

Notes from Bancroft



A Letter from the Department Chair

Our department transforms students' love of reading and writing into clear pathways to professional success and entrance into exciting, enjoyable careers.

The English major, with its emphasis on critical thinking, written and oral communication, and digital literacy, is ideally suited to produce graduates who soar to success!

We boast a 100% job placement rate for our secondary English education graduates and high acceptance rates into graduate schools and law schools. Our students present papers at academic conferences, publish articles, and win awards for undergraduate research in the humanities.

We have a gifted and productive community of creative writers within the department who publish poetry and fiction and work closely with award-winning professors.

Our majors engage in internship programs, tutor in the Writing Center, study abroad, and participate in social events and fun clubs such as the Literary Society and Sigma Tau Delta. And, our alumni establish exciting and successful careers in fields such as education, law, technical writing, corporate communications, game and web design, social media management, publishing and editing, business management, and human resources.

The Winthrop Department of English launches students into successful lives that make a difference, and we're so happy you're here to see what makes our department so special. Go Winthrop English, and go Eagles!



Dr. Amanda Hiner

In this newsletter you can expect:

Event Highlights

Faculty Publication Feature

Program News

New Faculty & Alumni Spotlights

Writing Center Updates

Fundraising Information



13th Annual Banned Books Event

In September 2024, the Literary Society and English Department hosted the 13th Annual Banned Books cultural event. During the event, students and other attendees were able to test their knowledge on censorship, learn more about the rise of censorship and book bans in the United States in 2023, and listen to the perspectives of professionals on the impact of book challenges in both education and public libraries.

As the keynote speaker, local high school teacher and Winthrop graduate student Maddie Neff engaged the group in a lively discussion about South Carolina's new legislation on the procedure for selection or reconsideration of instructional materials in K-12 education. After the presentation, attendees were able to ask questions of the presenters and to look through copies of many of 2023's top banned books. With over 100 students and faculty in attendance, this year's Banned Books event was a great success!



2025 American Shakespeare Center Trip

This March, Dr. Amanda Hiner took nineteen student participants to the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia for a fun weekend of plays and educational opportunities at the ASC's world-renowned Blackfriars Playhouse. This was the department's twelfth annual student trip to the American Shakespeare Center and Dr. Hiner's eleventh time organizing and chaperoning the trip. This year, the trip included full productions of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *The Comedy of Errors* and a new stage adaptation of Alcott's *Little Women* performed by a creative and award-winning cast. In addition, students participated in an educational workshop titled "Character Play," attended a custom lecture on Shakespeare's stagecraft, and took a backstage tour of the Blackfriars Playhouse, the world's only authentic recreation of Shakespeare's famous indoor theatre.

Trip chaperone Dr. Hiner notes, "The English Department's Spring Break Trip to the ASC is a beloved tradition in our department and a wonderful opportunity for students to deepen friendships and to see Shakespeare's plays 'come alive' in authentic staging conditions." We are grateful for the support of Mr. Spratt White and Mrs. Sandra Hagler White (Winthrop BA, English, '63) who have generously funded and supported this trip from its inception, providing a valuable and enriching learning experience for our students.

If you would like to make a contribution supporting enriching learning opportunities for our department, please scan the QR code on the last page of this newsletter to support the department's English Excellence Fund.



18th Annual English Department Undergraduate & Graduate Research Conference

The Department of English convened its eighteenth annual Department of English Undergraduate and Graduate Research Conference on March 29th. This cherished department event offers both undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to present their scholarly research to a supportive audience of faculty members, peers, family members, and friends. This year's conference featured three panels of outstanding student papers on a wide range of literary research topics. English Department faculty members moderated the panels, and audience members had an opportunity to respond to student papers with questions and comments. The conference featured Dr. Devon Fitzgerald as the invited keynote speaker, who presented a paper titled "Who Owns What?: Case Studies in Craft, Community, and Copyright," and conference participants were treated to a continental breakfast and lunch buffet.

Reflecting on the value of the department research conference, English major and student presenter Emmalynne Eshleman stated, "This conference gives us an opportunity, with faculty who we know support us, to practice our presentation skills in a way that is safe and accessible and builds confidence. Having that resource is really invaluable to us as students." This conference is one of many ways in which the Department of English supports and enhances student research, and it is made possible by generous donations to our English Excellence Fund.

Faculty Publication Feature

Congratulations, Dr. Hoffman! Dr. Hoffman's new book, *Such a Good Man*, is available to order at uwpress.wisc.edu/Books/S/Such-a-Good-Man.



"There is much to admire in these stories of working-class lives—the fine writing, superb pacing, pitch-perfect dialogue—but what I find most impressive is Hoffman's refusal to condescend to his characters. They are never mere caricatures but are complex human beings trying to cope with hardships life has dealt them. *Such a Good Man* is an excellent story collection. I look forward to reading more by this talented writer."

—Ron Rash, author of *The Caretaker*

Micro-Certificate in Technical Writing

With the support of BOT Member and Winthrop alumnus Mr. Rick Lee, department faculty members developed and successfully implemented the English Department Micro-Certificate in Technical Writing in fall 2024.

The new Micro-Certificate is a 7-9 credit hour program that teaches technical communication and proposal and grant writing with a focus on industry standards for communicating with a variety of stakeholders. Students can choose to take an internship in the program or select another specialized approved course. Students who complete the courses with a 2.0 GPA or higher will receive a digital badge that credentials them in technical writing that they can upload to their LinkedIn and add to their resume.

Scan here to learn more!



New Faculty & Alumni Spotlights



**Amy Bagwell,
M.F.A.**

The Winthrop English Department was honored and exceedingly fortunate to be able to hire Ms. Amy Bagwell, a new, talented instructor, in 2024. Ms. Bagwell joined the Winthrop English Department from Central Piedmont Community College, where she had worked as an instructor of first-year writing, literature, and creative writing since 2010. Ms. Bagwell has a BA in English Literature from The University of Georgia and an MFA in English and Creative Writing from Queens University in Charlotte. A gifted teacher, creative writer, and expert in public art, Ms. Bagwell has an extensive publication record and has won awards for her poetry. In addition, she has overseen public art exhibitions in downtown Charlotte, Charlotte Douglas International Airport, Plaza Midwood, Queens University, and Appalachian State University. Ms. Bagwell is highly respected in the Charlotte arts community for her expert oversight of large community arts festivals and for her community poetry exhibitions. She brings a joyful, positive energy to our department, and we are happy and honored to have her join our collegial community of scholar-teachers.



**Allison Welte '19,
'23**

English Teacher &
Literacy Coach,
Legion Collegiate Academy

Allison Welte graduated from Winthrop University with a BA in English and a concentration in Secondary Education in 2019. She taught English at Chester High School for four years during which she served as a Mentor Teacher to an international teacher, the National Beta Club Co-Sponsor, and a Technology Mentor. Allison returned to Winthrop for her MEd in Learning Design and Technology and graduated in 2023. She now teaches English and serves as the Literacy Coach at Legion Collegiate Academy where she also serves as the National Beta Club Co-Sponsor and the LCA Book Club Sponsor. Allison is currently pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Special Education from the College of Charleston and will complete the program this year. Allison is eternally grateful to the Winthrop University English Department for helping her become a better critical thinker, reader, and writer. She believes that every child deserves a high-quality education and believes that reading, writing, and critical thinking skills are the foundation of education.



“Easy Cheese Grits”

By Dr. Casey Cothran
from *Food for Thought*

Ingredients:

- 6 tbsp grits
- 1 tbsp butter
- 4 oz. Cheese Whiz (or Velveeta)
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp baking soda

Directions:

- Mix water and milk and slowly bring to a boil.
- Add grits and baking soda - watch carefully since the baking soda causes a chemical reaction and quick boiling over!
- Add salt, reduce heat, cover, and cook until liquid is absorbed and grits are done.
- Add butter and cheese whiz (1/2 a small jar), stir well and cook uncovered for another 5 minutes.
- Optional: Replace salt with garlic salt or add garlic powder.



Fall 2024 Writing Center Renovations

In 2024, in collaboration with the CAS Dean's office and university facilities, the Writing Center was upgraded with new paint and new furniture to create a warm and inviting atmosphere conducive to collaborative learning. Both the waiting room and tutorial room have been updated. I am so grateful to Dr. Amanda Hiner, Dr. Takita Sumter, Dr. Jo Koster, and Lori Howey for their work on the revitalization of the center.

The new space is comfortable with flexible seating (moveable desks and chairs), encouraging peer interaction and brainstorming. Additional comfortable seating in the tutoring room allows students to work independently or in small groups. The overall goal was to create a space that feels more like a study lounge where students feel welcomed, supported, and inspired to engage with their writing. We hope the revitalized environment will foster a sense of community and encourage students to view the Writing Center as a valuable resource throughout their academic journey.

— Dr. Devon Fitzgerald, Writing Center Director


Consider Making a Gift to the English Department

Thanks to our donors, we can offer incredible learning opportunities for our students such as our American Shakespeare Center Trip, study abroad experiences, Writers Series events, travel to the National Council of Teachers of English Conference, and our annual Undergraduate & Graduate Research Conference. Please consider donating to the Department of English to support our exceptional students and program!

Donation Link




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