

# The Word

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a newsletter from the english  
program at messiah university



## Craft: The Podcast

By Nate Castellitto



Podcasts. They're what we listen to now. Chances are, if you don't listen to one yourself, you've heard of them. Statista estimates that 82 million (57%) Americans listen to podcasts on a monthly basis. The rate is expected to rise to over 100 million listeners by 2024, too. Though the podcast might seem like just another digital fad, it has, by now, become a well-respected medium.

For those unfamiliar with the genre, podcasts are a series of audio files which follow some sort of logical thread. The most common series feature at least one host and various guests from episode to episode. There are theatrical podcasts, in which a host might be the excited narrator of a fiction piece, and interview podcasts, where often a

Howard Stern-style radio segment is present (sometimes minus the brazen provocation). Conversational podcasts spotlight discussions on a given subject, and monologue podcasts are published by anyone ranging from news outlets (the more self-aware, i.e. Trevor Noah, reign) to film critics. Most podcast series fit into one of these categories, but are not bound by them.

The first "official" podcasts circulated in the early 2000s, and by 2017 journalists and rhetoric scholars began to notice a migration. They argued that the first person stories which have long been found in literary journals--personal essays--are increasingly appearing in podcasts. These more recent iterations of the essay both employ anecdotal story-telling and a strong first person emphasis. The foundational element unique to the podcast is a sense of "ultra-confessionalism" (coined by The New Yorker's Jia Tolentino). This comes from the most obvious difference between written essays and podcasts: the literal introduction of the speaker's voice.

Avid podcast-listeners might have heard the name Joe Rogan before. A UFC color commentator and comedian, he is better known for *The Joe Rogan Experience*, the popular podcast he hosts. The podcast makes for a rich case study, as it boasts an audience upward of 10 million listeners per episode, and has hosted celebrities and professionals from a wide range of fields.

Past guests include astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, entrepreneur Elon Musk, and computer intelligence consultant Edward Snowden. DeGrasse Tyson and Musk are no strangers to the limelight. DeGrasse Tyson has hosted a podcast of his own for 11 seasons. Snowden, on the other hand, came from a more precarious position when he recorded his episode with Rogan.

Following his leak of classified information from the National Security Agency (NSA) in 2013, Snowden was engulfed in a controversy that has since altered his professional career. Snowden's decision continued to be a topic of political debate six years later (2019), when the Joe Rogan Experience episode he appeared on was released. As a result of these factors, Dr. Rodriguez,

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Assistant Professor of English at Messiah, said “a journalist would have never gotten that interview.” Following the publishing of his book, *Permanent Record*, in 2019, Snowden fully transitioned into earning his income from public speaking events. Consequently, a traditional sit-down interview looking to shed light on the 2013 NSA Leak was not appealing to him. Snowden wouldn’t have had creative control over which information to make public in such a venue. Perhaps owing to a combination of both *The Joe Rogan Experience*’s conversational atmosphere and interpersonal merits, Rogan was able to secure the podcast’s usual three hours-long episode with Snowden that year. The episode received much attention, and has garnered more than 23 million listens to date.

This example highlights a strength of podcasts, and possibly explains why so many people are listening to them in 2021. Since many of the most popular are conversational in nature, they, according to Dr. Rodriguez, “incorporate personality and intimacy.” The conversational approach and single-topic focus has much in common with academic writing. An eloquence of expression is present in many successful podcasts as well. In writing a podcast episode, however, the incorporation of original audio gives the audience an access to the speaker which eclipses even that of the personal essay. It might be why Snowden was willing to participate in Rogan’s podcast: he was able to show listeners where, as the adage goes, he was coming from.

In comparison to other media, the advantages which podcasts present for consumers are many. Both younger people and adults appreciate being able to tune into an episode as they go about their day. Much like an audiobook, listeners can simply press play and continue what they were doing beforehand. Unlike audiobooks, however, most podcasts are free. The accessibility of podcasts, in addition to their personality, play a large part in why so many people listen to them on a regular basis. It’s not difficult to do so.

Podcast composition, meanwhile, differs from creator to creator, but most creators carefully plan and write out each episode. This type of writing, although much different from traditional and less personal forms, engages in many of the same principles.

Sierra Leonean poet and podcaster Saidu Tejan-Thomas has always written from deeply personal experiences. Tejan-Thomas was first a writer of poems that challenge readers to think critically about racism and misogyny. After graduating college in 2015, he discovered he could talk about the social and civil injustices he had been writing about in a totally new medium: podcasts. “I was like ‘That’s the work I’ve been doing in poetry. Let me just try and learn to do that,’” Tejan-Thomas said of the moment he decided to do podcasting to Reggie Ugwu of *The New York Times*.

Tejan-Thomas began his podcasting career at NPR, where he produced an episode for *Code Switch*, then moved over to Gimlet to work on *Uncivil*, *Mogul*, and *Conviction*. Once he mastered his podcasting skills, he started his own, *Resistance*, late in 2020, shortly after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin’s murder of George Floyd.

Self-described as a “show about refusing to accept things as they are,” the podcast tells the stories of the individuals fighting for Black lives in the U.S. socio-political arenas.

While writing each episode of the podcast, the show’s audience is something that Tejan-Thomas pays close attention to. “I’ll write something a million times until I’ve found the rhythm or the words that feel like me. I want the black and brown people listening to feel like, ‘Yeah, that’s somebody I know,’ or, ‘That’s somebody I grew up with.’ I want them to know that this is for them, so that they’ll be open to what we’re saying and have access to these stories,” he said.

Compelling rhetoric often invites a widened space for listeners to really understand the speaker and his or her relationship to the subject of conversation. Rooted firmly in both the fields of rhetoric and composition, podcasts require just as much attention to writing practices as traditional writing forms. “Podcasters are contemporary writers,” Dr. Rodriguez added. “[Podcasts] teach the same writing conventions as essays.”

Interested students can get involved with podcasting here at Messiah. The Pulse Media Hub, located in the Larsen Student Union, has the necessary resources for podcast production. The student-led organization offers up their studio, equipment, and experience to students interested in starting their own podcast.

For listeners, we’ve included a list of favorites from students and faculty around the English program. An enriching lineup begins with *On Being* with American journalist and author Krista Tippett (who is slated to deliver a highly anticipated keynote address next semester at Messiah’s Humanities Symposium), *Poetry Unbound* with Irish poet Pádraig Ó Tuama, and *Resistance* with Saidu Tejan-Thomas. Podcasts can be found via Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Audible, and countless other platforms.

## Recommendations and Favorites

*On Being* w/ Krista Tippett  
*Resistance* w/ Saidu Tejan-Thomas  
*Keeping a Notebook* w/ Nina Lacour  
*Poetry Unbound* w/ Pádraig Ó Tuama  
*Literary Friction* w/ Carrie Plitt and Octavia Bright  
*Crazy Stupid Fangirls* w/ Elle Mills and Michelle Platt  
*The History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* w/ Peter Adamson  
*The Wildman and Steve Show* w/ Pastor Wildman and Steve Perkins  
*Louder Than a Riot* w/ Rodney Carmichael and Sidney Madden  
*In The Dark* from APM Reports  
*Radiolab* from WNYC Studios  
*Invisibilia* from NPR



# Semester Abroad

**Elora  
Kemper**

**Oxford  
University**



“It is easy to develop a plan and write checklists, especially when preparing to study abroad in a place you always dreamed of going. However, once I arrived in Oxford, those same plans and checklists burned away, and their ashes floated skywards on the updraft. Studying abroad is not making me a different person; it is pointing me towards the things I love. Living in Oxford makes me realize where I belong: in a library from the 17th century, amongst trees even older, and roaming weather-beaten cemeteries. My passions, interests, and desires did not dissipate; they rooted deeper within me because of the rich history that I cannot help but trip over every other step. Reading and writing about Shakespeare and Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* every week stretches me academically, but the conversations with peers and educators are irreplaceable.

That is not to say that this term has been easy. I will have written over 24,000 words by November 30th, which involves many late nights and inconsistent eating practices, and my feet were rubbed raw in the first couple weeks of walking everywhere. I still would not change a single thing about these past two months. And please do not bonk me over the head with a frying pan, because that is the only way I would ever forget it.”

# Senior Seminar: Research Spotlight



## Fiona Agnew

“The central question in my project asks how teachers can and should ethically teach Fyodor Dostoevsky’s novel *Crime and Punishment* in order to enhance ethical understanding. In my research, I am seeking to define and explore the importance of ethics in literature, as well as what it means to ethically read a text. In bringing these concepts into conversation with *Crime and Punishment*, my analysis of the text will identify questions, critical engagement, and close reading in order to fully demonstrate and define the process of ethical reading, as well as what students can learn from the text in terms of ethics.”

## Rebecca Wenger

“Writing is hard. Teaching the art and discipline of writing well is even harder. When Professor Janae Lapp introduced me to the Neighborhood Map Writing Tool I had to investigate it, to put it on trial, to see if it deserves the status of evidence-based practice or if it was merely a strategy that seemed like a good idea. Shocked at the lack of research, my role has become that of an experimental advocate. I have researched, used the annotated map strategy with 8th graders, and used it myself to write. This writing tool has the potential to incorporate other tried and true pedagogical concepts including: bridging the home-school culture/values gap, teaching the whole student, discussing topics relevant to students, visual mapping of ideas, drawing on prior knowledge, celebrating our roots, and recognizing the impact of geography on our stories and lives.”

## Josh Murray

“Edward Albee, one of the most famous playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd movement, argues that ‘the health of a nation... can be determined by the art it demands.’ The Theatre of the Absurd takes on its own, unique form, which cannot be defined by ‘traditional’ conventions of theatre. This style offers playwrights the opportunity to ask questions of the human condition, existence, and death in ways that other, more conventional styles of theatre, cannot. Though there are many absurdist plays, two that are frequently referenced due to their importance in the movement are *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, by Tom Stoppard. The unconventional nature of these two plays allows audiences to discuss questions of existence and death in a far more candid manner. Understanding the power of these two plays allows us to better understand the condition of not only our nation, but of humanity at large.”



# SIGMA TAU DELTA

## Induction Ceremony

Sigma Tau Delta, the international English Honor Society, inducted seven new members at Messiah in October. Alpha Upsilon, the local chapter, recognizes English students for their academic performance, leadership, and service. Membership awards eligibility to contribute to two publications, *The Rectangle* and *The Sigma Tau Delta Review*, and various prize and scholarship opportunities. The Fall 2021 members inducted were:



Congratulations, Sigma Tau Delta - Alpha Upsilon inductees, on your hard work.

## The Performer: Practicing Before a Cello Solo

BY ABIGAIL WERTZ

That Thursday, like every Thursday, John was sitting in the practice room with William standing over him. His fingertips were throbbing, and when he pulled them off the strings, the purpling indentations remained. They'd fade eventually, but he couldn't give them the chance to for another four hours, not until he'd perfected the piece. White powder dusted the fingers on his bow hand, and his fingers were still clawed around the frog. He couldn't seem to unclench his hand. When he tried, the bow clattered to the floor, smacking the stand on the way down with a hollow clang. The noise pulsed in the tight confines of the practice room and he cringed, not wanting to meet his mentor's gaze. William said nothing. When John gathered his wits enough to look up, the man wasn't even looking at him. Instead, his gaze was fixed on some far off point, on somewhere outside the crushing white walls of the room. A few seconds passed, and William cleared his throat, snapping back into the room.

"Again" he sniffed, a strange light still flickering behind his eyes. John picked up his bow and began at measure one.

His fingers ached. His head was starting to buzz, the melody bouncing around in his skull.

"Again" he said.

His muscles had stopped shooting with sparks of pain. Instead, there was a dull burning sensation, like he'd spent too much time in the cold and frostbite was starting to creep in.

"Again"

It no longer sounded like music. It was just noise pulled out from his hands and droning through his ears. He couldn't feel his hands anymore. With a sick sense of thrill, he realized he couldn't feel anything at all.



### *Author's Note*

*I wanted to explore how far someone was willing to go to pursue their passion, and if there comes a limit to how much they can give up before it's no longer worth it. I wanted to use a cellist to showcase this because of my own relationship with music. I'm working on building up the motivations of my characters and how that dictates their interactions with each other.*



# New Beginnings

BY GRACIE HAMMAN

I think back to the day my parents picked us up from the CPS office. This was supposed to be the day that everything got better. This was supposed to be the day that my life became normal again. But it wasn't. Instead, this moment was just a single stretch of pavement on this gravel road my life has been. Instead, this day led to many more years of abuse. Abuse that leaves only scars that never go away. Nobody would have guessed on that day that allowing us back into their care would be so detrimental. We sat at the table with them while the social worker finished our paperwork. Together we made a happy play-doh family. A pretty, colorful, perfect play-doh family.

Suddenly, I feel a sense of confidence in my next steps. I know exactly how I'm going to present this to John this time so that maybe he'll understand. I pull out my phone and send him a quick text: "Come to my room, and bring some play-doh with you."

"Did you bring it?" I'm sitting on my bed as John cautiously walks into my room, looking at me like I have three heads.

"Yeah, it's right here." He holds up the play-doh. "Now what are we doing with it?" I wave him over to my desk and move away the stack of textbooks.

"I want you to use the play-doh to build something that's important to you. Build something you really want. Something that inspires you to get through each day." I have an idea of what he might build, and my suspicions are confirmed when he starts piecing together tiny people. One by one I start pulling them apart. Not completely apart. I take an arm from one, a leg from another, maybe take the head off one.

"Woah woah woah! What do you think you're doing?? That's my future family!" His nose flares and he glares in my direction, sending darts right through me.



## Author's Note

*This short story was for my Fiction Workshop class. I want to further establish character development, particularly in the main character Ricky, but also a little bit more in his brother John. As this is a story about emotional growth, I want to create clearer transitions from their rejection to their acceptance of receiving therapy.*

# A Season for Grace

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR  
DR. KERRY HASLER-BROOKS



*"The thing about  
grace is that you  
don't deserve it.  
You can't earn it.  
You can only  
accept it. Or not."*

*Kimi Cunningham Grant*

On a late-night drive home from our Thanksgiving celebrations in Indiana, I read *These Silent Woods* by English alumni and novelist Kimi Cunningham Grant. I read quickly and voraciously, finishing the book in one sitting as the kids and the dog slept fitfully in the back seat and my husband hinted about taking a break from driving, but more than once I asked for a few more minutes until, done, I finished the last page.

Grant's novel is a literary thriller rich with subtle suspense, character-driven plot twists, and the layered, life-filled descriptions of place I have come to anticipate in her writing. This is the story of the relationship between a father and daughter who live nearly off the grid, in a remote wilderness, surrounded by mystery, secrecy, and lies. As I closed the book, however, it became clear that this is the story of the complex relationship many people have with themselves. It is a story of seeing oneself clearly, of accepting grace when given, and of reaching toward a forgiveness that can be the hardest one to give, forgiveness of oneself.

As a novelist, Grant writes in the spirit of her beloved poets: Walt Whitman, Mary Oliver, and the apostle John, all of whom she quotes or references in the book. Like a lyrical architect, she builds, word-by-word, a suspenseful, thrilling study of that most frightening and most miraculous thing: grace. "The thing about grace," writes Grant, "is that you don't deserve it. You can't earn it. You can only accept it. Or not."



## Book Group

The English program will be hosting a spring book group for any interested students, staff, or faculty.

We will be discussing *These Silent Woods* on Wednesday, **March 16**, 7-8:30 pm.

Pick up a copy of Grant's book and join us!

More information is forthcoming.



# Poet & Writers Series



In November, the Language, Literature, and Writing Department hosted its latest installment of its “Poets and Writers Series.” Poet Adrienne Su came to campus to visit with English classes and put on a night of poetry. Su is the author of five poetry collections, including her two latest, *Living Quarters* and *Peach State*, which she read to students on November 7. Students of Dr. Roth’s “Introduction to Poetry” and “Contemporary Poetry” classes had the chance to read the former together earlier in the semester. After reading and talking about her favorites from each, Su took questions from students and signed their books.

On January 25, award-winning poet and Messiah alumna Alexis Jackson will be on campus for a series of events on the theme “Poetry as Reconciliation.” Jackson will run workshops for creative students and the broader Messiah community and give a reading and artist talk from her forthcoming publication and Kore-prize winning book, *My Sister's Country*.



# Publishing Opportunities

## **Literary Undergraduate Research in English (LURE) Journal**

“Joining only a few journals in the nation dedicated to publishing scholarly work by undergraduate students, LURE promotes scholarship in literature, critical theory, film, and cultural studies. The journal has published papers by students from other Georgia schools, schools in other states, and even other countries. LURE currently accepts submissions from all undergraduates from any accredited institution.” Volume 12 submissions are due January 7, 2022.

<https://lurejournal.com/submit/>

## **American Short(er) Fiction Prize**

“The prize recognizes extraordinary short fiction under 1,000 words. The first-place winner will receive a \$1,000 prize and publication. Previous winners of the Short(er) Fiction Prize have gone on to be anthologized in places such as The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses. All entries will be considered for publication. Submit your entry online between November 24, 2021 – February 1, 2022.”

<https://americanshortfiction.org/submityourwork/the-shorter-fiction-prize>

## **Sleet Magazine**

“Sleet seeks the unexpected. Make us think. Our crew possesses a wide variety of tastes and styles, from classic to center to edge, but it is craft and passion that drive us. Sleet Magazine is currently open for submissions for our Spring 2022 edition. The submission window will close on January 15, 2022, at midnight.”

<https://www.sleetmagazine.com/pages/submissions.html>  
<https://www.sleetmagazine.com/pages/submissions.html>

## **The Cincinnati Review**

“We accept submissions for the print journal generally during three time periods: September, December, and May. Those reading periods will open on the first day of the month and close once we hit the submissions cap for that period... The Cincinnati Review welcomes submissions from writers at any point in their careers.”

<https://www.cincinnatiareview.com/submission-guidelines-2021-2/>

# Internship Opportunities

## **Walden, NY**

“Plough Internships offer a combined experience of publishing and community. Are you interested in learning the details of publishing, improving your writing and editing skills, while living in community?”

[https://https://www.plough.com/en/about-us/plough-internship?utm\\_source=Plough+-+English&](https://https://www.plough.com/en/about-us/plough-internship?utm_source=Plough+-+English&)

[utm\\_campaign=6e42fb2876-Professors\\_2021-11-17&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4cbb94afa4-6e42fb2876-297127777](https://www.usajobcentral.com/job/intern-technical-writer-summer-2022-in-harrisburg-pennsylvania/5836-139873843402?utm_campaign=6e42fb2876-Professors_2021-11-17&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4cbb94afa4-6e42fb2876-297127777)

## **Lumen Technical Writer Internship: Summer 2022 Harrisburg, PA (Remote)**

“Be a part of an internship program, driving human progress through technology. During a 10-week period our summer interns innovate and make an impact by transforming industries across the globe and changing the world one connection at a time. Our interns are presented with real business challenges and provide solutions that make a difference across all areas of the company, all while learning the skills needed to successfully navigate the modern workplace.”

[https://www.usajobcentral.com/job/intern-technical-writer-summer-2022-in-harrisburg-pennsylvania/5836-139873843402?utm\\_campaign=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_source=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_medium=organic](https://www.usajobcentral.com/job/intern-technical-writer-summer-2022-in-harrisburg-pennsylvania/5836-139873843402?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)

## **Writer/Journalist Internship Wilmington, DE (Remote)**

“The Borgen Project is an innovative, national campaign that is working to make poverty a focus of U.S. foreign policy. This is a 12-week, part-time, unpaid internship. However, if your availability is limited, you can work ahead and complete the program in fewer weeks. The selected candidate will be able to work from home and pick their own schedule, but must meet weekly deadlines. Articles submitted will appear on Borgen Magazine or The Borgen Project Blog.”

[https://https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/writer-journalist-internship-at-the-borgen-project-2826901133/?utm\\_campaign=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_source=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_medium=organic](https://https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/writer-journalist-internship-at-the-borgen-project-2826901133/?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)

## **Writers in Schools Internship: Fall 2022 Washington, DC**

“L“Writers in Schools (WinS) is PEN/Faulkner’s K–12 literary arts education and community outreach programming. WinS brings contemporary literature and living writers into under-resourced DC public schools, public charter schools, community organizations, and the DC Jail; donates books to low-income readers; administers an annual Youth Essay Contest; hosts in-class personal essay writing workshop residencies with professional writers; provides bilingual Spanish/English books and programming; and offers summer youth programming.”

eidos is a Fortune 500® information technology, engineering, and science solutions and services leader working to solve the world's toughest challenges in the defense, intelligence, civil, and health markets. The company's 43,000 employees support vital missions for government and commercial customers.” (Baltimore, MD)  
[https://getwork.com/details/7182f0ddcc634ec7e91e6302563c4bac?](https://getwork.com/details/7182f0ddcc634ec7e91e6302563c4bac?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)

[utm\\_campaign=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_source=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_medium=organic](https://getwork.com/details/7182f0ddcc634ec7e91e6302563c4bac?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)