

# English Department Newsletter

Issue 1/ Spring 2024



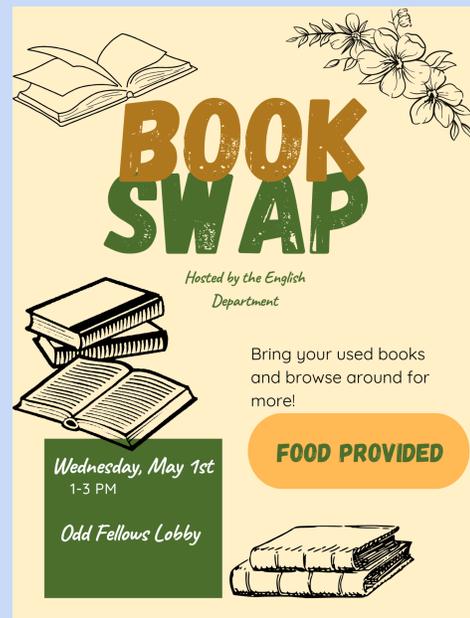
## Newsletter Launched

The Allegheny College English Department is excited to present the first 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. The inaugural edition also includes a Featured Course, Senior Project Spotlight, and an editorial. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this project.

## Dusty Elias Kirk Receives Connect CRE Award

Dusty Elias Kirk '75, co-founder of the Kirk and Caroselli Support Fund which offers financial support for Allegheny English students pursuing career-building opportunities, was recently recognized as a standout commercial real estate attorney by *Connect CRE*. Kirk received the award "for

her impact through her practice in real estate-related matters and her contributions to the legal industry and her community" (via reedsmith.com).



## Book Swap Event

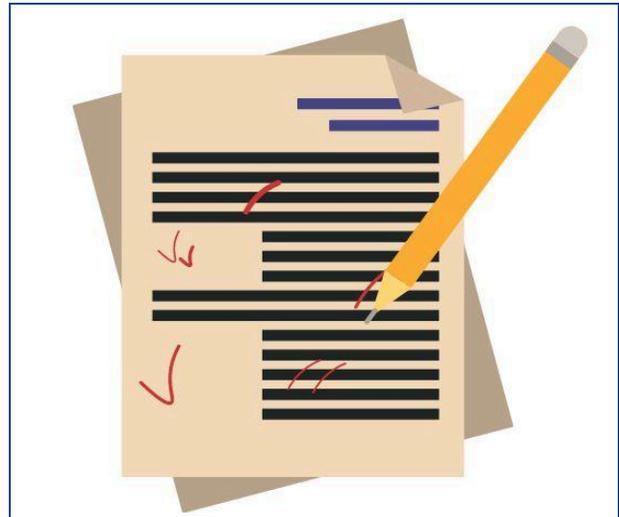
The English Department hosted a book swap event on Wednesday, May 1st in the Odd Fellows Lobby. Students and faculty brought their used books and passed them on to new owners, and also grabbed a few books for themselves. Leftover books will be collected and stored in Odd Fellows Hall and made available to anybody who wants them. Thanks to all who attended for celebrating literature with the English Department. We hope to hold a similar event next year!

## Why Study English?

As the humanities continue to decline, and English departments across the country see interest flounder, it becomes important for we literature lovers to voice our reasons for studying this once-esteemed subject. The question, *why study English?* can be split into two related questions: *why write?* and *why read?* As I recently learned in English 410, it is not immediately clear why a writer writes, and it is just as difficult to discern why readers read. The two branches of study within the Allegheny English department deal with these two questions independently. Creative Writing students try to find out why they write. Literature majors try to find out why they read, among other things. The easy answer to both questions is, *because I enjoy it*, but of course that only reframes the question to be, *why do you enjoy writing or reading?* If you enjoy reading or writing, one reason to study English is to find out why that is. Studying English is about finding meaning in reading and/or writing within a literary community. English departments are made up of people who have discovered meaning in literature, and their task is to help students discover meaning for themselves. Once meaning (or a meaning) has been found, the literary enterprise becomes personally fulfilling. Literature becomes valuable on its own. *Why study English?* Because it means *something* to you, and you need to find out what that is.

**Roderick Hochstetler** is a senior at Allegheny College, majoring in English with a Literature focus, and minoring in History and Classical Studies. After graduation, he plans to pursue a career in teaching.

## Featured Course



### ENGL 207: Editing and Publishing

In Fall 2024, the English Department is introducing a new course taught by Professor Alexis Hart. This course will focus on the principles of manuscript editing, editorial correspondence, and document design. Emphasis will be placed on rhetorical analysis and collaborating with authors as well as considering the ethical and social implications of editing and document design. Students will develop the skills required of an editor and document designer through hands-on experience. The course will also count toward a new Editing and Publishing microcredential. To complete this microcredential, students must take and complete ENGL 207, ENGL 208: Professional Communication **or** ENGL 504: Editorial Practicum: The Allegheny Review, and any 200-level creative writing workshop.

## Single Voice Readings



### *Lauren Holmes*

On February 27, Professor Lauren Holmes gave a public reading from her upcoming memoir as a part of the Single Voice Reading Series, organized by Professor Christopher Bakken. Lauren Holmes teaches fiction writing and screenwriting at Allegheny College.



### *Khaled Mattawa*

The second Single Voice Reading, originally scheduled for March 21, was unfortunately canceled due to Khaled Mattawa's unexpected illness. The English Department is hopeful that Mattawa will be able to come to campus and read from his poetry in the near future.

### *Parable of the Herd*

The shepherd tends the sheep  
until he dies, at which point the sheep  
pick a new shepherd from the village.  
They'll pick a boy, young, who doesn't know  
what tending means, but the sheep  
promise to teach him. The sheep always  
teach the shepherds, the sheep have no choice.  
The boy they pick has no choice either –  
this is the way things are done.

The sheep are wolves, of course.  
Everyone knows that story, how no one  
believes the boy when he wails for his parents,  
for the villagers to come and look  
at the sheep's sharp teeth.  
The sheep will kill the boy with those teeth  
they swear they don't have, and then  
they will howl down the hill for another shepherd.  
They are hungry. The sheep are always  
starving, really. There is prey in the hills,  
but boys from the valley are plentiful  
and so much more trusting.

And when the herd moves together,  
how easy it is to catch a child  
in the ruins of the pasture,  
The only challenge  
is how to clean the blood.

*Madeline Allen* is a senior at Allegheny College. She is an English major with a Creative Writing focus and an Education Studies minor. Upon graduation she will be pursuing an MFA in poetry. When not writing, she spends her time running or finding strange things in the creek.

## Senior Project Spotlight:

### Could AI Help us Grade Writing?

My senior project is about exploring the capability of creating a grading system for writing by utilizing Natural Language Processing (NLP). I am focusing on grading student reflections. NLP is doing this by analyzing what would be considered an ideal sentence according to a rubric I created, and comparing responses to this ideal sentence. The idea for the project came about after I discovered NLP and its capabilities and developed an interest in technical writing. NLP is part of the reason we have such capable AI applications today, so I figured that by using the same tools, I could create something that relates to both NLP and technical writing. The research process was honestly quite difficult because predictive scoring is carried out in a few different ways; finding literature related to automatic essay grading and technical writing essentials was much easier than finding an ideal way to implement a predictive scorer. Nonetheless, I was able to find information that led me to the development of my project; which I am thankful to have been able to explore.

**Michael Abraham** is a senior at Allegheny College. He is a double major in Computer Science and English. He is currently interning as a technical writer at Acutec. Michael describes his Quality Technical Writer Internship as being an "interesting and laborious experience." Michael tackled the company's Quality Management System (QMS) in order to ensure that manufacturing instructional guides and procedures properly conveyed the goals, necessities, and processes as well as reformatting procedures to establish uniformity across the QMS. By working with the Quality Director, John Vogan, Michael set a higher standard of documentation in the Quality department, ensuring that all other departments were able to work efficiently.

## Faculty News

**Professor Christopher Bakken** has recently published or has poems forthcoming in *The Southern Review* and *The Common*, as well as two anthologies: *Braving the Body* (forthcoming from Small Harbor Publishing) and *Unnatural Disasters*, an anthology of scary stories and poems from the library of Orion Magazine. In February, he served as an external reviewer of the Professional and Creative Writing Program at Goucher College.

**Professor Jennie Votava** has recently published an article in the *Shakespeare Bulletin* entitled "'Nothing will come of nothing': King Lear and the Paradoxical Debasement of Whiteness in HBO's *Succession*," as well as a book entitled *Shakespeare's Histories on Screen: Adaptation, Race and Intersectionality*, with publisher, *Arden Shakespeare*.

**Professor Soledad Caballero** has recently published an essay entitled "Ghost Time" in *The Hopkins Review* as well as two poems and an essay in *Poetry Northwest*, with more publications forthcoming.

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### Contributions by

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Michael Abraham  
Roderick Hochstetler

### Edited by

Roderick Hochstetler