

English Department Newsletter

Issue 2/ Fall 2024



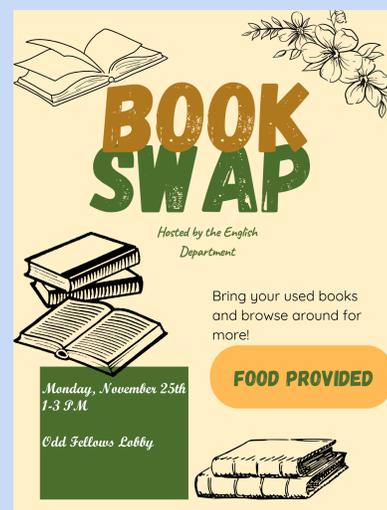
About the Newsletter

The Allegheny College English Department is excited to present the second edition of the English Department Newsletter. A new issue will be published every semester. Content will vary from one edition to the next, but each newsletter will feature Department News (including faculty, student, and alumni achievements and publications) and student writing. This edition also includes a Featured Course, Senior Project Spotlight, and an editorial. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this project.

Lauren Isaacs '22, selected to Aspiring Academics Program

This year, I have the privilege to complete the Aspiring Academics Program through the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP). The program emphasizes the pillars of pharmacy

academia that includes teaching, scholarship, service, and personal attributes. My initial interest in becoming a future academic was sparked at Allegheny when I began working as a writing and grammar consultant in 2019. It was a job that never felt like a job, and it helped open doors to future opportunities in academia. I am almost halfway through the Aspiring Academics Program, and I am learning a lot of helpful information that will help guide me in my professional future as a pharmacy practice educator.



Book Swap Event

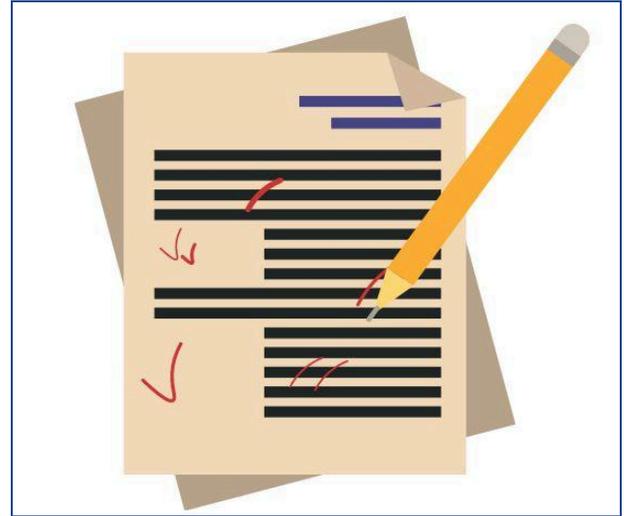
The English Department hosted a book swap event on Monday, November 25th in the Odd Fellows Lobby. Students and faculty brought their used books and passed them on to new owners, and also grabbed a few books for themselves. Leftover books will be collected and stored in Odd Fellows Hall and made available to anybody who wants them. Thanks to all who attended.

Why Study English?

I'll never forget the look of dismay that came across the face of the Navy ROTC Commanding Officer when I told him that I was switching my major from Engineering to English. "What good is that going to do you?" his face seemed to say. And while I knew that I was giving up my initial dream to become an astronaut, I also knew that earning a Bachelor's degree in English would be excellent training for my post-graduation role as a junior officer (JO). First of all, much of the work of a JO relies on effective oral and written communication. As I often tell my students, the best way I could support the sailors who worked for me was to write them successful award recommendations and to make the case for their promotions on their evaluations. Second of all, through my study of literature, I frequently encountered and had to think critically about depictions of people, voices, cultures, values, places, etc. much different than those I was familiar with. Through my intensive engagement with these texts, I enhanced my cognitive empathy, a key attribute for my role as a manager of people (as a twenty-three-year-old Ensign, I managed a "shop" of six disbursing clerks, all of whom identified as male, two of whom were non-citizen service members, and only one of whom identified as white) and as a representative of the United States in ports of call around the globe. In other words, like a majority of the 500+ Allegheny English major and minor alumni who responded to the department's 2022 survey, through my academic discipline, I developed an understanding and ability to empathize with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. When I resigned my commission after six years of active duty, I knew that I wanted to make a career out of helping other young people develop these qualities, too. I am privileged to do so here at Allegheny.

Dr. Alexis Hart is a professor of English at Allegheny College and the Director of Writing.

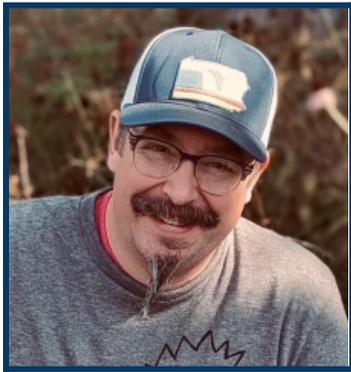
Featured Course



ENGL 118: Literature and the Mind: Artificial Intelligence

In Spring 2025, the English Department is introducing a new course taught by Professor Jennie Votava. This course will focus on the questions of how literature imagined artificial intelligence, both in the past and today, and why does it matter? How can generative AI tools boost our creativity when analyzing and writing about texts, and what are their limitations? By exploring these questions, those in the class will gain a deeper understanding of how literature, the human mind, and artificial intelligence interact, while also sharpening their skills as readers, writers, and thinkers.

Single Voice Readings



Matthew Ferrence

On September 5, Professor Matthew Ferrence gave a public reading from his newly released book of essays, *I hate it here, Please Vote for me*, as a part of the Single Voice Reading Series, organized by Professor Christopher Bakken. Matthew Ferrence teaches nonfiction and fiction writing at Allegheny College.



Angie Cruz

On October 24, Professor Angie Cruz gave a public reading from her 2019 novel, *Dominicana*. Angie Cruz is a professor and the Writing Program Director at the University of Pittsburgh. She is the Editor-in-Chief of *Aster(ix) Journal*.

Rooted in Resilience

I find myself kneeling in front of my
willow tree.

I thought she had perished
before I could stop the blades
from entering her bark. Yet,
here she stands terribly tall.

My memory of her was hazy,
but in finding her here—the
exact grassy nest she was nestled
in before—I hear laughter escape my
throat as the komorebi filters
gold onto the ground.

As I walk, I go in and out
of shadows; This is a dream
I do not intend to wake up from.

An abrupt gust of wind throws
me off balance, but she still stands,
unmoved. I find myself pacing around my
willow tree, wondering if she feels
confined to the roots pulling her down,
or feels protected by their confinement?

My trunk doesn't hold me upright
anymore, and I have already been
uprooted. But she stands tall
as my uterus sheds itself of pain.

A callus formation heals her wounds,
and my willow tree, we,
will be okay.

- Sarah Allison

Sarah Allison is a senior at Allegheny College. She is an English major with a Creative Writing focus and a Dance and Movement Studies and Journalism in the Public Interest Double Minor.

Senior Project Spotlight:

Exposure

My senior project, *Exposure*, is a novella that focuses on grief, family dynamics, and music. It is told in three perspectives, one of which is a therapist. The project began in my Writing for Screen class last semester, as a partial screenplay set in the 70s during the streaking phenomenon. (Yes, there is streaking involved in this story, but you will have to read it to find out more.) I hardly recognize the piece now, though. I set out to write a story with limited technology, instead focusing on honest face-to-face interactions, and I am so unbelievably proud of where it has come since its humble beginnings. Through several meetings with my advisor, Professor Holmes, I've been able to fine tune and expand where needed to create a story that is as realistic in its portrayal of relationships as possible, whether those relationships be between children and parents, between siblings, or between friends. I wrote the first draft of *Exposure* in the summer and have gone through several more drafts this semester. Every draft has been more and more of a cathartic experience. Seeing myself on the page, in so many words, is worth every moment I've cringed at the thought of other people reading this particular work. It is very intensely me.

Sofia Hassan is a senior at Allegheny College majoring in English Creative Writing and minoring in Middle East and North African Studies. This past summer she interned remotely with Harvey Klinger Literary Agency, and she was responsible for evaluating queries authors submitted to the agency. However, while she is passionate about publishing, she hopes to use the English skills she has cultivated over the years to teach English abroad. This semester she earned her TEFL certification through an online program. Her goal post-graduation is to combine her desire to travel the world with her love of helping others.

Faculty News

Professor Christopher Bakken's fourth book of poetry, *Driving the Beast*, is forthcoming from Louisiana State University Press in fall 2025. He recently published poems in [The Sewanee Review](#) and [The Common](#), and his long poem "[For the Dead Union](#)" (the composition of which involved research into the history of Meadville) appeared just before the 2024 election in *Plume*.

Professor Jennie Votava published her book, [Shakespeare's Histories on Screen: Adaptation, Race and Intersectionality](#), with Bloomsbury Publishing and has a forthcoming foreword to [William Shakespeare the Complete Works: The Histories](#) from Flame Tree Publishing.

Professor Matthew Ferrence has recently published a collection of essays entitled [Hate it Here, Please Vote For Me: Essays on Rural Political Decay](#) from WVU Press.

Professor John MacNeill Miller has recently published his book [The Ecological Plot: How Stories Gave Rise to a Science](#) from UVA Press, an essay on *Literary Hub* entitled "[The Forgotten Female Novelist Who Foresaw Ecology, Environmentalism, and Realist Fiction](#)", and an essay in *The Revelator* entitled "[Darwin the Storyteller](#)".

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