



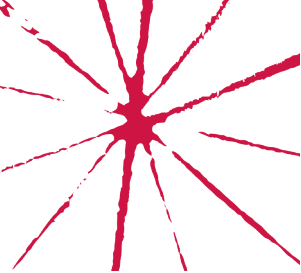
Department of English
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

English Majors

AWARDS CELEBRATION

**April 27, 2025
4:00PM**

Alumni Room, Pyle Center



Ceremony Program

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Christa J. Olson

Professor of English and Department Chair

Remarks from the Director of Ceremonies

Mark Vareschi

Associate Professor of English and Interim

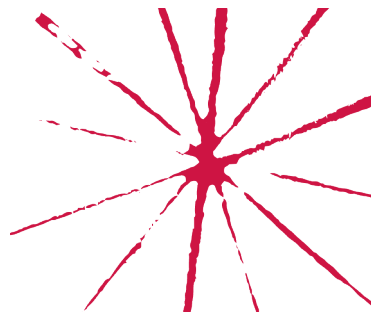
Director of Undergraduate Studies

Presentation of Scholarship and Writing Prize Recipients

Recognition of the Early Career Alumni Award Recipients

Closing Remarks

Reception



WRITING PRIZES

The John McMynn Williams Senior Thesis Award

Presented by: Jacee Cho

This award is given to one student for a senior thesis chapter that demonstrates exceptional writing and analytical skills.

Recipient: Sophie Boes

Thesis: *Thinking for Speaking about Turkish Evidentiality: The Current State of Scholarship*

Instructor: Jacee Cho

The William F. Vilas Prizes

Presented by: Abigail Letak and Amadi Ozier

These prizes were established by Anna M. Vilas in 1912 and are awarded each year for the two best expository essays written by undergraduates in an upper-level English course.

Recipient: Brett Dunn

Essay: *Building the Body of the Nation: Embodied Nation-Building in Black Women's Literature*

Instructor: Amadi Ozier

Recipient: Aspen Schrupp

Essay: *Color Me Happy: Art as an Enchanted Version of Wellness*

Instructor: Abigail Letak

McMynn Williams Creative Media Prize

Presented by: Nate Marshall

This prize recognizes the outstanding use of creative media to express ideas in unique ways, to re-imagine the work of English studies in English classes, and to take advantage of the affordances of emerging media. Projects winning this award demonstrate an understanding of how creative media allow for novel modes of expression, communication, and persuasion.

Recipient: Sarah Perkins

Project: *Visualization of Postcolonial Love Poem*

Instructor: Sarah Wood

Recipient: Han Raschka

Project: *The Carrying: Motherhood and Grief*

Instructor: Nate Marshall

James T. Lewis Prizes

Presented by: John Mulvihill

These prizes were established in 1968 and awarded annually for the two best essays written by first-year students in an English Department course.

Recipient: Samantha Cayton

Essay: *The Hyphen Between: An Observation on Cultural Disconnect and Language of Second Generation Filipino Americans*

Instructor: John Mulvihill

Recipient: Carmelina Mendoza

Essay: *The Three Separate Lives of Carmelina Ann Mendoza*

Instructor: Maryhilda Ben Ibe

Standish Henning Shakespeare Prize

Presented by: Bridget Anderson

This prize was established by Professor Andrew Weiner in recognition of his teacher and colleague Professor Standish Henning. The prize is awarded for the best essay written by an undergraduate in one of the English Department's upper-level Shakespeare courses.

Recipient: Xining Liu

Essay: *Identifying Loves Labor's Won; Or, Hercules' Love's Labor*

Instructor: Bridget Anderson

McMynn Williams Data Analysis Prize

Presented by: Johs Rasmussen

This prize is awarded for an outstanding written project based on the collection and analysis of original data in an upper-level English major course.

Recipient: Carlee Kessler

Essay: *Queering the Writing Fellow: Calling for Queer Theory in Writing Fellow Pedagogy*

Instructor: Johs Rasmussen

Mary Ellen Williams Golby Writing Prize

Presented by: Unifer Dyer

This prize is awarded for the best essay or project by an English major that focuses on social justice, antiracism, or anti-ableism.

Recipient: Diya Abbas

Essay: *Beyond Articulation*

Instructor: Unifier Dyer

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Undergraduate Writing Awards

These awards are for outstanding academic essay writing done by students who are L2, or second language, undergraduate writers. These writers have shown a high level of skill in their argumentation, logic, and use of voice, as well as excellent citation and analysis skills.

1st place

Recipient: Yijia Zhang

Essay: *When Emojis Confuse Instead of Clarify: Understanding the Impact of Platforms, Age, and Culture*

Presented by: Danielle Scheffler

2nd place

Recipient: Naqib Bin Mohd Nazri

Essay: *The Impact of Childhood Trauma on Perfectionism in Adulthood*

Presented by: Lidka Rao

Runners-Up

Recipient: Mingwei Zhang

Essay: *Click, Share, Discriminate? The Role of Social Media in Amplifying Different Discrimination*

Presented by: Karen Best

Recipient: Yuhan Xing

Essay: *The Extent to Which Psychological Measures Are Exploited By Magicians*

Presented by: Karen Best

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

The Helen C. White Award

Presented by: Jacee Cho and Abigail Letak

This award is presented to senior students majoring in the Humanities who exemplify the sterling character of Helen C. White, a great teacher and scholar in the Department of English at the University of Wisconsin, on the basis of academic standing and a deep interest in the life of the community. Donor Ineva Baldwin felt that recipients should have demonstrated their interest in sharing their humanistic culture with their families and community.

Recipients:

Sophie Boes

Aspen Schrupp

The Dorothy Classen Urish Scholarship

Presented by: Allison Rollins

This scholarship was established by Jack Urish, a former English major at UW-Madison, in honor of his mother Dorothy, who was an English teacher in Stoughton, WI. The donor wishes to offer financial support toward the academic success of a senior English major.

Recipient: Han Raschka

Helen Black Bennett Memorial Scholarship

Presented by: Ron Kuka

This award was established by the donor, Penelope G. Sticha, in honor of her mother, Helen, in 1994.

Recipient: Abby Stoa

Felice Levin Michaels Scholarship

Presented by: Anja Wanner

This award was established by the donor to provide scholarships to undergraduate students in the Department of English.

Recipient: Matthew Pennington

English Undergraduate Scholarships

Presented by: Michael Kaplan and Ramzi Fawaz

This scholarship provides financial assistance to deserving undergraduate English majors. Thanks to the generosity of Thomas Johnson '73 and Barbara Johnson, the English Department has provided scholarships to students through this fund since 2014.

Recipients:

Peyton Hennig

Alexis Sanchez-Nava

Mary Brabyn Wackman Scholarships

Presented by: Sara Kelm, Amanda Shubert, Joseph Bowling, Josh Kalscheur, Megan Bailon, Emily Hall

These scholarships were established by Charline M. Wackman, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin in 1961, in honor of her mother, Mary Brabyn Wackman. Awards are based on academic merit and given to English majors who are Wisconsin residents.

Recipients:

Emily Asmann

Ellie Clark

Emily Laskowski

Maggie Lenar

Ann Lundstrom

Claire Orlikowski

Lauren Pickel

Cayden Wernsing

McMynn Williams First-Generation College Student Scholarship

Presented by: Raquel Kennon and Paul Tran

The McMynn Williams First-Generation College Student Scholarship recognizes the strength, commitment, and perspective of First-Generation English majors. This scholarship is awarded on the basis of academic merit and an appreciation of the contributions First-Generation students make in the classroom, the department, the university, and the wider community.

Recipients:

Brett Dunn

Noah Kohn-Dumbuya

Lila Hicks Furber Scholarship

Presented by: Ron Kuka

This award was established in 1995 by Lila Hicks Furber, who graduated with a degree in English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1926. After graduation, Lila became a teacher.

Recipient: Abby Stoa

Vivian Mowry English Scholarships

Presented by: Sara Kelm and Kirk Sides

These scholarships are funded through a trust established in 1963 by Vivian Mowry, a 1910 graduate of the University of Wisconsin. Awards are made to English majors on the basis of scholastic proficiency and active participation in campus activities.

Recipients:

Diya Abbas

Sophie Boes

Ray Kirsch

Ella Olson

Aspen Schrupp

Landis Varughese

Jeffrey Allen Steele Memorial Scholarship

Presented by: Sarah Ensor

This award was established by Jocelyn Riley in 2018 to honor the memory of her husband Jeffrey Allen Steele, a professor in the Department of English, who loved teaching and focused his research and passion on American Literature, particularly on the author and groundbreaking women's rights advocate Margaret Fuller. The scholarship assists accomplished undergraduate students who are enrolled in the Department of English, with a preference for those studying American literature.

Recipient: Wylie Dituri



Cyrena Pondrom Scholarship

This award was established by Julie Bogle who graduated from UW-Madison in 1985 with a BA, majoring in both English and History. While an undergrad, she was a student of Prof. Cyrena Pondrom, who taught modern English literature. Julie was fortunate enough to work with Professor Pondrom on an independent study project focused on Virginia Woolf. It was a transformative experience. Being exposed to someone as brilliant and insightful as Professor Pondrom was both intimidating and deeply enriching, truly a life-changing experience. After working in publishing for several years, Julie went on to attend UW Law School, graduating in 1999. Fifth of six children, Julie could afford to attend UW Madison as an undergrad only because she was given the Mary Brabyn Wackman Scholarship. She is happy to have the ability, through the UW Foundation, to provide a similar opportunity to young English majors today, and to honor the woman who had such a deep influence on her future.

Recipients:

Kylie Gibson

Katalina Lee

Early Career Alumni Awards

The Early Career Alumni Award recognizes UW-Madison English alumni who have demonstrated exceptional success in their chosen field within the first ten years after obtaining their degree. This can be demonstrated in several ways. Examples include, but are not limited to, professional achievements, contributions to society, service, or support of the University of Wisconsin.

The honorees demonstrate the value that their English education has had on their lives and the rewarding paths that an English major may take initially upon graduation.

Ajanae Dawkins, BA English Creative Writing, 2018



Ajanae Dawkins is a poet, conceptual artist and theologian. She works through poetry, visual art, performance, and audio to explore the politics of faith, grief, and intimate relationships between Black women. As a theologian, she blends cultural criticism, memoir, and theology as autotheory to consider the relationship between Black church history, spirituality, and creation. Her work has appeared in *Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day*, *The Rumpus*,

Prairie Schooner, and more. Her exhibition, *No One Teaches Us How To Be Daughters*, debuted at Urban Arts Space in 2024. Her chapbook, *BLOOD-FLEX*, won the New Delta Review prize. Ajanae is an Elizabeth George Grant Recipient and Writing Freedom Fellow. She was the Taft Museum's 2022 Duncanson Artist in Residence and Ohio State University's 2024 UAS Community Artist in Residence. She is a fellow of Torch Literary, The Watering Hole, and Pink Door. She co-hosts the VS Podcast with Brittany Rogers at the Poetry Foundation.

Sammy Gibbons, JBA English Creative Writing + Journalism, 2019

Sammy Gibbons is a journalist and fiction writer living in Brooklyn, New York. She originated the role of National Network Print Planner at the USA TODAY Network. In that capacity, Sammy expands the reach of fascinating journalism from USA TODAY Network newspapers across the US by selecting local stories for print publication throughout the Network.



Previously, Sammy served as a culture reporter for the USA TODAY Network Atlantic Region and as the sole news reporter for the Door County Advocate. While at the latter, Sammy was named Rookie of the Year by the Wisconsin Newspaper Association. She led Gannett/USA TODAY Network's LGBTQ+ employee resource group and spoke about the importance of such groups as a panelist at the NLGJA: Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists' annual conference.

Sammy received her Bachelor of Arts in English and Journalism in May 2019. At UW, Sammy spent most of her time in *The Daily Cardinal* office which she led as Editor-in-Chief her senior year. She was also a DJ at WSUM. Her short story "Muse" was published in *Illumination Journal's* Spring 2019 edition.

Sammy's short story "Directions" was published in *Sinister Wisdom: A Multicultural Lesbian Literary & Art Journal's* Summer 2020 edition. Her journalism is primarily featured in USA TODAY and its local affiliates. Recently, her reporting about the reality of transgender athletes was recognized by the Associated Press Sports Editors.

Outside of work and writing, Sammy is a dancer and proud cat parent.

Niru Sivanushanthan, BS English + Zoology, 2015

Niru is a family medicine resident physician in Sacramento, California. Her areas of focus include chronic disease management, LGBTQ+ medicine, and sports medicine.

Niru grew up in Racine, WI, and received her B.S. in English Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2015. She received her M.D. at Ross University School of Medicine in 2021. She took her first honors English class as a junior at J.I. Case High School, and has been in love with literature ever since.



During her undergraduate years, she was also a Writing Fellow, and worked with faculty and students on rhetoric and teaching, and presented her research at the International Writing Center Association Conference in 2013. She enjoyed presenting her honors' English thesis on Harry Potter and Animality;

exploring the series' portrayal of medical stigmata through fictional creatures.

She is privileged to work with all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds in family medicine. Her English degree nurtured her passion for communication and advocacy and allowed her to do the same for her patients. In 2022, she was an Emerging Leader Award Recipient through the American Academy of Family Physicians for her work in social needs screening in primary care.

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her partner Kelly and their dog, hiking, pottery, and listening to 90s R&B.

With Gratitude

The Department of English wishes to recognize and thank the benefactors of the scholarships and awards we have granted today. Your generosity is sincerely appreciated. Private gifts of all sizes provide us with resources for meaningful enhancements to our program and support of our outstanding students. For more information on making a gift or including the Department in your estate plans, please contact:

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