



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY  
Department of English

Winter 2024 Newsletter  
Volume 1, Issue 2

# STUDENT BEAT





# STUDENT BEAT

## About Us

*Student Beat is the semiannual newsletter to inform students about the English Department. From stories by students to student/teacher updates, Student Beat is the place to find everything about the Wayne State University Department of English!*

*Edited by Nyana Allen xBA '24.*

*Please email [ENGMSA@WAYNE.EDU](mailto:ENGMSA@WAYNE.EDU) with events and news items for our next issue.*

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## Follow us on ...



Wayne State University Department of English



@EnglishWSU

## Save the Date

April 26 - Departmental Student, Staff, and Faculty Ceremony

April 29 - Scholarship deadline

March 6, 20, April 2, 8, and 18 - Humanities Brown Bag Lunch events

## Fun Facts

- The English Department turns 70 this year!
- The Maccabees Building was erected in 1927 for an Insurance Company
- The Graduate Programs in English received 190 applications for Fall, 2024. That is a 400% increase over 2023!

# Letter from the Chair

Dr. Caroline Maun



I am delighted to welcome you to the Winter 2024 edition of *Student Beat*. I'm writing in my last semester as chair of the Department of English at Wayne State University. After six years of service in this role, I look forward to a great next chapter for our department. Our department strives to foster an environment that prioritizes academic excellence and champions our graduate students' personal and professional growth. I believe that the heart of our department's success lies in engaging our students in meaningful ways, supporting their journeys toward achievement, and nurturing a culture of collaboration that extends beyond the classroom into the wider community.

This semester, we have seen remarkable examples of student engagement and success. From the Graduate Research Symposium, where our students showcased their research (in addition to our article on Chloe Leavings and Lena Hakim, please also note this wonderful article in [Today@Wayne on graduate student Chloe Leavings' research on rhetoric and Black women's maternal health outcomes](#)), to the notable achievements of individuals within our community, such as M.A. alumna Kinyel Friday, whose accomplishments as the Operations Manager at 826Michigan and as an author and publisher underscore the talent within our department and the supportive framework that allows such talent to flourish.

Collaboration and connection with the community remain central to our department's and the university's mission. Initiatives like the launch of the *Rushton Journal of Undergraduate Humanities Research* and our active involvement as faculty and students in the Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies and the Humanities Center exemplify our commitment to extending our reach and impact. Through these endeavors and partnerships, we aim to foster dialogues that bridge our department with the broader university, academia, and community.

In nurturing a positive environment, we strive to create a space where creativity, diversity, and inclusivity are encouraged and celebrated. It is within this environment that our students, faculty, and alumni can genuinely thrive, contributing to a vibrant department that stands out for its excellence and community engagement.

Let's continue supporting each other, celebrating our achievements, and looking forward to the exciting opportunities ahead. Together, we are not just an academic department but a community that significantly impacts the world around us.

# Graduate Research Symposium

## PhD Students Lena Hakim and Chloe Leavings present at GRS 24

February 28 marked the in-person return of the Graduate Research Symposium at the Student Center. The showcase is a unique opportunity to see the research being conducted at Wayne State through poster presentations, platform talks, and the lauded Three-Minute Thesis Competition. Third-year PhD student Lena Hakim presented “Empowering Student Writers Through Application of the Hawawati Tradition in Writing Curriculum” and second-year PhD student Chloe Leavings presented “Talkin’ About Mama: Identity Safety Cues in Obstetric Settings to Reduce Black Maternal Mortality Rates.”



Chloe Leavings reflected on the event: “My research centers using identity-safety cues in obstetric settings to decrease the Black maternal mortality rate. The Graduate Research Symposium was my first time ever presenting my research at an in-person event (except class), so I was able to articulate my research to scholars from various disciplines and highlight an important health crisis from a rhetorical point of view and receive positive feedback and resources for further research.”

Lena Hakim commented, “I’ve done a fair amount of conferencing over the last couple of years but as expected, it’s often with those already familiar with my discipline and the importance of teaching students clear writing skills. What I appreciated about the GRS is that I got to discuss my research and the importance of teaching writing with people from various disciplines that I rarely get to speak to, such as people from the medical school, and we got to have great conversations regarding just how important the writing field is for basically every discipline!”

# Student Spotlight – Jimmy Flowers

by Nyana Allen xBA '24

[Click here to read the entire interview on our English Dept spotlight page](#)



## Revamping a dream with AGRADE: An interview with Jimmy Showers

Meet Jimmy Showers, a long-time Detroit, guitarist, and Wayne State senior. Jimmy found himself with a decision to make after his band's tour was cancelled due to Covid-19. He needed to plan what to do next, and he decided school was the best option. He enrolled at Oakland Community College to begin his journey, but he was unsure exactly what that would be.



After his time at OCC, Jimmy decided to transfer to Wayne State in 2023. The choice to major in English was simple: After taking a creative writing course and reading short stories by Tobias Wolff, he became obsessed with writing. "It really made me obsessed with how the author made writing emotional and the process behind writing and creating stories." Jimmy is a member of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences AGRADE program. The AGRADE program allows outstanding undergraduate seniors to enroll in undergraduate and graduate classes simultaneously, with a goal to earn a Master's degree in an accelerated time. Jimmy learned about the program from Royanne Smith, the Department of English undergraduate advisor. AGRADE has helped Jimmy become a better writer and use the skills he is developing. He has done grant writing for Wayne State and credits AGRADE for helping him consider unique ways to use his degree. Jimmy expects to graduate with his Bachelor of Arts in English in May 2024 and has applied for the Master's program for Fall 2024.

# Alumna Spotlight – Kinyel Friday

by Jeffrey Amato xMA '24

Click here to read the entire interview  
on our English Dept spotlight page



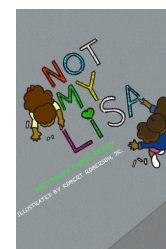
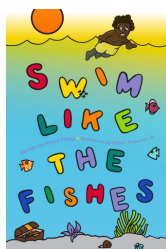
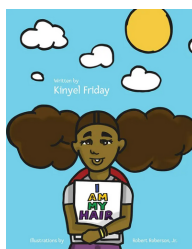
Kinyel Friday BA, MSW, MA '14 is a published author who earned an MA in English with a concentration in creative writing. Currently, she is utilizing her skills and experience to inspire today's youth as the operations manager at 826Michigan, a nonprofit organization focused on helping the language and literacy skills of Southeast Michigan school-aged students through creative writing. Her love for English and writing led to the creation of her children's books and the development of her publishing company, KinYori Books.

Kinyel entered the MA program after working for several years as a middle school social worker. She held workshops on self-esteem for girls and realized that if she, "could catch children as they're younger and teach them, 'You are beautiful; you are fine just the way you are,' then [she would] feel like [she] would be successful as a writer."

Kinyel has just finished a novel, which actually started as a short story during her undergraduate years. She expanded the story into a collection that evolved into her Master's thesis with the guidance of Dr. Caroline Maun. "What is interesting is this is not a traditional novel. This is eight short stories put together that use the same characters and the same timeline." A perfect example of how scholarship inspires future work, she hopes to publish the novel within a year.

Kinyel has "a ton of writing that still hasn't been published ... but I know that I'm not finished!"

Kinyel Friday is the author of I Am My Hair (2020), Swim Like the Fishes (2021), Not My Lisa (2022), I Feel You (2022), Night-Night, Nina (2024), and the short story Troubled Minds (2021), all published by KinYori Books.



## Notable Events

# THE RUSHTON JOURNAL LAUNCH EVENT

February 29, 2024, Humanities Commons



The English Department celebrated the launch of the newly-developed Rushton Journal of Undergraduate Research. The event featured many prominent speakers, including Acting Provost Laurie M. Lauzon Clabo, Professor Linda Beale, Humanities Center Director Jaime Goodrich, CLAS Dean Steffi Hartwell, and President Kimberly Espy. Members of the Rushton - Harvey family were on hand to honor the inspiration for the endowment fund they created in memory of Edmund and Norma C. Rushton. The journal will be a showplace for intelligent and compelling humanities arguments of interest to the University community and greater Detroit, and is lead by Assoc. Professor of Teaching Joe Torok.

Three outstanding submissions were chosen to receive special recognition: English major Adeline Navarro was awarded the Best Essay Prize for her piece titled, "Double Consciousness, Mirrors, and the Children Within Them: A Conceptual Reading of W. E. B. Du Bois's 'As the Crow Flies.'" Honorable mentions went to Art History major Jackson Gifford for his work, "Jennifer Packer's Unique Employment of Color: How the Artist Uses Hue to Mystify and Politicize Simultaneously" and History major Marco Cardamone for "Determining Jury Impartiality in the Malice Green Murder Cases". Senior Ashley Joranstad read a excerpt from the Rushton Journal.



## Notable Events

### GRADUATE WORKSHOP



**Friday, February 16, 2024, 9405 Maccabees**

Dr. Jonathan Flatley held a workshop for all English graduate students to discuss Academic Job Interviews. He covered what to expect during the interview process and tips for what to do before, during, and after an interview. He also described some of the most common interview questions and ran mock interviews. PhD student Grace Williams commented, “Dr. Flatley helped demystify the academic job interview by directing [us] to be well-prepared to discuss [our] research and teaching and by letting [us] know that the individuals on hiring committees are just tired and busy people looking for a colleague.”

### HUMANITIES BROWN BAG LUNCH SERIES

**Friday, February 16, 2024, F/AB 2339**

The Humanities Center hosted Philosophy Dr. Layla Saatchi PhD '21 to discuss “Epistemic Fragility and Color-Blind Reasoning” for its first Brown Bag Colloquium of the year. Dr. Saatchi is also an instructor in the Honors College. The series aims to be a catalyst for interdisciplinary conversations and fellowship among WSU scholars at all stages of their careers.



## Notable Events



# CENTER FOR GENDER AND SEXUALITY OPENS

**January 2024**

The Wayne State Board of Governors approved the creation of the Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies, directed by Associate Professor Simone Chess. CGS is a resource hub to support research, teaching, and community programming relevant to anyone studying how gender and sexuality play a role in their life, work, and world. The Center supports the generative overlaps between intellectual, academic, political, social, and community approaches. Further, the Center will be a research hub for scholars from across Wayne State's schools and colleges and aid in the recruitment and retention of leading researchers in feminist, queer, and trans studies. The Center recently expanded to include Jin Gwak (they/them) as ASO and Student Engagement Coordinator and is planning a permanent home in the Student Center.

On February 27, 2024, the Center held an event from the Dr. Thomas Klein Gender and Sexuality Speaker Series featuring Northwestern Univ. Prof. Sarah Schulman, an activist and historian who shared material from her recently published oral history, *Let the Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP, New York, 1987-1993*. This ongoing free series is open to the public and will reach virtual audiences all over the world.

# HUMANITIES CENTER CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

**Friday, February 2, 2024, MacGregor Conference Center**

The Humanities Center celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a symposium on "Why Humanities Matter." The event featured panel discussions "The Humanities as Survival" and "Connecting People with Stories: The Humanities in the College History Classroom," and a roundtable conversation on "What the Humanities Do." The day closed with keynote speaker Stephen Best delivering "...At Risk." Walter Edwards, founding director of the Humanities Center said, "We were honored that the President of the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes chose to deliver the keynote address. Brilliant faculty from Wayne State gave papers that demonstrate the value of the humanities. I am very proud of our accomplishments."

# Student Milestones

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**Melanie Zynel** successfully defended “A Tedious and Comfortless Uniformity of Time: Narratives of Aging in the Long Eighteenth Century” on February 15, 2024. Congratulations Dr. Zynel!

**Corey Hamilton** successfully defended “Attendance and Absence of the Laity: Acknowledging the Rhetoric of an American Protestant Megachurch” on February 16, 2024. Congratulations Dr. Hamilton!

**Christopher Susak** successfully defended “Remixing Community Cartographies: Mapping Community Engagement, New Media, and the Composition Classroom” on February 29, 2024. Congratulations Dr. Susak!

**Colleen Hart** is planning to defend “Evidence of Empathy in Rhetoric and Composition Studies: Tracing Empathy in the Writing Classroom, Discipline, and Beyond” on March 20, 2024.

**Allen Ford** is planning to defend “Literature Unbound: Black Carceral Consciousness from 1965 – 1975” on March 20, 2024.

**Chloe Leavings**, xPhD '26 presented “Talkin’ Bout Mama: Identity Safety Cues in Obstetric Settings to Reduce Black Maternal Mortality Rates” and **Lena Hakim**, xPhD '27 presented “Empowering Student Writers through Application of the Hakawati Tradition in Curriculum” at the Graduate Research Symposium on February 28, 2024.

**Jimmy Showers**, xBA '24 and **Polly Talison**, xBA '24 were admitted into the AGRADE program in English. This accelerated degree program allows outstanding undergraduate students to earn graduate credits towards a MA in English while completing their BA.

# Consider classes for Spring/Summer 2024

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## Undergraduate:

### ENG 3140: American Literature after 1865

- Take a literary journey through the centuries as well as contemporary topics of discussion. The class takes an intersectional approach to gender, sexuality, race, and class through writers such as Henry James, Angela Flournoy, Thornton Wilder, and more. Led by Katie Martelle, the class is synchronous, Tues & Thurs 10:30 am. Not available for Graduate credit.

### ENG/GSW 5035: Topics in Gender and Sexuality: Complex Bodies: Power Privilege, and Pleasure

- This upper-level course is a study of the works of Angela Carter, Toni Cade Bambara, Kimberlé Crenshaw and more. Attention to critical theory as well as various literary and cultural forms are the basis for this course. Led by Katie Martelle, the class is synchronous, Tues & Thurs 6:30 pm. Not available for Graduate credit.
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## Graduate:

### ENG 5730: English Grammar

- Embark on a comprehensive analysis of English sentence structure and parts of speech using the terminology and descriptive approach of traditional grammar. Led by Steven Pobutsky, the class meets in person, Tuesdays & Thursdays at 5:30 pm. Open to juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

### ENG 5785 & 5850: Scholarly Writing for Graduate Students

- These classes place an emphasis on learning and executing written genres common to research and presentation activities in graduate school. One class is intended for non-native English speakers. Led by Jule Thomas, both classes meet online.

### ENG 8998: Prospectus and Dissertation Chapter Workshop

- Stay on track this summer with the support of this 2-credit course led by Dr. Jonathan Flatley. Synchronous, Mondays 6:00 pm. Email [l.butcher@wayne.edu](mailto:l.butcher@wayne.edu) for an override code.