A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR
by Chris Morrow

I have always found something special about the first line of a work of literature – especially when it comes to novels. Whenever I begin a new book, I stop after the first line to let it sink in. That first line is the author reaching out across time and space to invite me into her world and entice me to keep reading. Sometimes first lines are enigmatic such as Octavia Butler’s opening line to Kindred, “I lost an arm on my last trip home.” Sometimes they are funny like Patrick Ness’s opening to his YA novel, The Knife of Never Letting Go, “The first thing you find out when yer dog learns to talk is that dogs don’t got nothing much to say.” They can even be repetitive. The great writer of my generation, Snoopy from Peanuts always starts by writing, “It was a dark and stormy night…”

Over the last several months, in the grip of a global pandemic, many of the emails in my inbox have started like one of Snoopy’s stories: “These are unprecedented times.” Truth be told, I probably started an email or two of my own with a similar phrase. And I guess that sentiment is true enough. But, like anything oft repeated, it soon loses its meaning. So, if you will allow me, I would like to restart this letter with a new opening line:

These are preceded times.

Despite the uncertainty of the world around us and the drastic changes to our educational system and our lives, it is the persistence and resilience of the faculty and students that stand out most to me about the last months of the Spring semester.

I witnessed WIU students from a wide variety of ethnic, economic, and regional backgrounds demonstrate the same desire to learn and thirst for knowledge they always have. They adjusted to new academic routines, adapted to new technologies, and did so with the same spirit of collegiality I have come to expect from our students. They did not allow the pandemic to compromise their education.

I also witnessed faculty demonstrate the same dedication to providing the best education possible for these students. They also learned new technologies, experimented with new ways of teaching, and continued to advocate for their students – whether it was providing access to technology, being communicated with in a timely manner, ensuring their safety, or honoring their achievements. Faculty also participated in online scholarship and commencement ceremonies and took time out of their schedules to record video messages for our majors and our graduates.

As I write, plans for the fall semester are still developing. However, I take comfort in the knowledge that whatever the first line of our department’s novel, the theme will continue to be a fierce commitment to education and to the well-being of our communities.
Day Three of My New Life
by Brandon Williams

At some point, I stopped asking myself when things had started going wrong, along with the follow up as to whether I ever really knew or just forgot on purpose. By the time I turn twenty-five I’m unraveling faster than I can put myself back together, working a dead-end job that’s a good fit for my dead-end state of mind. The problems I thought I had been living with become the things I struggle with, and it’s always the path of least resistance to just give up. When I finally hit bedrock and self-destruct it’s less like a supernova and more like a mercy killing. I come out the other side of my twenties nothing but glue and glass bones.

Applying to Western is the first thing I’ve done right in damn near a decade. Trying is new to me, and I find that I am glad I did. When the acceptance letter arrives in the mail, it’s a shock to the system. I applied because I didn’t know what else to do. I didn’t think anyone would take me. I can’t remember ever feeling that they should.

But now it’s more than just thinking about it. Now it’s the doing, and the doing is the stage I encounter least frequently—I always sink beneath the thinking. I decide by not deciding; I see my failure as foregone.

It is time to test that assumption, and myself.

I sit down in my too-small desk, not entirely certain I’m in the right room. I don’t have time to settle in before Dr. Banash informs us we are to sit in alphabetical order within a circle. No hiding in the back, no avoiding his attention; I sit right next to him, a deer in the academic headlights. He seems infused with a professorial intensity verging on manic, as if his whole frame is so busy generating thought that it can’t be anything but wiry. My frame may be slightly less animated; hence, the too-small desk.

Within the first five minutes of class we’re told that we will be reading Sartre and Nietzsche and a few other names I recognize, but which just as quickly escape me. I am out of my depth. It’s been more than six years since I attended community college regularly and this is not that, this is the real thing. This is Actual College. I figure I’ve got two weeks, maybe three, before Dr. Banash figures out I’m not smart enough to be here.

Later, I ask what I’m pretty sure is a stupid question about the role of the author in interpreting a text. Dr. Banash doesn’t seem to notice—he just points me towards Barthes.

Dr. Helwig is explaining the syllabus in a large room filled with long white tables. I spend the next thirty minutes trying to place her accent, which sounds like a valley girl got run over by a Southern bus. I don’t know where she’s from, but I do know that she knows her poetry, and she shares her knowledge eagerly with a mostly silent class of people who are here because their advisors said they need to be.

Admittedly, I am one of those people—but I do actually love poetry. I tell her that I rarely like anything written after 1940 and she laughs with a wry understanding. I talk to her after class once about Gerard Manley Hopkins, a poet she also appreciates. I am perpetually grateful, time and time again, when she takes a moment to humor me.

Eventually, we cover Hopkin’s “God’s Grandeur.” She smiles at me and says, “Brandon, I know you like Hopkins, so why don’t you read this one.”

She remembers.

Walking into 302 is like coming home. I’ve spent my whole life forming opinions on game theory, even if I didn’t have the vocabulary. Astride the light of the afternoon, we have long and intricate discussions, throwing ideas back and forth across the wide room. I think about my positions while doing homework, driving to school, even just before sleep. I wonder what Courtney and Desiree will have to say?

I have a slightly strange acquaintanceship with Dr. Morrow, in that we both recognize each other as ‘that guy who plays games over at Kozmic Game Emporium.’ We were at least peripherally aware of each other before I became a student at Western and now I’m his student. If there’s any awkwardness implicit in this, we move past it. One nerd knows another: Whenever I have a meeting with him, we spend most of our time talking about video games.

Sometimes we talk academically, if we must.

Professor Lawhorn is possessed by a lust for life that I can’t replicate on my best of days. She is transcendentally human, open and fantastic even with her failings. She snorts when she laughs, which makes whatever she’s laughing at even funnier.

I am quiet in my corner of the room, some dark patch of growth shying from the light she bends at me. When she looks me straight in the eye and says that I had better never stop writing, I find myself believing that if I ever did, she would definitely take it personally.

She tells me to capture what’s true; to find the beauty in the ugliness and the darkness in the edges of all that glitters. She tells me to write what is honest even if it is fantasy, to create from the pieces I’ve been given and have taken, to spread out the blank white page and in its borders stamp a part of my self with every crooked line intact, every splotch and crease, every curve that hints towards the absolute sphere—the perfect core of what I make and what’s been made of me, all truths wonderful-hideous-perplexing enmeshed.

She tells me to write.

I write this.
The Mirror and the Lamp

Helwig Publishes Major Book

Timothy Helwig is a Professor in the Department of English at Western Illinois University. He specializes in nineteenth-century American literature and antebellum print culture, with an emphasis on working-class identity and cross-racial sympathy in the works of Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, George Lippard, Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Frank J. Webb. He has held visiting research fellowships from the American Antiquarian Society and the Library Company of Philadelphia. Timothy serves as the Midwestern Regent for Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society (2014-2022), and the Treasurer for the Research Society for American Periodicals (2015-2021). His new book Cross-Racial Class Protest in Antebellum American Literature was recently published by the University of Massachusetts Press, and he spoke to The Mirror & the Lamp about his research topics and his writing experiences.

M&L: Congratulations on the publication of Cross-Racial Class Protest in Antebellum American Literature. Could you give us a brief overview of your book?

TH: My primary focus is looking at how white and African American authors alike used similar rhetorical strategies to protest chattel slavery in the south and “wage slavery” in the north in the two decades leading up to the Civil War. George Lippard, George Thompson, and Augustine Duganne are three white working-class authors who were very popular and appealed to the multi-racial working classes in the late 1840s and early 1850s amidst emergent industrial capitalism. Lippard’s The Quaker City, published as a complete novel in 1845, was the best-selling novel in America until 1852, and both Lippard and Duganne spoke out at public meetings in Philadelphia to protest the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Their sensational city-mystery novels, along with Thompson’s, regularly link the exploitation of multi-racial workers in the urban northeast and the horrors of chattel slavery as the two curses plaguing the nation. At the same time, African American authors such as Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, and Frank J. Webb employed the conventions of sensational novels in their writing that protested chattel slavery and appealed to the white working classes to become allies in the fight. Douglass, in particular, increasingly linked the efforts to end slavery in the south with the efforts to ameliorate the working conditions of free African Americans in the north, and he attempted to establish an industrial school in New York for children of all races to receive an education and prepare for a career in the workforce.

M&L: Your work finds you reading a popular literature that was widely read at the time but often forgotten today. What got you interested in reading this literature, and what is most surprising about it?

TH: I first encountered George Lippard’s The Quaker City, a surreal novel that never wavers in its critique of the excesses of industrial capitalism, that progressively features an African American anti-hero, and that employs Gothic horror to entertain the reading masses, in a graduate course in 1995. I always enjoyed reading and studying nineteenth-century American literature—canonical figures like Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Frederick Douglass, and Walt Whitman—and Lippard’s sensational writing so committed to immediate social reform was new to me. You can think of Lippard’s writing as Edgar Allan Poe’s Gothic tales “on steroids,” but with a didactic message that Poe may not have appreciated.
Lippard and Poe were professional friends, and Lippard was one of the last authors Poe saw before his death in Baltimore in 1849, but their writing has very different literary concerns.

**M&L:** What were some of the challenges you faced in the process of researching your book?

**TH:** Many of the sensational novels that I study were serialized in weekly story papers before being published as complete novels, and sometimes the only copies that have survived are those in the story papers. And issues of story papers, as well as African American newspapers, are often incomplete or not yet digitized by their respective holding libraries, so I made trips to the American Antiquarian Society, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Library of Congress, and historical societies in Pennsylvania in order to read the primary texts and relevant context sources. Fortunately, websites like Accessible Archives offer a complete run of Frederick Douglass’s newspapers and William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator*, so I had access to these sources and could run word searches to expedite my research. Additionally, the librarians at the various archives were instrumental in providing me with resources when I could not travel. For instance, the American Antiquarian Society provided me with a digitized copy of Lippard’s last novella, *Eleanor; or, Slave Catching in the Quaker City*, which was serialized in a weekly story paper and offers one of the strongest condemnations of chattel slavery by a white working-class author in the 1850s.

**M&L:** If a student were interested in knowing more about this work, where should they begin? What would be a great novel or journal to dive into?

**TH:** A number of George Lippard’s novels, such as *The Quaker City*, have been recovered by American literature scholars since the 1980s, but if you prefer to start with a shorter city-mystery novel, Lippard’s *The Killers* was recently reprinted by the University of Pennsylvania Press. Walt Whitman’s dark temperance novel *Franklin Evans*, reprinted by Duke University Press, also employs the Gothic and takes up the cultural issues I focus on, although, as my book indicates, Whitman’s 1842 novel is not nearly as progressive as Lippard’s on representations of race or class critique. Frederick Douglass’s 1853 novella *The Heroic Slave* offers an excellent example of cross-racial correspondence with sensational city-mysteries, and Douglass’s speeches and essays have been digitized and made available to the public on Indiana University’s *Frederick Douglass Papers*, an archive I now use regularly in my classes.

**M&L:** Did you have any experiences teaching that made you think about the book you were writing differently?

**TH:** While I am grateful to Western Illinois University with providing me a year-long sabbatical and research stipends to write my book, I am equally appreciative of the conversations I had with my dynamic undergraduate and graduate students over the past 12 years about the books and newspapers central to my project. Those conversations and the students’ final essay projects helped to remind me of the limits of the cross-racial sympathy evidenced in the primary texts that I study, and they gave me a deeper appreciation for the power of Frank J. Webb’s representation of ordinary African American middle-class life in his 1857 novel *The Garies and Their Friends*.

**M&L:** Both labor relations and race relations are deeply strained today. Does the argument of your book suggest perspectives to you that might be useful as we think about these issues today?

**TH:** Yes, I believe my research uncovers a moment in American literature where white and African American writers transcended racial lines in their efforts to further positive social reform, both in terms of ending chattel slavery and improving the lives of working people in America. In our current political climate, it can be instructive to study the rhetorical effectiveness of writers like Lippard and Douglass who appealed foremost to our common humanity.
The department of English is delighted to celebrate this year’s Scholar of the Year, Erica Parrigin, a full-time student on the QC campus!

At this year’s department awards ceremony, held everywhere and nowhere on Zoom, Dr. Dan Malachuk remarked, “Last year, Everett would not shut up about one student: how great she was in this course, that course, blah blah. ‘Sure,’ I thought, ‘but those are just your courses.’ Well, I’m happy to report Everett is a most reliable narrator.” Dr. Malacuk went on to declare that “Erica is one of our strongest students ever!”

The Mirror & the Lamp reached out to Erica and asked her about her experience in English.

M&L: Why did you choose to major in English?

E.P. I became an English major partially because literature is exciting. There’s nothing I love more than learning! Whenever I’m reading or writing I find myself looking into new topics provoked by the material at hand. The works that I enjoy the most are the ones that I don’t understand, as they push me to examine them by exploring different concepts. Nearly everything I read inspires me to create my own interpretations and share them, which brings me to the main reason why I’m an English major: literature is unique in its ability to stir empathy. I strongly believe that sharing new perspectives is key to bettering the lives of others.

M&L: What book has made the biggest impact on you so far?

E.P. Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* is the first book I was able to recognize as feminist. I had unknowingly developed a preference for works by feminist authors, but as a young teen, I was mostly unaware of the messages they were sending. *The Bell Jar* made me realize that I had never before experienced a woman’s account of mental illness in literature – something that suddenly struck me as an offensive omission of a topic very close to me. It was a turning point in my adolescence, prompting a realization that authors like Ursula K. Le Guin and Alice Walker were trying to say something with their stories. I finally began to notice certain implicit themes occur again and again, giving word to my own feelings against injustices.

M&L: What writing assignment are you most proud of?

E.P. The assignment I’m most proud of is my poem “Becky” that won first place in the Cordell Larner poetry category. It was challenging because I have very little experience in writing poetry, but the thing that made me the most proud was my mom’s reaction to it. She cried happy tears and said it was a “perfect snapshot of us at that time,” always trying to find goodness in difficult situations. I’m proud because I made her proud.

M&L: Are you reading or writing during the summer lockdown?

E.P. I don’t think I could go without reading and writing for an entire summer! Especially now that I’m in such an academic mindset. I picked up a book the other day and had to go find a pencil after the first page because I wanted to mark it up with my thoughts. I’ve been journaling constantly and have a million ideas just waiting to be written.

M&L: What are you looking forward to this fall?

E.P. After such a heavy course load this semester I’m looking forward to some mental relaxation in the fall! I’m done with most of the required courses for my major, with only electives remaining. I’m very excited for a less stressful schedule.

Erica’s stressful schedule last year helped her produce some remarkable work. At the awards ceremony, Dr. Malachuk described what she has already achieved: “In papers ranging from feminism in *The Awakening* to intersectional feminism in *Raisin in the Sun*, on the sublime and the sublime, Nietzsche’s skepticism, Wordsworth’s alliance with Elaine Scarry, Whitman’s alliance with himself, and the complexities of desire in the #MeToo era, Erica’s work has always been clear, bold, totally persuasive.” We are delighted to recognize this amazing work, and we look forward to seeing what Erica will write next year!
The Reading Room Series, spearheaded by undergraduate student Grayson Stoik, is an effort to celebrate writing at Western Illinois University, build community amongst English faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students, and feature the incredible space, facilitated by Dr. Banash—the Reading Room, open to all, in Simpkins 025.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, three Reading Room Readings were held, typically on the third Friday of the month at 4:00 p.m. On Friday, October 25th, after a warm welcome by Interim Chair Dr. Christopher Morrow, a packed house was audience to featured English faculty Dr. David Banash, featured graduate student Anna Miller (Psychology), and featured undergraduate student Grayson Stoik.

On Friday, November 15th, again to a full crowd, an engaged audience listened to featured English Faculty member Dr. Merrill Cole, English graduate student Savannah Dupont, and featured English undergraduate Marcus Sweeten. On Friday, February 21st, 2020, English Education faculty member Dr. Alisha White read from her newly published chapter, English Graduate student Katya Kozhukhova read original mythology, and undergraduate Angelique Herrerra, a LEJA major and English minor, read original poetry.

COVID-19 made the last two readings of the semester impossible, but the lineup was planned as follows, and I wish to thank those featured readers for their willingness:

March 27th:
Faculty: Dr. Magdelyn Helwig
Graduate Student: Gustavo Primo
Undergraduate Student: David Vawter

April 24th:
Faculty: Dr. Christopher Morrow
Graduate Student: A.J. Rocca
Undergraduate Students: Emma Dayhoff & Kaylee Gundling

The Reading Room Series also featured an open mic which led to new voices featuring new work each time. Grayson Stoik graduated in May, and he will be missed. Without Grayson’s enthusiasm and deep love for the literary arts and community building, The Reading Room Series would never have found a home in Simpkins 025.

The Reading Room Series will continue in 2020-2021. I’ll be working to plan three readings per semester due to audience demand, and will work to reschedule the readings that were cancelled. If you have any interest in being a featured reader, have suggestions, or interest in helping coordinate this Series, please contact Barbara Lawhorn at BC-Lawhorn@wiu.edu. Each reading was a warm community, a feast of words and baked good, and a truly nourishing way to conclude a Friday afternoon on campus.
What Teaching College Night Classes Taught Me About Teaching High School English

by Deanna Palm

“The job is yours if you want it!”
This sentence was music to my ears after hours of background checks, tax forms, and applications.
“You start tomorrow.”
This sentence was the wakeup call.

It all began on a freshly thawed out day in March—a day I will not soon forget. I’d received a text from an acquaintance that Black Hawk College’s Outreach Center was hiring a new instructor for crocheting (and later knitting), my dream job. Their former instructor decided that it was time for her to retire and I, a nineteen-year-old Black Hawk College sophomore, was the only one to apply just one day before the class was to be held. I was a bit suspicious as to why this process was so rushed, but the excitement that welled up within me was enough to blind me into racing through the mountains of paperwork.

Let me get one thing straight. I was no novice in crocheting, knitting, or teaching yarnworks. I was a knitter first since eight years old, and a self-taught crocheter since thirteen. I’d taught groups of children ages 8-14 from my home, taking over my knitting/crocheting club from the woman who taught me everything I know. I may have been young, but I was not unqualified. Still, you can imagine the look on my supervisor’s face when we met in the lobby. Apparently, I sounded a lot older on the phone, and thus, my voice that mysteriously deepens when nervous landed me my position as the youngest Professional and Continuing Education, or PaCE, instructor in Black Hawk College history.

I’ve been teaching at BHC for over a year now, and it’s been the greatest learning experience for me. While my first class was thrown together in just one day, complete with a syllabus, schedule, and handouts, I got an opportunity that not many future educators get before completing their Bachelor’s degree. I got my own classroom…that I had to share with GED and ESL instructors. My own lesson plans…that were based on previous guidelines from other instructors. I did have my own students, no catch there. Sure, it was a non-credited course where I didn’t grade their performance, but they did get to grade my performance at the end of every course, but even so, they were my students. Most importantly, I got to do what I love: teaching.

As you can imagine, this experience required a learning curve. My first class had an age span of twenty-six to eighty-one, far different from the eight to fourteen-year-olds I was used to teaching and often resulting in some challenges establishing authority. Looking back on my experiences, I was almost certain that I would never use any of the lessons I’ve learned from them in my future high school English teaching endeavors. After all, college night school and public high school? They couldn’t be any more different, right? However, I couldn’t have been more wrong.

Now that I’m finally entering the education portion of my…education, I’m beginning to see the undeniable connections between the two. These range from teaching strategies to types of students to classroom setup. The first similarity I’d like to introduce is the diversity of learners. While in the past I’d taught every student the same way, now I had to learn three different teaching techniques to accommodate auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners. For auditory learners, I had to develop phrases to remember the steps that I could repeat over and over again throughout the lesson. These were phrases like, “The name of the stitch is the number of times you yarn over and pull through two,” or the far catchier “If you’re in doubt, pull the whole stitch out.”

For visual learners, I had to demonstrate the steps in phases as a group. Then, I’d go around and show the steps individually. Visual learners had a hard time doing the mirror image of what I was showing, so this extra instruction from a different angle helped them greatly. My handouts also contained a text version of my verbal instructions so they could use it as a reference after seeing what each term looked like. Finally, for kinesthetic learners, I’d often have to teach things like how to position the crochet hook throughout the entire stitch-making process. All learners in my classes were a combination of these styles, so while my instruction still took the format of one lesson for the whole class, that lesson took many
forms to be more inclusive of other learners. I was naïve to use a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching in the first place, but this experience helped me to develop strategies to accompany the three types of learners throughout every step of the process.

Much like in high school, my classes were different sizes, too. Anywhere from three to eight students would show up in my classes, and for a subject as hands-on as crocheting, that meant learning to adapt. If eight students showed up, I was perfectly prepared, but a highly motivated class of three learns at a lightning pace when they have more opportunities to ask the instructor for guidance. Armed with extra handouts and double classes, I was able to learn how to move classes along at a relaxed pace, regardless of size. I also had a learning curve of how to catch individual students up to keep them on the same track as the other students. This was done through clearly outlining all of the required stitches for the course, taking two weeks on average to learn. In my four-week course, most students would have an opportunity to learn beyond crocheting in rows of treble stitches. Those who finished in two weeks would get to crochet circles and hearts and more complex pieces, and students who missed a class along the way were still able to learn all of the basics without feeling as though they were running behind. Prioritizing lessons led to lower course drop rates and higher student engagement.

I also needed to master the art of “unteaching.” I can’t tell you how many people were taught to slip stitch, thinking they were learning to single crochet. While some students had learned the wrong way, others already knew the right way, and while I wouldn’t say they knew more than the teacher, they certainly knew more than the class covered. For example, I had one student take the “Refresher Crochet” course thinking it was “Intermediate Crochet.” This showed me the importance of understanding student abilities. I needed to figure out what she knew, learn what she wanted to know, and figure out how to teach her in a way that mirrored beginning crochet principles. After all, I couldn’t make this class “Intermediate Crochet” for her and teach two different lessons, but I could show her how to double crochet two stitches together while others learned to do the same. This has better prepared me to handle the students whose learning appetite exceeds classroom expectations.

There was another thing I never anticipated: having a shared classroom. Before every class, I’d need to arrive at least thirty minutes early to clean and prepare. The desks would be arranged in the weirdest ways, and I’d need to drag the tables into the correct arrangement for that day’s class after taking a photo of the arrangement they were in so that I could put everything back the way it was. There would often be student materials left behind from the algebra class that met before mine that I’d need to turn into the lost and found. I learned to bring paper towels to dry the newly cleaned tables because, while I was thankful for the sanitation procedures in place, they could harm the yarn my students placed on those tables. I’d walk into a different tornado every time, and sometimes, this tornado took the form of random people who weren’t involved in any classes just wandering through my classroom to see how much had changed since the last time they’d been there. This lesson taught me that I needed to keep everything I needed with me and have ample time to prepare my classroom desk arrangements and materials because I could never be certain of the conditions I was walking into.

The biggest shock to me was how many students took my class to get back something they’d lost. Several students would approach me after class and say, “You don’t have to try to teach me so hard. I had a stroke.” You see, doctors often recommend yarnworks as a means of trying to exercise fingers and regain fine motor skills. I had no knowledge of this and assumed that all of the students who took my class would have full use of their hands. Instead, I found that I needed to develop creative ways to pause practicing and weave in instructions on topics like pattern reading and choosing the appropriate tools to give these students an opportunity to rest their hands and minds throughout. Another student had Parkinson’s Disease, and she needed guidance on how to move her hands in a way that, even if she had tremors, the yarn wouldn’t slip off the needles. One student had knee surgery, and I needed to arrange the tables in a different set up so he could sit with the group. Now that I’ve taken my first Special Education class here at WIU, I can see how this ties into accommodating special needs during regular class instruction.

Finally, my students were the greatest teachers because many were teachers. They’d share about their students and lesson plans, and I gained a lot of knowledge from hearing how they taught Shakespeare and made an effort to get their students to appreciate poetry. Many would share videos and assignment sheets with me via email, and I was able to glean so much from our conversations. There’s a lot we can learn about teaching from baptism by fire, but there is even more we can learn from those who have been educators for decades and seen the changes to the public education system firsthand. My biggest advice to anyone looking to teach is to listen because, while it’s tempting to want to jump right into teaching as soon as possible, it is far more beneficial to hear what you can expect before you are in a position of influence.

The independence of teaching your own class for the first time is thrilling, and I am grateful for the opportunities BHC has granted me. This chapter has been both educational and rewarding, and the students I’ve taught have taught me equally as much. As I prepare to transfer to the Macomb campus here at WIU, I eagerly await the next chapters of block teaching and student teaching, knowing that they will further equip me for the future.
TEACHING FROM HOME: COVID-19 EMPTIES SIMPKINS HALL
by David Banash

English’s home in Simpkins Hall is the envy of faculty and students across the Western campus. A magnificent Works Progress Administration building from the 1938, its beautiful stone facade, high ceilings, oak woodwork, spacious offices, and enormous windows make it a wonderful place to study and teach. COVID-19 has forced faculty and students out of Simpkins this semester. The Mirror & the Lamp asked faculty to share pictures of their improvised shelter-in-place offices and a few words about their experiences moving to all online classes.

English Advisor Ellen Poulter writes, “I wish I could say it’s as neat and tidy as my office on campus, but alas, my dining room is lost to the cause! The best part, though, is my office mate, who I think secretly hopes I never have to leave the house again! I miss you all terribly. I miss campus. It’s so stupid the way we take things for granted. Maybe that lesson will be one of the silver linings when this is over.”

Bill Knox writes, “The neighborhood view from my home desk normally includes strolling neighbors, small wild mammals, and the greening of spring. In short, pleasant, but my eyes are increasingly drawn away from my screen as the season warms.”

Bill Thompson is not ceding any space to the screen on his codex-only desk.
Alisha White writes, “This is our home office on the second floor. I have a nice big desk, and hanging above it is the waterfall painting I did in eighth grade. You can’t see, but behind me are two nice big shelves with our research books: (My) English Ed and qualitative research books on one side, and (Stewart’s) physics and quantum mechanics on the other side. The other picture is of my piles, one for each class I’m teaching. I spread out across the floor as I get into each project.”

Roberta Di Carmine writes that her desk includes “glimpses of my past travels (New Zealand, Australia, Costa Rica…) to remind me of future travel…”

David Banash writes, “I was traveling for spring break when the shelter-in-place orders started, so I have remained in Mississippi with my partner, Andrea Spain, our nine dogs plus three current rescues. The kitchen table is not as comfortable as my office in Simpkins, and I really miss seeing my students everyday, but I’m making it work. You can see that Lucky is happy to have the company all day everyday.”
As we finish up the year under such unusual circumstances, it still seems strange not to be in Simpkins. Whether it’s everyday activities or special events like English Awards Night, it’s sad not to be able to see professors and fellow classmates. Several students shared their experiences working from home, including some of their new colleagues...

Second-year English graduate student **Savannah Dupont** writes, “Working from home is difficult in many ways. I’m lucky that I already had a fast, reliable computer to use. However, I do have a lot more distractions I have to put aside while working at home. Not only do I have to resist playing Animal Crossing all day, I also have my cat Khali constantly trying to climb on my desk and play. It can be stressful being stuck at home all day, but taking consistent breaks throughout the day to play my favorite game or with my cat help keep me calm and collected.”

First-year English graduate student **Meghan O’Toole** also has cats keeping her company. Meghan writes, “Genowefa (the calico) and Mulder (the black cat) are very serious students.”

**Whitney Sullivan**, a second-year student and administrative coordinator in the University Writing Center, writes, “I miss my WIU family greatly! Working from home has been incredibly difficult. I struggled getting a workspace together as I usually operate from Malpass Library and Simpkins Hall, where I always have plenty of space. Being at home, I’ve had to reorganize my schedule and my limited room to accommodate my chaotic workload. Though a challenge, I found that having the right work environment provides a smoother transition through this solitariness. My furry colleagues have been giving me tons of motivational support and inspiration! Even as they steal my pens and sticky notes, I couldn’t have gotten this far being isolated without them.”
First-year grad student Kendrick Keller says, “It’s somewhat rough. I didn’t know how I would miss the TA office. But in reality, I loved having my large desk and window. It was even more fun when my fellow TAs would pop in spontaneously and keep me company. I should probably get a cat or something for that now. I miss Simpkins, but I’m making it work here.”

English grad student Marcus Bailey says, “It’s been quite an adjustment working from home. I miss being able to socialize face-to-face, and there have been some complications in trying to solve problems without my typical resources. However, it does have its perks like being able to work in my pajamas and not having a far commute to work.”

First-year grad student Maureen Sullivan says, “The hardest part about working from home is not having distinct physical places to separate different types of work. It’s all just turned into sitting in front of the computer all day long, and I miss being able to collaborate and socialize with my classmates in Simpkins and my coworkers at the University Writing Center in Malpass.”

INSPIRATION FOR THE COVER

Despite the challenges of distance and technical difficulties, we’ve made it to the end of the year. Congratulations to all of the students graduating, and to the students returning next year, we continue to cling to the hope that we will all get to see each other face-to-face in the fall. What we’ve learned from this experience so far is that we took even the simplest parts of life in Simpkins for granted — and that pets are always the best part of any Zoom meeting. This year’s cover was based on the unusual circumstances of the end of the year: classes, meetings, conferences, and tutoring sessions all became video calls as we transitioned to digital learning. (In hindsight, a screenshot of the English Awards Night would have been the perfect picture for the cover.) The recreated image of a Zoom meeting represents the ongoing engagement between students, educators, and authors in this new online space.
Each spring, the English Department awards $20,000 in scholarships and fellowships for our graduate and undergraduate students. We are pleased to announce the following students were awarded English scholarships this spring for the 2019–2020 academic year.

**Undergraduate Scholarship and Award Winners**

Barbara & John Blackburn Scholarship: Carmen Bizarri  
Dr. Paul Blackford British Literature Scholarship: Erica Parrigin  
Dr. Olive Fite American Literature Scholarship: Deanna Palm  
Dr. Irving Garwood Shakespeare Scholarship: Joshua Stinson  
Lila S. Linder English Scholarship: Abigail Gindlesberger & Joshua Stinson  
Karen Mann Essay Award in Literature and Film: Connor Sullivan  
Beth M. Stiffler Memorial Scholarship: Connor Sullivan  
Robert L. Hodges English Education Scholarship: Khamiya Ellis  
Sigfred, Jeannette & Dean Johnson Scholarship: Mackenzie Ricco  
Scholar of the Year Scholarship: Erica Parrigin

**Writing Awards**

Bruce H. Leland Essay Contest:  
*English 100, Introduction to Writing* – 1st Place, Tayla Shaver; 2nd Place, Gisselle Salgado; 3rd Place, Toni Carpenter.  
*English 180, College Writing I* – 1st Place, Joelle Butzow; 2nd Place, Dustin Steinkamp; 3rd Place, Quint P. Thompson II.  
*English 280, College Writing II* – 1st Place, Chyanne Davidson; 2nd Place, Irina Widmer; 3rd Place, Emily Check.  
*GH 101 General Honors* – 1st Place, Jasmine Woods; 2nd Place, Ian Stearns; 3rd Place, Madalyn Pridemore.  
*Multimodal Writing* – 1st Place, Lauren Bearden-Kyser; 2nd Place, Daniel Hammond; 3rd Place, India Lockhart.  
Lois C. Bruner Creative Nonfiction Awards: 1st Place, Kaylee Gundling; 2nd Place, Beth Cranston; 3rd Place, Brandon Williams.

Cordell Larner Award in Fiction: 1st Place, Brandon Williams; 2nd Place, Erica Parrigin; 3rd Place, Emma Dayhoff.  
Cordell Larner Award in Poetry: 1st Place, Erica Parrigin; 2nd Place, Claire Dodson; 3rd Place, Kaylee Gundling.

**Graduate Scholarship, Fellowship, and Award Winners**

John Mahoney Research Fellowship: Katya Kozhukhova  
Ron & Leslie Walker Graduate Fellowships: Meghan O’Toole & Maureen Sullivan  
Syndy M. Conger Essay Award: A.J. Rocca  
Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award: Katya Kozhukhova & Alex Weidenhamer  
Alfred J. Lindsey Memorial Scholarship: Meghan O’Toole  
John Merrett Scholarship in British Literature: Rachael Aderoju  
Nai-Tung Ting Scholarship: Kendrick Keller

**Current Undergraduate Students:**

Courtney Bender presented “Ill-Fated Spirit: Examining Cinthio’s Disdemona and Shakespeare’s Desdemona” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.  
Hannah Edwards presented “Walt Whitman’s Franklin Evans, Preserving Citizenship in Middle-Class Manhood” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.  
Kaylee Gundling presented “Now It’s My Turn” and “Exploitation and Revenge in I Spit on Your Grave” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.  
Angelique Herrera presented “Director’s Cut” and “What Are You?” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference and accepted a summer internship at Andy Frain Services in Chicago, IL.  
Kevin Titus, presented “Blade Runner: Cyberpunk, Identity, and Queerness” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.  
Brandon Williams presented “End Measured Mile” and “How the West Once Was: The Spatial Storytelling of Red Dead Redemption 2” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.
Current Graduate Students:


Rebecca Aderoju presented “Work of Fiction as Propaganda for an Idea, a Cause, or a Belief” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

Bonita Akinbo presented “Problematizing Identity Crisis in Migrant Africans in Diaspora in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference. She accepted an offer to enter the Ph.D. program in African and African Diaspora Studies, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.


Shannon Finneran presented “Glück’s Lyric: Language as Shared Action” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

Francesca Hamm presented “From Ultima to the In Between: Religion in Rudolfo Anaya’s Bless Me, Ultima” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

Kasandra Henshaw presented “Lyric Theory, Nursery Rhymes, and A.A. Milne,” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

Kendrick Keller presented “Heroes Never Die: Looter-Shooters and Death-free Narrative Coherence” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference. This winter, he led his writing group, Sallee 3 Productions, in the creation of a sketch comedy pilot, Bored of Education. The script was nominated for Best Comedy Program Script at the 57th annual National Undergraduate Student Electronic Media Competition, held by the National Broadcasting Society (NBS). This spring, he was chosen to present an original micro-play, “Another Maid In A Dress,” at WIU’s Bring Your Own Play Competition.

Meghan O’Toole presented “Don’t Waste Your Prayers, Saints Are Bad Listeners” and “Identity, Status, and Wealth in Conflict: The Secret History as an American Novel” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference. Her essay, “‘Yes I’m Gay, Yes I’m Homophobic’: Closetedness in The Goldfinch,” was accepted to the Midwest Conference of Literature, Language, and Media at Northern Illinois University.

Danielle Reagle presented “Affect Theory, Toxic Masculinity, and the Lyric” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.


Whitney Sullivan presented “Unmasking the Sailor: A Homeroetic View of Ishmael and Queequeg in Moby-Dick” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

Alex Weidenhamer presented “‘As Long as You’re Strong, You’re Right’: Masculinity as a Defense Mechanism in Down These Mean Streets” and “White Man’s Poison: Pesticides and Chemicals as a Symbol of Systemic Racism in Helena Maria Viramontes’ Under the Feet of Jesus” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

Vaneice Williams presented “Writing Your Own Destiny” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

Alumni:

Alex Ayers (M.A. 2015) accepted a position as the Assistant Director of Peer Learning and Tutoring Programs at Stanford University, Mountain View, CA.

Dakota Carlson (M.A. 2019) accepted a position as lecturer of English at Quincy University.

Cody Cunningham (M.A. 2016) accepted a position as Senior Managing Director, Marketing and Communications, at Bradford Allen in Chicago.

Zoë Detlaf (B.A. 2018) accepted a position at Books of Wonder in New York City.

Tiffany Dimmick (B.A. 2011) accepted a position as I.T. department Office Manager at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Peoria, IL.

Sheldon Gaskell (M.A. 2017) accepted a position as an Instructor of Rhetoric and Writing at University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.

Duncan Gingrich (B.A. 2016) accepted a position as the Deputy Circuit Clerk for Whiteside County, Sterling, IL.


Gale Grundstrom (B.A. 2020) accepted a teaching position at Stark County CUSD 100 Wyoming, IL.

Raquel Henry (B.A. 2016) accepted a position as an Adult Education Instructor at City Colleges of Chicago-Wilbur Wright College.

Kristyn Kasner (M.A. 2017) accepted a position as a Com-
commercial Associate Project Manager at PCI Pharma Services in Rockford, IL.

Max (Nicholas) Keil (B.A. 2017) was promoted to Senior Manager of Learning and Development at TMX Finance, Grapevine, TX.

Alex Lounsberry (B.A. 2020) accepted a teaching position at West Prairie High School, West Prairie, IL.

Erin Moore (M.A. 2006) accepted a position as the Head Librarian of Public Services at Palmer College of Chiropractic, Davenport, IA.

Nic Nusbaumer (M.A. 2019) taught writing at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay. He has accepted a fully-funded offer to the doctoral program in English at George Mason University.

Luke Phillipi (B.A. 2014) earned his M.A. in Counseling from the Denver Seminary, and he recently opened his own practice, Two Trees Counseling, in Westminster, CO.

Kristi Garcia Relaz (B.A. 2008) accepted a position as Regional Development Specialist at Lions Clubs International Foundation, Oak Park, IL.

Emily Riniker (B.A. 2007) works as a Supply Management Specialist at John Deere, in Dubuque, IA.

Heather Springer (née Hardwick) (B.A. 2012) accepted a position teaching English at Olathe South High School, Olathe, KS.

Jason Stalides (B.A. 2003) became the Director of the Trio Upward Bound program, designed to increase the success of low-income students in post-secondary education, at Carl Sandburg College, Galesburg, IL.

Klaira Strickland (M.A. 2018) accepted a position as Adjunct Professor at Tidewater Community College, Chesapeake, VA.

Bryce Swain (B.A. 2018) was accepted to M.A. programs in English at University of Illinois at Chicago, Loyola, and DePaul.

Luke Taylor (B.A. 2015) earned a B.A. in screenwriting from DePaul University. He is a co-founder of BBF Productions. His first feature film, Break, was released in May, and it is available to stream on Amazon.

Abigail Tichler (2015) accepted a position as Marketing and Project Specialist at Midwest Electronics Gaming, LLC, Bloomington/Normal, IL.

Anabel Torres (B.A. 2018) has been accepted to the Master of Library Sciences program at the University of Iowa.

Brittany Venzon (B.A. 2020) accepted a teaching position at Stark Country CUSD 100, Wyoming, IL

Gina Wilkerson (M.A. 2014) accepted a full-time faculty position teaching writing at Blackhawk Community College, Moline, IL.

Jared R. Worley (M.A. 2018) accepted a position as an Instructional Designer at Boeing, Imperial, MO.

Faculty:

Marjorie Allison presented “When Ghosts Won’t Stay Dead” at Modern Language Association Annual Conference in Chicago and “Rewriting Identity through Graphics: And Subverting Expectations While Doing It” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

David Banash presented “Alfred Hitchcock’s Psycho and the Cinematic Novels of Don DeLillo and Manuel Muñoz” at Michigan Technological University and “Practicing the Art of Reading” at Midwest State University, TX.

Rebekah Buchanan published “Zines, Art Activism and the Female Body: What We Learn from Riot Grrrls” in p/Articipate: Make Culture Active. She was a Fulbright Roving Scholar in Norway from August 2018–July 2019. Invited presentations included “Prison, School and Public Libraries in Norway” at the University of Illinois iSchool; “Climate Change Initiatives in Norway: Cassandra Project” at Urbana; “Norwegian Prison: Lessons in Humanity” at the Urbana-Champaign Bail Out Coalition Fundraiser; and “Riot Grrrl Zines,” at University of Salzburg.

Merrill Cole published “Shut Set” in Cutbank Literary Journal. He also took part in the 30/30 Project at Tupelo Press, where he published a poem a day in April and raised $930 for the press.

Roberta Di Carmine presented “New Perspectives on Aging: Or How Humor Contributes to Positive Portrayals of Aging in Italian Cinema” at the International Conference on Film Studies: (De)Constructive Narrative Identities at the London Center for Interdisciplinary Research; “Women’s Cinema in Italy” at the Rocky Mountain Modern Languages Association (RMMLA); and “Multifaceted Feminist Discourse on Gendered Representations in Women’s Cinema” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

Jose Fernandez presented “Transforming the Canon of Immigrant Literature through Social Mobility in Adichie’s Americanah” at the 33rd Annual Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS) Conference in Cincinnati.

Everett Hamner published “The Television is the Night Car”: A Conversation with Graeme Manson about Snowpiercer.” His review of Living in Technical Legality: Science Fiction

**Magdelyn Helwig** presented “Confronting Radical Exclusion in Radically Inclusive Dual Enrollment Programs” at the Council of Writing Program Administrators Annual Conference, Baltimore.

**Tim Helwig** published his book *Cross-Racial Class Protest in Antebellum American Literature* with the University of Massachusetts Press. He won the CAS Outstanding Faculty Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research Award. He has served as the Midwestern Regent for the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society, 2014–Present. He presented “‘These Wretched Beings’: Recuperating the Rural White Poor in *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* and Mary Pike’s *I’d May*,” at the EGO/ΣΤΔ regional conference.

**William Knox** presented “A Perhaps Immodest Proposal: Re-envisioning Honors Program Admissions” and “Not Finding (and Finding) Private Honors Support” at the Upper Midwest Honors Conference as well as “Re-imagining Sustainability Outcomes” at Environmentally Concerned Citizens, Macomb. He published “Sustainability and Situational Awareness” in the *McDonough County Voice*. He published his book, the *Encyclopedia of Journalists* with Rowman and Littlefield. His article “Sing Along with Hitch: Musically Marketing the Master of Suspense” appeared in *The Soundtrack Album: Listening to Media* (Routledge), and his article “Mr. Capra Goes to Mumbai: Class, Caste and Karma in Indian Remakes of Frank Capra’s Films” appeared in the *IJPC Journal*.


**Erika Wurth** published “Not Like Jesus but I am a Boy,” in *River Styx*. Her review essay “14 New and Upcoming Books By Native American Writers You’ll Love” was published by Buzzfeed. She participated in readings and workshops at Middlebury Breadloaf Writers Conference; *Tin House* Summer Workshop (fiction); *Kenyon Review* Writers Workshop Scholar (fiction); Central New Mexico Community College; Vermont College of Fine Arts; SOMOS (NM); California State University at Monterey Bay; Missouri State University; and the Moon City Reading Series (OH). At the Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) conference, she participated in “Savage Sunsets: A Memorial Tribute to Adrian C. Louis”; “Outsiders in Minority Fiction, When You’re Not From Where You’re Supposed to Be”; and “Indigenous Fiction: Intersections in the United States and Canada.” She read her work at “Native American Voices: A Reading from Recent Works in Native Letters,” AWP. She also read at Metro State University, Denver, and coordinated events with Utah State University, the Ute Nation, and Utah Book Festival.


**Dan Malachuk** presented “Post-Critique after the End of History” at *Fin de la critique littéraire? The End of Literary Criticism?*, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris; “Natural Rights and Science in American History” (co-authored with Alan M. Levine and presented in absentia) at the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C.; and “Settler Colonial Studies and *O Pioneers!*” at the Willa Cather Society, American Literature Association, Boston.

**Rich Ness** published his book, the *Encyclopedia of Journalists on Film* with Rowman and Littlefield. His article “Sing Along with Hitch: Musically Marketing the Master of Suspense” appeared in *The Soundtrack Album: Listening to Media* (Routledge), and his article “Mr. Capra Goes to Mumbai: Class,
In January the University Writing Center (UWC) added asynchronous (e-tutoring) appointments to complement its face-to-face and online (real-time) appointment options. Little did we know how crucial those alternative options would be in the coming weeks!

Starting March 16, we moved all Macomb and QC staff to the online and e-tutoring only schedule. Services were expanded to seven days a week, 14-15 hours a day. Our student consultants were amazing, volunteering to change their schedules so we could cover the expanded schedule. The UWC remained online (with reduced hours) through the summer and we had our busiest summer to date. Since spring break, UWC consultants have provided 370 online and e-tutoring appointments. We have also addressed many quick questions through our Grammar Hotline, Facebook Messaging, and scheduling online message center.

How are students adapting to online writing support?

Nursing major Yin Thi Thi Oo noted, “When I had a question, they replied immediately to my message and helped me. I had an online appointment with video call and I really liked it because it is like real life where I can ask questions.”

History major Joshlyn Lomax also shared, “I love the writing center because it has aided me in becoming a better writer,” she said. “In each appointment, the grammatical errors in my paper were not just fixed for me, but I was given an explanation on why the error I had made was wrong. Each time I write an essay, I remember the advice I was given so I do not make the same mistake twice.”

And how did our consultants adapt? Here’s what a few shared with me:

English MA student Meghan O’Toole: “My cats are keeping my company while I work! It can be hard to stay motivated and keep writing during this time, but I try to break up my day by task and make tons of lists to keep me on track. I also make sure to take plenty of short breaks to play Animal Crossing, read some of the book I’m reading for fun, bake something, work on my creative writing, or hang out with my cats!”

English MA student Rachael Aderoju: “The recent transition to alternative formats didn’t at first feel like a big change, but while trying to adjust my daily schedules I realized how much of a change it was. Adjusting to online appointments has not been so challenging for me, since we do this during normal school hours, except that I now have to do this every day for all my appointments. My usual technique for e-tutoring appointments is to write a couple of points I think my clients are referring to (since I can’t immediately hear from them to know what they mean) and write how each of those things can be adjusted. Although I sometimes feel I write long essays, I also like to get in conversations with my students through my feedback. However, I seldom feel the lack of motivation to work and study. Some days I feel energized, other days I feel extremely fed up with things. I try to get on Zoom meetings with families and friends on days when I feel like this. Overall, I still enjoy the freedom of working from my home space and not having to wait 10-15 minutes for a bus!”

Vocal performance MFA student Rachel Mason: “Here is a picture of my night shift setup and my assistant, Elmer, who only occasionally proves to help with productivity (but he’s cute, which helps with morale). My home ‘office’ has been makeshift and often bare-bones since the quarantine hit, as I don’t have many of the things I am used to having available when I am on campus. Sometimes it is hard to be productive in an environment where I usually relax, but I have found lots of time for research, personal writing, and trying new recipes! It helps to know that we are not alone in our situation, even in our isolation, and seeing this situation as a challenge to learn rather than a loss, even when it feels like one.”

The UWC will offer online-only services through December 2020. While we all hope to return to face-to-face hours in the spring, we are looking forward to another great semester of genuine collaboration and service in the virtual world this fall!
The Proust Questionnaire

with Alex Weidenhamer

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Happiness is such a transient idea to me, but the only constant, and perfect, form of happiness I can think of would be anywhere surrounded by my closest friends and loved ones.

Who is your favorite hero of fiction?

Oh gosh, between film, literature, and video games, I have so many! The first one that comes to mind though is Arthur Morgan from Red Dead Redemption 2. His character arc is one of the greatest I’ve ever seen, and he shows that, no matter what your past may be, people always have the chance to change.

What is it that you most dislike?

Oh, I’d have to say dishonesty and laziness; pickles are a close third.

Where would you like to live?

I love the Northeast United States, and I always imagined myself settling down in Massachusetts someday. However, I really wouldn’t mind living out of the country for a while to see what the world has to offer.

What is your current state of mind?

After graduating, I always wake up wondering, “What’s next?” I’m constantly searching for something new to challenge/better myself, and now, I feel just a tad restless.

What do you consider the most overrated virtue?

In all honesty, anything that can make someone a more self-actualized and compassionate person is great in my opinion, but if I had to choose, I’d say contentment. Though I think people should strive to find the good in their present circumstances, there is always room for improvement and ways to better yourself.

If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?

I would probably like to be some kind of animal, so I’ll go with a fox. I’ve always really liked their role as the cunning tricksters in various folktales around the world.

What do you most value in your friends?

Loyalty. I regard my closest friends as family, and they do the same for me, so it’s only natural that I place a high importance on it. True friendships, the ones that stand the test of time, are built upon an unwavering sense of loyalty to one another.

Which talent would you most like to have?

I’ve always wanted to be able to paint. As a kid, I was in love with landscapes, and I never truly understood how people could capture those moments of natural beauty so perfectly.

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

Honestly, I found out that when I teach, I say the phrase, “So, let me tell you a story…” before I go off on tangents. One of my students pointed it out a few semesters ago, and I realize now that I am slowly becoming my father.

What is your motto?

“This is the real secret of life — to be completely engaged with what you are doing in the here and now. And instead of calling it work, realize it is play.”

— Alan Watts

Alex Weidenhamer, M.A. 2020

The Mirror & the Lamp 19
We hope you enjoy the seventh print edition of *The Mirror & the Lamp*. The goal of our magazine is to bring together students, faculty, and alumni of Western Illinois University’s Department of English.

Please keep us informed of your recent activities and achievements. Email your news to our faculty adviser, Dr. David Banash: d-banash@wiu.edu.

You can also find more stories in our online edition at mirrorandthelamp.org.

*The Mirror & the Lamp* is a publication of the Phi Delta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at Western Illinois University

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*The Mirror & the Lamp*

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