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The Word

a newsletter from the english
program at messiah university

The Necessary Words

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR
DR. KERRY HASLER-BROOKS



*"I read them over
and over again with
unabated interest.
They gave tongue to
interesting thoughts
of my own soul,
which had
frequently flashed
through my mind,
and died away for
want of utterance."*

Frederick Douglass

I have spent much of my fall semester with the words of Frederick Douglass. Together with the students in my courses I have read and reread Douglass' first autobiography *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, a book I have taught to high school and college students throughout my 15-year teaching career and a book I recommend almost more than any other as vital reading. Every time I come across a used copy of Douglass's *Narrative*, (as well as Wallace Stegner's novel *Crossing to Safety* and Nicole Krauss's *The History of Love*) I buy it, knowing I will hand it over to a student, friend, or family member soon.

As David Blight recently claimed in the recent American Democracy Lecture, Douglass is perhaps the single most important "prose-poet" of American democracy. He was a philosopher and a prophet who "read and then wrote" his way to the remaking of a just American life. In *The Narrative*, Douglass describes a collection of abolitionist speeches to emphasize the role of reading - and later writing - in his physical and ideological freedom-making: "I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance." Douglass, that prophet of freedom, needed the words of others. He needed others to help give voice to the ideas that would so dramatically help reshape American life. Just as he read certain words "over and over again," I now reread his over and over; I think about them, I think with them, I think through them.

As you look to the second half of the semester, may your craft be filled with the necessary words of those who have come before.

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NEW BEGINNINGS

Department of Language, Literature and Writing (LLW)

By Nate Castellitto

Creative thinkers. Engaged speakers. Perceptive readers. Responsible writers. The newly-formed Department of Language, Literature, and Writing (LLW) welcomes all students of Chinese, French, Spanish, German and English studies. Beginning this semester, the previously separate Departments of Modern Languages and English are joined under one umbrella.

The move, made this summer, may come as a surprise to some. Students might have noticed that we're closer now—literally. All English professors' offices have been relocated to the first floor of Boyer across the hall from the Modern Language offices.

The merger is also made with the intent to grow closer in other ways. Shared event planning will be more accessible and instructors can more easily draw on the strengths of their colleagues to inform their own teaching.

LLW Chair Dr. Kerry Hasler-Brooks said, "The new Language, Literature, and Writing Department draws on the shared commitments of all our programs to train students for creative thought, clear communication, engaged discussion, perceptive reading and responsible writing in the world. Faculty and students in Chinese, English, Spanish, and French know that language significantly shapes our identities, deepens our interactions with others and enables us to change the world as people of Christian faith."

The overlap between the various disciplines of LLW is noticeable in the classroom. Similar to that of each English degree, Modern Language classes emphasize a focus on political, social and cultural histories of the people affiliated with each language.

"There is a natural relationship between both areas. We [both] seek to help students gain fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication. In both areas, students gain knowledge about literature and culture but, more importantly, learn to make connections with other disciplines and the world beyond our campus. At the core, we support the mission of the university to educate young people to acquire a deep and compassionate understanding of others," Spanish professor Dr. Robalino said.

While the merger is primarily at an organizational level (students' course lists and program titles will not change), it seeks to create new opportunities for fostering deep learning and disciplinary understanding, and in the process, more frequent collaboration between the various areas of study. Chinese, French, Spanish, German and English studies were already parallel. Now they're under one roof.

"Personally, I am excited for the collaboration across our disciplines and the potential for that collaboration to invigorate our work and our programs with new creative possibilities," Dr. Kerry Hasler-Brooks remarked.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND
DIRECTOR OF FIRST-YEAR COURSES



DANNY RODRIGUEZ

AN INTERVIEW WITH NATE CASTELLITTO

Messiah University hired Dr. Danny Rodriguez this past spring ahead of the 2021–2022 academic year. An Assistant Professor of English and the Director of First-Year Courses, Dr. Rodriguez earned his Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition at Texas Christian University and his B.A. and M.A. in English at the University of Texas at Arlington. Currently, Dr. Rodriguez is teaching a First-Year Seminar titled “The Rhetoric of the New Testament.” In the upcoming spring, he will teach “The Rhetoric of Professionalization,” “Created and Called for Community,” and “College Writing Workshop.” I had the privilege of speaking with Dr. Rodriguez in early September (parts of the interview have been edited for clarity).

Nate: What brought you to Messiah?

Dr. Rodriguez: Well, the job market for higher education was a little interesting last year because of COVID-19. I’ve always been interested in teaching at a Christian institution, so it was the Christian dynamic that pulled me toward Messiah University. While I looked at the [LLW] Department, particularly the English program, I felt like I could add a rhetoric and composition component to the program. I made sure I actually brought something to the institution.

N: What are you most excited for?

R: I’m most excited about the students. Undergrads vary from institution to institution, so I’m getting accustomed to the student body here. I would say that I am deeply interested in seeing how engaged students are with writing and reading. So far, my First-Year Seminar students have been great. That’s a plus. In terms of other things, I guess I’m also excited about being at a Christian institution where Christianity informs the entire model--more so just seeing what that actually looks like in terms of the day to day activities.

N: What is your favorite memory as an English student?

R: Now I feel old. As an undergrad, I would say for me, it was probably one time I got a paper back; it was a rough draft, and it was for an introduction to literary criticism. It was a 200-level course, and the professor was intimidating because she was an Ivy League graduate. I remember we had spoken in her office hours at one point about formatting block quotes. She told me how to correctly format them, and I made a mistake in the paper. I remember reading a comment she left [correcting the mistake and stating] in all capital letters: “I TOLD YOU THIS RULE ALREADY!!!” It was that one time as an undergraduate where I realized, in terms of higher education, that there’s this expectation that you do not only hear actual rules and conventions but you internalize them to ensure that you’re disseminating accurate information.

N: Who are your literary and rhetorical heroes?

R: In terms of rhetors, I would say Malcolm X. He’s probably, in my opinion, the best rhetor of the 21st century. I just think that he gets overlooked because of how controversial his rhetoric sometimes was to mainstream audiences. In terms of rhetorical critics, I would say, as of right now, Victor Villanueva, Carmen Kynard, Adam Banks, Elaine Richardson, and Richard Enos. In terms of literature, I have enjoyed the work of Robert Cormier, particularly *The Chocolate War*. I’m also a huge fan of Walter Dean Myers for his contributions to young adult literature.

N: In your opinion, what is the role of English in contemporary society?

R: Literature still informs the world, but in other ways. It seems to be about documentaries and the docuseries now. The film is the [new] novel. However, literature still impacts culture. In terms of rhetoric, we see it every day. For example, rhetoric about the coronavirus, how people interpret it, presidential rhetoric, and whatnot influence the decisions of people everyday. Even more so with social media. Every time someone tweets something or puts something out there, they create this rhetorical situation, and sometimes these responses produce good things and sometimes they produce bad things. But, I think, in terms of English studies as a whole, I think it's more impactful because of how books can become novels or how they can inform the foundation of a documentary or a docuseries. In terms of rhetoric, again, it's just not ever going away, I think, mostly because of technology and everybody having a social media platform where fact checking may or may not actually occur. I think writing has evolved. The podcast is the new essay. The essay is no longer the tradition of my generation or the generations before me. The younger generations determine what writing looks like now. Now, the podcast is the actual essay. It's a form of writing. I just think that writing has evolved and will continue to do so. Typically, English studies evolve with it as long as educators are aware of the evolution and embrace change.

Stop by Dr. Rodriguez's office in Boyer 166 to welcome Dr. Rodriguez to our department, ask questions about a class, or tap into his expertise in Rhetoric and Composition. Additionally, check out Dr. Rodriguez's Messiah University profile for information on his publications in the field.

WORK IN PROGRESS: STUDENT WRITERS

Stillness

BY ALEXA NICHOLAS, CLASS OF 2023

It is quiet and still.
The trees outside gently sway with the wind.
The sky remains dark even as the sun rises behind grey clouds of rain.
I feel safe within my dwelling,
Untouchable,
Watching the rain trickle down the window.

In the stillness of the morning,
My mind wanders into the unknown places of the day ahead.
Worries, fears, what-ifs.
I work hard to push them aside
I can think about those later.
For now, for this brief moment,
I rest in stillness.

Author's Note:

I think that the simplicity of this poem makes it pleasant to read and the imagery allows the reader to feel as though they are in this cozy spot inside watching the rain. However, I feel like with some revision and a bit more depth, this poem could become a more thought-provoking piece. I would like to add another stanza or two, and adjust some of the language to be more figurative as well as ambiguous.



A Prayer for My Generation

BY JULIA WITTEL, CLASS OF 2023

Oh God....

May we be a generation that hopes.

May we be writers who are thoughtful, compassionate, and sincere. May we be dreamers who never stop chasing the clouds.

May we be theologians always in wonder of greater things.

May we be peacemakers who live with conviction and grace.

May we be poets who beckon the world to see *anew*.

May we be artists who are attentive and honest and brave.

May we lay down our arms, so we can open them instead.

May we never be convinced that our way is the only one.

May we speak loud for the voices that get lost in the crowds.

May Justice be our destination and peace be our path.

May we behold our brokenness and embrace it as strength.

May our faith move mountains and part gaping seas.

May our songs arise as anthems and as cries.

May we be devoted to curiosity, never satisfied with what has been. May we be the first to listen and the last to judge.

May we give as though we have nothing to lose.

May we know that love is our greatest weapon.

May we have wisdom to tell the lies from the truth.

May we face the darkness knowing we have seen the greatest Light. May we be a generation that hopes.

The Author's Note

After spending months reflecting on the state of my generation, the word I couldn't escape was hope. When I sat down to write, what came out was a prayer. We are a generation that has seen tremendous loss. We have looked up into the face of giants and we have stood before idols commanding us to bow. Yet here we stand. What we have now are simply stories to tell - how we do this is entirely up to us. This prayer is a love letter to my generation. It is a vision of all I hope we become and a celebration of all that we've been.

ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



Bruce Walsh

Adjunct Professor of English

Courses you teach

Fiction Workshop
Introduction to World Literature
Literature and the Life of Faith

Your favorite book

Wow! The pressure of naming just ONE is getting to me so I'll throw out one for a few genres:

Novel: The Power and the Glory, by Graham Greene

Poetry: Why I Wake Early, by Mary Oliver

Theology/Philosophy: The Courage To Be, by Paul Tillich

Spirituality: Falling Upwards, by Richard Rohr

On writing: Bird by Bird, by Anne Lamott

To read with my son: Caps for Sale, by Esphyr Slobodkina,
The Sneetches, by Dr. Seuss, Dr. De Soto, by William Steig

Play: Lydie Breeze, by John Guare

If you could eat dinner with anyone who would it be and why?

1. Anthony Bourdain, clearly; he'd tell me where to go, what to eat; the food would change my life, and it'd all get comped

2. Frank Black (formerly Black Francis) of the Pixies
I desperately want to know what half those songs mean; the other half I'm pretty sure I'm the only one that gets it

3. Oprah

4. William Shakespeare
Likes a drink and an off-color joke

5. Former Phillies third baseman, Charile Hayes
I feel we are both underated by our profession and would truly understand each other.

NEW ADJUNCT FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



Danielle Hawley

Adjunct Professor of English

Courses you teach

Twentieth Century Women's Literature, Ministry and Leadership (FYS course), Created & Called for Community

Your favorite book

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri or any of her short story collections

If you could eat dinner with anyone who would it be and why?

I would love to eat dinner with Kate Baer, an up-and-coming poet whose work I admire. She captures the experience of motherhood so well in her first collection, What Kind of Woman.



Daniel Breen

Adjunct Professor of English

Courses you teach

ENGL 124: The Short Story.

Your favorite book

Anything by Louise Erdrich, anything by Alice Munro.

If you could eat dinner with anyone who would it be and why?

I would have dinner with my wife, Abigail, and our dog would be the waiter.

POETS AND WRITERS SERIES

When the news comes for you, as its bound to come,
you will know you've been swimming for years
toward the surface of this day, this day

when the news fills you up like a lung, like air
surprising the diver, who, having lived too long
in that slow, dreamlike buoyancy of the sea,

forgets how substanceless, griefless
the air can be, all that sunlight smashing
the black water to pieces. Some of you

will leave the sea behind, climb willingly
into the possible, feeling your legs,
shaking them out, first one and then the other,

and some of you will turn, return to the sea,
diving deeper this time, down past the reef
with its travesty of companionship,

deeper to where there is no light but the light
of dark swimmers, finning by without fear
or expectation, impossibly lit from within.



The Language, Literature and Writing Department collaborated with the Music Department to host a Faculty Recital and Reading on Tuesday, September 15th. The event featured readings of original and favorite poems of English professor Dr. Matthew Roth and scores played by Music Professor Kerry Harker-Roth on viola.

A part of the annual “Poets and Writers Series,” Dr. Roth and Professor Harker-Roth took turns presenting their crafts during the performance. They were joined by Denise Dillenbeck on violin, as well as Patrice Ewoldt on piano. A highlight from the evening was Dr. Roth’s reading of “The News,” published by the Roanoke Review and a part of his manuscript-in-progress.

More of Dr. Roth’s poetry can be found in his book, *Bird Silence*, published by Woodley Press, and in national journals such as *Verse*, *American Literary Review*, *Antioch Review*, and 32 poems.



Next up in the “Poets and Writers Series” is a night of poetry readings from poet Adrienne Su. Su is the author of five poetry collections, a fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts and a recipient of residencies at the Fine Arts Works Center and The Frost Place. A graduate of Radcliffe College of Harvard University and the University of Virginia, Su teaches at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. She will be reading from her work on Monday, November 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Summer Reading List

- Jonah Freil '24- *Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis
- Hannah Desko '23- *Carry On*, John Lewis
- Cam Wimberly '23- *Summer Sisters*, Judy Blume
- Gracie Hamman '23- *America*, E.R. Frank
- Molly Mckim '23- *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker
- Peyton Cassel '23- *1984*, George Orwell
- Alexa Nicholas '23- *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Delia Owens
- Julia Wittel '23- *Our Souls at Night*, Kent Haruf
- Dr. Hasler-Brooks - *Hamnet*, Maggie O'Farrell

To contribute to the newsletter, please
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Publishing Opportunities

New Plains Review

“The *New Plains Review* seeks quality creative works ranging from poetry and prose to plays/screenplays and music and short films. Established in 1986, *New Plains Review* is a student-run literary journal published in spring and fall through the University of Central Oklahoma’s New Plains Student Publishing. Keeping with the university’s goals of both excellence and diversity, it is our mission to share with our readers thought-provoking, quality work from a diverse number of authors and artists.”

<https://newplainsreview.submittable.com/submit>

The Allegheny Review

“*The Allegheny Review*, now entering its 39th year of publication, is one of America’s few nationwide literary magazines dedicated exclusively to undergraduate works of poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, and artwork. Published annually, the periodical showcases some of the best literature the nation’s undergraduates have to offer...The deadline to submit for the upcoming issue is October 15th, 2021.”

<https://alleghenyreview.wordpress.com/submissions/>

1890: A Journal of Undergraduate Research

“The purpose of *1890: A Journal of Undergraduate Research* is to provide undergraduate students the opportunity to demonstrate their interests and abilities in various disciplines by accepting works of research, creative writing, poetry, reviews, and art. New Plains Student Publishing uses *1890* to encourage, recognize, and reward intellectual and creative activity beyond the classroom by providing a forum that builds a cohesive academic community.”

<https://newplainsreview.com/1890-uco/>

Journal of Student Research

“*Journal of Student Research* (JSR) is an Academic, Multidisciplinary, and Faculty-reviewed Journal devoted to the rapid dissemination of current research published by high school, undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral student authors.” JSR has published authors from more than 300 schools around the world. Projects on all topics are welcomed, and students will receive feedback from the publication once their submissions are reviewed. The due date for Volume 11, Issue 1 submissions is November, 30, 2021 at 11:59 p.m.

<https://www.jofsr.org/index.php/path>

Silk Road Review

“*Silk Road Review: A Literary Crossroads* publishes vibrant, well-crafted fiction, nonfiction, essays, poetry, one-act plays, screenplays, graphic narratives, translations, first chapters, and artwork that explore human dynamics and social

transformations that occur in any story-rich location in the world.”The *Silk Road Review* invites submissions on a rolling basis.
<http://silkroad.pacificu.edu/submit.html>

Internship Opportunities

Volunteer: Writer / Journalist Internship

“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. 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.” (Philadelphia, PA)

https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/volunteer-writer-journalist-internship-at-the-borgen-project-2410527594/?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic

Magazine Writer Internship

“EDM World Magazine is actively looking for multiple intern writers to join our quickly growing company. You will get the opportunity to be published by the #1 EDM Magazine app in the world. This internship will provide you with real world writing experience. If you are serious about writing, have time to commit to the position, and are passionate about electronic dance music then please continue reading.” (New York, NY)

https://jobs.smartrecruiters.com/EDMWorldMagazine/743999742111034-magazine-writer-internship?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic

2022 West Wing Writers Winter/Spring Internship

“West Wing Writers is committed to a diverse and inclusive work environment. We strongly encourage members of historically underrepresented groups to apply, including people of color, women, LGBTQ+ individuals, gender-nonconforming people, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and multilingual individuals.” (Washington D.C.)

https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/2022-west-wing-writers-winter-spring-internship-at-west-wing-writers-2711441587/?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic

Technical Writer Internship

“Leidos 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)