



Department of English
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

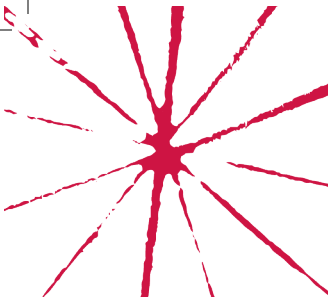
AWARDS CELEBRATION

April 19, 2026

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

David Zimmerman

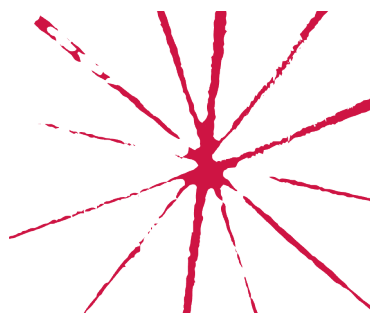
Professor of English and Director of
Undergraduate Studies

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: Timothy Yu

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

Recipient: Eeshan Chakrabarti

Thesis: Reticence as Affect in Three Contemporary Poets

Instructor: Timothy Yu

The William F. Vilas Prizes

Presented by: David Zimmerman

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: Claire Orlikowski

Essay: A Well-Known Hoodoo Doctor...And a Catholic. Critical Examination of Folk Religion in Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*.

Instructor: Raquel Kennon

Recipient: Xining Liu

Essay: Crip Cyborgs: Disability, Embodiment, and the Prosthetic Future in *Cyberpunk*

Instructor: Frederic Neyrat

McMynn Williams Creative Media Prize

Presented by: Timothy Yu

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 allows for novel modes of expression, communication, and persuasion.

Recipient: Landis Varughese

Project: The Island (podcast)

Instructor: Timothy Yu

James T. Lewis Prizes

Presented by: Mandy Moe Pwint Tu and Mario Ortiz-Robles

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

Recipient: Ali Alkaabi

Essay: From Burden to Honor

Instructor: Mandy Moe Pwint Tu

Recipient: Julia Vance

Essay: The Indoctrination and Objectification that Have Led to the Systemic Barriers that Non-Human Animals Faced from Law to Literature

Instructor: Mario Ortiz-Robles

Standish Henning Shakespeare Prize

Presented by: Joseph Bowling

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: Nate Mason

Essay: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Towards a Holistic Feminist Interpretation

Instructor: Joseph Bowling

McMynn Williams Data Analysis Prize

Presented by: Kristina Huang

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

Recipient: Jai Deans

Essay: Disability and Writing Pedagogy: An Analysis of Accessibility in Tutoring Writing Spaces

Instructor: Johs Rasmussen

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: Yu Chen

Essay: Echoes Without Voices: AI and the Hollowing of Meaning

Presented by: Shauna Crowther

2nd place

Recipient: Amber Tian

Essay: Beyond Screen Time: How Social Media Use and Personality Shape Students' Energy and Motivation

Presented by: Danielle Scheffler

Runners-Up

Recipient: Chloe Guo

Essay: Motivating ADHD: The Power of Interest-Based Frameworks in Early Education

Presented by: Danielle Scheffler

Recipient: Miguel Pereira Lima

Essay: Ambiversion, Extraversion and Leadership: How Referring to Both Sides of the Same Coin is Better Than to Just One

Presented by: Danielle Scheffler

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

The Helen C. White Award

Presented by: Sara Kelm and Erika Meitner

These awards are 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: Ella Olson
Han Raschka

The Dorothy Classen Urish Scholarship

Presented by: Sarah Ensor

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: Asher Moriarty

Helen Black Bennett Memorial Scholarship

Presented by: Erika Meitner

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

Recipient: Han Raschka

Felice Levin Michaels Scholarship

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

Recipient: Claire Orlikowski

English Undergraduate Scholarships

Presented by: Daniel Lurie

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: Lorelei Dittl
Grace Melstrand

Mary Brabyn Wackman Scholarships

Presented by: Kristina Huang

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: Emma Anderson
Angel Chao

Vivian Mowry English Scholarships

Presented by: Joshua Calhoun

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: Evan Randle

McMynn Williams First-Generation College Student Scholarship

Presented by: Timothy Yu

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.

Recipient: Landis Varughese

Lila Hicks Furber Scholarship

Presented by: Sara Kelm

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: Ella Olson

Jeffrey Allen Steele Memorial Scholarship

Presented by: Ramzi Fawaz

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: Peyton Hennig

Cyrena Pondrom Scholarship

Presented by: Kristina Huang

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.

Recipient: Jai Deans

Patricia Joan Allen Scholarship

Presented by: Eric Raimy

This award is given to an undergraduate student in the Department with a demonstrated interest and academic focus in the study of literature and an understanding that literature has importance beyond academic study. Preference shall be given to students who share their appreciation for literature with members of a larger community on the University of Wisconsin – Madison campus or with other organizations outside of campus through teaching or other outreach.

Recipient: Matthew Pennington

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.

Madeline Heim - JBA English + Journalism, 2018

Madeline Heim covers public health and environmental issues for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. A Wisconsin native, Madeline



graduated from UW-Madison in 2018 with degrees in Journalism and English. She has been with the Journal Sentinel since 2022, previously serving as a Report for America corps member writing about the Mississippi River and western Wisconsin. Before joining the Journal Sentinel, she led coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic for the

USA TODAY Network in Wisconsin. Her work has been recognized by the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, Milwaukee Press Club, Covering Climate Now, North American Agricultural Journalists, and National Headliner Awards.

Emma Ross (Palasz) - JBA English Creative Writing + Journalism, 2016

Emma Ross (Palasz) is a Content Marketing Manager at Grant Thornton, a global professional services firm that provides advisory, tax, and independent audit services, where she develops thought leadership content for key industries. She has also been the content lead for the firm's community impact and employer brand initiatives.



Prior to Grant Thornton, Emma held marketing and communications roles in higher education and nonprofit sectors. She spent several years at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business supporting alumni engagement and fundraising communications, worked at a Chicago-based boutique marketing and PR agency serving nonprofit and social enterprise clients, supported consumer PR campaigns at Weber Shandwick, and has also been a freelance grant writer.

Emma holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism & Mass Communications and English with a Creative Writing emphasis from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. During her undergraduate years, she contributed to The Badger Herald as a reporter and State News & Features Editor and completed reporting internships at WisPolitics and PBS Wisconsin.

Meghan Villapando - BA English, 2016

Meghan Villalpando is an attorney based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is a commercial litigator at Husch Blackwell LLP, an Am Law 100 law firm, where she represents clients in complex, multi-million-dollar disputes in state and federal courts across the country.



A proud double Badger, Meghan earned her J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 2022. She graduated first in her class, summa cum laude, and was elected to the Order of the Coif. She served as a Note & Comment Editor for the Wisconsin Law Review and competed on the Moot Court Board. Meghan began her UW journey in the English Department, earning her B.A.

in English from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2016, where she was a Writing Fellow and served as Co-President of the Madison Undergraduate Society for English.

Meghan made some of her best memories at UW–Madison, both as an undergraduate and as a law student, and she remains deeply grateful for the education that shaped her. A true believer in the Wisconsin Idea, Meghan strives to carry it forward by using her education in ways that serve her clients and strengthen her community. Meghan mentors high school students through the Eastern District of Wisconsin Bar Association’s Honorable Charles N. Clevert, Jr. Mentoring Program, helping students explore the legal profession and connect with practicing attorneys. She also serves on the State Bar of Wisconsin’s Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Committee and on the Board of the Wisconsin Hispanic Lawyers Association.

Meghan enjoys spending time in her artist-curated office, collecting rare gemstones, precious metals, and jewelry and fashion from her travels. Meghan is always happy to talk with students and fellow Badgers about career paths from English to law. On, Wisconsin!

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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