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# THE WORD

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
AT MESSIAH UNIVERSITY

## A Conversation with Dr. Jean Corey

By Nate Castellitto, Class of 2023

After 26 years in higher education, including 14 at Messiah University, Dr. Jean Corey will retire from teaching this spring. Dr. Corey teaches courses in rhetoric, composition, and American literature in the English Department as well as various other courses across the University. In her time at Messiah, Dr. Corey also served as the English Department Chair, Director of the Writing Program, Director of the Center for Public Humanities, and Director of the Writing Center. Last month, I sat down with Dr. Corey for an interview celebrating her accomplished career. (*Parts of the interview have been edited for clarity.*)

### **Note: What are some of your favorite memories from your career?**

Dr. Corey: My favorite thing is watching my students, how they've taken the very conversations we've had in class, and really watching how they're living out their vocations and following that. To me, that's definitely the most gratifying thing. And, some of them are professors themselves. But not just as professors--watching how God has used their inclinations, their temperament, their passions, and their interests, and where that has led to. And, for the most part, so many of them are really making a difference in the world, and that seems like such a blessing to be part of. I love classes where I walk out and it's just been this incredible conversation and things have shifted for all of us.

### **N: What will you miss the most when you retire?**

C: I feel like I learn so much through my students. It's just a continual growing and learning and thinking. It's such a lively place to be for my mind and for my imagination. I'm very nervous about that, not having that exchange with students, that opportunity to have those kinds of engaged conversations that are pursuing a larger truth beyond our reach. I can't imagine where else that happens in the same way it does in the classroom.

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**N: You've directed and led a number of organizations at Messiah--the Center for Public Humanities, the Writing Center. Why are opportunities like these important for students to continue to access?**

C: I love the Center for Public Humanities because I think it creates this third space where none of us are operating out of a sense of 'we're going to be evaluated.' It's a third space where we can really ask questions and come together and collaborate in ways where people aren't worried about what their grade is going to be. And, we're connecting with community members, so it's knowledge-making with people who have all different kinds of knowledge, and to me, that's an exciting place to be. It's exciting to see what happens when we bring our collective interests and knowledges together. At the Center for Public Humanities, students are able to address real-world problems, and I love the fact that students can see how their disciplinary work connects to the issues they choose to address as follows.

**N: You're an accomplished academic. Which of your scholarly contributions or publications are you most proud of? Which are the most significant to you?**

C: One thing about starting late as a professor and one thing about having six children is you don't get to devote much time to write for publication, so I had to make my choices early on. I could have chosen to write more, but then I would not have done the Center for Public Humanities. It would have been a choice away from that or from something else. But, I will say most of the scholarly work I've done has been at the intersection of religion and literature. It's dealt with identity and writing, too. Two pieces I've published have to do with motherhood, religion, and race--all the things I'm interested in. This writing led to a lot of discovery. It was agonizing to write but transforming to write. The thing about motherhood, seriously, having six children was something I was kind of embarrassed about. Most academic women have one or two children, or none. There's a reason for that. This idea of motherhood and thinking of it as academic at all was important.

**N: What are your plans for the next few years?**

C: I'm open. There are a few things that I want to do. One thing is that I want to be a better neighbor. My mother did a lot of volunteering in service, and that was something when my kids were little and I was home that I did a lot of. I really thrive on that, I love that, and I hope that I am able to do that and other things I couldn't do before. I am on the board of the Sankofa African American Theatre Company, and I'm working with two other friends who are also on the board to create curriculum in a program that's outside of school. I think I will do all sorts of education in different spaces, too, but I don't know what that looks like yet.



Dr. Corey's presence, characterized by a teeming wealth of knowledge, transformational life experience, and spiritual meekness will be missed. I had the privilege of taking two classes with Dr. Corey this year: Writing for Social Change and Composition Theory & Pedagogy. In the former, the responsibilities my classmates and I took on challenged us to grow into our voices and roles in society as kingdom-oriented practitioners of the written word. In the latter, both future teachers and writers delved into the intricacies of composition and the vast theories surrounding it. Both courses elevated my own and surely others' understanding of our craft, as well as that of Messiah students who came before us. Few educators have had such a transformational impact on students. Thank you, Dr. Corey, for your service and contributions to both the English and Messiah communities.



## Zetta Elliott: 2020-2021 Poets and Writers Series

Last month, acclaimed author, poet, and playwright Zetta Elliott visited Messiah virtually as part of the English Department’s annual Poets and Writers Series. Elliott has won multiple awards, including the New Voices Award Honor for her first published book, *Bird*, and an Amazon Best Children’s Book of the Year selection for one of her more recent books, *Dragon in a Bag*.

On Tuesday, April 6th, Elliott delivered a lecture to Professor Perrin’s Introduction to Creative Writing class based on her poetry collection *Say Her Name*. Students learned about the concept of mentor poems from poems she had written herself in response to Lucille Clifton, Audre Lorde, and others. Students were then given the opportunity to write poems of their own modeling the mentor poems they brought to the lecture.

On Thursday, April 8th, Dr. Corey’s Composition Theory & Pedagogy class and students from Ms. Cabbagestalk’s Public Speaking class at Central Dauphin East High School participated in Elliott’s “The Power of Poetry Workshop.” Elliott prefaced the workshop by sharing her journey to becoming a published writer, which she admitted wasn’t easy as an immigrant in the U.S. Then, Elliott shared poems by Phillis Wheatley, Nikki Giovanni, and others, and noted the emotional and political substance within them. After compiling a list of words that came to mind when they thought of the U.S., students wrote poems from their word associations.

In the evening, Elliott held a formal reading from several of her books, including *Say Her Name*, *American Phoenix*, *New Daughters of Africa*, *Check the Rhyme*, *Stranger in the Family*, and *Show Us Your Papers* as well as new, unpublished poems. In a particularly powerful moment Elliott reflected on the experience of applying for U.S. citizenship described in the poem “American,” which ends with these words:

but I am american  
always have been  
and always will be  
I am also my father’s daughter so  
I know that even with ID  
They may still come for me and  
fling me back into the briar patch  
But my blood mingles old worlds, and new  
I skip like a stone between hemispheres  
and making trouble is an impulse  
I won’t deny

I am american  
after all

After the reading Elliott responded to questions about how collaborations with illustrators shape her writing, the range of emotions alive in Black writers and readers, and the duty of artists today to connect people to each other.

## from *The Park*: An excerpt from a Senior Seminar project

BY CHRISTINA LAMOREUX, CLASS OF 2021

Her hair was lighter than his, perhaps it was all the sunshine she embodied. Unlike her younger brother, who stayed in the shade so he would not burn. His black cain leaned against the park bench he sat on, the handle was made of healing crystals he got at a Shadowly's shop. The Shadowly told him the translucent blue crystal was cleansed with the Eternal Flame and would aid the aches of his leg injury. Whether it helped or not, he liked its smooth surface and color.

Ivy sprinted up to her brother, pulling him from his maladaptive daydream. She was sweating, the hem and knees of her trousers were grass stained.

"What world are you lost in today?" She said sitting beside him, placing her hands behind her head.

"You smell."

"All in the name of beating the boys from Oakwood at ball."

Ivy had long stopped asking if Cylas wanted to be friends with the students from Oakwood.

"Do you wish you had gone to school?" Cylas asked, not taking his gaze off the distance.

"Doubt I would've been any good at it. You might've if you didn't sulk about so much." She smacked him in the shoulder, he winced, pretending it hurt more than it had.

### *Author's Note:*

*I began this piece in Messiah's Fantasy Writing workshop my junior year and it is now my senior fiction project. Professor Whitehead, Professor Roth, and all my workshop peers really helped me bring this story to life. I hope one day they will see it in bookstores.*



# A Word on Creativity

by Nate Castellitto, Class of 2023

Creativity is a complex thing. It's found in any good work of literature, brilliant lecture, or feat of architecture. It is present in the arts and the humanities but also less obviously creative fields of knowledge. As an artist might see more stars in her night sky than anyone else does, a chemist might discover a new concept by approaching a substance from a unique angle. The truth is that everyone engages in some capacity of creative thinking.

But, what is creativity exactly? A Cambridge scholar might say, simply, that creativity is the imaginative formation of original or unusual ideas. In thinking about it this way, it is important then to distinguish how originality, or "unusualness," is achieved. Learners of various trades and younger creators often construe an original or unusual idea to be something entirely new from its beginning stages all the way through the final product. It's a noble pursuit to create from scratch. However, it is difficult and often a lofty goal to create this way all the time.

Consider the remarkable William Shakespeare, among the greatest playwrights ever. Shakespeare wrote at least 37 plays and collaborated on several others, enjoying financial success during his lifetime and centuries of critical praise since his death in 1616. What makes his work so great, however, is not that they follow original plots. In fact, only two of his plays--*Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Tempest*--incorporate original plots. Shakespeare's genius was in what he did with other writers' ideas. In morphing existing plots to create dramatically new stories, introducing his own ideas, and sprinkling critical reflection in cherished histories, he wrote plays without resemblance. Creativity often looks like this. It is usually inspired, at times quite heavily, but in inserting one's own insight and experiences into an idea, the creator achieves something no one else can.

There is also the challenge of process when thinking about creativity. Once inspiration strikes, there is work that must be done to bring the idea to fruition. What happens when the idea doesn't come right away, though? Or, what if the idea only comes in part initially? In *The Art of Thought*, British Psychologist Graham Wallas suggests there are four roughly defined stages that most creative processes share: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. Although inspiration tends to emerge in numerous ways, it is often from a combination of the first two stages - when the individual gathers material, gains insight, and steps away from the subject - that the elusive epiphany surfaces. This inspired thought or idea, Wallas calls "illumination." The final stage, "verification," is where the creator brings the idea to fruition, essentially producing or executing it.

Of course, Wallas's outline is not an authoritative one. The creative process in action is as indefinite as creativity itself. Depending on the field or work one operates in, the process might skip a step or integrate an additional one. In fact, Thomas Edison, who held over a thousand patents for his inventions, often repeated these steps numerous times before obtaining success, similar to the writing process of drafting, redrafting, revising, and editing. Trying over six thousand filaments in his lightbulb before it finally worked, Edison's notorious invention is a testament to the fact that much of creative work occurs not in thinking of ideas but in the determination and commitment required to materialize them. Consequently, verification is often not the end of the process but the beginning to a new approach within it.

In this context, creativity is much less a linear process than it is the jumbled mind map of a priceless manuscript. Creativity is a *fluid*, complex thing.

Creativity, surely, can be the formation of the words and ideas scattered about a manuscript. Creativity also has to be, then, the organization of those ideas into one cohesive entity: a single creative product.

On finishing a written story, short fiction and comic book author Neil Gaiman says “the process of doing your second draft is the process of making it look like you knew what you were doing all along.” Though speaking primarily of written work, Gaiman’s words can be applied, really, to any craft. Creators don’t always know what they are doing until they have finished. It is in this space, where initial pressure for completeness is taken away, that uninhibited innovation takes place. Creativity is and takes place during each step of the process. Creativity is the process itself: a moment in time, a conversation with things and people, and the product of an interminable effort.



## HONORS PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Last month, three senior English students presented their Honors Project Presentations. These students presented the culmination of their research and writing done over the past year on various topics related to the field of English.

On April 15th, Emma Spronk presented her project, “Ne Bena Maana Bɔ: A Story Will Come Out of Me.” Emma’s project pivots from the Bambara phrase used in her title in exploring the origins and inevitability of stories in human life.

Following Emma’s presentation, Olivia Bardo presented her project, “Into Each Tangled Path: Domesticity and Desire in Early 20th-Century Women’s Magazines.” In her project, Olivia investigates the multiple intersections between self-advocacy and poetry in early 20th-century women’s magazines.

Joel Pace wrapped up the Honors Project Presentations with his project, “Raising the Dead: Myths and Their Retellings,” on April 21st. Joel’s retellings ponder and reconstruct three myths in encouraging readers to consider the modern relevance of myths and legends.





*"I've been renewed by our moments of silence...I've been inspired by the clear-eyed words that have echoed off the page and into our rooms scattered all over the place. I've been in awe of your wisdom and your creativity and your vulnerability and your faith.*

*And your question. Oh, the questions."*

# A Season for Awe

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR  
DR. KERRY HASLER-BROOKS

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This year has asked much of all of us. I've worked 12, even 14, hour days too many times. I've started too many work days at 4:00 am, roused by worry or a long list of things to do. I've opened my inbox and found it too full with notifications and requests, too many things needing my immediate response.

And yet, I end this academic year more energized than tired, more restored than rundown, more in awe than overwhelmed.

As I look back over this year of distance, quarantine, injustice, and loss, the thing I see most clearly in this moment is your creativity, your survival, and your strength. It hasn't always been pretty. I've seen your tears, and I've shed my own. I've cried when I couldn't muster one more minute of work and when I couldn't read one more headline and when I couldn't hear about one more death. But through all of it, there you have been. In class. Over coffee. On the trails. On Zoom. I've been renewed by our moments of silence, the quiet that has held our common prayers and our common breaths. I've been inspired by the clear-eyed words that have echoed off the page and into our rooms scattered all over the place. I've been in awe of your wisdom and your creativity and your vulnerability and your faith.

And your questions. Oh, the questions. Inspired by the writing of Zitkala-Sa, Zora Neale Hurston, Sylvia Plath, Toni Morrison, and others, you've asked in earnest and in joy:

- How does love survive and how can it stumble when it faces the hatreds of the world?
- How can we hold together a healthy love of other, love of self, and love of God?
- How do we look unflinchingly at real suffering, and how do we insist on the promise of renewal and rebirth?
- Why do we read? How do we read? How do we read well, justly and ethically?
- Why do we write? How do we write in ways that bring beauty to the world?

I walked into this year nervous and unsure about how we would pull it off. I walked through this year renewed again and again, day after day, by your commitment to learn, to be transformed, to hold each other up, to live out the call of the Creator to do justice and love mercy. I walk out of this year with gratitude.

Peace to you.

# ENGLISH



# ALUMNI



Five recent alumni  
shared their  
**VOCATION  
STORIES**  
in English 202  
this spring.



# SPOT LIGHT

**Isabel Gonzalez** ('20, top center) just completed her first year in the Masters of Divinity program at Princeton Theological Seminary where she works with the Hispanic Theological Seminary.

**Sarah Becker** ('20, top right) works as a bilingual tutor and in migrant education through Pennsylvania Intermediate Units. She will begin her Masters of Science in Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon in the fall.

**Nate Gorkos** ('19, bottom center) works with the Denver Rescue Mission, a nonprofit organization that supports those experiencing homelessness and addiction.

**Elisabeth Ivey** ('18, middle left) is founder, writer, and copy editor at Ivey Editing Services. She also works as the Program Manager at the Center for Public Humanities at Messiah.

**Joel Johnson** ('17, middle right) works for the Native Seeds/Search organization in Tucson, AZ. He is founder and writer at Narratives of Place, which provides writing and editorial support for sustainability, agriculture, and environmental stewardship projects.



## MATT & KERRY ROTH



*A reading and recital featuring original poems and short works for solo viola from our own Messiah faculty.*

## ADRIENNE SU



*A poetry reading from *Peach State* (2021), the most recent collection from NEA Fellow and Pushcart Prize winner.*

2021-2022

# Poets and Writers Series

*Each year the English Department hosts a series of readings from remarkable poets and writers. Pick up a book by this summer by one of the poets who will be joining us on campus next year.*

## ALEXIS JACKSON



*A poetry reading from *My Sister's Country* (2021), the Kore Prize-winning debut collection from Messiah alumni ('13).*

## JOHN POCH



*A poetry reading from the author of *Texas* (2019) and *Fix Quartet* (2015). Generously supported by the Nisly Endowment. 10*

*What are  
your summer  
plans?*

"I am looking forward to working as a camp counselor, assisting in theater activities, and catching up on reading for fun."

--Josh Murray '22

"I will be going on vacation to Disney World with my family and my best friend."

--Serena McQuoid '24

"I'll be working as an intern with my county clerk, as well as taking some literature courses online. In between work and class, I'll be spending plenty of time on the beach!"

--Camryn Wimberly '23

"I'm hoping to read deeply, contemplate what I read and what my life is showing me, and perhaps to make some poems from this peripatetic habit."

--Prof. Perrin

"Hike. Bird. Canoe. Fish. Camp. Read. Write. Sleep."

--Dr. Smith

"I'm planning on traveling and working on my motorcycles and cars."

--Kristjan Urich '22

"I'm teaching English as a Second Language to international elementary students at the school I graduated from in Turkey."

--Rebecca Wenger '22

"I'm hoping to finally catch up on my sleep schedule as well as read some works I've always wanted to and reread some favorites, too."

--Rosey Jones '22

"I plan on working at Barnes & Noble and visiting new friends I've made during the semester."

--Hannah Sides '24

# Publishing Opportunities

## **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 publication invites submissions on a rolling basis.  
<http://silkroad.pacificu.edu/submit.html>

## **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 10, Issue 3 submissions has been extended to May 31, 2021 at 11:59 p.m.  
<https://www.jofsr.org/index.php/path>

## **Inquiries Journal**

“Inquiries Journal is an open-access academic journal that highlights the work of students at the undergraduate level and above. The journal publishes work across a range of academic disciplines with a particular focus on the social sciences, arts, and humanities.” Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis.  
<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com>

## **Sigma Tau Delta Journals**

“The Sigma Tau Delta journals (*Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle* and *Sigma Tau Delta Review*) publish annually the best writing and criticism of undergraduate and graduate active chapter members of the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society.” Sigma Tau journals are catalogued with the Library of Congress, and honors for best writing in each category (poetry, critical essay, short story, and creative nonfiction) are awarded. Submissions for 2022 journals are due between April 12 and May 10, 2021.  
<https://www.english.org/publications/journals/index.shtml>

# Internship Opportunities

## **Creative Writing Intern at GoBelieve -- Philadelphia, PA**

“The [Creative] Writing Intern will assist with the creation and development of stage play and web series scripts.”  
[https://www.internships.com/posting/ccm\\_b139e7a6-8711-41ca-9fe6-ead97967e8b8?utm\\_campaign=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_source=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_medium=organic](https://www.internships.com/posting/ccm_b139e7a6-8711-41ca-9fe6-ead97967e8b8?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)

## **Writing Intern at GoBelieve -- Philadelphia, PA**

“The Writing Intern will focus on the creation and editing of documents, essays and power point presentations. We have a focus on the career of being a writer and developing the skills of getting your point across in the most effective ways. You'll be writing for an up and coming app and have the opportunity to truly grow your skill set as a writer.”  
[https://www.internships.com/posting/ccm\\_ed27106a-c739-4b83-b7df-3d52c35f1083?utm\\_campaign=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_source=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_medium=organic](https://www.internships.com/posting/ccm_ed27106a-c739-4b83-b7df-3d52c35f1083?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)

## **Editorial Intern at Swivel Beauty -- Reading, PA**

“Swivel Beauty is seeking sharp, hardworking, detail-oriented writers who are interested in contributing to our new beauty blog centered on the haircare needs of black women. This role will entail conducting interviews, writing articles (3 per week), pitching your own ideas, and publishing content to our blog.”  
[https://tarta.ai/j/9hFTBhkByaQtB0YsfGdT-editorial-intern-spring-2021-in-reading-pennsylvania-at-swivel-beauty-inc?utm\\_campaign=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_source=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_medium=organic](https://tarta.ai/j/9hFTBhkByaQtB0YsfGdT-editorial-intern-spring-2021-in-reading-pennsylvania-at-swivel-beauty-inc?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)

## **Technical Writer Intern at Positive Psyche -- Baltimore, MD**

“Positive Psyche, a certified HUBZone and 8(a) company, is seeking interns interested in a career in Technical Writing or Proposal Writing. The intent of the internship is to develop skills and experience in the candidate's chosen field with the hopes that PPC will retain these services for continued employment after their degree is obtained... Interns will be responsible for: creating and publishing/distributing the monthly newsletter, editing/publishing company policy, process or marketing forms, assisting/editing/writing solicitation proposals, PowerPoint presentations and assisting/editing/writing “white papers” as assigned. Administrative duties will include: taking meeting minutes, maintaining office files, answering phones and greeting visitors.”  
[https://www.internships.com/posting/c6ab48c9-d505-4f50-acbc-1df43f5bf489?utm\\_campaign=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_source=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_medium=organic](https://www.internships.com/posting/c6ab48c9-d505-4f50-acbc-1df43f5bf489?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)

## **Content Writer Intern at Envision2bWell -- Philadelphia, PA**

“We are looking for people (2-3) that are passionate about content blogging/writing in the health and wellness space who want to push the envelope and expand their talents. This is an excellent opportunity to build your skills/portfolio, strengthen your resume through published blogs, articles and posts, and make new connections with colleagues around the globe.”  
[https://communityjobboard.muih.edu/job/content-writer-intern/55596963/?utm\\_campaign=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_source=google\\_jobs\\_apply&utm\\_medium=organic](https://communityjobboard.muih.edu/job/content-writer-intern/55596963/?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic)