tucker Donley Memorial Scholarship

First-place winner of the James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest—Undergraduate Division

Honorable-mention of the Waitman Barbe Creative Writing Contest—Fiction Division

Aside from writing, reading, and acting, I love to sing and make music with my family, crochet clothes that a kid might wear (but for myself), attend rock concerts (when it is safe to do so), and curse my parents with caretaking a stray orange tabby cat with chubby cheeks. I'm passionate about animation, *Mamma Mia!*, so-bad-they're-good movies, social justice, the environment, and mental health.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I process ideas best when I can discuss them with others, so I appreciate having a space in my English classes to read thought-provoking texts and then share my opinions with others before my ideas make a nasty little nest inside my brain. Hearing new perspectives on narratives vitalizes me, whether it comes to my own writing in a workshop setting or *King Lear* in British Literature. English and storytelling gives us a reason to be here.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I'd most like to adopt a cockatiel, but I guess it's also a dream of mine to be accepted to a Master's program for Creative or Dramatic Writing.



Alicyn Craig

HOMETOWN: Martinsburg, West Virginia

MAJOR: Secondary Education/English

Winner of the Blanche Haskins Lough Capicola Scholarship

Besides school, I love to just relax and destress by doing something creative like using makeup. It is an outlet for my creativity when I cannot get it out during assignments.

After graduating I plan to hopefully teach here in West Virginia, but eventually move states to pursue a different love of teaching. The classes here at WVU have been so far amazing. There hasn't been a class I did not enjoy, with each class being so different you get to see a wide variety of students and opinions.



Michael Duong

HOMETOWN: Elkins, WV

MAJORS: English (Creative Writing concentration) and Entrepreneurship

Second-place winner of the Jon Scott Nelson Freshmen Creative Writing Award

Some of my interests include writing poetry, reading, watching movies, and hiking.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about English is that there is no real "right" answer. Anyone can interpret a piece of literature in their own way, which makes it so individualistic and interesting to see where people are coming from. As for English Classes, I do enjoy them because it gives me a different perception of the world that I may not have had prior entering the class.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I want to go and live in Europe and create my own business. It is either that or I will spend my time traveling the world and developing a series of fictional books.



Autumn Fitzsimmons

HOMETOWN: Rock Cave, West Virginia

MAJOR: English (Creative Writing concentration)

MINORS: Foreign Literature and History

Winner of the Virginia Butts Sturm English Scholarship

I love God, art, photography, and writing.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Up to this point, my English and literature classes have been about analysis, and understanding how the works we cover relate to life, and what the author was trying to communicate with their writing. I love the thought and effort that goes into this type of analysis, and what gems can be discovered through it. With an area of emphasis in creative writing, I want to use these analysis skills and thoughtfulness to grow as a writer and be able to communicate important messages through my work.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I plan to further my education in graduate school, while also continuing to work on my art and writing. I hope to one day be a novelist as well as a graphic novelist, which would utilize both of my artistic passions.



Michael Green

MAJOR: Ph.D. in English

Summer Humanities Internship

I am a PhD candidate with West Virginia University's English department, currently in the dissertating phase of my degree. My writing expresses an interest in certain variants of the existential uncanny across a number of different subgenres in American and British science fiction, fantasy and horror literature and film. I have also enjoyed teaching classes on these genres to our undergraduates during my time with the department and feel in doing so that I have learned as much from them as they ever have from me. Teaching English at WVU has allowed me the opportunity to create an environment of open inquiry with my students, opening up spaces for them to find their voice within the larger conversation, which has benefitted me to no end. My greatest hope for the future is simply to continue creating such classroom experiences with my students wherever I find them.



Kelsey Greene

HOMETOWN: Parkersburg, West Virginia

MAJORS: English (Creative Writing concentration) and Sociology

Winner of the Elsie M. and Ethel M. Jones Scholarship

Winner of the Virginia Butts Sturm Creative Writing Scholarship

My hobbies include reading, writing, embroidering, and playing too much Animal Crossing.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Favorite thing about English and English courses: I really enjoy getting to read works that are out of my comfort zone that I wouldn't necessarily pick up on my own. Being exposed to authors from around the world and learning something new is always an exciting experience.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I'll be applying to graduate programs in both Sociology and Creative Writing. I hope to teach at the collegiate level and eventually get my PhD.



Allison Groves

HOMETOWN: I am a townie! Born in West Virginia, I have lived in Morgantown for thirteen years.

MAJORS: English and Spanish

Winner of the George Bird Evans Literary Scholarship

I am passionate about loving people well. I lead with a ministry called YoungLife at Fairmont Senior High School in Marion county. In addition to music and songwriting, I also enjoy traveling, especially doing missionary work internationally, as well as healthy living and fitness. In my (extremely rare) free time, I will be found somewhere in the woods, hammocking, nose-deep in a C.S. Lewis book.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

The opportunity for personal growth! I am a passionate believer that the arts can facilitate great changes in the world. There are few other areas of study that encourage personal development the way that studying English does.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

Who knows! I entered college with a surefire six-year plan to finish undergrad in English, get my master's in Education and be a teacher somewhere in WV. Since then, I have added a major, acquired and dropped a few minors, been to three countries, and contemplated many different things. Wherever I end up, I want to meet people where they are at with love and encouragement. Maybe that's as a teacher, or a writer, or perhaps something completely new and different.



Emily Gwaltney

HOMETOWN: Morgantown, West Virginia

MAJOR: Child Development and Family Studies with an area of emphasis in Preschool Education.

Winner of the Jon Scott Nelson First-Year Writing Award

Ever since I started volunteering in children's ministry when I was twelve years old, I've loved working with young children (two-year-olds are my favorite!). In my free time, I enjoy reading lots of books, drinking tea, and writing anything from short stories to poems to personal essays.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Since I was a little girl, I have loved English and writing, especially creative writing. I am very grateful to my English professor, Rebecca Thomas, for letting me write about a topic I am passionate about, and for giving me so much direction and feedback on my writing here at WVU.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I would like to teach a two-year-old class at an early learning center in West Virginia. I hope to continue writing short stories and articles in my spare time.



Skylar Jenkins

HOMETOWN: New Cumberland, WV

MAJOR: Elementary Education

Winner of the Jon Scott Nelson First-Year Writing Award

I really enjoy painting on records and eating cake pops.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about my English course is that you get tons of practice! Having enough practice is helpful because it's really the only way to get better at writing. I find that in English classes you're constantly exposed to new writing techniques and styles. For example, I hadn't ever written nor seen a memo until I took English 101 in college.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I plan to work on my masters in Elementary Education; afterwards, I hope to be working in either an Elementary or Middle School.



Amelia Jones

HOMETOWN: Wheeling, WV

MAJOR: English

MINORS: Theatre and German

2021 Order of Augusta

Pursuing an English degree was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I am using what I learned in the classroom to refine my skills as an academic while having support from my peers and the institution. Literature has the capability to reveal who I am and how I fit into this world.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

The English department has become my home here at WVU. I have been able to pursue research, study abroad, and deepen my passion for literature. One of my favorite experiences was being able to study abroad in Rome and Florence, Italy with Dr. Caronia!

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

After graduation, I plan to pursue my MA in English Education at Columbia University. I am so thankful for all of the guidance and support that I have received from the English department during my time here. Thank you all, for everything!



Armâan Karimpour

HOMETOWN: Ona, West Virginia

MAJOR: Clarinet Performance

First-place winner of the James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest—102/103 Division

Winner of the Jon Scott Nelson First-Year Writing Award

I am involved with classical music, tennis, and the performing arts.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about English is either connecting personal experiences, news and public events, and literature together to create meaningful writing for different contexts or reading beautiful and meaningful stories.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I would like to continue to develop my musical and artistic abilities and eventually perform professionally in a symphony orchestra.



Macy Kile

HOMETOWN: Fort Ashby, West Virginia

MAJOR: English (Creative Writing and Professional Writing & Editing concentrations)

MINOR: History

Winner of the Waitman Barbe Creative Writing Award—Nonfiction Division

My interests include writing short stories and spending time in nature, which heavily influences my writing.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about English courses here at WVU is how much my professors care about me and how much effort they put into my education. I am so thankful for you guys!

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I am about to move to Columbus, OH where I hope to enter into a career that allows me to be creative and exercise my writing skills.



Rachel Killough

HOMETOWN: Bloomery, West Virginia which is a pretty small town in the eastern panhandle

MAJOR: English (Professional Writing & Editing concentration)

MINOR: General Political Science

Winner of the Eleanor Tucker Donley Memorial Scholarship

When I'm not working on my classes, working part-time at Planet Fitness, studying for the LSAT, or working on my internship with Public Citizen, you can usually find me reading, working out, playing the piano, or hanging out with my friends.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Both writing practice and the exposure to several varieties of amazing literature, authors, and genres. The English major forces you to engage your mind with a wide range of materials and application of abstract thought. This has incalculable benefits regarding your own writing, analysis, speech, and even your unconscious mind.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I plan to go to Law School to pursue a legal education. I want to use my skills enhanced through my English major to best represent people who need legal help as a licensed attorney. I have always been infatuated with the judicial system, and I want to further my knowledge of it so I can help people in an important way, but also because I'm simply curious.



Karen Klein

HOMETOWN: Kalamazoo, Michigan

MAJOR: MFA in Creative Writing (fiction)

Winner of the Russell MacDonald Creative Writing Award—Fiction Division

I'm originally from Kalamazoo, Michigan but have lived and taught English to high school students in Texas, Wyoming, Alaska, India, and Poland. I'm passionate about writing, reading, spending time outside, and horses.

I am most impressed by the supportive group of committed writers, both students and professors, with whom I share classes. I'm so appreciative that I was selected for this program at WVU.



Wenyu Kong

HOMETOWN: Dalian, a coastal city in northern China

MAJOR: Ph.D. in English

First-place winner of the James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest—Graduate Division

My focus is in modernism (British and Anglo-Irish in particular), and contemporary literary theories (especially psychoanalysis and hauntology). I also enjoy exploring temporality and the concept of time used in modernist works.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I can use my writing as a powerful tool to interpret life and train my analytical skills, as I am charmed by the beauty of the English language.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I am hoping I can continue researching and teaching in higher education institutions.



Devin Lacy

HOMETOWN: A tiny town just outside of Charleston, WV

MAJOR: M.A. in Professional Writing & Editing

Winner of the Rebecca Mason Perry Award

I am a lover of cats (“Yes, I would love to see a picture of your cat!”); a connoisseur of pasta (“Give me all the carbs, please.”); and a borderline-obsessive buyer of books (“The three books in my purse? They’re for if I get bored.”). I’m also a first-year graduate student at West Virginia University, but a fifth year Mountaineer. I graduated from WVU in 2019 with a Bachelor’s in English, concentrated in both Creative Writing and Professional Writing & Editing. After taking a year off, I’m back on campus—well, as much as anyone can be at the moment—to earn my Master’s in Professional Writing & Editing. I’m an Appalachian to the core, born and raised in wild and wonderful West Virginia, growing up in a tiny town just outside of Charleston. I moved to Morgantown after graduating from high school in 2015, and I’ve been here ever since! While I love and have quite the collection of poetry, I am nothing near a poet. I do, however, love fiction! Magical realism is my go-to, but I love anything with some witchy vibes. I also have a soft spot for works related to and/or based on Sherlock Holmes, Arthurian legend, or Greek and Roman myth. Period dramas are a total guilty pleasure that I indulge in often. Appalachian literature is a recent love, one that I am enjoying cultivating and expanding as time goes on. Basically, as long as there’s a solid, interesting story-line and some awesome character development, I’m hooked. Recommendations are always welcomed and appreciated.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about English and English courses the opportunity to explore and interact with unique, diverse voices and perspectives. I love the opportunity to learn new things and share stories and ideas with others in an open, respectful space.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I hope to work in editing and publishing, working specifically with fiction and creative non-fiction. However, I am also considering teaching. I guess I’ll just see where life takes me and where my true passion lies



Lauren Layton

HOMETOWN: Apex, North Carolina

MAJOR: Nursing

MINOR: Anthropology

Winner of the Jon Scott Nelson First-Year Writing Award

In my free time, I enjoy collecting musical instruments, cooking, and camping in national parks!

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My professor, Dr. Nancy Caronia, who encouraged me to enter this competition, made my first college English class a wonderful experience.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

After graduation, I look forward to working in the West Virginia hospital system and later pursuing a master’s degree in nursing.



Lauren Lee

HOMETOWN: Nicholas County, West Virginia

MAJOR: Secondary Education/English

Winner of the Blanche Haskins Lough Capicola Scholarship

My interests and passions include reading, teaching, and leading Younglife at Morgantown High School!

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

My future plans after graduation is to get a job in West Virginia and maybe get a Master's degree!



Ross Liggett

HOMETOWN: Pendleton County, WV

MAJOR: English (Creative Writing concentration)

MINOR: Sociology

Honorable-mention of the Waitman Barbe Creative Writing Award—Nonfiction Division

I have a passion for reading, writing, and making recipes with my InstantPot.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I like the creativity that English allows and the positive environment that my English professors have fostered in their classes.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I plan on obtaining my MFA.



Linda Ma

HOMETOWN: Morgantown, WV

MAJOR: Immunology and Medical Microbiology

Second-place winner of the James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest—102/103 Division

I enjoy reading horror novels, hiking, and cooking.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I like the degree of freedom present in English classes. Everyone writes differently, based on their life experiences.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

Dental School.



Aerianna McClanahan

HOMETOWN: Delbarton, WV – a small, but beautiful town
MAJORS: English and Women’s & Gender Studies
MINORS: Sociology and Appalachian Studies

Eberly College Outstanding Senior English Major

I am interested in researching diversity, social justice and grassroots activism particularly within an Appalachian setting. Outside of my academic interests, I enjoy spending time with my two dogs Dundie and Fern as well as watching '80s films (which are definitely the best, in my opinion).

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I have loved English and Literature for as long as I could possibly remember. The thing that I love the most about it is that one text can have so many interpretations - the possibilities are limitless. With that in mind, taking courses that were so small and intimate and having a group of 20-25 people to bounce ideas off of in my classes here has been an incredible experience because with each new perspective I am introduced to by a classmate, my love for the subject not only grows tenfold, but I get to build bridges and connections to people from all walks of life in the process. It’s unbelievably special.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I will be returning to WVU in the fall to pursue my Master’s degree in English. As someone who hopes to become a college professor someday, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to be a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the English Department as I continue to pursue my academic and career goals.



April McGinnis

HOMETOWN: Boone, NC
MAJOR: Ph.D. in English

Department of English Distinguished Teaching Award

John C. and Mildred W. Ludlum Dissertation Fellowship

I am originally from Boone, NC and lived in Chapel Hill, NC for 10 years before coming to WVU. I've been teaching composition and literature since 2011. Outside of the classroom, I spend a lot of time birding and hiking. I received my BA and MA in English (literature concentration, minor in philosophy) from Appalachian State University.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

After I finish my degree at WVU, I hope to continue teaching at the college level, as I really enjoy working with students. I would also love to find a way to bridge environmental humanities and public outreach with my work.



Caitlin Mead:

HOMETOWN: Wheeling, WV
MAJOR: English
MINOR: Psychology

Winner of the Virginia Butts Sturm English Scholarship

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about English and my English courses is the opportunity to read great literature.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I am still in the process of exploring what I would like to pursue after graduation, but I am interested in going to graduate school to further my education.



Taylor Miller

HOMETOWN: Fairmont, WV

MAJORS: English (Professional Writing & Editing concentration); Advertising and Public relations with an emphasis in Public Relations

MINOR: Event Planning

First-place winner of the Professional Writing & Editing Award

Outside of my coursework, I volunteer with WVU's chapter of A Moment of Magic. I own an obnoxious number of plants, and in my spare time, I like to take care of said plants, read, hike, or spend time with my friends and family.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about the English program is the openness of both the degree and the professors and administrators who run the program. The English program allows students to experience all aspects of the English field, and encourages students to think outside of the stereotypical careers that an English degree is associated with. Through my courses, I have been able to improve my speaking, writing, and analytical skills, have read everything from the Classics to modern works, learned about the great creators that came before, and have been motivated to follow my heart. The professors and administrators in the program have never been anything but encouraging, believing in me and my potential even if I could not see the greater picture as they could.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation: After graduating with my undergraduate degrees in May of 2021, I will be returning to WVU in the fall to continue my education by pursuing a master's in Professional Writing and Editing. After completing my master's, I hope to work in the editing and publishing industry as a book editor.



Sara Money

HOMETOWN: Romney, West Virginia

MAJOR: Secondary Education/English

Winner of the Carter Bishop Memorial Scholarship

I am heading into my Sophomore year of college here at West Virginia University. I enjoy reading and napping with my dog in my free time.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love exploring the many readings and genres in each of my classes.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I want to put my efforts back into West Virginia and become an English teacher in Hampshire County, West Virginia.



Tucker Nadeau

HOMETOWN: North Ferndale, Montana

MAJORS: English and Spanish

MINOR: Arabic Studies

Winner of the Elena Illa Graham Memorial Scholarship

Some of my passions are reading, playing disc golf, and whitewater kayaking in wild and wonderful WV. I am also a member of the WVU wrestling team and to wind down I enjoy making baked goods for my roommates.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love the excitement that all of my professors have for literature and language, and I also appreciate the chance to read so many good books that I wouldn't have the time or inclination to do on my own.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I hope to study abroad in a Spanish or Arabic speaking country and eventually obtain a master's degree in literature. Eventually I plan on working in education or with the federal government.



Lauren Pauley

HOMETOWN: Winfield, WV

MAJOR: English (Creative Writing concentration)

Minor: Appalachian Studies

Winner of the Waitman Barbe Creative Writing Award—Fiction Division

I love writing, reading, spending time with my friends/family, and watching musicals and cheesy movies.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love being able to hear my classmates' interpretations of the works we read. Getting to read wonderful literature with a room full of people who are just as passionate as you are is such a nice feeling!

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I hope to continue with writing fiction in any way that I can—my ultimate goal would be to get my MFA in Creative Writing!



Jennifer Peedin

HOMETOWN: Eastern North Carolina

MAJOR: Ph.D. in English

David G. Allen Dissertation Fellowship

I am from eastern North Carolina which most likely influenced my research about swamp and hurricane narratives. I love kayaking, coffee shops, gardening, and bird watching with my cat, Ava, although with decidedly different intentions than Ava. I am getting my Ph.D. with research based on Southern Indigenous and African American narratives that question the function of race in southern landscapes.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about English is its ability to investigate the depth of human emotion, interaction, and strength and to place me anywhere and in any era, so I may experience those things as well. My favorite thing about teaching English is helping my students navigate through written works that challenge and question long-held beliefs and practices and witnessing an acceptance of others through literature.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I hope to continue teaching English after graduation.



Gabriella Pishotti

HOMETOWN: Warren, Ohio

MAJOR: Ph.D. in English

Second-place winner of the James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest—Graduate Division

My research interests include global anglophone and migration literature and human rights narratives. Specifically, my work focuses on the cross-border experiences of refugees, immigrants, and displaced individuals and how different narrative forms can impact the dissemination and reception of these stories as well as influence human rights conversations. When I'm not reading and writing for school, you can usually find me reading and writing for fun or baking something that's sure to have chocolate in it.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Class discussion—I love learning from my classmates and getting to hear their opinions and ideas on a topic or book we've read.



Jordan Pugh

HOMETOWN: I grew up on a 47-acre farm in Southern, WV, but I recently moved right outside Charleston, WV.

MAJOR: English (Professional Writing & Editing concentration)

MINORS: Communications and Women's & Gender Studies

Winner of the Eleanor Tucker Donley Memorial Scholarship

I am passionate about advocacy and activism. Particularly, I am a fierce advocate for women's rights, equity, intergenerational literacy, prison reform, and environmentalism/sustainability.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Rhetoric rules our lives! Transcribed rhetoric allows us to tangibly interact with moments that no longer exist. Contemporary literature courses are writing a sort of counter-narrative to the literary canon, aiming to tell the stories of women and minorities whose narratives and accomplishments have been entirely omitted from history or told from the tainted perspective of the privileged.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I hope to instill my immense appreciation and respect for the craftsmanship and authorship of literature into others through my future service, leadership, and career endeavors. Ultimately, I just want to promote equality in the world any way I can—in my daily speech, actions, social and service involvements, and most importantly, my beliefs. I am considering law school but also have an interest in the publishing and journalism industries, as well as continued work in the nonprofit sector. I certainly intend to contribute to the extreme illiteracy epidemic in West Virginia.



Qazi Arka Rahman

HOMETOWN: Bangladesh

MAJOR: Ph.D in English

Summer Humanities Internship

I am interested in the nexus of postcolonial literature, South Asian studies, and digital humanities. I am curious about the role of fiction in shaping the concepts of nation and nationality in modern South Asia and seek to understand the multidimensional identity politics operating there. I am a firm believer in the power of narratives and actively try to weave that philosophy into my pedagogical approach. I also enjoy critical studies of science fiction, films, and popular culture. An avid soccer fan, I love music of all kinds and anything cyberpunk!

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

You get to know about a wide range of topics while continuously un-learning and re-learning. It helps you develop critical insight to understand the necessity of not seeing things in binary and the importance of continuous reexamination of our world. That is how we keep growing.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I would like to pursue a career in academia because I enjoy research and like to teach. Also, I have been always interested in the way universities operate and I think the pandemic has pointed out many vulnerabilities of the existing higher education system. I would like to play my part in the inevitable reimagination of academia in the future.



Melissa Reynolds

HOMETOWN: Aurora, WV

MAJOR: English (Professional Writing & Editing concentration)

MINOR: History

Runner-up of the Appalachian Writing Award

I'm currently an active member of Morgantown Writers Group and an editor for *The Metaworker Literary Magazine*. When I'm not writing or studying, I rescue plants from the discount section at Kroger or I play Dungeons and Dragons.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I often stand in awe when reading someone's words who have been gone for hundreds of years—no time machine needed to know their thoughts. Stories allow me to explore many different aspects of life, whether it's a different time period, another place, or a new perspective.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I will be going to graduate school to get my masters in PWE this upcoming Fall. After that, I want to help other writers hone their craft while I continue my own work.



Mary Grace Rich

HOMETOWN: Marlinton, WV

MAJOR: Journalism

MINOR: English

Second-place winner of the James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest—Undergraduate Division

I like to write, be outside, and spend time with my boyfriend and my cat, Bear.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about English and English courses is being exposed to new ideas. I've read lots of works in English classes that I might not have ever considered reading before. It's helped me discover a lot of great authors and books I love!

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I'm planning on working and spending lots of time at the beach.



Aaron Rovan

Hometown: Johnstown, PA

Major: Ph.D. in English

Summer Humanities Internship

My research and writing focuses on the connections between literature and folklore. I'm currently interested in the intersection of women's religious traditions and the development of American ethnicity. When I'm not reading, writing, or teaching, I enjoy bike riding, gardening, cooking, and doing home renovations.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I like the flexibility that English allows. I can focus on literary studies while also engaging history, anthropology and folklore. It's like the best of all worlds.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I would love to continue to teach writing and literature to college students, but I'm also open to careers beyond the academy that would help me do good in the world.



Anna Schles

HOMETOWN: Charleston, West Virginia

MAJOR: MFA in Creative Writing (fiction)

Winner of the Zierold Creative Writing Award

I like to write, draw, play chess, go to WVU basketball games, and read.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite things about English classes are all the amazing professors I have had at WVU and the way that their classes have broadened my thinking.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

After graduation, I would like to continue writing and teach creative writing and composition.



Miranda Smith

HOMETOWN: Matewan, WV
MAJOR: M.A. in English

Winner of the Rebecca Mason Perry Award

In my free time I love baking, going on rides with my dog, reading collections of weird fiction, and watching Jeopardy with my family. My research interests include ecocriticism and the environmental humanities, with a more specific fascination with the EcoGothic body and the ways that race and gender overlap with environmental concerns.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

The sense of community I've experienced in all of my classes since beginning my time here at WVU.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

After completing my M.A., I hope to continue on to a PhD program.



Megan Swiger

HOMETOWN: Morgantown, WV
MAJOR: Secondary Education/ English

Winner of the Carter Bishop Memorial Scholarship

I have always been happy to be from West Virginia since it is such a rich state with the traditions and nature it boasts. Actually, when I was little, my pride and joy was my mother's pepperoni rolls and fried dough (I still say they are a staple of my childhood)! I enjoy reading and writing--especially writing--and I hope to one day publish a book. I also enjoy hiking and running, as well as watching anime.

Since the major is very set on its schedule, I am not in the process of completing any minors, but I do have some experience with languages. Throughout high school and then three semesters at WVU, I took German and this coming semester I am enrolled to take Japanese.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love thinking critically about literature, which is partially why I love writing. I find analyzing characters and their character arcs extremely fascinating, which is why I enjoy my English classes so much when we discuss various books and articles. Also, a lot of the English courses that I have taken so far have challenged us to think about how we can better society, which has been very helpful and enlightening for me.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

There are a few things that I really want to do in the future. I love the idea of traveling: I think it's very important for people to appreciate and be exposed to different cultures and lifestyles. I hope to emphasize this in my future classrooms and give my students a bigger perspective of the world (the world is bigger than their hometown, state, or even country). My dream is to visit Japan, but I also would love to travel across Europe. As mentioned above, I would also love to publish a book someday. While all of this is happening, I look forward to teaching English in either a middle or high school, but preferably a middle school.



Lauren Volk

HOMETOWN: Cross Lanes, West Virginia
MAJOR: Secondary Education/English

Winner of the Blanche Haskins Lough Capicola Scholarship

Winner of the Captain William Neely Award for Outstanding Sophomore

Honorable-mention of the Waitman Barbe Creative Writing Award—Poetry Division

My interests and passions include singing, playing guitar, reading, playing tennis, and being involved in Cru, which is a campus ministry.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite things about English and the English major are getting to analyze literature, have great literary discussions in class, and make so many new friends that are interested in the same topics I am. I love that English courses give me an opportunity to express my creativity.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

My future plans after graduation are to become a middle school or high school English teacher in the state of West Virginia. I also plan to obtain a master's degree and become a principal eventually.



Alexandria Webb

HOMETOWN: Kenova, West Virginia

MAJOR: English (Creative Writing and Professional Writing & Editing concentrations)

Minors: Philosophy and Women & Gender Studies

Runner-up of the Appalachian Writing Award

I was born and raised in Kenova, West Virginia, where I learned to love reading and writing from an early age. I used to get in trouble in grade school for reading under my desk during lessons. I am passionate about creating content that lets the audience forget about everything else for a while and has the ability to occupy their mind long after they have read it. I hope to have my own published novel one day that can do this.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

The comprehensive aspect. The more you learn about reading and writing, the more other subjects become easier to understand.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I am going to work as a Proposal Writer for Fusion Technology in Bridgeport, WV. I hope to continue writing creatively in my free time.



Liam Wholihan

HOMETOWN: Little bit of everywhere in Maryland, a quiet corner of Illinois, and now a piece of West Virginia too.

MAJOR: MFA in Creative Writing (poetry)

Winner of the Russell MacDonald Creative Writing Award—Poetry Division

Winner of the Rebecca Mason Perry Award

I delight and hunt delights, which has led me into the wonderful company of fellow poets, handymen, musicians, and martial arts instructors. As a little kid, I got really excited about dinosaurs, so not much has changed. Like my father, I'm at my happiest in the woods, on a friendly porch, or coasting down an unfamiliar road with the windows down. My work can be found in *Quail Bell Magazine*, *Bridge Bluffton: University Press*, *Catch*, *Quiver*, and *Cellar Door*.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Oh the people, it's always the people and the little bits of themselves they bring to class. I live for that hum of chatter outside of a classroom before class starts, smalltalk across a socratic circle, and walking out of big double doors together after we're done. And, you know, we get to talk about poems too.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

Ireland sounds fun, and so does touring across the U.S. making music. I'm tending to baseball fields right now too, so maybe something where I can do all that and write with people. I'll tell you the plan after it happens.



Natalie Wonsettler

HOMETOWN: Morgantown, WV

MAJOR: Biology

MINORS: English and Medical Humanities

Winner of the Jon Scott Nelson First-Year Writing Award

I am currently a member of the Appalachian Prison Book Project and Pre-Medical Club. I also volunteer with a local Girl Scout troop, as I was a Girl Scout for ten years and really enjoy helping the younger girls earn badges and encouraging them to take advantage of the opportunities that Girl Scouts offers. This summer I'll be participating in research at the Eye Institute at WVU, and am very excited to get involved in the research process and learn more about the mechanisms involved in the molecular pathways of ophthalmic medicine. In my spare time I love to read and listen to 70s music.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love that English has opened my mind to a multitude of ideas and perspectives that are helping me gain a better sense of the world. I also love how freeing writing can be. It has challenged me to take a deeper look within myself, and has helped me gain a better understanding of who I am.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I'm planning to apply and attend medical school! I'm unsure what specialty yet, but I'm very interested in ophthalmic medicine and possibly gynecology, and then further specializing in helping women with postpartum depression.



Lily Wright

HOMETOWN: Bluefield, WV

MAJORS: English and French

Second-place winner of the Professional Writing & Editing Award

I'm really interested in international issues like immigration, human rights, etc. I'm passionate about language acquisition as well.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My favorite thing about the English department is how eager all of my professors are to help me realize my personal and professional growth.

Future plans/what would you like to do after graduation?

I plan to take a year off from school for work experience and then apply for law school!