

Meet the 2023-24 English Department Award and Scholarship Winners



Malory Adams

HOMETOWN: Albion, NY

MAJOR: English (Literature and Cultural Studies)

Runner-up of the Waitman Barbe Creative Writing Award-Fiction Division

I'm a graduating senior, and my main interests include reading and writing. On campus, I've been involved in Sigma Tau Delta, HerCampus, and Mountaineer Maniacs.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

My concentration is in literature, but surprisingly, I have really enjoyed my creative writing classes. They have pushed me in a good way.

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

I'm interested in working in a law office and then pursuing a Masters in School Librarianship.



Rojda Idil Arslan

HOMETOWN: Istanbul, Turkey

MAJOR: M.A. Literature

Runner-up of the graduate division of the James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest

When I'm not reading or writing, I'm *trying* to write poetry in Turkish and playing the piano. I can't wait to get back home this summer and reunite with my piano, who's been with me since I was 14.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

What I love most about English and literature is discussing and hearing others' thoughts about world building ideas and theories. Beyond the academic aspect, I find it incredibly satisfying to be able to read, think, and talk about world-building ideas.

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

After graduation, I will pursue a Ph.D. degree. My end goal is to head back to Turkey and teach at a university there. I'd love to teach a theory class someday!



John Fox

HOMETOWN: Morgantown, West Virginia

Zierold Creative Writing Award

I'm from Morgantown, WV, born and raised! I'm interested in emotionally intelligent children's cartoons (my favorite is She-ra and the Princesses of Power), playing guitar (when I can), and reading horror and sci fi (also when I can)!

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I'm studying for an MFA in Creative Writing: Fiction. My favorite thing about studying English and writing is the community that builds in workshops or classes when talking about literature. I love seeing our minds come together!

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

After graduation, I hope to get published, continue my work at the library, and perhaps pursue a doctorate. (After I've rested from the master's!) ^-^



Destinee Harper

HOMETOWN: Harrisonburg, Virginia

James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest: Graduate Division

Destinee is an English Ph.D. student from Harrisonburg, Virginia. Her research investigates legal structures that support book and education restrictions in prisons. After obtaining her degree, Destinee hopes to work for a higher education in prison program. In her free time, she enjoys talking about her day with her husband, reading, and taking her dogs to the park.



Helen Knight

HOMETOWN: Born in Ethiopia but raised in West Virginia

Winner James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest: 102/103 Division Honorable Mention of the Waitman Barbe Creative Writing Award-Fiction Division

My passion lies in helping underprivileged and underserved individuals and advocating for equal opportunities for all. Currently, I am pursuing a major in Multidisciplinary Studies, with minors in International Business, Communication, and Sociology.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

English, being my second language, has played a pivotal role in my personal and academic development. It has provided me with a platform to express my passions and ideas in various ways and has honed my communication skills significantly.

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

Upon completion of my studies, I plan to either serve in the Peace Corps or intern for the United Nations, where I can contribute to making a positive impact on a global scale.



Erin Langan

HOMETOWN: Ridgeley, WV

MAJOR: MA in Professional Writing and Editing

Rebecca Mason Perry Award: M.A. PWE Recipient

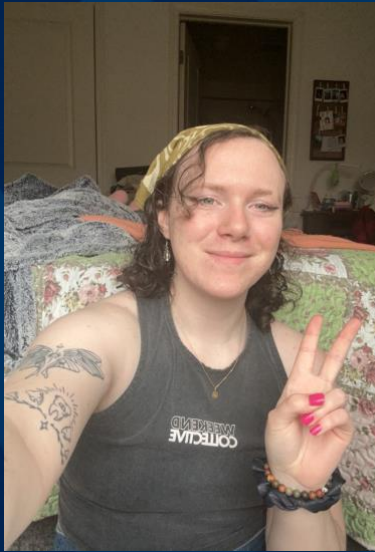
I'm originally from Ridgeley, WV, and I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in English from West Virginia University in May 2023. I love to be active, hiking, biking, and going to the gym, and I enjoy traveling, listening to and creating music, and volunteering in the community.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love that English courses not only teach about the language itself, but also about seeing and understanding perspectives other than your own or the standard. It's important to me to have a multidisciplinary background, and our English department has helped me make sense of all the connections between topics and fields that other disciplines might see as unrelated.

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

After graduation, I'm hoping to attend medical school to become a physician. I'm looking forward to being able to use the rhetorical skills I have gained through my PWE and English degrees to better understand and communicate with my patients and peers!



Cody Matorin

HOMETOWN: Needham, Massachusetts

MAJORS/MINORS: Multidisciplinary Studies with minors in English, journalism, and arts management.

James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest: Nonfiction Division

Bio: I am from Massachusetts; I grew up in a suburban town called Needham, but I now reside in a smaller rural town called PeppereIl on the border of New Hampshire and Massachusetts. I have many interests that I love and am passionate about. I enjoy photography, painting, listening to and playing music, and socializing with friends as well as meeting new people. I am very passionate about interpersonal relationships, and I value finding community. I also value creative expression, and the freedom to truly be yourself.

Favorite thing about English/English courses: I have always loved writing, but was often discouraged by my teachers in middle school and high school. College has reignited my love for writing and I feel like I have gotten a lot closer to figuring out who I am as an individual as well as a writer because of the English courses I have taken at WVU. Coming to college has allowed me to have an epiphany: writing doesn't have to be about finishing a story or making things perfect on the first try, or even about fitting my teacher's impressions of what a "good" story is. I see writing as an extension of yourself; a way you can express your inner world. It's about communicating with others artistically, while also sometimes being analytical. Writing is about focusing on your own ideas rather than those of others. It is a wonderful way to connect with the world, and I have found my own version of connecting with others through writing.

Future Plans/After Graduation: I have always struggled with the idea of what I'll do after graduation. I have so many different ideas of what careers I might want to pursue, and I am still trying to figure out what I am truly passionate about in the professional world. I have also bounced between several different which has helped narrow my interests down, but I am trying to further understand where my interests lie. I am honestly not sure what the future holds for me, but I know wherever I end majors and minors, up, I will never give up my love for writing.

Matthew Powney

HOMETOWN: Vienna, WV

Winner of the Russell MacDonald Creative Writing Award—Poetry Division

I grew up in Vienna, West Virginia. I enjoy playing soccer in competitive leagues around Morgantown, playing the electric bass, creative writing, reading literature and poetry, and being an amateur home chef. I have enjoyed my time in english courses at West Virginia University as they have given me the freedom to explore my experience so I can distill it into my art.

Currently I am pursuing a Master of Fine Art in Creative Writing Poetry at West Virginia University. Before pursuing my MFA, I received my Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering and Business Management at West Virginia University with minors in Computer Science and Creative Writing. My master's thesis manuscript, *Time on the Mountain*, is an exploration of my time in West Virginia, extraction from the region, and the pollution of the Ohio River.

After graduation, I will be looking after my newborn, who is due to be born in late April. Once she is a little bigger, I hope to find a career where I can focus on the betterment of West Virginia and continue making art about the area. I'd also like to start a garden.





Ethan Prichard

HOMETOWN: Milton, WV

MAJOR: English 3+3

MINOR: History, Business Ethics & Prosperity

Appalachian Writing Award

Bio- I am from Milton, WV. I spend my time fishing, hanging out with my girlfriend and roommates, and going to sporting events with my family.

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

I plan to attend WVU Law School upon graduation and pursue a career in tax law or in business.



Newton Sweeney

HOMETOWN: Martinsburg, West Virginia

MAJORS/MINORS: B.F.A. Acting and B.A. English dual degree student

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

I'm a writer and actor from Martinsburg, WV. For as long as I can remember, I've been passionate about social justice, and most of my creative projects revolve around finding one's voice and making the world a safer place for all. When I'm not reading or writing, I can usually be found going on a little walk, junk journaling, or on my porch, practicing yoga with my cat.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love getting to analyze literature and uncover deeper meaning in texts! It makes me feel like I'm a detective piecing together clues.

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

After I graduate in December, I plan to pursue a Master's Degree in English Education and become a high school English teacher.



Marvellous Taiwo

Rebecca Mason Perry Award: M.A. Recipient

Major/Minor including concentrations: M.A. in English (Literature)

I am from Oyo State, Nigeria. My areas of interest encompass the intersection of literature, culture, and the environment, which has influenced my research interests in postcolonialism, environmental humanities, grief literature, and affect studies. In my spare time, I enjoy listening to music and exploring the outdoors.

My favorite thing about English and English courses is the opportunities to think instrumentally with several beautiful concepts and contribute to critical dialogues.



Kelly Ward

HOMETOWN: Clay City, Kentucky

MAJORS: MFA in Creative Writing (Fiction track)

Winner of the Russell MacDonald Creative Writing Award—Fiction Division

Fiction writing is my passion, but my other interests include old-growth forests, publishing trends, Cafe Bustelo, and spoiling my pet cat, Nyx. In the summer I can usually be found with a vanilla milkshake, going for a drive through rural Kentucky with the windows rolled-down for hours.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

Finding my experiences and personal beliefs through others' stories. I love being haunted by the stories that touch my heart.

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

Right now I am still in the process of contemplating creative writing PhD programs, but my plan for after graduating in spring 2025 is to begin querying an agent for my thesis/novel.



Ella Wisnieski

HOMETOWN: Magnolia, DE

MAJOR: Master of Fine Arts, Poetry

Rebecca Mason Perry Award: M.F.A. Recipient Honorable Mention: Russell MacDonald Creative Writing Award

Before pursuing my MFA, I attended the University of Notre Dame, where I first became interested in writing and education. I feel very lucky that I've been able to continue developing these passions at WVU. So far, in my poetry, I've explored themes of desire, nourishment, and aimlessness; as a teaching assistant, I've endeavored to help students find and hone their authentic voices as writers..

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I love the collaborative nature of our classes. There are so many different perspectives and ideas that I get to learn from, both from professors and fellow classmates!

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

After graduating from WVU, I hope to find a career that allows me to further explore and cultivate my passion for education. I would also like to publish my first collection of poems!



Wenyu Kong

Blaydes Family Summer Fellowship

My name is Wenyu Kong. I am from Dalian, China. I am a Ph.D. candidate in English.

My study interests lie in British and Irish modernism, Gothic studies, and temporalities studies. Currently, I am in my dissertation stage and my study explores the history of British/Irish Gothic and the transformative usages of Gothic traditions in Irish modernist writings. I am interested in exploring the intersection among history, literature and cultural memory. When I am not researching or studying, I also enjoy traveling and cooking. I am always excited to explore new places or try new recipes.

Favorite thing about English and English courses?

I believe that literature teaches us empathy. When we study a particular work, we are not simply studying for our academic purposes, we also learn to listen to different voices and understand various styles of lives, and such mutual understanding is necessary for our society. I also feel grateful for knowing the wonderful people in our English Department; their passion for the subject has been helping me to discover more about English and see myself with more potential.

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

After I graduate from WVU, I hope I can continue to work as a researcher/lecturer in higher education institutions. I will be happy to continue to teach writing and literature to college students, but I am also open to other opportunities that can continue to transfer my skills learned in the English major to other fields.

