

THE WORD

*a Newsletter from
the English program
at Messiah University*

December 2022 | Issue 8

FINDING COSMOS IN THE CHAOS

by Nate Castellitto ('23)

"A Christian writer--and reader--might only need to make sense of her subject to do right by her faith."

p. 03

Look Inside!

TEACHING DANGEROUSLY

by Jake Rice ('21)

"I read the humans in the room, and stepped into the unknown, all with the purpose of treating those young people the way they deserve to be treated."

p. 04

Writing on Campus: *The Peregrine Review* | Note from the Chair
Writers Talk | Internship Testimonials | December Graduates

INTO THE DEEP

by Olivia Bardo ('21)

"Being a student of English means approaching life with curiosity, tenderness, and tenacity"

p. 08

NEW ENGLISH FACULTY: DR. BROOKE DUNBAR- TREADWELL

by Nate Castellitto ('23)

This Fall, Messiah English was blessed to add Dr. Brooke Dunbar-Treadwell as a member of the program. Previously an adjunct professor teaching Communication and First-Year Courses, Dunbar-Treadwell is excited to have started working with English students specializing in Professional Writing instruction.

(continued p. 02)



Dunbar-Treadwell is a senior lecturer in English and Director of Writing and is teaching Writing for Social Change this semester. Her expertise is in digital rhetoric, bringing important, contemporary insights to related courses.

“I like to look at how we communicate online. A lot of the [research] I’ve done has been about connection and disconnection in digital rhetoric...[In] my dissertation, for example, I studied social communities and said, ‘Let’s look at the spaces where deeper connection is happening, where people are growing together as a people, where community is happening and where relationships are being built.’ I put those spaces side by side with the ones where people are cruel, toxic and unkind to each other and say ‘Well, what’s happening in this space...Using different types of language and messaging, how can we be more of a connected society and culture?’ That’s the kind of research I do,” Dunbar-Treadwell said.

Dunbar-Treadwell earned an MA in English from Northwestern State University and then her PhD in Communication at Regent University. She then returned to Messiah, where she was previously an undergraduate student. Now an accomplished scholar, Dunbar-Treadwell looks back fondly on her growth since her time as a Messiah student. Professors who spoke into that journey inspired her to do the same for future generations.

“Dr. Nance McCown is someone who I can point to as someone who just really challenged me in a loving way...I always said I wanted to do for students what Nance did for me, but I honestly didn’t think I would ever get into graduate school. The reason my [undergraduate] GPA was low was in part because of undiagnosed ADHD. When I find my students are walking through that, too, I encourage them to get help. You can’t just wish it away,” she shared.

“I like to look at how we communicate online. A lot of the [research] I’ve done has been about connection and disconnection in digital rhetoric...”

Since then, Dunbar-Treadwell has published a selection of journal articles and conference presentations. Professionally, she is drawn to the range of principles in still-developing communication platforms. Her upcoming book, *The Case for Connection in Online Spaces*, focuses on the topic.

“I think anonymity is really fascinating. I have a book coming out this spring...which is essentially offering both the case for where connections still exist, and also the case for why we should still seek [connections] when it’s the harder thing to do. It’s really easy to choose division or not to explore depths in our online interactions,” Dunbar-Treadwell said.

Similar types of study have pertinent significance today. The spaces where English and Communication intersect are equipped to help individuals on journeys of self-discovery.

“For example, so many individuals struggle to come out to people in their everyday lives. For some, being able to engage with who they are in online communities can help them do so in the real world because they’ve had that opportunity to do so anonymously, first,” Dunbar-Treadwell remarked.

Dunbar-Treadwell’s background presents excellent opportunities for Messiah students to familiarize themselves with the depths of the English program. She will teach Magazine Writing and Introduction to Professional Writing & Rhetoric in the spring.

“In their own ways, spiritual value surfaced in their work . . . A Christian writer - and reader - might only need to make sense of her subject to do right by her faith.”

Devotional: Finding Cosmos in the Chaos

By Nate Castellitto ('23)

A question we've considered in Prof. Ryan Rickrode's Literary Nonfiction is what it means to be a Christian writer. At the beginning of the semester, we examined writers of faith who explicitly discussed their faith, and then those who chose not to. In their own ways, spiritual value surfaced in their work.

Author Madeleine L'Engle describes one manner in which writers can reckon with their faith. In her memoir, *A Circle of Time*, she writes, "All real art, in its true sense, is a religious impulse; there is no such thing as a non-religious subject. But much bad or downright sacrilegious art depicts so-called religious subjects . . . Conversely, much great religious art has been written or painted or composed by people who thought they were atheists."

L'Engle's words sparked an insightful discussion. Whereas some writers will tackle topics of faith in their work head-on, there is just as much, if not more, spiritual value to be gleaned from "non-religious" pieces. The roles of Jesus-follower and language-practitioner should fall into perfect harmony.

Finding "cosmos in the chaos," as L'Engle puts it, is a good, worthwhile mission for any writer. The knowledge that we share a universal pursuit of meaning is a reminder of the significance in all good writing. Professor Rickrode encouraged us to let spirituality emerge organically in our work. A Christian writer--and reader--might only need to make sense of her subject to do right by her faith.

Teaching Dangerously

Alumni Reflection,
Jake Rice '21

ELA Teacher at South Western High School

After graduation day in May of 2021, adult life and responsibilities surfaced fast. Within the first year I: got married, bought a house, secured a teaching job, and most importantly, adopted two cats. In the span of 12 months I had gone from a schedule of eating, sleeping, and “schooling” every day to taking care of a house, growing in the covenant of marriage, and standing in front of 80 young people for 8 hours a day. I wouldn't have it any other way.

It is amazing what the Lord can teach us through change and how the experience as an English major has played a pivotal part in this new beginning. At Messiah, I studied to teach and inspire young people to learn and grow as individuals on their journey as readers and writers in the world we live in, for better or for worse. Now I am putting that knowledge into practice, and as many teachers know, gaining more knowledge every day.

As I began my life as an English teacher, I began reading literature on the topic of grades - what they propose to communicate and their adverse effects on the humans they are imposed upon. I read a number of books and reflections and came to a conclusion I would have never predicted: grades are noxious to student learning and motivation, and I don't want to use them. In short, I stopped using them. Points and letters have left my classroom, and I have found a sense of justice for my students that oftentimes evades teachers. Because this process is oft unheard of in a public high school, the challenges that come with “ungrading” are some that other veteran/experienced teachers have not had the pleasure of encountering. I have had to, as Ralph Ellison says, “play the game, but [not] believe in it,” and although difficult, I have witnessed the benefits every single day in the humans in front of me. For instance, I ask students frequently to give me feedback as their teacher as I am still learning how to tackle school without grades, and one student said, “I don't feel like a prisoner in here.” This, among others, is why I have taken grades off the table. Challenging? Yes. Messy? Yes. Always evolving? Yes. Purposeful? Absolutely.

I read the written word, read the humans in the room, and stepped into the unknown, all with the purpose of treating those young people the way they deserve to be treated. The process started by studying the dangerous art of creation as an English Major, and has grown into action, the action of “creating dangerously.”





Writing on Campus: *The Peregrine Review* Messiah's Literary Journal

by Nate Castelletto ('23)

Messiah's literary journal, *The Peregrine Review*, made its first call for submissions last month. Students from all academic disciplines are invited to submit poetry, prose and artwork (sketches, paintings, photography, etc.) to be considered for publication. *The Peregrine* is published annually during the spring semester.

Senior Molly McKim is serving her second year as Editor-in-Chief of *The Peregrine*. She sees the journal as a necessary space for undergraduate student artists and writers.

"It's really worthwhile and important for students to have a way to submit their work and have people be able to read a respected and well-known journal, even for our small university...Having a place for students, no matter where they're at with their work, is great...Students are able to be recognized for their work," McKim said.

The Peregrine had its beginnings in the 1990s. It was first published in 1990, supported by English professor Dr. William Jolliff. Jolliff has since moved to Oregon and teaches at George Fox University.

"He was a practicing poet. He was placing . . . at least a dozen poems every semester. He now has a couple of books out, but he was teaching poetry writing. I think it was when he saw the quality of the students' work, what they were producing; that was what sort of prompted [the idea]," Dr. Samuel Smith said.

"In its current form, *The Peregrine* is a digital journal housed in Murray Library's Mosaic platform. It didn't always carry its current title, however, and it was formerly produced in print form. "In the mid-nineties, it was called *The Minemingo*. It was actually run by the Student Government Association," Smith said.

Advised by Smith today, *The Peregrine* is now a staple of the English program. In addition to publication opportunities, *The Peregrine* presents students with the chance to gain editorship experience as well. Smith and McKim lead a team of student editors to assemble a cohesive, inclusive issue each spring.

"It's a good experience to learn more about the journal and magazine process, and what exactly goes into the whole thing. That entails designing, editing, [garnering] submissions, interacting with new students and being able to work alongside others," McKim said.

Submitting to a collegiate journal can be a pivotal first step for students wishing to write professionally. Some of the best-read writers, like Alice Walker, as well Messiah's own Alexis V. Jackson ('13) and Jordan Windholz ('05), were first published by college literary journals.

Spread the word: your work belongs in *The Peregrine*. Students and peers from all academic disciplines are encouraged to submit. Last year's edition can be accessed here.



Submit your work TODAY at peregrine@messiah.edu.

Waiting in Miracles

A Note from the Chair

BY DR. KERRY HASLER-BROOKS

This is a season of waiting.

Advent means coming or arrival. The waiting is hopeful and anticipatory. And the waiting is hard, overwhelming even for those of us living, learning, and working on a college campus. December can feel like a deluge of demands: papers, projects, and exams atop meetings, applications, and preparing for next semester. The demands can seem unrelenting and the end can seem ever far away. December - and not April, my dear Eliot - may be "the cruelest month."

And yet, December also brings gifts. It is a season of waiting for miracles and of waiting in the miracles, big and small. My son's violin concert and my daughter's Nutcracker performance. A paper rigorously argued and elegantly crafted. *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* and *The Swimmers*.

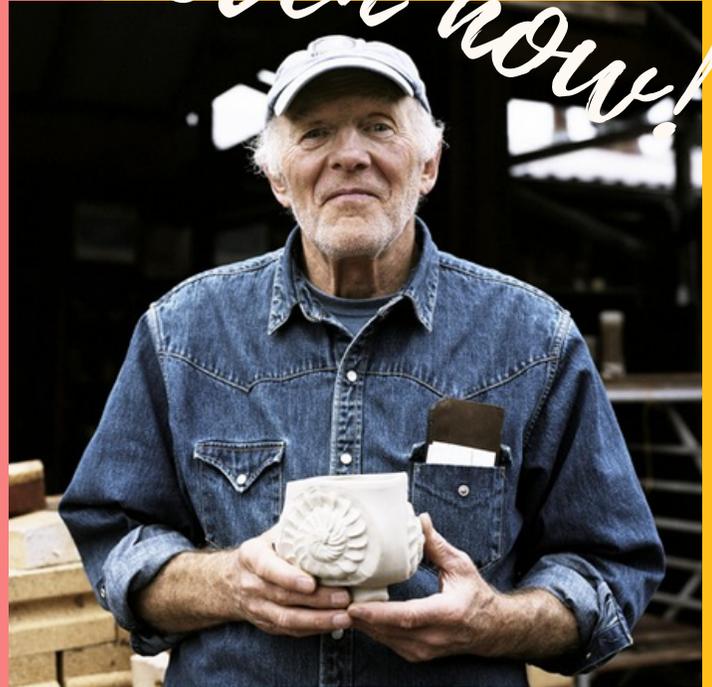
Gingerbread houses and Christmas trees. Rooms overfilled with the dearest faces and time to talk with new friends. Breath. Pause. Prayer. Brisk runs and chilly hikes.

December is a season of waiting, overworked and still ready for the miracles that really are all around us.

**"The true light
that gives light
to everyone was
coming into
the world."**

John 1:9

Listen now!



WRITER TALKS



Check out a new podcast from the Messiah University English program featuring student writers - and special guests - reading and discussing their original poetry and prose.

Recent Episodes

Episode 5:
Elizabeth Movinsky, "Title: Boxing Club"

Episode 4:
Jack Troy, "The Wind in the Jug"

Episode 3:
Abby Smoker, "gold-washed sky"

FINDING THE RIGHT INTERNSHIPS: MU ENGLISH TESTIMONIALS

Camryn Wimberly '23

**Communications and Policy Intern, Common Justice
Content Writer, African Americans on the Move Book Club**

“This summer, I worked as a Communications and Policy intern with a non-profit organization called Common Justice. Common Justice is dedicated to promoting restorative justice practices - as opposed to incarceration - for people who have committed violent crimes. I ran the organization's Twitter, as well as their blog and website. I was able to learn a lot about the injustices and flaws within our criminal legal system and my skills in writing were immensely helpful as I worked to share stories and advocate for people who are unfairly impacted.

I also interned as a Content Writer with an organization called African Americans on the Move Book Club (AAMBC). AAMBC is an organization that focuses on giving up-and-coming Black creatives a platform to promote their work. While working with AAMBC, I was given the opportunity to create a survival guide and workshop for creators, which offered tips and exercises to inspire their creative processes. I also wrote blog posts and newsletters and helped to plan a festival and awards ceremony called 'Black Writers Weekend.'

Both of my internships gave me the opportunity to step out of my comfort zone and learn new skills. Through these experiences, I was fortunate to grow in my ability to be more empathetic and creative, and to develop my skills in writing, communication, and advocacy



"I was fortunate to grow in my ability to be more empathetic and creative, and to develop my skills in writing, communication, and advocacy."



Adam Carter '25

Children's Ministry Intern, Calvary Baptist Church

This summer I had the privilege of working as a children's ministry intern at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem North Carolina. I worked directly with ministry leaders in the day-to-day needs of ministry. The internship allowed me to attack my work in creative and fun ways (often in a costume). The highlight of my internship was getting to write and perform the opening and closing rally skits at VBS. Through this summer I was able to see the versatility of my English major, which helped me create efficient and accessible emails, and a fun and engaging VBS skit!



After graduating from Messiah, I moved to Washington, D.C., where I participated in a year-long fellowship program with *Sojourners*, a faith-based social justice publication. Through the program, I lived in an intentional community and worked as an editorial assistant. In my role I wrote daily devotionals, sent newsletters, paid authors, fact-checked articles, and wrote my own pieces. I also learned the basics of SEO, audience engagement, and social media management.

I'm learning to be okay with not knowing what's next. I've always been such a big planner, and being out of college has really been the first time that I don't know exactly what's next. Growing up, I always knew I wanted to be a student of English, get good grades, and graduate with honors. But now I'm discovering all of the sweet things come with slow journeying onto the next thing. It's important to let yourself be surprised by all that comes with not knowing.

I spent my summer visiting new places: Ontario, Delaware, Florida, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Maine. The most meaningful experience for me was a bookish road trip to Massachusetts with my partner. We visited Walden Pond and Orchard House. While strolling through Boston Commons, we came across the *Make Way For Ducklings* statues, which were created as a tribute to my favorite children's book author, Robert McKloskey. I'm discovering that I thrive at a slower pace. When I was at Messiah, I was involved in several activities and projects, but I didn't know how to practice true self-care and to follow my body's instincts. So now, I'm teaching myself to follow more natural rhythms.

Since graduation, my understanding of what it means to be a student of English has expanded. It's easy when you're a student to get caught up in the grades, and not really remember what drew you to the major. I'm realizing that being a student of English means approaching life with curiosity, tenderness, and tenacity — to think critically about your place and purpose, and then act upon it. It's important to steep your identity in the things you are discovering about yourself *through* your studies, not in the grades you receive along the way.

For me, that began with reading. Since graduating I've been reading without an agenda, without an assignment in mind, and without intentions of annotating. I'm just reading. I'm catching up on the books that I've been wanting to read but didn't have time for in college. Some of my favorites include *The Memory Police*, *Whereabouts*, *The Night Circus*, *The Dutch House*, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, *Circe*, and *Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine*. I respond to the pulls in my heart by reading, writing, and creating. By engaging in and with words. Being a student of English can take you inward, outward, and beyond: to the mountains, out to sea, through the meadows and cityscapes. English isn't just a field of study, it is my beacon for the journey ahead. I'm gazing into the deep, on the watch for what's next.

"Being a student of English means approaching life with curiosity, tenderness, and tenacity — to think critically about your place and purpose, and then act upon it. It's important to steep your identity in the things you are discovering about yourself through your studies, not in the grades you receive along the way."

Congratulations DECEMBER GRADUATES



Camryn Wimberly



Hannah Desko



Maddie Miller

