

Department of English Newsletter



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
College of
Arts and Science
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ARTSANDSCIENCE.USASK.CA



English graduate students Gideon Umezurike, Parastoo Tahmasbi, Erin Paulhus, and Amara Ujumadu join Graduate Chair Ann Martin in the Murray Library in 2025. Photo by Kassidy Guy

2025-2026

Welcome to the USask English Department annual newsletter.

Inside, you will find news of faculty research activities; reports of awards earned by students; profiles of MFA in Writing mentors; news from our undergraduate and graduate student associations; notable events including Writing North, the Millard Lecture, the Bateman Lecture, the Honours Colloquium, Literature Matters, and the River Volta reading series; new books by members of the department; news from professors emeriti; and acknowledgement of the forthcoming retirement of a long-time faculty member.

Thank you to MFA in Writing intern Kamryn Heavin, office coordinator Diana Tegenkamp, faculty member Jessica McDonald, and many other members of the Department and College for their contributions to this newsletter.

— Outreach and Engagement Chair / Newsletter Editor Wendy Roy

Our Department's vision is to be a place where many peoples come together to engage in mutually respectful relations and dialogues. We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty Six territory and traditional Metis homeland, and we acknowledge the diverse Indigenous peoples whose footsteps have marked this territory for centuries.

Research News

SSHRC Insight Development Grant

Faculty Member Dr. Kandice Sharren, Principal Investigator, and Professor Emeritus Dr. Lisa Vargo, Co-Investigator, were awarded a 2025 SSHRC Insight Development Grant for “Analyzing the *Analytical*: Investigating Wollstonecraft’s Reviews with Stylometrics.”

Mary Wollstonecraft contributed hundreds of reviews to bookseller Joseph Johnson’s the *Analytical Review* between 1788 and her death in 1797. However, which reviews she authored, exactly, remains a point of debate. Drs. Sharren and Vargo are exploring whether stylometrics, a computer-assisted analysis of linguistic patterns, can settle it

The project team includes PhD student Parastoo Tahmasbi and Honours student Gillian Skjei, who are immersed in learning about late eighteenth-century periodical culture as well as receiving training in the use of digital tools with the assistance of Leanne Chung from the University’s Digital Research Centre.

Through this research, Parastoo has identified periodicals such as Haywood’s *The Parrot* and the nineteenth-century *The Pearl* as potential areas for her future inquiries, particularly in relation to eighteenth-century literature and the study of lewd texts. Gillian’s hands-on, methodical engagement with textual data has provided new insights into the application of stylometric analysis and the stylistic characteristics that make individual writers and their work unique.



Parastoo, Lisa, Gillian, and Kandice.

Storytelling as Connection and Resistance

As part of her program of research as Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Storytelling, Dr. Kristina Bidwell organized gatherings around the theme of “Storytelling as Connection and Resistance” on May 8, 2025, to explore how sharing stories, experiences, and knowledge can offer a way to respond to and resolve conflict. A video of the on-campus gathering can be watched online [here](#).

The storytelling events were intended to offer a humanizing alternative to divisive politics of Indigenous recognition that are being increasingly adopted by many universities. They provided an opportunity to hear the voices of Inuit peoples of southeastern Labrador, a group impacted by such policies.



Labrador Inuk artist and storyteller Kate Forest speaks at the event. Photo by sweetmoon photography

Research News

New Bateman Professor Named

Dr. Brent Nelson has been named Bateman Professor in the Department of English starting July 2026. He is a scholar of early modern literature and digital humanities who began his career at USask in 2001 after a doctorate from the U of Toronto. His project will focus on the future of scholar-built digital resources, which in recent years have increasingly had support from their home institutions withdrawn. The preservation and sustainability of open-access digital resources such as his own two major projects, The Digital Ark and the John Donne Society's Digital Prose Project, is the subject of the two-to-four-year term of his Bateman Professorship.

This work grows out of Dr. Nelson's research program with Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE), which included collaboration with USask's Digital Research Centre to prototype a print bibliography of criticism on John Donne as a simple, searchable, and indexed database-like resource. His current initiative to migrate the DigitalDonne site from Texas A&M University to USask (with the ultimate goal of uniting it with his Prose Project) explores how far basic web technologies can be pushed in order to reduce reliance on databases. His second major project, the DigitalArk, is a complex database that exemplifies the problem of sustainability across the digital humanities; he hopes to work toward a solution for preservation and continuation of this resource and others like it, with anticipated outcomes applying to the broader community of scholar-builders and to the institutions that have supported them. Dr. Nelson aims to develop concrete institutional policy for the sustainable support of scholar-built digital assets, providing the groundwork for the next generations of scholars to address these issues.

The Bateman Professorship is open to full professors in the Department of English who have an established reputation in their field. The professorship was created in 1919 and is named in honour of Reginald Bateman, who became a professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan in 1909 and was killed during the First World War in 1918.



RSAW Celebration



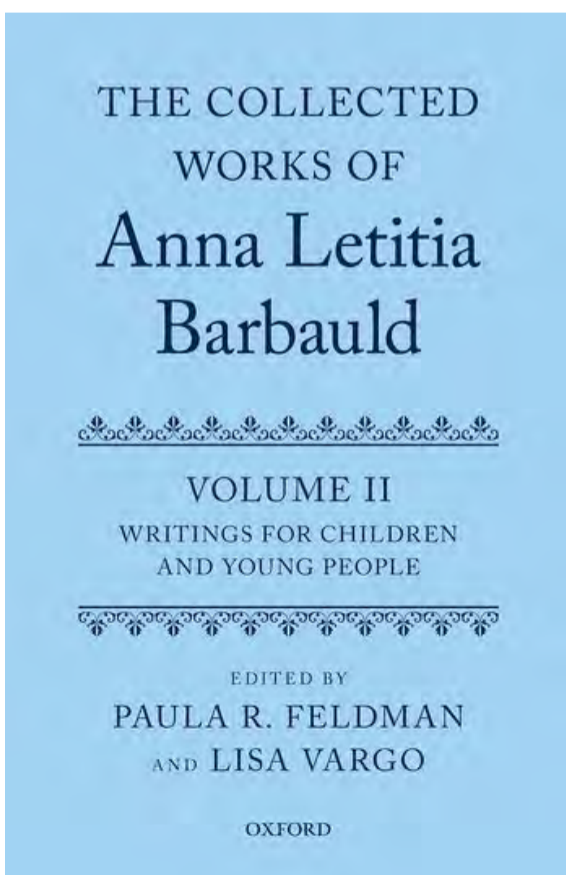
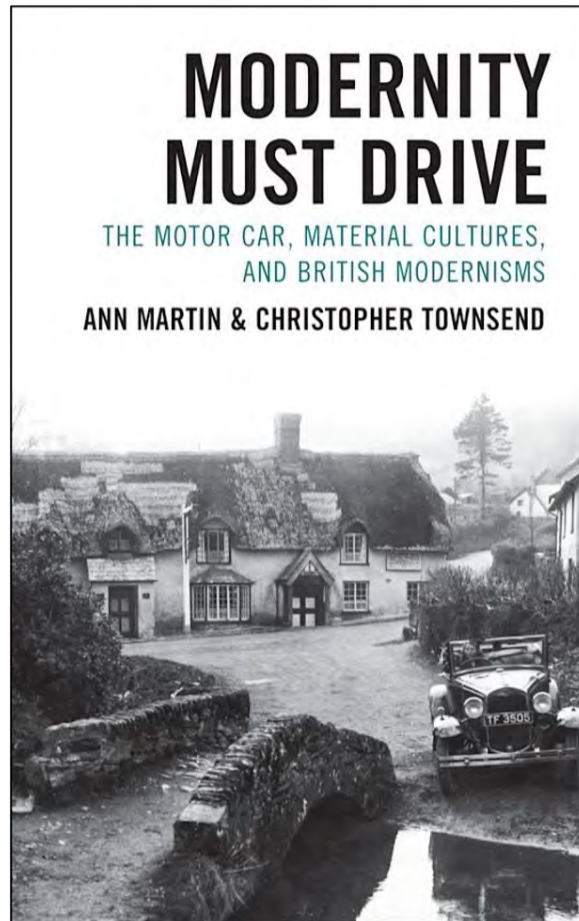
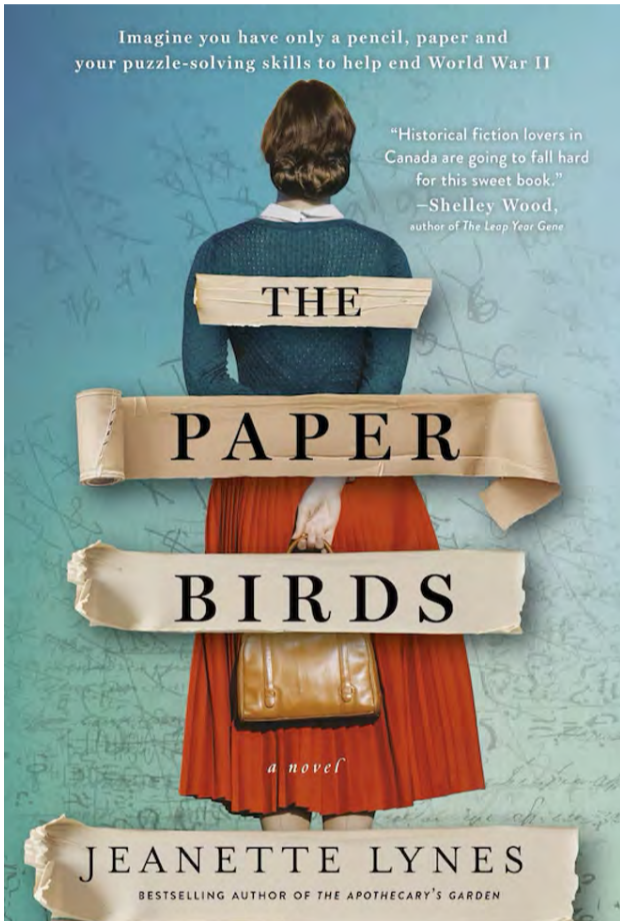
At the Research, Scholarly, and Artistic Work celebration April 8, 2026, department members talked about their research and recent publications, including Professor Emerita Lisa Vargo (top right) with her co-edited collections of the works of Anna Letitia Barbauld; Kristina Bidwell (right) about her SSHRC Reconciliation Network Grant on amplifying urban Indigenous stories; and Wendy Roy (above centre) with USask contributors Jasmine Redford, Kai McKenzie, Jessica McDonald, and Mabiana Camargo to the collection *ReVisions: Speculating in Literature and Film in Canada*. For more information about the books celebrated, see p. 4.



Photos by Jessica McDonald and Yin Liu

Celebrating Books

Congratulations to members of our department who published new books in 2025-2026: Jeanette Lynes for *The Paper Birds: A Novel* (June 2025); Wendy Roy for her edited collection *ReVisions: Speculating in Literature and Film in Canada* (Nov. 2025), and Ann Martin for her co-edited collection *Modernity Must Drive: The Motor Car, Material Cultures, and British Modernisms* (Dec. 2025). Congratulations also to professor emerita Lisa Vargo for her co-edited *The Collected Works of Anna Letitia Barbauld, Vol. 2, Writings for Children and Young People*, and to alumni Shero Sheikh for *The Post-9/11 Great American Novel*, Beverley Brenna for *I'm Here: YA Stories of Identity*, and Kristine Scarrow for *Only Human*, as well as award nominees listed below.



Book Award Nominations

A number of people connected to the department have been short-listed for the 2026 Saskatchewan Book Awards for books published from Nov. 2024 to Oct. 2025:

- *The Paper Birds* by Jeanette Lynes, Book of the Year, Fiction, and City of Saskatoon Awards
- *How I Bend Into More* by Tea Gerbeza, Book of the Year, First Book, and Poetry Awards
- *She's A Lamb: A Novel!* by Meredith Hambrock, Fiction Award
- *Seventhblade* by Tonia Laird, First Book Award
- *Butterfly on the Wind* by Adam Pottle, Children's Literature Award
- *Something For the Dark* by Randy Lundy, Indigenous People's Publishing Award
- *Theories of Everything* by Dwayne Brenna, Fiction Award

Congratulations! The award winners will be announced May 1, 2026.

Celebrating Teaching and Administrative Service

Liv Abram Wins Early Career Teaching Award

By Kristen McEwen

One of the most popular courses in the Department of English is getting an update. PhD candidate Olivia Abram is planning on increasing engagement and incorporating ethical use of generative AI for ENG 242: Indigenous Storytelling of the Prairies.

Abram has been named as the recipient of this year's Lesley Biggs Early Career Teaching Fellowship. The fellowship provides funding to a promising early-career instructor for a project that will help them improve or innovate as a teacher.

"It's always an exciting thing to be awarded funding for a scholarly project you're passionate about, but receiving the Lesley Biggs Teaching Fellowship is particularly satisfying because of its foundations in the legacy of innovative teaching and learning at the University of Saskatchewan," Abram said. She has also received the Gwenna Moss Centre Course Design and Development Fund to help with redesign efforts beyond the oral storytelling piece of the course.

Many students choose ENG 242 to meet the Indigenous Learning Requirement as part of degree programs administered by the College of Arts and Science. The course was initially developed in 2002 by Métis Elder Maria Campbell and Dr. Kristina Bidwell, then reimaged as an online offering by Drs. Janice Acoose and Adar Charlton.

"ENG 242 was originally designed to place Indigenous written literature within the context of a long and ongoing history of Indigenous storytelling in this place," Abram said. "Because of the practical challenges of including oral stories and assessing student understanding of them and changing learning landscapes — such as student use of generative AI — this aspect of the course has been reduced over time, especially in the online version of the course." Through redesigning the course, Abram plans to interview and record local Indigenous storytellers to help students understand that engaging with literature means more than exclusively reading novels, she said.

Students will have the opportunity to understand that engaging thoughtfully with Indigenous storytelling and storytellers helps create better stewards, visitors, and learners on the land. Abram also plans to incorporate generative AI into the course. While there is a lot of conversation about AI and an increasing dependency on the tool, Abram recognizes that it isn't going anywhere any time soon. "There are a few AI tools I really like, actually, and I think showing students the possibilities of developing their own critical thinking skills through AI rather than replacing their critical thinking with AI is important."

Prior to becoming a graduate student, Abram taught high school English and had experience designing curriculum for her students. "In academia, we tend to prioritize and celebrate research so much, but our research and teaching can and should inform each other," she said. "This award will support me in further developing my skills in thoughtful, ethical course design, which is extraordinarily important as we face this new postsecondary teaching and learning landscape."



Peter Stoicheff Retires as University President

Dr. Peter Stoicheff, a member of the department of English, wrapped up ten years of service as president of the University of Saskatchewan in December 2025. Now on leave, he is working on an account of transformations in the post-secondary education sector over the last decade, in Canada and globally, through a USask lens. He notes, "Whether that becomes a published book or a project that sits exclusively in our library's archives remains to be seen."

Dr. Stoicheff began his career at the University of Saskatchewan in 1986 as professor of American literature, and he served as vice-dean and then dean of the College of Arts and Science from 2005 to 2015. An article about his achievements during his term as university president can be found [here](#).



Dr. Stoicheff speaks at his farewell celebration.

Photo by Wendy Roy

Notable Events


2026 Millard Lecture

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
PETER MILLARD LECTURE
 Thurs., March 19 | 4 pm
 Admin. Bldg. C280

FROM INDIGENOUS CONTAINMENT TO FREEDOM: TRACING AND BREAKING NARRATIVES OF SETTLER COLONIALISM
 Dr. Kristina Bidwell (PhD)

Settler colonialism has functioned through efforts to restrict and contain Indigenous lands, movements, connections, and presence – physically, conceptually, and narratively. In the face of these efforts, Inuit of central and southern Labrador have, for centuries, resisted settler efforts to contain them – from escaping slavery and capture, to refusing to be restrained to a limited land base, to, more recently, opposing policies that seek to restrictively define Inuit lands and identity. Drawing on examples from this community, Dr. Bidwell will explore how Indigenous people telling their own stories can be a powerful act of freedom.

The Peter Millard Lecture honours Dr. Peter Millard (1932-2001). Dr. Millard, head of the English Department (1985-91), was highly influential in gay and human rights. USask established the Peter Millard Scholarship (1994), Canada's first university-administered scholarship for research in gay and lesbian studies.



Dr. Kristina Bidwell (PhD)


The 2026 Peter Millard Lecture by Canada Research Chair Dr. Kristina Bidwell explored how settler colonialism has functioned to restrict and contain Indigenous lands, movements, connections, and presence — physically, conceptually, and narratively. The annual lecture celebrates Dr. Peter Millard, head of the Department of English from 1985 to 1991, who was influential in gay rights and human rights.

2026 Bateman Lecture

BATEMAN LECTURE

The Climate Crisis in Canadian Fiction
 Dr. Wendy Roy (PhD)

Thursday, March 5 | 4 pm | Administration Building C280



In this biennial lecture, Bateman Professor of English Wendy Roy explores the recent proliferation of climate fiction in Canada. Through novels about global warming, the death of trees, and the depredations of mining, authors such as Michael Christie, Catherine Bush, Rebecca Campbell, and Thomas Wharton ask readers to imagine the costs of environmental change on humans, animals, and plants, and to envision what we might do to prevent it.



The Bateman Research Professorship was created in 1919 and is named in honour of Reginald Bateman, a professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan who was killed during the First World War in 1918.

The biennial Bateman Lecture by Dr. Wendy Roy focused on the recent proliferation of climate fiction in Canada, including its emphasis on multivocality, past-present-future connections, and the trope of the island. The Bateman Research Professorship was created in 1919 and named in honour of Reginald Bateman, a professor of English at USask who was killed during the first World War.

Other Notable Events

In November, Sheheryar Sheikh, USask alumnus and Donald Hill Postdoctoral Fellow at Dalhousie U, visited campus for a series of events connected to his recent book, *The Post-9/11 Great American Novel: Fictional Perpetuations of White American Trauma and Islamophobia*. Also in November, USask President and English faculty member Peter Stoicheff narrated the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra “Secrets of the Whales.” In March, faculty member Dr. Jenna Hunnef gave a talk on American Indigenous writer Tommy Orange at the U of Regina for the Regina-Saskatoon faculty exchange.

2025 Sheheryar B. Sheikh
 Dept. of English & USask Visit

Nov 3
 WRIT 990 Seminar
 1 PM - ARTS 272
 Presentation on publishing, professionalization, and pedagogy for MFA students.

Coffee Reception
 2:30 PM - ARTS 407
 Informal visit for MFA students and undergraduate students studying creative writing.

Nov 4
 Book Launch
 4:30 PM - Murray Library, Murray 154 and Link Gallery
 An interview-style reading. Dr. Sheikh in conversation with Dr. Banco. Books available for purchase. Reception with refreshments is open to the public.

Nov 5
 ENG 990 Seminar
 2:30 PM - ARTS 272
 Panel presentation on academic publishing, with Professor James Gifford, Fairleigh Dickinson University. For MA and PhD students.

Nov 6
 Coffee Session
 1 PM - ARTS 407
 Conversation topics include navigating Canadian academic culture, thesis and dissertation creation, grant applications and academic job searches.
 All are invited. Particularly relevant to MA, PhD, and international graduate students in the Department of English.

TOMMY ORANGE'S Neomodernist Proclivities

Dr. Jenna Hunnef
 Department of English,
 University of Saskatchewan

— LA CITÉ 215 —
MARCH 20, 2026
 — 2:30 PM —

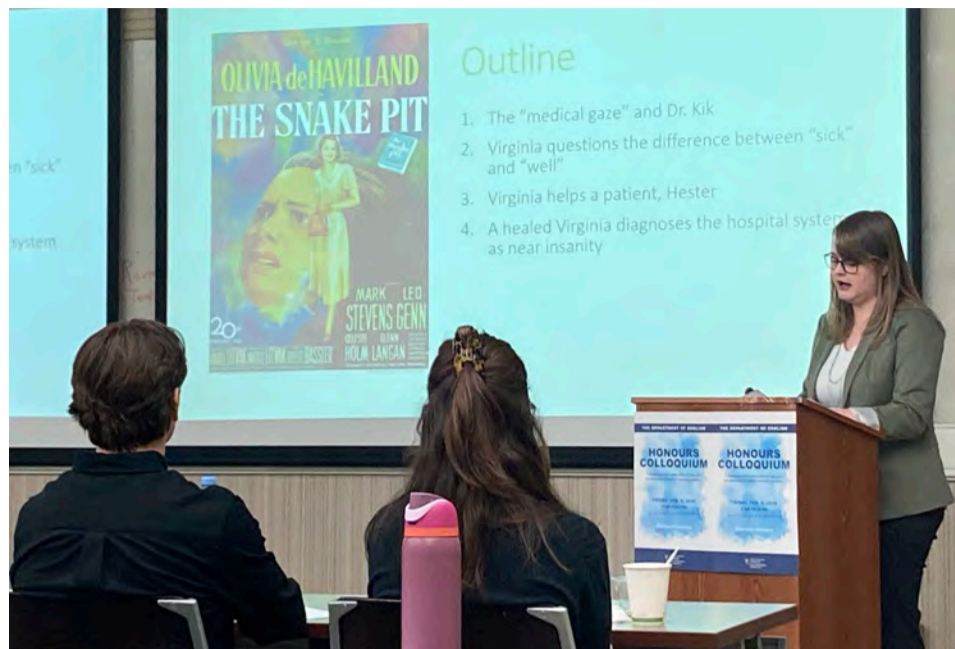
Notable Events

Honours Colloquium 2026

Honours English students shared their original undergraduate research at the 17th annual Honours Colloquium February 6. A packed crowd of faculty, fellow students, friends, and family were in attendance at the Diefenbaker Canada Centre.

Panels included “Formal Explorations: Archetype, Metaphor, Found-Footage,” “Power / Structures: Bodies, Minds, Spaces,” and “Gendered Mediations: Women in Male Storyworlds.”

Warm congratulations to BA Honours and Double Honours students for accomplishing this part of their degrees. See the event program [here](#).



Honours student Emily Zbaraschuk presented on Anatole Litvak's film *The Snake Pit* at the 2026 Honours English Colloquium.

Thank you to student presenters, panel chairs, audience members, the Undergraduate Chair, and the Office Co-ordinator for their part in the success of this event.



Honours and double honours students Isabel Atherton-Reimer, Nina Pham, Arden Poppel, Dani McLaughlin, Kamryn Heavin, Conall Wagner, Calla Potter, and Emily Zbaraschuk at the 2026 Honours English Colloquium. Photo by Ella Ophir

Literature Matters: Literature in the Community

Our literature in the community lecture series, hosted by the Outreach Committee, featured seven public events in 2025-2026 with faculty, lecturers, and graduate students, at Grace-Westminster social hall.

September 24: “Where’s Walmart? The Commonplace in Canadian Literature,” with faculty member Jessica McDonald

October 22: “Detours into Dread: A Short, Scary History of Travel Horror Films,” with faculty member Lindsey Banco

November 26: “Can a Robot Be a Poet?: Navigating AI in Today’s University,” panel discussion with English department members Ella Ophir, Ian Moy, Jeanette Lynes, and Tristan Taylor, chaired by Yin Liu

January 28: “Anti-apartheid Activism in Nadine Gordimer’s *Burger’s Daughter*, with PhD candidate Vijay Kachru

February 25: Place and People in Kate Beaton’s Graphic Oil-Sands Memoir *Ducks*,” with PhD student Jenna Miller

March 18: “Competing Visions of Ireland in the 1840 Painting *A Blind Girl at a Holy Well*,” with STM faculty member Kylee-Anne Hingston

April 22: “Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan: New Directions for 2026 and Beyond,” with dept. members Brent Nelson and Alyson Cook and SOTS director Skye Brandon

SEP
24

LITERATURE MATTERS: LITERATURE IN THE COMMUNITY SERIES

Where’s Walmart? The Commonplace in Canadian Literature

A PUBLIC TALK BY DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
FACULTY MEMBER

JESSICA MCDONALD

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2025
7:30 pm

Grace-Westminster United Church Social Hall
505 10th Street East, Saskatoon



Out of all possible settings, why would Canadian authors choose to write Walmart into their literary landscapes? This talk considers examples ranging from the predictable—Walmart as profit-making behemoth, taking over small cities and local economies—to the more experimental—as site of a steamy missed connection between strangers, backdrop to a surprising celebrity encounter, or cherished place to wander the aisles with a loved one. In addition to asking “why Walmart?”, the talk will explore how such literary works illuminate what’s at stake in these commonplace staples of our contemporary geography.



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LITERATURE MATTERS: LITERATURE IN THE COMMUNITY SERIES

OCT
22

Detours into Dread: A Short, Scary History of Travel Horror Films

WITH ENGLISH FACULTY MEMBER
LINDSEY BANCO

Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2025
7:30 pm

Grace-Westminster United Church Social Hall
505 10th Street East, Saskatoon

Traveling can be anxious business. From “Here be dragons” warnings on medieval maps to fairy-tale wolves hiding in the forest to contemporary horror films such as *The Wicker Man* (1973), *Hostel* (2005), or *Midsommer* (2019), travel stories often lead us into terrifying territory. This talk focuses on horror films, one of the most popular and controversial forms of modern storytelling, and explores how they navigate concepts of travel and exploration. It asks why so many horror films depict nightmare road trips, camping expeditions gone awry, haunted cars, and flights from hell, and it maps how they connect the excitement and novelty of travel to its dangers and fears.

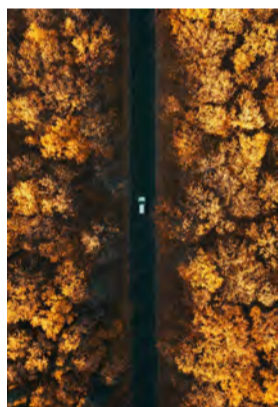


Photo by Kornél Mähl on Unsplash

LITERATURE MATTERS: LITERATURE IN THE COMMUNITY SERIES

NOV
26

Can a Robot Be a Poet? Navigating AI in Today’s University

A PUBLIC TALK BY
A PANEL OF DEPARTMENT
OF ENGLISH MEMBERS

Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2025
7:30 pm

Grace-Westminster United Church Social Hall
505 10th Street East, Saskatoon



AI-generated image from vecteezy.com

“Artificial intelligence,” or AI, the ability of computational systems to simulate or perform tasks that humans do, is provoking reactions from excitement to confusion to outrage. What’s behind, and ahead of, the hype and the fear? How do the ever-changing forms of AI affect the work of creative writers, literary scholars, and university instructors of literature and composition? Our panel features fully human English department members Ella Ophir, Ian Moy, Jeanette Lynes, and Tristan Taylor, chaired by Yin Liu.

LITERATURE MATTERS: LITERATURE IN THE COMMUNITY SERIES

JAN
28

Anti-apartheid Activism in Nadine Gordimer’s *Burger’s Daughter*

WITH PHD CANDIDATE
VIJAY KACHRU

Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026
7:30 pm

Grace-Westminster United Church Social Hall
505 10th Street East, Saskatoon

This talk focuses on South African writer and activist Nadine Gordimer’s 1979 novel *Burger’s Daughter*. Set in South Africa during the apartheid era of the 1970s, the novel presents a nuanced conversation between factual reality and emotional experience through an alternating use of subjective and objective narrative perspectives. This dual structure functions as a literary device but also as a political strategy, enabling Gordimer to explore the complex landscape of anti-apartheid activism by white South Africans.



LITERATURE MATTERS: LITERATURE IN THE COMMUNITY SERIES

FEB
25

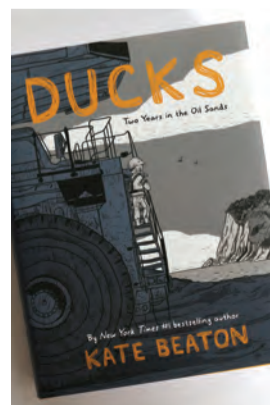
Place and People in Kate Beaton’s Graphic Oil-Sands Memoir *Ducks*

PHD STUDENT
JENNA MILLER

Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2026
7:30 pm

Grace-Westminster United Church Social Hall
505 10th Street East, Saskatoon

Kate Beaton’s graphic memoir *Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands* (2022) reveals how the industrialized setting of Alberta’s oil sands affects not only the land and local wildlife—most notably the hundreds of ducks that died in a tailings pond—but also the people who live and work there. This talk explores how space and place shape human identity, and how the graphic medium allows Beaton to convey the connection between environment and self in ways that text alone could not. *Ducks* reveals a truth we too often ignore: we are not separate from the world we inhabit, and the world we create inevitably shapes who we become.



LITERATURE MATTERS: LITERATURE IN THE COMMUNITY SERIES

MAR
18

Competing Visions of Ireland in the 1840 Painting *A Blind Girl at a Holy Well*

STM FACULTY MEMBER
KYLEE-ANNE HINGSTON

Wednesday, Mar. 18, 2026
7:30 pm

Grace-Westminster United Church Social Hall
505 10th Street East, Saskatoon

In a time when Ireland’s national identity was especially fraught, E. W. Burton’s 1840 watercolour *A Blind Girl at a Holy Well* was adopted by and adapted for competing visions of Ireland and what it meant to be Irish. In this presentation, STM faculty member Kylee-Anne Hingston shows how Victorian sentimentalism and flexible tropes about blindness allowed Irish (and English) writers and publishers to advance their particular conceptualizations of Irish national identity.



LITERATURE MATTERS: LITERATURE IN THE COMMUNITY SERIES

APR
15

Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan: New Directions for 2026 and Beyond

Skye Brandon and Alyson Cook in
conversation with Brent Nelson

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2026
7:30 PM

Social Hall, Grace-Westminster United Church,
505 - 10th St. E., Saskatoon

Join newly appointed Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan artistic director Skye Brandon and communications coordinator Alyson Cook in conversation with English professor Brent Nelson. They will tell us about Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan’s productions for 2026—*Much Ado About Nothing* and *Julius Caesar*—as well as the direction Skye plans to take the company in future seasons as the Festival moves beyond its successful 40th Anniversary.



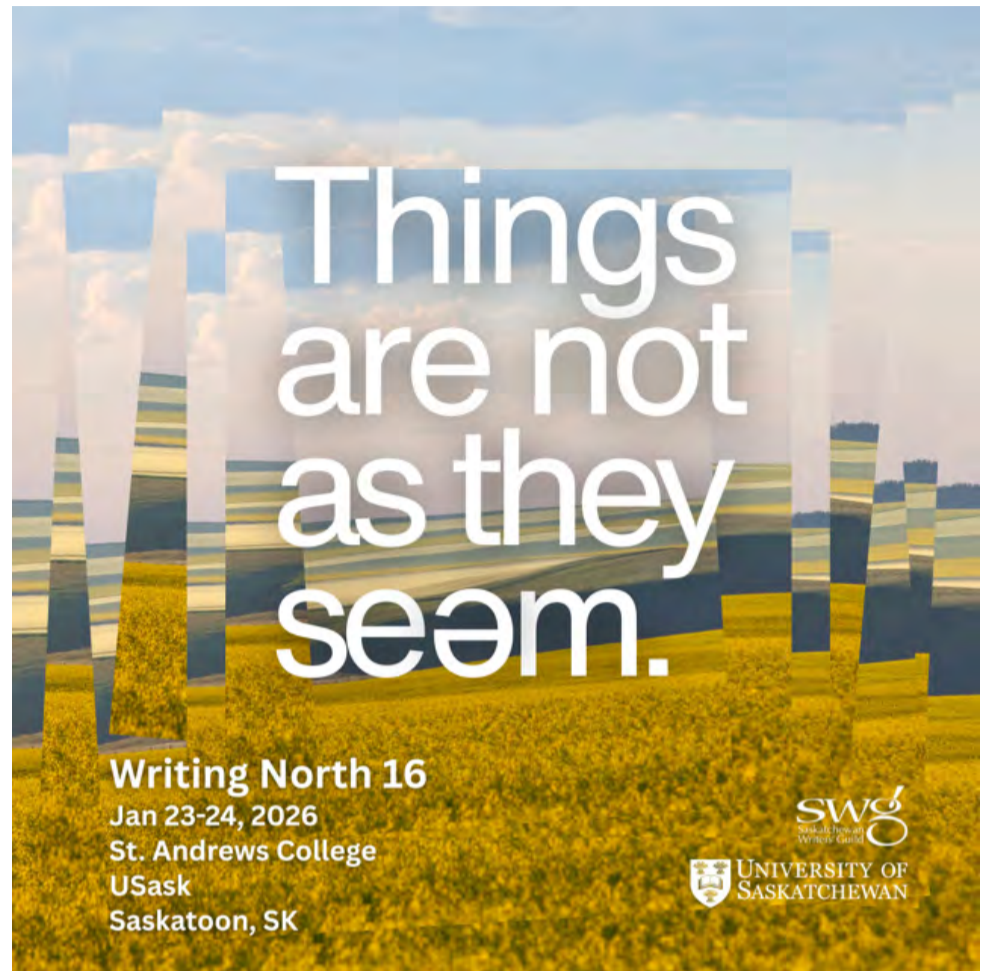
Braden Butler as King Richard in *The Tragedy of Richard II* from the 2025 Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan season, directed by Skye Brandon. Photo by King Rose Visuals

MFA Notable Events

Writing North



Waubgeshig Rice speaks at Writing North 16.



The theme for this year's annual *Writing North 16* festival, hosted by the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and the MFA in Writing Program of the USask Department of English, was *Things Are Not As They Seem*.

The featured talk by Waubgeshig Rice, author of *Moon of the Crusted Snow* and *Moon of the Turning Leaves*, was on "Anishinaabe History and Writing the Future." Rice discussed how his upbringing in Wasauksing First Nation empowered him to explore a culturally-informed approach to the post-apocalyptic genre, and how he looked to the past and the true history of this land to write about the future.

Other events included Emily Riddle's "Ancestral Joy and Justice in the Archives," which focused on how archival research can be processed, critiqued, and visited through poetry, and Tonia Laird's "Worldbuilding for Fiction," which explored how societal, cultural, familial, and environmental influences can shape characters and plot throughout a story.



Writing North speakers and organizers Tea Gerbeza, Cat Abenstein, Waubgeshig Rice, Yolanda Hanson, Debbie Sunchild-Petersen, and Jeanette Lynes.

MFA Notable Events

River Volta Reading Series

The 13th yearly River Volta Reading Series was organized by MFA in Writing students Jolena Klymyshyn, Douglas MacDonald, Veronica Fabian, and Tia Hendricks.


2025-2026 was a lively year, with featured writers Lloyd Ratzlaff, Glen Sorestad, Dash Reimer, Miguel Fenrich, and Robert Benz. River Volta also hosted open mics in September and January, and the graduate reading event April 2 (see p. 23).

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES

Presents:
Reading by **Lloyd Ratzlaff**
Followed by an open mic

October 7, 2025

Join us at **Art Bar**, front of house
229 20th St. W - at **7:30 PM**



THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES



Presents:
Reading by **Glen Sorestad**
Followed by an open mic

November 4, 2025

Join us at **Art Bar**, front of house
229 20th St. W - at **7:30 PM**

BOOKS ARE CASH ONLY

GLEN'S NEWEST BOOK OF POEMS
"FIRST LIGHT, LAST LIGHT" \$20

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
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THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES

Presents:

FEBRUARY 3 2026





Reading by **Dash Reimer**
Followed by an open mic

THE RIVER VOLTA READING SERIES

Presents:

March 12 2026

Readings by **Miguel Fenrich + Robert Benz**
Followed by an open mic

Talks on the Craft of Writing


Throughout the year, the MFA in Writing Program and the English Department sponsored talks by three Canadian writers: Joel Katelnicoff, Ken Wilson, and Louise Bernice Halfe.

Brown Bag Lunch
with **Joel Katelnicoff**

**"The world is who you are when you get there":
Poetry, Theory, and Cut-Ups**

**FRIDAY, OCT 24
12 PM to 1 PM
ESB 142**

Info: english.department@usask.ca




The MFA in Writing Program and the Department of English present

**STEP-BY-STEP,
WORD-BY-WORD: WRITING
AS EMBODIED PRACTICE**

A public lecture by **Ken Wilson**

**Wednesday, Feb. 25
3-4 pm
Arts 210**




Ken Wilson is an assistant professor in the Department of English & Creative Writing at the University of Regina. His first book, *Walking the Bypass: Notes on Place from the Side of the Road* (2025) won the 2022 City of Regina Writing Award. His essay, "The Bear on the Path to Tofino," won the 2025 McNally Robinson Bookseller's Creative Nonfiction Contest. His second book, *Walking Well*, is forthcoming from Wolsak & Wynn.

"...an eyes-wide-open trek through a landscape almost entirely subsumed by the extractive forces of late-stage colonialism." – Trevor Herriot

"Walking the Bypass sings in Wilson's descriptions of his treks, which are often entrancing, as well as in its histories of Crown-Indigenous relations." – Literary Review of Canada

"Original, unsettling, and provocative." – Candace Savage




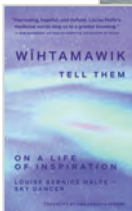
The Department of English and the MFA in Writing program present:

A Public Talk by **Louise Bernice Halfe**

**Wednesday, April 1
3-4 pm
ARTS 210**

Cree poet Louise Bernice Halfe - Sky Dancer will discuss her newest book, *wihtamawik / Tell Them: On a Life of Inspiration*, in which she chronicles her childhood in a cabin on reserve, through the Indian Residential School system, and into her reclamation of her *nēhiyaw* language, culture, and spirituality.

All are welcome.

MFA Mentor Spotlight

MFA in Writing intern Kamryn Heavin interviews MFA in Writing mentor Madeleine Thien

Have you always known you wanted to be a writer, or did it come to you later in life?

I always knew. From the beginning, reading was my solace and my escape. It seemed incredible to me, almost miraculous, that lines on a page could create these other dimensions, worlds, feelings, and existences.

Are you constantly writing, or thinking about what you will write next? How do you balance regular life with a work that you love so much?

I'm always working on something. Other characters and lives and times are part of my constant and present reality. To me this feels like a fortunate, though occasionally overwhelming, thing.

I think, especially over the past fifteen years, I've relied on the practice of writing to keep me destabilized, so that I don't approach the world through a settled frame. It's true that writing can demand a great deal emotionally, but it also gives a person ways to think, imagine and feel that are unique and transformative, and sometimes lifesaving.

What has your experience with mentorship been like in the past?

I've had different teachers, friends, editors and fellow writers over the years who have taken on this role of mentorship. But often my mentors are not writers. They are people who have had to find a way to live through difficult times, who have quietly supported others, and have tried to live by their principles. When I think about mentorship, I think about being a fellow novelist but also just a fellow person. I feel like we're thinking together. What I love is that I'm always challenged to think about fiction and the world in ways that might be new to me.

How did you approach the USask MFA mentorship?

I try to be guided by where the writer is in their lives, what they are struggling with, and discovering, in the work. Each writer is so particular! It's really special, learning to see what they are seeing, and then to support them as they find their own way to communicate those ideas and make them live.

What did you learn from your mentee?

Boldness, persistence, vision. I really enjoyed working with my mentee, Rahul, and having the chance to read his epic, complex and moving novel.

Is there anything you would like to say about the USask MFA in Writing mentorship?

Only that it is so enjoyable! It feels like an ongoing and ever surprising conversation between two writers.

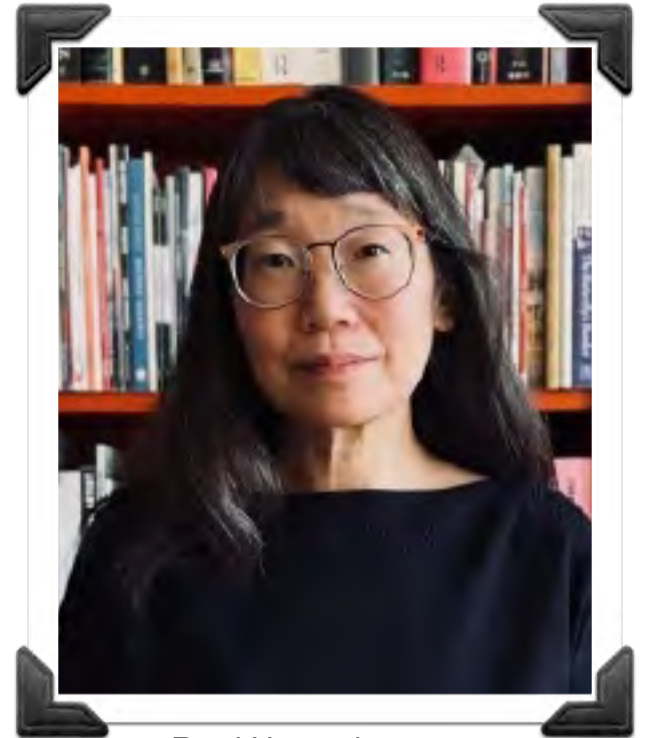
As a celebrated author, how do you approach a new project? Do you feel pressure to "beat" your last work?

No, the pressure I feel is ... I don't want to let my characters down. They are imperfect human beings, as we all are, but they are clinging to the present and to our shared world. I always feel they have a meaning beyond me and them.

About Madeleine:

Madeleine Thien was born in Vancouver and lives in Montreal. She is the author of five books, including *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, the Women's Prize for Fiction, and the Folio Prize, and won the 2016 Governor-General's Literary Award for Fiction.

Her most recent novel, *The Book of Records*, was long-listed for a National Book Critics Circle Award and for The Climate Fiction Prize 2026, included on President Obama's list of favourite books of 2025, and named a book of the year by *The New Yorker*, *The Guardian*, *Time*, and the New York Public Library. As well as serving as a mentor for the MFA in Writing program at the University of Saskatchewan, Madeleine teaches in the MFA Program at Brooklyn College and in the Granta Writers' Workshop.



Rawi Hage photo

MFA Mentor Spotlight

MFA in Writing intern Kamryn Heavin interviews MFA in Writing mentor Meredith Hambrock

Have you always wanted to be a writer?

I was really a lover of reading first, and films and television. When I learned I could get a degree in creative writing I was very focused and excited about it. I followed my passion for story and my curiosity about narrative into a career. I always wanted to live a passionate life and I'm lucky to have found a career that fits in this way.

How has your work in television impacted your work as a novelist?

Working in TV made me more of a professional. It demands a lot of the writer in meeting deadlines, coming up with ideas, finessing jokes, working as part of a team, networking... It's very much about putting your ego aside and getting the work done. That's made me a more collaborative person, and a better teacher and mentor. It gave me a great foundation for serving the work first and to take myself out of it.

Do you find the writing community in Saskatoon different from other places where you've lived? How have you nurtured your connection to the community?

The writing community in Saskatoon is so relaxed, nurturing, and open. There's a ton of opportunities for writers at all stages of their careers and a lot of free or low-cost programming. The Writer in Residence program at SPL, book launches at McNally, all the programming put on by the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild, and so many other things I can't think of right now. If you want to be involved in the community here, it is easy, and that is really lovely.

I also love just getting to hear about what people are working on, to read their work, to see what people are thinking about, what they're up to. Even if the work doesn't go on to become published, there is so much value in creation. I'm always glad to bear witness to what other people devote their minds to. It's a real gift.

What's your favourite thing about being a mentor and teacher?

I love connecting with writers. Getting to be a part of a small community of writers inside of a workshop class, especially an in-person workshop class, is a special thing. Every course I've ever taught has stuck with me and the work of the writers in those classes does too.

What advice do you have for writers just starting out in Saskatoon?

Get out there and meet writers. Find your people! Make a writing group — the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild will give you funding. Create work but also show up, listen, volunteer, and use the resources available to you. The Writer in Residence program at the public library, the Indigenous Storyteller in Residence at USask, the SWG, Art Bar — there are so many avenues available to you.

Can you tell us more about your next project?

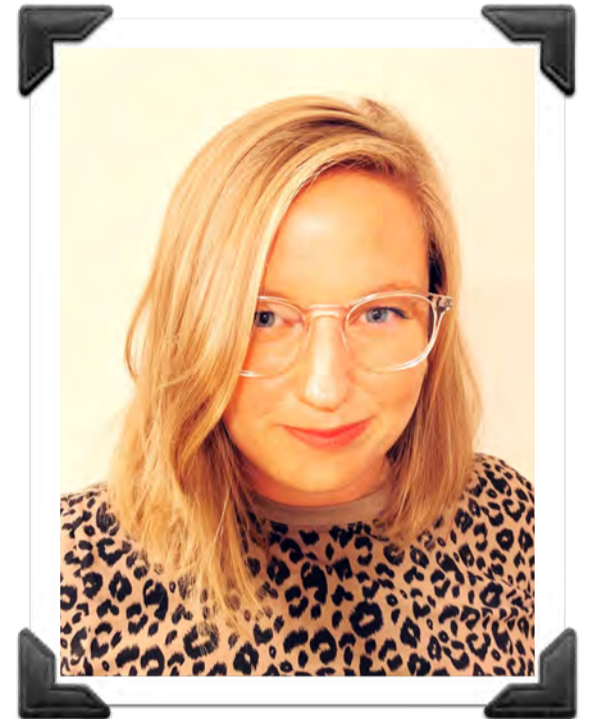
My next project is a literary horror novel loosely inspired by *Rosemary's Baby* about a young woman who might be possessed by her IUD. Hopefully coming out Fall 2027!

About Meredith:

Meredith Hambrock has worked in writing rooms on more than 100 episodes of TV comedy. She most recently served as executive story editor on the sitcom "Corner Gas Animated."

Meredith's debut mystery novel *Other People's Secrets* (2022) was called "audacious" and "fabulous" by the *New York Times Book Review*. Her second novel *She's a Lamb!* (2025) was named a Best Book of the Year at Indigo, Kobo, and McNally Robinson Bookstores.

Meredith holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia and lives in Saskatoon. As well as serving as a mentor in the MFA in Writing program, she has been a fiction writing instructor for USask's Department of English.



Student Association News

English Course Council

The graduate English Course Council (ECC) has been navigating through a quieter year than years of ECC past, but has projects on the go for the 2025-2026 academic year and beyond.

This year, ECC vice president Rachel Neubuhr Torres and I are undertaking an initiative to bring back the *Literary Eclectic* conference — an English graduate student conference shared between the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina — with the aim of hosting it here at USask in the fall 2026 term. Rachel has been very busy networking for USask and has been such an asset to the ECC; I want to send her all my thanks!

Additionally, *The Fieldstone Review*, led by editor-in-chief Jenna Miller, is busy working on its upcoming 2026 issue with the theme of WILD SPACES. It's been a lot of "all work and no play" this year, but we did have time to organize a movie night this March to see *Wuthering Heights* in the theatre.

In September 2026, we will hold an election so that more graduate students can become a part of the ECC and help shape an exciting academic year for all of us.

— ECC President Jasmine Redford

English Undergraduate Society

During this past school year, the English Undergraduate Society (EUS) has been nothing short of phenomenal and inspiring. Through the collaborative efforts of our executive team, we have successfully hosted a wide range of events and fundraisers, drawing in both English majors and students from other disciplines in the process. Starting off strong, we hosted our annual welcome party, with many students attending to enjoy some pizza, play board games, and socialize with one another in a relaxed environment. This was followed by our Meet the Profs night, a Jeopardy-themed trivia night between students and professors that concluded with Professor Ella Ophir winning our locally curated door prize.

Thanks to donations from our English professors and students, our fundraising events were especially successful: we raised \$133 from our bake sale and \$548 from our book sale. These amounts were then used to fund our Undergraduate Formal, our annual themed Louis' event with food and live music. In collaboration with Write-On USask, the Linguistics Students Committee, the Saskatoon Psychology Students' Society, and the Black Students Mentorship Association, we settled on an art deco theme, and attendees came dressed in their best Roaring Twenties attire. With Buttercream returning for the second year in a row for a live performance, the night was an unforgettable end to the school year.

Overall, it has been a wonderful and rewarding experience working with the EUS. I am grateful to have been part of such a dedicated and welcoming team, and I wish all the best to our newly elected executive members for 2026-2027. I have every confidence that they will continue to build on this year's success.

— EUS Co-President Nina Pham

Graduate Student Awards

Congratulations to graduate students who received Department, College, and University awards in 2025-2026:

- University of Saskatchewan Dissertation Award, Humanities and Fine Arts:
Tricia Monsour
- University of Saskatchewan Master's Thesis Award, Humanities and Fine Arts:
Owen Schalk
- Teacher Scholar Doctoral Fellowship:
Alyson Cook
Gideon Umezurike
- Sharon Butala Award in Writing:
Andres Lohstraeter
- Walter S. Buchanan Book Prize:
Jolena Klymyshyn
- Dr. Edward McCourt Memorial Award:
Peggy Schmeiser
Parastoo Tahmasbi
- Ron George Graduate Award in English Literature:
Peggy Schmeiser
- MacKenzie Scholarship:
Tamoghna Mukherjee
- Edward McCourt Fellowship:
Anna Gow
- Susan Willigar Prize:
Chelsea Belcourt
- Kathleen Fraser Prescott Daykin Scholarship:
Veronica Fabian
Mikayla Marin
Rahul Gautham Veliyil Edwin
- Elizabeth Brewster Memorial Scholarship:
Jolena Klymyshyn
Douglas MacDonald
- Joel and Lily Green Memorial Award in English Literature:
Emily Zepick
- Lesley Biggs Early Career Teaching Fellowship:
Liv Abram
- GSA Award for Research Excellence in Humanities, Arts, Social Science, Law, or Education:
Gideon Umezurike

And awards from outside the university that can now be announced:

- SSHRC Graduate Awards:
Canada Graduate Scholarship, MA: **Jolena Klymyshyn** (MFA in Writing)
Indigenous Scholars Award: **Jessie Warkentine** (MA)
- MLA Professional Development Grant:
Jasmine Redford

Profile of Award Winner

Tricia Monsour, Winner of USask Dissertation Award

By Diana Hope Tegenkamp

Tricia Monsour, recipient of the University of Saskatchewan Dissertation Award, Humanities and Fine Arts, attributes her discovery of *The Castle of Tynemouth* by Jane Harvey to fate.

"I went digging and stumbled across this WordPress article with a synopsis of Jane Harvey's gothic novel," says Tricia. She had expressed her desire to annotate an edition of a 19th-century gothic novel by a woman author to her thesis supervisor, Professor Emerita Lisa Vargo. Dr. Vargo established parameters she felt would set Tricia up for success, including a stipulation that the selected work had to have been published more than once.

Although Tricia found Harvey's first chapter "a bit dry," she kept going thanks to the intriguing WordPress synopsis, and "totally fell in love" with the book. One character in particular, Mrs. Cresswell, delighted her, adding humour into an otherwise dark gothic world.

In detective-like fashion, Tricia sometimes did weeks of research for one annotation or historical reference, distilling and choosing what to keep and what to leave out. Her goal was to provide just the right amount of information "so that a modern reader can appreciate the significance."

But when it came to piecing together archival research to get a more complete sense of Jane Harvey, Tricia struggled with her disappointment at how scattered and incomplete the information was for this pioneer of women's gothic fiction. "Women were writing considerably in the early 19th century," Tricia says, "but they were largely facing criticism, so women novelists from this time period were often just forgotten."

Those who want to read Monsour's annotated edition of *The Castle of Tynemouth* will be pleased to know that the award-winning PhD student is now working on a proposal for the University of Wales Press, which has published previous editions of forgotten gothic novels. "I don't think it will be in people's hands in the new few months, but I'm hoping in the next couple of years."

When it comes to winning the University of Saskatchewan Dissertation Award for *A Scholarly Edition of Jane Harvey's The Castle of Tynemouth*, Tricia's eyes shine with emotion.

"During the four years of my PhD, I was taking care of my husband who was very ill and trying to juggle everything, trying to do the project justice. This was Doctor Vargo's last doctoral supervision, and I wanted to make her proud. So, it was gratifying just knowing that my committee members felt that it was worth a nomination. Winning the award was surreal. It helps justify the support my amazing PhD committee so generously gave me."

Abstract:

Tricia's dissertation presents the first scholarly edition of Jane Harvey's second novel, *The Castle of Tynemouth*. First published in 1806, the novel was popular enough to be published again, by subscription, in 1830. In recovering this forgotten novel, Tricia included a comprehensive overview of Harvey's critical reception in the nineteenth century and an analysis of how *The Castle of Tynemouth* is situated among the corpus of Harvey's written works. The dissertation also includes an expanded biography of Harvey and an overview of her work in the book trade, as both an author and the proprietor of a circulating library in Tynemouth, England. Included with the novel are detailed annotations for the extensive historical and regional features, as well as for the literary references and quotations. Tricia makes the literary critical argument that Harvey's novel can be considered "Gothic historical"; the dissertation focuses on reclaiming Harvey and her novel for modern scholarship.



Profile of Award Winner

Owen Schalk, Winner of USask Master's Thesis Award

By Diana Hope Tegenkamp

Owen Schalk, recipient of the University of Saskatchewan Master's Thesis Award, Humanities and Fine Arts, for his MFA in Writing project, the novel *Under Salted Earth*, credits the excellent support he received through the writing program as key to his success.

"I came to the MFA with certain concerns at the forefront of my mind — but it wasn't until I started working with my supervisor Sheri Benning, and with Jeanette Lynes, and other writers in the program, that I was able to find a way to contain those ideas within a literary form."

Owen's novel combines three genres: eco-fiction, prairie realism, and the New Weird. "All three genres deal with disruption," says Schalk with excitement, "and the efforts of characters to adapt to disruption. I find this very resonant with our current moment. Climate change is worsening. Our lives are at the mercy of the capitalist system. And in the New Weird, which focuses on the strange and the unsettling, there's this element of disorientation, in which unanticipated change is not necessarily bad but potentially positive, something which can spur new ways of thinking and being."

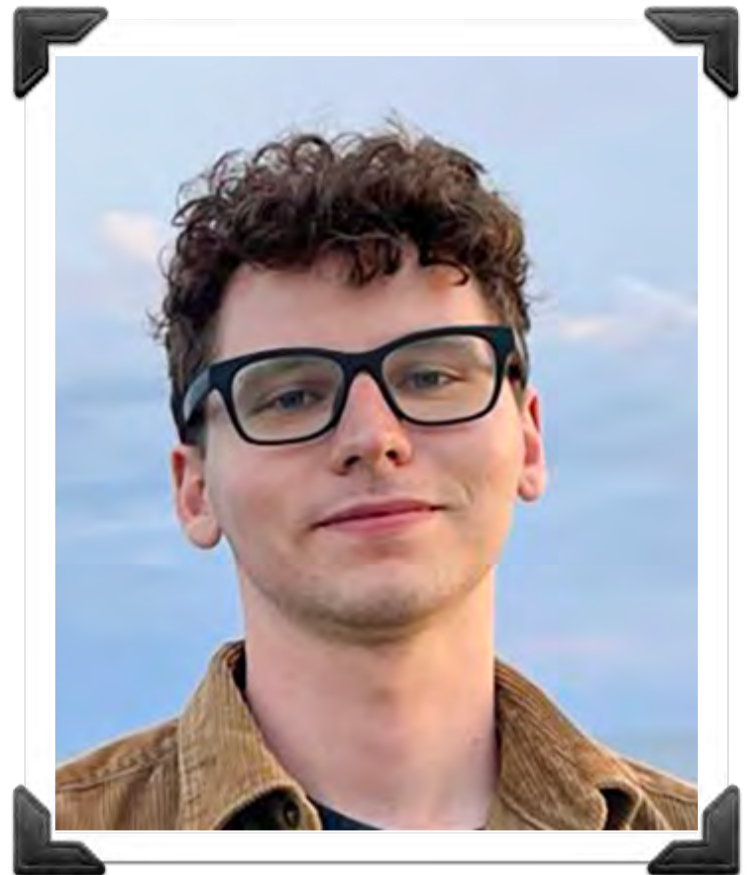
Under Salted Earth offers readers an intergenerational story of disruption, set in a rural Manitoba town. When the inhabitants, a mix of settlers and members of Indigenous communities, are confronted with a monstrous creature who arrives, demanding massive quantities of food, they are forced to come together in new ways. "I wanted to see what would happen if I wrote around that idea of the monster, and as I kept writing, the more I found myself incorporating specifics of the small-town setting that I knew well, those charms of rural life, the strange characters and events your grandparents tell you about, and you think, could that have happened? Was that real?"

For the hungry monster in his novel, Schalk borrows from the figure of the Bahkouv, a German folkloric monster said to live in city tunnels and terrorize drunken men at night. The beastly figure that shows up in rural Manitoba is a more overt sinister presence, which is meant to connect to the less overt yet ever-present destructive element of agribusiness.

Schalk, who grew up in rural Manitoba, understands the harsh economic realities of small, single-family farming and credits the discipline of manual farm labour with instilling in him the work ethic needed to be a writer. But, above all else, there is one focus which returns consistently in Schalk's discussion of his award-winning thesis: his commitment to writing with a social conscience and to connecting his writing to much-needed social change.

Citing writers who influenced him, he speaks about the "kind of curiosity that gets sparked in your mind when you read a great novel, no matter where the person's from." He then goes on to recall the scene from the novella, *By Night in Chile*, by Roberto Bolano, in which prisoners are being tortured in the basement of a house while the literary elite parties on the main floor.

"It made me think, what do I want to do as a writer? Do I want to be one of those writers who is upstairs partying? Or do I want to be a writer who draws attention to the people who are being tortured in the basement and tries to get them out?"



Undergraduate Student Awards

The Department of English was delighted to honour the 2025–2026 undergraduate award recipients on April 2, 2026.

The event brought together students, faculty, family, and friends to celebrate the achievements of award recipients.

Congratulations to all!



Students celebrate at the 2026 Awards Reception.

Copland Prize in the Humanities:
Elisabeth Bauman

Award for Excellence
in English Studies:
Elisabeth Bauman

S Bychinsky Award, Excellence
in Creative or Critical Writing:
Kamryn Heavin (creative)
Karis Oscienny (critical)

Avie Bennett Prize
in Canadian Literature:
Emily Zepick

Elizabeth Brewster
Memorial Scholarship:
Dana Turk

Yuans Award
in Canadian Literature:
Arin Bear

Mary Lou Ogle Award for
the Study of Communications:
Cassidy Letkeman

Ronald and Mary Dyck
Memorial Award:
Kamryn Heavin
Karis Oscienny

Hannon Travel Scholarship:
Emily Zbaraschuk

JB McGeachy Prize in English:
Nolan Long

Reginald JG Bateman
Memorial Scholarship:
Emily Zbaraschuk

RA Wilson Memorial Scholarship:
Emily Zbaraschuk



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Arts and Science
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
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Words from Undergraduate Award-Winners

Undergraduate Award Winner
DANI MCLAUGHLIN



feeling grateful

Undergraduate Award Winner
CASSIDY LETKEMAN



feeling fortunate

Undergraduate Award Winner
KAMRYN HEAVIN



feeling honoured

Undergraduate Award Winner
EMILY ZEPICK



feeling happy

Undergraduate Award Winner
DANA TURK



feeling delighted

Undergraduate Award Winner
CALLA POTTER



feeling grateful

Undergraduate Award Winner
KAITLYN PRICE



feeling accomplished

Undergraduate Award Winner
CONALL WAGNER



feeling happy

Undergraduate Award Winner
NINA PHAM



feeling empowered

Undergraduate Award Winner
EMILY ZBARASCHUK



feeling thankful

Undergraduate Award Winners
2025 - 2026



Undergraduate Award Winner
ANNA SELINGER



feeling thrilled

Profile of Award Winner

Elisabeth Bauman, Undergraduate Awards Winner

By *Diana Hope Tegenkamp*

“Unyielding curiosity.” “Uncommon joy.”

These were two key qualities English undergraduate chair Brent Nelson noted about Elisabeth Bauman (alongside her remarkable academic performance) when writing his nomination letter for the Copland Prize in Humanities — which, indeed, Elisabeth won.

In our conversation, Elisabeth’s curiosity and joy come through like constant bursts of sunshine. “I’ve always loved learning,” she said, crediting her mom, who homeschooled her. “We had to hit certain things like math, science, and penmanship. But then, after that, we were allowed to explore. My mom’s approach to a literary-based education laid a foundation for me to thrive at university, because the Department of English also values how culture, literature, and history intersect.”

As well as winning the Copland Prize, Elisabeth also received the Award for Excellence in English Studies and the Thomas Deis ’38 WWII Memorial Prize from STM. Additionally, she’s been awarded a SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship for her master’s program beginning in the fall.

And yet, six years ago, Elisabeth’s future university success was not apparent to her. “I felt very isolated and alone,” she shares, remembering her first year of university. “I kept thinking ‘will I ever find my place?’ I didn’t really make friends right away and it was distressing.”

Elisabeth brightens, comparing where she was then to where she is today, able to “walk anywhere on campus and meet and be with people I know. That richness of connection and community on campus is incredibly meaningful, and, in the beginning, I didn’t know that it would be possible for me to experience such a big change.”

As STM’s Dean Marche pointed out in her speech about Elisabeth, prior to giving her the Thomas Deis prize, “Elisabeth exemplifies St. Thomas More College values, prioritizing meaningful connections, embracing diversity of thought, and demonstrating a commitment to the betterment of her community.” Notably, Elisabeth has achieved this through substantial contributions, including serving for three years on STM’s Students’ Union and two years as VP Academic Affairs for the USSU.

When it comes to considering her awards, Elisabeth is quick to laugh and note the practicalities, appreciating that the awards will mean she’s much less stressed financially, and will have more time to do other things, like joining the University Choir and tutoring. But then, she offers a deeper reflection, something she attributes to her Christian perspective. “I’m trying to balance this idea of ego and humility,” she says. “These awards are big deals! It’s exciting, so I try to think of it like when we acknowledge something good. The delight of celebrating good things can and should co-exist with recognizing their source, from family and professors to God and work ethic. I guess what I’m trying to say is I didn’t do this entirely on my own.”

Elisabeth becomes extra animated when speaking about the value of studying in the Humanities and the transferable communication skills that can be applied to many professional and personal situations. “Dr. Sarah Powrie talks about how the English Major’s superpower is empathy. Pick any of your canonical writers: even if you don’t agree with the characters, we spend time living with them and hearing their thoughts and seeing the way they view the world. Then we come back into our own world, and our empathy muscles have been exercised so much. That helps me, in daily life — it means I’m not losing the complexity of situations.”



Award-Winning Undergraduate Essay

“What Are You Going To Do With That?” The Value of a Liberal Arts Degree

Kamryn Heavin - for the Ronald and Mary Dyck Memorial Award in English

Around the time I entered Grade 12, like every seventeen- or eighteen-year-old looking to enter university, I began to be asked by those around me just what I was going to study. This is an exciting question, one that has a multitude of answers, each of which opens a whole new future. It is also one that for a long time, I did not know how to answer. Thankfully, it only took about one semester of university classes before I had my heart set on an English degree, and I could proudly answer the question. Little did I know, my answer would actually produce the opposite response I wished for. Instead of pride and awe, my conversation partner’s face would, without fail, become a blur of surprise, confusion, and sometimes, even pity. Then came the question that would haunt me for the next three years: “and what are you going to do with that?” Sometimes even now, I still do not have a nicely prepared answer. However, I have learned that this hesitation, however awkward a silence it may produce, is an answer in itself. A liberal arts degree can do so much in this day and age that it is overwhelming to produce a neat, succinct answer, even more so when you are put on the spot. I believe that the skills taught in liberal arts programs are applicable everywhere in our society. But for the sake of being succinct, and neat, I think the most important of these skills is the ability to generate new ideas, back them up, and defend them against a formidable opponent.



AI is a huge topic in modern society — a scary topic. It is a robot who can write an essay in seconds. It is a robot who can answer physics problems in seconds. It is a robot who seemingly has all the answers. But that is the catch: it only *seems* to have the answers. AI does not have the ability to come up with new material. It operates off plagiarizing and stealing ideas that humans have already come up with, have already dedicated sweat and tears to coming up with. A comparison can be drawn between this concept and the sciences. Science has a place, I have no doubt about that, but it operates off of models that have been around for years, decades, centuries. AI might seem like it comes up with new ideas, but it actually takes components of lots of different sources and combines them. Humans do it, too. When I write a story, I take parts of my life experiences, previously consumed media, and even art that I merely glanced at. The difference is the *imagination* of humans, which is something that a robot cannot replicate. Humans do not replicate components of previous works, we are *inspired* by them. We change aspects of them and create something new. If we allow AI to dominate the arts realm of society, we will essentially be recycling the same ideas over and over, and will eventually come to a standstill in knowledge production.

The world would not continue to adapt and evolve if we constantly recycled the same ideas or tried to solve social issues with formulas. Arts students understand the nuances of human behaviors, as we are working with them every day. When we read theory and apply it to real life in English class. When we read a crazy court case in Philosophy. The sciences understand how the body and mind is supposed to work, but arts students understand that sometimes, plans go sideways. People look, act, and feel different than every person around them. In arts classes, these nuances do not scare us, we do not understand them as something to fix. In fact, we integrate them with our learning. We have learned how to respectfully debate with each other. We have learned to adapt our opinions when the situation calls for it. This is especially applicable today, with so much conflict happening in the world. If the world leaders are stuck on their own opinions, and are insufficient in debating with each other, we will never solve problems that are affecting millions of people every day. Leaders need to be able to create an argument, back it up, and defend it against an opponent. But they also need to be able to take the opponent’s facts and opinions and integrate them into a solution. Finally, they need to be able to articulate this solution.

My final point on the value of a liberal arts degree is the importance of critical thinking and speaking skills. These are skills that are taught to us arts students from day one: brainstorming an opinion, defending it in an essay, and presenting it to an audience. Through this whole process, an ability to articulate thoughts in a clear and organized matter is crucial. I can definitely think of some world leaders today who do not sound put together when they are presenting an idea. Any argument sounds like a bad one when the speaker is tripping over their words and contradicting themselves. If one can not express their thoughts in a well-delivered manner, it does not matter what their idea was in the first place. When these thoughts are challenged, one also has to be able to respond in a thoughtful and respectful way. These are all skills that are taught in liberal arts classrooms everyday, with classroom discussions and debates being the centre of many lessons.

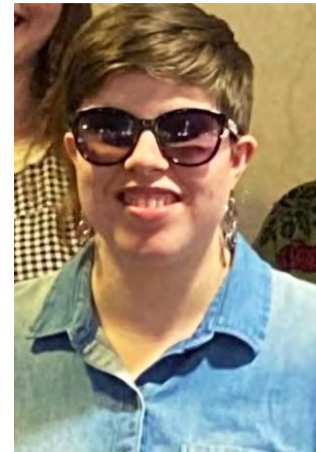
Science degrees have their place, no one can argue that. But arts degrees are crucial for getting new ideas out into the world. Arts students are able to get these ideas out in clear, convincing manners, as well as aptly defend them if needed. With AI being part of so many aspects of society, it is more important than ever to have humans who know how to create real ideas, real arguments, and real connections. So, I guess to answer all those people who ask me, “what are you going to do with that?”: my answer is not neat, or succinct. But if you really want me to be quick about it, when you ask me what I will do after I graduate, I say this: *anything*.

Award-Winning Undergraduate Essay

The Value of a Liberal Arts Education

Karis Oscienny - for the Ronald and Mary Dyck Memorial Award in English

The liberal arts are a vast and varied array of fields that provide multitudes of knowledge, but they are often looked down upon or thought of as less important than other fields of study such as STEM subjects. Those who choose to study the liberal arts are sometimes stereotyped as unmarketable in the workforce, but this is simply not true. The liberal arts teach invaluable skills that can be useful just about anywhere, both within the workplace and outside of it. The knowledge and skills gained from a liberal arts education are important to one's professional life and to their personal life as well. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the liberal arts, an education in these subjects imparts flexible and creative thinking and instills many transferable skills that are critical in any career.



An education in the liberal arts helps with resisting rigid thinking and promotes flexibility. The subjects included in the broad area of liberal arts provide a diverse collection of knowledge, which means that learners are exposed to a wide variety of ideas and perspectives throughout their education. A student studying the liberal arts will be challenged to confront their own beliefs and biases over and over again and to view the world in brand new ways. This process teaches critical thinking, empathy, and openness to new things. In an article from liberalartsedu.org about the perspectives a liberal arts education provides to students, writer Scott Wilson states, "An education in liberal arts is a constant reminder that our individual experiences are grains of sand in the bigger picture. Learning to place our own perspectives in the broader context is invaluable for understanding others." A liberal arts education does not allow students to become stuck in their ways or averse to new ideas and situations. Rather, it encourages them to use critical thinking and creativity to approach the problems and challenges they face. The ability to think creatively and find innovative solutions to problems is a priceless skill in every area of life.

An education in the liberal arts also gives students many transferable skills that are important to have in the workplace. Students in the liberal arts develop and hone research skills throughout their education, and this gives them the ability to find and identify reliable information and the understanding of how to apply what they find. In a world with increasing misinformation, this skill is more important than ever, and liberal arts students are well-equipped to inform themselves and find accurate and reliable sources of information. Combined with the previously discussed ability to think critically, liberal arts students have the necessary skills to know how to use what they learn and apply logic when problem-solving. These skills can be extremely valuable in the workplace where new and innovative solutions will always be needed. Furthermore, students studying the liberal arts are constantly challenged to refine their communication skills when writing and speaking, which is valuable in any career path. A liberal arts education gives learners the ability to express their ideas clearly and promote understanding between themselves and others. The abilities to find accurate and reliable information, apply that information logically, and communicate clearly are all important regardless of one's choice of career.

Although the liberal arts are stereotyped as unimportant, this could not be further from the truth. This broad area of knowledge that encompasses several different fields teaches many important skills that learners will carry with them into any career they choose. The liberal arts teaches critical thinking and the ability to think beyond oneself. It also teaches students how to conduct research, find useful information, and use it carefully. Finally, the liberal arts teaches clear and concise communication. These skills are beneficial in any job in any field and are desirable to many employers. An education in liberal arts will set students up for success in any field they choose.

Work Cited

Wilson, Scott. "Why is Liberal Arts Important?," liberalartsedu.org, July 19, 2022, <https://liberalartsedu.org/faq/why-is-liberal-arts-important/>.

Undergraduate Student Highlights

Honours Career Internships



Students in the Honours Career Internship, including Conall Wagner, Warsha Mushtaq, and Nina Pham, presented and explained posters outlining their projects at the Undergraduate Awards celebration April 2. Photos by Sarah Powrie and Wendy Roy



English Undergraduate Formal



EUS at the Open House



English Undergraduate Society (EUS) executive members Calla Potter and Conall Wagner greet students at the English Department table at the fall 2025 Open House. Photo by Ella Ophir



Above, members of the EUS celebrate with the band Buttercream at the annual Undergraduate Formal in March, with the theme Art Deco or Roaring Twenties.

Graduate Student Highlights

MFA in Writing Graduate Class Reading



MFA in Writing students presented their work at the Graduate Class Reading April 2, 2026.



Right, English graduate students Erin Paulhus, Matthew Rempel, Bailey Schaan, and Amara Ujumadu discuss their MA research in the university library in summer 2025.

Photo by Kassidy Guy

Graduate Student Research

English Graduate Works in Progress Talks

Senior PhD students presented Works in Progress talks in 2025–2026 as part of their doctoral programs. The talks were on a variety of fascinating topics:

Liv Abram, “Read, View, Listen: Multisensory Integration and (More) Ethical Engagement with Indigenous Literatures,” Sept. 2025

Mabiana Camargo, “A Cartography of Gender: Women’s Spatial Oppression in Margaret Atwood’s Speculative Fiction,” Oct. 2025

Jasmine Redford, “Blood on the Snow: Research on Violence within *Captain Canuck* Comics,” March 2026

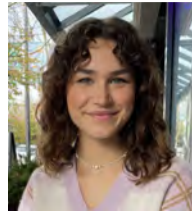
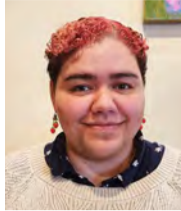
Ian Moy, “Coming Home: Culture and Conflict through Family in Canadian Literature,” April 2026



Jasmine Redford’s self-portrait with Captain Canuck.

MFA Grads: One-Question Interviews

MFA in Writing intern Kamryn Heavin conducted one-question interviews with the 2026 MFA graduates. She also asked for a 5-star read or watch.



Rahul Edwin

Rahul is a writer and poet whose work has appeared in *Grain*, *in medias res*, and *River Volta*.

How has your final project changed over the course of the MFA in Writing program?

I entered the program expecting to write a short story collection, something small and domestic, in the vein of Carver or Lahiri. Instead, I wrote *The Ivory Crown of Indus*, a fantasy-adjacent novel set in 16th-century India, ending in a tragic war. Everything about it is outside my comfort zone. The idea began as a throwaway novella, but during the program, I went through some mental health struggles and the novel became a way of working through that trauma on a grand scale. The novel's scaffolding is foreign to me, but much of the heart of it hits close to home.

5-Star Read: *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke

Veronica Fabian

Veronica (they/them) is a speculative fiction writer who wonders what monsters look like in the modern world.

How has your final project changed over the course of the MFA in Writing program?

I applied to the MFA program with a fantasy novel in mind. I'm currently finishing the last touches on a young adult short story collection that spins Western monster tropes. I never imagined that I would write a short story, much less a collection of them. Although that fantasy novel is always beckoning me back, I'm glad I got this chance to write my short story collection. I dearly love each story and have learned so much as a result that has only strengthened my writing.

5-Star Read: *Thornhedge* by T. Kingfisher

Tia Hendricks

Tia (she/her) is an MFA in Writing student who loves fiction, especially fantasy-crafting, and her two big dogs.

What was your favorite component of the MFA in Writing program?

The River Volta reading series, but more specifically, doing the reading series with friends and having our very supportive peers join us. With every event I was shocked at how many people came. The space was full almost every time and many, many people took advantage of the open mics! Plus, of course, getting to be involved in the writing community in Saskatoon and listening to wonderful writers' work. Overall, the program wouldn't have been the same had it not been for my peers and our wonderful instructors. They made the program fun and an experience I will never forget.

5-Star Read: *Sabriel* by Garth Nix

Jolena Klymyshyn

Jolena grew up in Saskatoon and completed her undergraduate in Psychology and Creative Writing in Halifax. During her time on the coast, she was consistently inspired to write about home and is currently writing a prairie fiction novel.

How did your preferences for poetry, non-fiction, and fiction change over the course of the MFA in Writing program?

I came into this program as a prose writer and have always seen myself writing fiction. Getting to work in all three modes throughout the course was an opportunity to experiment in ways I wouldn't

have on my own, as it is easy to find yourself in a creative echo-chamber. Poetry pulled me from my prose safety net and taught me to play with rules of language. Non-fiction expanded my reading and reminded me to observe my daily world. Though I still consider myself a fiction writer, I now have pieces I am proud of in these other forms.

5-Star Read: *Etta and Otto and Russell and James* by Emma Hooper

Douglas MacDonald

Douglas is a MFA graduate. If there isn't a pen, or guitar, or tennis racquet in his hand, then he's probably washing dishes.

How has your final project changed over the course of the MFA in Writing program?

I had no idea what my project would be when I entered the program. I knew I wanted to write short stories but as often happens in writing, I discovered what I wanted to explore through the writing process. It has developed into a Gothic Canadiana collection, focusing on traumatic histories across the country. I would encourage anyone who enjoys writing to apply for the program and allow themselves to find the words along the way.

5-Star Read: *No Great Mischief* by Alistair MacLeod

Mikayla Marin

Mikayla (she/her) is a speculative eco-fiction writer whose work reimagines ecologically balanced worlds aimed to inspire and motivate climate action.

How has your final project changed over the course of the MFA in Writing program?

My thesis was always focused on using narrative to inspire and motivate change for healthier human-nature relationships. Upon entering the MFA, my goal was to finish my novel. I never had confidence in my short pieces. However, through coursework with amazing professors I was exposed to short stories and essays that inspired me to write a solarpunk short story collection. It's been motivating to grow comfortable and confident with short form prose, a practice I intend to continue honing. I'm very happy with and proud of the collection I've produced.

5-Star Read: *The Serviceberry* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Shayne Metcalfe

Shayne is a filmmaker and writer who blends classic cinema and technology's influence on humanity into stories that entertain, encourage empathy, and offer new ways of knowing.

How did your preferences for poetry, non-fiction, and fiction change over the course of the MFA in Writing program?

I gravitated toward fiction because it seemed most related to screenwriting, although I discovered all forms use memory and imagination. Poetry's ability to condense meaning and emotion into a few lines easily applies to screenwriting. It also encourages a slow pace and contemplation of words, creating moments that evoke feelings connected to ideas. Fiction and non-fiction are more similar than I had previously thought: the line between them often blurs. All writing has the ability to elicit emotional responses. The MFA program gave me the time and resources needed to create this kind of magic.

5-Star Watch: *The Beast in Me*, Season 1, Episode 1, 'Sick Puppy,' by Gabe Rotter, Daniel Pearle, and Erika Sheffer.

News from Professors Emeriti

Teaching English in Ukraine

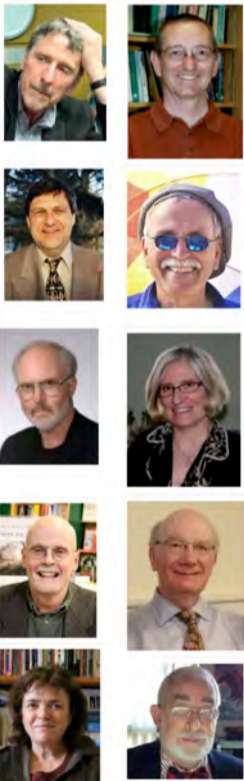
Professor Emeritus David Parkinson has been teaching conversational English to Ukrainians in Ukraine, online, through [Classrooms Without Walls](#). He sends this invitation:

The classes now include students from grade seven to adult. The students are gaining confidence with increasingly complex discourse. We have been discussing various responses to the question “*What place is important to you?*” This place might be nearby, far away, or no longer existing; it might evoke happiness or quite a different response. The students are interested to hear and consider other voices responding to this question.

They’ve asked me to invite current and former students and teachers in Saskatoon to prepare very short audio captions that identify the important place and why it is especially important to the speaker. The caption might consist of only two sentences. It might accompany a photograph to be shown. Privacy and security are key to all aspects of this course. Accordingly, as the class convenor, I guarantee to delete these files immediately after the class and never to identify contributors by name. Similarly, no information can be provided about the identity or location of the students in Ukraine. Files can be sent to Dr. Parkinson by email attachment. He would be happy to provide each contributor with a note of acknowledgement.



Reflections from Dr. Terry Matheson



Looking at the photographic list of retirees on the department’s website made me realize, perhaps as never before, how much I have admired, respected, and genuinely felt a friendly affection for all of my retired colleagues. Their pictures brought to life so many positive experiences from decades over the years, that it made me see vividly how fortunate I have been to share my professional life with such intelligent, interesting, companionable, and thoroughly decent women and men. I could never have imagined my professional life would have been not simply intellectually rewarding, but so frequently exciting, and especially, often sheer fun!

I can only add that I hope other English Departments across the country and elsewhere have experienced the fortune it has been my extremely good luck, considering that I wound up, in an institution I initially thought I’d never be able to remain, when initially offered a term position, where the then Department Head informed me that there was absolutely no chance that the position would ever become permanent.

One never knows what the future can offer. I am forever grateful for the professional life I’ve enjoyed, beyond anything I could have imagined, and my colleagues have been essential to that life.



Mindfully Unwinding Whiteness

For the second successive year, Professor Emerita Susan Gingell is helping to run “Mindfully Unwinding Whiteness: Eight Guided Conversations About Whiteness, Racism & Antiracism” at Round Prairie Library. The series pays particular attention to anti-Indigenous racism, reconciliation, and Indigenous resurgence, and each gathering incorporates mindfulness instruction and practice to help participants address emotionally charged topics. Susan is also continuing her work on MMIWG2S+ with Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik/Women Walking Together, including serving on the Red Dress Day planning committee.

Honouring a Retiree

Wendy Roy

By Jessica McDonald

As a former student and current colleague of Dr. Wendy Roy, I am pleased to honour her work on the occasion of her retirement in June 2026. After eighteen years as a journalist and editor, Wendy returned to university for graduate work in English, completing first a Master's at the University of Saskatchewan and then a doctoral degree at McGill University. When she came back to the University of Saskatchewan in 2004 for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship, it marked the beginning of what would become a twenty-two-year-long career here as an educator and researcher.

Over the course of her career, Wendy has become well-known for her work on Canadian literature and culture. Not only has she published more than twenty book chapters and essays in top journals such as *Canadian Literature* and *Studies in Canadian Literature*, but she has written two scholarly monographs: *Maps of Difference: Canada, Women, and Travel* (2005) and *The Next Instalment: Serials, Sequels, and Adaptations of Nellie L. McClung, L.M. Montgomery, and Mazo de la Roche* (2019). These are in addition to the two collections she has edited: *Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond: Interfaces of the Oral, Written, and Visual* (2012), co-edited with Susan Gingell, and *ReVisions: Speculating in Literature and Film in Canada* (2025). Her research career culminated in her appointment as Bateman Professor from 2023 to 2026, allowing her to focus on her latest research project on speculative writing in Canada. Her expertise in the discipline has been recognized through election to several positions within the Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures / L'Association des littératures canadienne et québécoise, including as president, and appointment to the advisory board of *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne*.

In the last two decades, Wendy has developed and taught numerous courses in Canadian literature, including Mapping Canadian Literature, Canadian Speculative Fiction, and Dystopian and Apocalyptic Women's Fiction in Canada. These and many other courses have been enriched by Wendy's humble and dialogic approach to sharing her expertise, whereby she *learns with* rather than teaches to the students. Her accomplishments in teaching have led to three teaching awards, including the inaugural Learning Communities Teaching Award, the Provost's Outstanding Teaching Award, and a College Teaching Excellence Award. As well as classroom teaching, Wendy has supervised almost twenty graduate theses and a number of undergraduate projects, and her supervisees have benefitted from her attention to detail and careful oversight of their work. Through this variety of teaching contexts, Wendy has been an exemplary model of an educator who is willing to learn, adapt, and stay current. I am struck by how Wendy deliberately seeks out and listens to the insights of junior scholars in her field, then adapts her teaching materials and approaches to account for those perspectives.

In addition to her research and teaching, Wendy's work for the department has included chairing the Undergraduate and Outreach Committees, and three years as Head of the Department from 2017 to 2020. Among her proudest achievements in these capacities was helping to shepherd into existence the interdisciplinary Certificate in the Study of Indigenous Storytelling and, with Lisa Vargo, endowing the Award for Excellence in English Studies.

It is not only within more formal contexts — administration, published scholarship, supervisory work, and the classroom — where Wendy has made an enduring impact; she also devotes significant time to informal mentorship. As someone who has benefitted from such dedication for more than fifteen years, I have witnessed the range of ways Wendy makes mentorship a daily practice: planning lunchtime check-ins to discuss challenges of the profession, initiating conversations about new discoveries or problems arising in Canadian literature, or offering hallway advice on problems faced by graduate students and junior scholars. Wendy is a community-builder in the everyday, practical ways that matter, and the Department of English has benefitted greatly from her collegiality.

We congratulate Wendy on the accomplishment of such a richly filled career. We wish her all the best as she moves into retirement and can take more time for her pleasures and passions: dancing with Garth, teaching Zumba, walking along the river, engaging in volunteer work and personal writing, and spending time with her family.

