



## Between *the* Lines

*Department of Literature  
and Languages*

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## English as a Pre-Law Major from a First-Year Law Student

*Annalyn Andrews | BA English, 2024*

In my law school class, my peers' undergraduate majors ranged from history to neuroscience and from finance to psychology. One thing I learned during my first semester of law school is there is no perfect pre-law major; however, my English major has been beneficial to me in many ways.

First, there have been many weeks during my first year of law school that I have looked back on the heavy reading load of my English classes with thanks. It is not uncommon for my law school classes to have fifty pages of reading per class every week of the semester. While the heavy reading load of law school was daunting for some of my classmates our first semester, my undergraduate English courses had prepared me well with habits for how to schedule my reading in order to have the reading done, reviewed, and understood by class time. Similarly, the discussion-focused atmosphere of my undergraduate English classes helped prepare me for the "Socratic" teaching style of law school. While I was "cold-called" only a couple times during my experience in English classes, establishing the habit of being prepared for meaningful class discussions helped me feel better prepared for the ever-looming "cold calls" in my first semester law school courses.

While it may seem obvious that being an English major would be beneficial in legal writing courses, legal writing is very different from any form of writing I had previous experience with. While adapting to legal writing was a learning curve, I often looked back on my writing and rhetoric courses and was very thankful that they made me step outside of my comfort zone to produce writing samples that I was unfamiliar with. Being capable of stepping away from writing styles I was comfortable with helped me to adapt quickly to such a new form of writing in law school. Furthermore, my English background put me a step ahead in our lessons on grammar and mechanics.

Finally, the most unexpected way my English degree has aided me in law school has been in class discussions and analyses of statutes and other legal language. The experience I gained in my English courses, such as assessing an author's intent and combing through a text and analyzing why an author made the word choice they did, has made me feel confident in my contributions to these discussions.

For these reasons (and many others) I would suggest any pre-law student consider an English major!



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# Why English Majors Rule the Nonprofit World

*Megan Riaz | BA English, 2009 & MA English, 2011*



In the world of philanthropy, stories are the bread and butter of fundraising.

Growing up, I spent hours in the library, longing to be like the characters I read about. I was fascinated with understanding their lives and willfully escaped my own by losing myself in the characters' feelings and dreams.

It is human nature to desire connection with others, and in the vast world of philanthropy, stories drive programs and raise billions for worthwhile causes. When I was in college, I had no

idea what the future held for me as an English major. I vividly remember people asking, "So, what are you going to do with your degree, teach?" and for many years I believed that was my only option.

But there are other options for us English majors, and the nonprofit world is an untapped dream. Living in this world is like going to work every day, but not really feeling like you are working.

Sharing stories from the patients who find hope and healing at Bethesda Health Clinic is truly a dream come true. I am given a glance into the best of humanity. I interview patients about their experiences to share with donors, supporters and many in the community who want to know more about Bethesda. But Bethesda, as a nonprofit entity - a mere tax ID number with a logo - isn't enough to convince people to open their bank accounts. **Stories must exist to draw donors into the mission and connect them to the very core of the needs, which leads them to take action and give financially.** The connection between the needs of the patient (or client) and the generosity of the donor is made secure through personal, impactful stories. And we love stories!

Interviewing our patients is something I will never take for granted. I have the immense privilege of sharing their stories for the world to see; to put into words something like a life-saving surgery, a critical diagnosis, or a caring smile. They experience life-changing healthcare, and that deserves to be shared. Their stories are told with respect, honesty, and dignity. The people who read their stories and are called to give do so with authenticity and joy.

It's a circle of change driven by language, by stories, and it's amazing. The world of philanthropy needs English majors to tell those stories.

# Amazon's *The College Tour*

**Michaela Murphy | BA English, 2023 & Current English MA student**

In October of 2024, I had the opportunity to film an episode of the Amazon television show, *The College Tour*. The Spring 2025 episode will focus on various aspects of student life at UT Tyler. My segment is an overview of the programs we have available to our students for career readiness development.

Looking at my audition video, the producers saw that my position as a graduate student and teaching assistant on campus meant that I was the perfect example of what a transition from college life to work life looks like for our students. Additionally, my experience as a campus tour guide meant I also had extensive background knowledge on our campus and its resources. With that being said, it wasn't my knowledge of campus geography that helped me obtain the role.

What helped me secure my role? It was the script I wrote for my audition and the passion I exuded about my student/teacher experience. It was evident to the producers that this University, and more specifically the Literature and Languages department, had equipped me with the skills to write, communicate, and teach at the level required of exemplary graduates going out into the workplace – and that's exactly what they wanted to feature.

While these skills will undoubtedly help me in my future job, they were also critical in my experience with Amazon! Besides writing my audition script, I was also required to write my episode script and send it to editors within a short time frame. This also meant rereading and memorizing the revised script in a timely manner before and during the filming process. Prior to filming, I was required to attend zoom and phone meetings, communicating to people in various time zones to schedule filming times and ensure I was on track with paperwork. Effectively communicating on and off camera helped the process run much smoother. Lastly, my prompt time-management skills were essential in meeting deadlines and filming windows. All the aforementioned skills I needed for this experience were strengthened and professionalized by my education here in the Literature and Languages department at UT Tyler.

Not only was I prepared to take on the role because of my education and experiences, but the support from faculty and staff in the Department gave me the confidence to apply and continue with the role, even when I doubted my abilities.

I hope my story inspires you to reach for big goals... and to see what the Literature and Languages Department at The University of Texas at Tyler has to offer you!





# From the (Argentinian) Pampas to the Lone Star State

**Jonatan Benitez | BA Spanish, 2012**



After I completed my BA degree at UT Tyler, I was hired as a Reporter/Writer for *Al Dia* (*The Dallas Morning News*, Spanish edition). I oversaw the coverage of sporting events, interviews, and articles. I would spend my weekends attending FC Dallas games, Texas Rangers Games, and other sporting events in the DFW area. I had the opportunity to meet well-known athletes such as Dirk Nowitzki or Elvis Andrews.

After that, I was hired as a Spanish Teacher and Head Soccer Coach at Dallas ISD. I worked one year at Seagoville Middle School teaching Spanish 1, Spanish 2, and Spanish Language & Culture. During that year I led the MS Boys team to win the 2013 District Championship.

Then I worked for North Dallas High School for five years where I taught Spanish Literature, and I was also the Boys Head Soccer Coach. I oversaw 50+ student athletes (Varsity and Junior Varsity), and developed a team culture. As far as the teaching part, I would have students participating in school events such as “Dia de los Muertos” or “Cinco de Mayo.” In addition, I would invite recognized Spanish Speaking people such as Pedro Silva from Univision or Erik Mora from Telemundo to speak to the class to motivate them in their future careers. In terms of soccer, the Varsity & JV team were able to complete community service hours and host soccer camps. The team ranked among the top ten teams in the DFW and achieve Bi-District and Area Championships.

Eventually, I was recruited by Faith Family Academy to be Director of Soccer. I created a program that would cover Pre-K to 12th Grade. My first year, I started with a JV team as well as coaching the MS team. We went from a program that had twenty student athletes to sixty. From 2019 to 2025 the program has increased in numbers as well as accomplishments. The Faith Family Academy Soccer program has over 250 student athletes actively participating. As far as titles are concerned, the Varsity team has won four District Championships, three Bi-District Championships, and three Area Championships. In addition, the school has been ranked #1 in region 2 UIL 4A. Even more importantly, seven student athletes earned soccer scholarships at different universities. During this time, I also earned a Masters in Sports Management from SMU.

I can say that the education and mentorship that I received at UT Tyler shaped me to be the person who I am today. The classes prepared me for a variety of professional positions. All the professors were crucial in my career, and I am still in touch with some of them today. I highly recommend this program and hope more people have the same opportunities that were provided to me.

# An English Major in the Library: It's Not All About Books!

*Alia Pappas | BA English, 2016*

I have always loved learning and the written word, and studying English at UT Tyler gave me the skills I need to provide successful information access to all. After graduating from UT Tyler's English program, I began my eight-year-long career in library and archival science, which continues today in my work at the Plano Public Library.

I have worked in public libraries, university libraries, and archives in Texas and Washington State. In these roles, my English degree has enabled me to learn complex technical processes, communicate effectively across socioeconomic backgrounds, provide information and services to a variety of communities, and pursue a master's degree in library science.



Libraries are no longer dominated by shush-filled shelves; they are vibrant community resource hubs that require a variety of skills to operate. I have found the balance of creativity and logic that I developed as an English major useful in technical aspects of library work. The emphasis on technology in library science has increased due to the rising demand for e-resources, the need to help patrons filter through AI-generated misinformation, and the practice of using statistics to track library usage.

Having the critical thinking skills to analyze data about a population's resource interests helps librarians understand what their community needs from the library. Additionally, many libraries offer technology items to use, such as VR headsets, DSLR cameras, 3D printers, laser engravers, and more, necessitating that librarians have a variety of technical skills. Learning to follow proper grammar and think critically in an English program sets students up to learn these technical processes with ease and imparts the creativity to troubleshoot and develop unique resources with them.

Of course, communication is another invaluable skill that I gained from my English degree. Libraries and archives are community-based organizations where connection and regular communication with the community is paramount. Reading and writing about people from various socioeconomic backgrounds for an English degree allows one to better understand and serve them. In multiple roles, I served as the sole point of contact for patrons from nearly all continents.

The combination of my English degree with an International Studies minor, experience in the Global Awareness Through Education (GATE) Program, and an understanding of folks from other backgrounds were all instrumental when communicating across cultures.

Ultimately, the beauty of majoring in English is that it is a highly-customizable degree with no "right" way to pursue it. My English degree has worked for me and my employers, and it has set me up to succeed in my library science career, allowing me to provide exemplary service to my community.

# Why an English Degree Is the Smartest Investment in Any Career

*Jim Clayton | Current English Student*



**M**y name is Jim Clayton, and I am a non-traditional student here at UT Tyler. I want to talk briefly about the reason I've chosen my degree path, and the importance it holds to my future.

We live in an age driven by rapid communication and complex global issues. The ability to think critically, write effectively, and communicate persuasively is more essential than ever. As I complete my undergraduate degree in English at UT Tyler this May and prepare to represent our school as a 2025 Graduate Archer Fellow in Washington, D.C., I am constantly reminded of the value of my chosen field of study.

People often ask me why, after 16 years in the oil and gas industry, I would return to school for an English degree. The answer is simple: no one wants to swing an eight-pound sledgehammer for a living when they are in their 50s. But beyond that, I needed a foundational degree; something that could have multiple uses over a broad spectrum of specialties without diluting my career path. I needed an undergraduate degree that would give me tools that my competition in the job market may not have. English is one of the few degrees that fills every requirement.

An English degree is more than just reading classic literature or analyzing poetry; it is a discipline that fosters critical thinking, constructs logical arguments, hones the ability to put thoughts and ideas down into words, and then communicates those ideas with clarity and precision. These skills are invaluable across all industries, from business and law to public policy and technology.

In Washington, D.C., I will study policymaking, where clear communication is crucial in shaping laws and influencing change. The ability to write compelling arguments, interpret nuanced texts, and express ideas persuasively is not just an academic exercise, it is a professional necessity. In your degree path, you will face many moments where you must communicate your technical expertise to someone who doesn't speak your technical vernacular. Having that ability immediately gives you an advantage over competitors and peers who lack it.

Whether as a major or minor, an English degree is a powerful tool. It equips individuals with the essential skills to navigate, influence, and lead in a world that demands strong communicators at a time when we have a noted shortage of them.

After all, the ability to think, write, and communicate is not just beneficial, it is fundamental to success.

# Building Your Future

*LaKyndra Bridges | English Minor, 2023*

**A**s an MFA student studying creative writing, editing, and publishing at Sam Houston State University, I am occasionally reminded of how my undergraduate experience at UT Tyler shaped me into who I am today and helped me become a top student within my cohort.

## 1. Find a Mentor

I know what helped me most was finding a mentor. A mentor is someone willing to support and guide you in your goals. This should be someone you look up to who has accomplished the things you strive to do in or outside of academia. They should be your cheerleader on the sidelines of the goals you want to achieve, but they should also be willing to challenge you to do better than you think you can do.

## 2. Be Well-Rounded

When I first got into my MFA program at SHSU, I thought I would be behind my peers academically. Everyone in my cohort was an English major. At my time at UT-Tyler, English was my minor, and journalism was my major, but I never thought having both under my belt would help me more than not. I can give different perspectives during the seminar, and I have my foot in academic writing and an idea of editing and publishing during my practicum classes. If you can, become well-rounded at your time at UT-Tyler. Don't be afraid to double major or have your minor be in an interest that'll complement your studies for what you want to do after graduation. The more well-rounded you are now, the easier it will be to make last-minute decisions when applying for graduate programs or jobs after graduation.

## 3. Embrace a Growth Mindset

Whether you decide to go to graduate school, land a job, or even take a break after graduation, keep and embrace a growth mindset. Take those "hard" classes offered in your curriculum. Apply for those ambitious internships and start researching that topic during your academic break. Whatever you do, keep growing! During my year off after graduating from UT-Tyler, I worked on application material for graduate programs and met with my mentor monthly to hold me accountable.

Please implement these three takeaways while you can. Doing so will shape you into the person you want to be, even if you are unsure who that is!





# A New Minor for All Majors: Digital Storytelling and Interactive Design

**Dr. June Oh | Assistant Professor in English and Digital Studies**



In this increasingly digitally mediated world, the humanities face the question of relevance. Why is it still important? What can you do with it?

The new minor, Digital Storytelling and Interactive Design, is an effort to thrive through these questions by making explicit the values of the humanities and literary studies to today's world.

At the heart of literature, there's storytelling: a compelling plot that keeps you on your toes, solid character development that pulls you in, and thought-provoking themes in rich language that evoke emotions and critical reflection. These cores of storytelling resonate across time and space, even to the digital space and the professional world.

Studies show that effective communication, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving are some of the most in-demand skills in the workforce (Marcus, 2025). Good storytelling requires just that – conveying a clear message, ability to analyze information, consider alternative points of view, and make choices for specific audiences. Whether you're an engineer, poet, designer, or corporate manager, your ability to communicate your message has a profound impact on your career. In other words, you need to know how to tell a good story. And now, using digital tools to do that is as important as it is expected.

Starting Fall 2025, two new courses invite you to take advantage of this in-demand new minor. ENGL 3363 (Digital Storytelling Based on Literature) introduces students to the foundation of storytelling methodologies and theory in various media forms such as print, games, interactive websites, and hypermedia fan fiction. ENGL 3364, offered Spring 2026, will allow students to use the knowledge gained in the previous course to produce a prototype of interactive literary narratives using industry-standard software platforms and technical documentation practices.

The application of traditional concepts of literature to digital products fosters intellectual flexibility. Through experimenting with various modes of storytelling, the classes in this minor will help students work beyond a familiar area of expertise and learn to navigate complex challenges.

Completing this minor will equip you with cutting-edge skills to become creative and critical creators of digital storytelling products in your future fields. It all starts with a good story.

## Reference:

Marcus, J. (2025, February 11). "Need a job? Try majoring in the humanities, more colleges say". *Christian Science Monitor*. <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2025/0211/colleges-jobs-humanities-languages>

# Driving Success in the World of Auto Finance

*Lincoln Edgemon | BA English, 2019*

**W**hen I decided I wanted to major in English, I wasn't sure what my future looked like. The only thing I knew without a doubt was that I had absolutely no interest in working in anything even remotely related to finance, accounting, or any other 'math-oriented' field. Imagine my surprise when I end up working at an auto financing company less than five years after graduating. And yet, just as Dr. Beebe, Dr. Jessop, and Dr. Kelly advised, I have seen firsthand that an English degree is valuable in every field.



I currently work as a Communications Specialist for GM Financial, and I have the opportunity to work closely on many different aspects of the business. From correspondence going out to customers to articles for the website, there are countless ways that an English degree drives success in my role. Here are just a few of the ways I've been able to apply my degree to the world of auto financing.

## **Translating technical jargon**

There's no question: legal information surrounding car loans and leases is difficult to understand. One of the biggest aspects of my job is to take that difficult information and create letters, emails, and notifications that customers can easily understand. Luckily, this is one of the many ways that studying English in college prepared me for my future career.

## **Brand storytelling**

As is true with almost all brands, storytelling is a necessity. In the automotive financing industry, we aren't just trying to sell commercial installment plans or leases, we are trying to enable mobility, connecting people to what matters. So, every email, letter, advertisement, and notification has to further this story and deepen the trust our customers have in our ability to serve them with excellence.

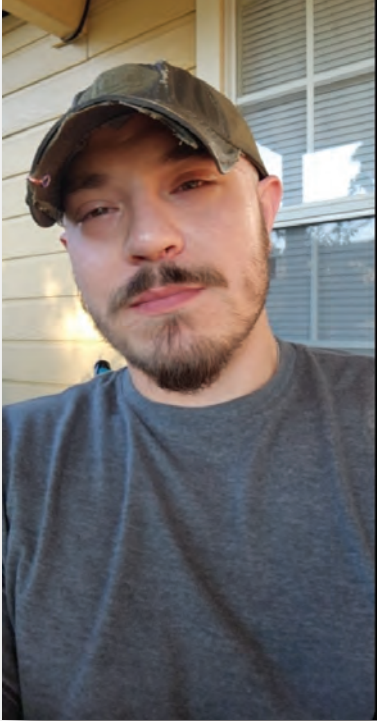
## **Creating and maintaining brand standards**

At a company with thousands of employees, it can be hard to communicate with one voice. And yet having a single voice is one of the most important aspects of building trust with your audience. This creates the necessity for brand standards. While the current brand standards were created before many of us were even at the company, we all work collaboratively to make sure each written piece matches the standards and sounds cohesive.

An English degree is so much more than reading classic literature, writing creative fiction, and talking about our favorite authors or periods. It instills in us practices that transcend the boundaries of industries, equipping us to be pioneers in our fields. We can spot trends, patterns, and opportunities in ways others cannot. We can communicate with empathy, insight, and conviction where others may struggle to find the right words. We help shape the way the world communicates. An English degree can open doors to worlds that we may never expect; we just need to be ready to use those talents wherever we may find ourselves.

# Pleasantly Surprised By Old Authors

*Cody Vasquez | Current English Major*



“**R**eadings In American Leadership” (ENGL 2370) is a CORE course designed by Dr. Ann Beebe. Upon enrolling, I was not exactly stoked to be reading works of people who were long dead and surely unable to relate to the modern problems I was facing.

The first essay, “The American Scholar,” was by Ralph Waldo Emerson. There’s not enough room in the column to tell you about it properly, but suffice to say, it’s a great first piece to start a course. It turned my expectations on their head and really challenged me to see beyond my own experiences to understand how some issues—like the purpose of formal education—are faced by multiple generations in different settings.

In fact, it was like that with each piece we studied. As I was able to see in the class discussions, there were generally some ideas that everyone noticed and put some thought into, but what really caught my attention is that other students were able to glean ideas I hadn’t thought about, or saw things in a way that hadn’t occurred to me.

Ultimately, I can only comment on my own experience, which mainly involved the values and traditions of citizenship, and what they mean to me personally. At 28 years old with some serious miles on me, I’ve had a long time to develop my internal character. The exploration of those ideas and principles contrasted with the writings from the historical authors featured in the class was highly satisfying, and I felt richly rewarded for the work I did to understand them.

As an American, but more importantly, as a free agent, concepts like community and sacrifice in good faith weigh heavily on my mind, and the importance of these things is masterfully demonstrated in the works studied throughout this course. Of course, being an English course, there’s a stress on understanding how the ideas are expressed and noticing how the authors develop the relationship between ideas, but even more than that, the course invites you to take stock of your own values and principles. What kind of ethos guides your decisions? What’s important to you? What kind of leader are you right now? If you tried your best, what kind of person could you become? We may have analyzed essays and speeches by Emerson, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Webster, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, and others in the course, but I developed a clearer picture of the kind of leader I want to become by the end of the semester.

# From Shakespeare to Spreadsheets: How My English Degree Led Me to HR

*Jesseca Watson | BA English, 2015 & MS Human Resource Development, 2018*

**A**lthough I began my educational path to become an English teacher, I am quite pleased that not all things worked out in the way that I hoped at the time. I didn't follow the normal path one might expect to a Human Resources career as my first job was as a high school English teacher. Although that wasn't the right path for me, I was able to pivot and navigate quickly towards a new path. I credit to my English degree for this smooth transition.

By leveraging skills developed by my degree, I was able confidently explore new opportunities. When I originally left teaching, I applied to a payroll position for which I had no experience. However, I highlighted several qualities that I knew the hiring manager would benefit from and thankfully was given the opportunity. I am currently the Human Resources Manager at Kilgore College, so I have found a career at a lovely place where I can utilize my unique English, education, and HR knowledge.

I anticipated that my English degree would benefit me in any career by enhancing my technical and professional writing skills, sharpening my analytical abilities, and strengthening my capacity to interpret and apply texts. More specifically, in Human Resources I write and review administrative rules to follow board policies, analyze workforce data to predict staffing needs and improve retention plans, and apply conflict resolution strategies to evaluate different perspectives, identify underlying issues, and propose fair, evidence-based solutions – all while using the skills I learned while gaining my degree.

However, there are some ways that I utilize my English degree that I did not expect. One skill I use most often in this position is my ability to understand people. The ability to view a potential candidate as a whole picture versus a resume, the ability to interpret when an employee might need additional support, and the ability to recognize what motivates employees to help them fulfill their potential all stem from my English degree. Reading and analyzing literature has expanded my understanding of diverse perspectives, emotions, and human behavior. Studying character motivations and conflicts has helped me deepen my empathy, which is crucial for employee relations, conflict resolution, and leadership.

Embracing an unexpected career path while applying my English degree has shown me the value of adaptability and the power of transferable skills. While my journey did not unfold as I originally planned, it has reinforced the importance of staying open to new opportunities and trusting in the strengths I have developed as an English major. The intersection of an English degree and human resources has allowed me to apply my skills in meaningful ways, proving that no knowledge or experience is ever wasted.





# Words into Action: How an English Major Can Excel as a Faculty Fellow

**Tina Bausinger, Ed.D. | BA English, 2011 & MA English, 2013**



**W**hen I finished my master's degree in English at UT Tyler in 2013, I thought I would only be able to utilize it in the classroom, or perhaps in writing and publishing. Certainly, I've spent my fair share of time in the lecture hall, debating Iago's motivation in *Othello*, or explicating meaning from Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise," which are both meaningful and rich ways of engaging with my major, but I've found three ways that having an English background gives me unique strengths in my position as a Faculty Fellow with Alamo Colleges.

As a fellow, I represent my college within the system. There are four other fellows with different backgrounds from mine, and they are all very strong in their positions. But with my English background, I've found:

I have strong communication skills. Armed with lessons from the English program, I've developed exceptional writing, reading, and speaking abilities. I'm able to tap into clear communication skills when I need to lead a discussion, offer feedback, or create ideas for academic publications on the fly. I'm also asked to speak impromptu in front of influential stakeholders, and I'm able to create connections between seemingly different worlds. I attribute this trait to my work in the trenches of literary research.

I'm able to engage with critical thinking and analysis. My ability to analyze texts from *Beowulf* to Emily Dickinson taught me to pivot and shift ideas from many perspectives. Research and problem-solving are part of my daily agenda, as I'm asked to engage in academic discussions, juggle interdisciplinary research, or closely examine policy changes that will affect faculty on my campus—something I learned early on in my undergraduate work.

The research and writing experience honed in my English courses primed me for conducting my own original research, putting together conference proposals, and putting just the right tone to an email to a colleague are all skills I learned within UT Tyler's program. Organizing complex ideas into straightforward action plans is something I learned when I began my thesis – breaking down a formidable task into manageable chunks became an essential skill I learned when navigating the choppy waters of my master's experience. By the end, it was smooth sailing with a sunny blue sky.

I still remember the first day on UT Tyler's campus. It seemed so big, and I felt so out of place. I went home discouraged that first day, sure I'd gotten myself in over my head. All these years later, it was one of the proudest moments of my life when I walked the stage with my BA, then my MA. I knew the program was challenging, and that somehow, I had risen to the challenge. All the hard work and late nights finally paid off.

Having an English major in a job in higher education gives a unique perspective and builds distinct value that other majors simply don't. We really bring a unique set of skills and an out-of-the box style of thinking that often creates unique answers to problems other majors don't always offer. By the way, what do you think about Iago's motivation? Let's discuss.

# Becoming a Professional Writer

*Timothy Brewer | MA English, 2018*

Earning my MA at UT Tyler was an experience that caused me to grow in ways I hadn't anticipated. I was challenged to write more clearly and effectively by my peers and professors, and I was pushed to explore areas that had previously been gaps in my knowledge. Particularly, the courses I took on the life and work of John Updike and the life and work of Henry David Thoreau expanded not just my worldview and knowledge base, but helped me incorporate what I loved about the writing of these two authors into my own writing.

While earning my degree, I was teaching high school full time and working part time as a professional poet with Typewriter Rodeo. I loved finding ways to teach what I was learning in my graduate courses to the high school students I had at the time, sharing my passion and excitement about literature with them. Earning my master's degree also gave me a pay raise, which was more than welcome at the time.

I left teaching in 2019 to work as an instructional designer for an educational supply company. I believe that having my master's in English gave me a significant edge among other candidates they were considering for the role. I was able to apply so much of what I learned in my graduate studies at UT Tyler to my role as an instructional designer in the areas of content writing as well as editing and revision of content.

Since then, I have worked as a technical writer and a proposal writer for law firms and CPA firms. The experience in editing and revision (largely self-editing) I gained through my graduate studies at UT Tyler has been instrumental in my success in these roles. Every day, I read dozens if not hundreds of pages of legal documentation and contracts and edit them for clarity and accuracy. Being able to communicate clear, concise messaging to clients is a joy of mine and gives me great pride in my work.

I always knew I wanted to write professionally in some capacity, and my time at UT Tyler helped prepare me for this in a way nothing else could. I was exposed to so much great literature and great writing and advice from my professors and fellow students, which had an undeniable impact on my growth as a writer.



# Two Generative AI Grants

*Dr. Tara Propper & Dr. Zita Hüsing | Assistant Professors of English*



The Department of Literature and Languages recognizes the unique value of centering innovative technology within English Studies. For example, one of our department's most popular minors is Writing with Technology, which investigates the various digital tools that shape how we write, to whom we write, and the ways in which we analyze and critique writing. Drawing from this commitment to the study of writing and reading technologies, Dr. Tara Propper and Dr. Zita Hüsing have both received internal grants from the University of Texas at Tyler to enhance our understanding of the possible uses of Generative AI within English Studies and how it can advance our curricular offerings. Generative Artificial Intelligence tools hold many promises for teaching and learning, especially within English Studies whereby machine-learning software can help transform classrooms into spaces of innovation, creativity, and opportunity. Dr. Propper and Dr. Hüsing look forward to representing the College of Arts and Sciences!

Below, we have included short descriptions of the two grant projects on which Dr. Propper and Dr. Hüsing are working:

## **AI In the Archives: Training Students in Machine-Assisted Reading Practices and Setting the Stage for a Humanities AI Learning Lab** (Propper)

This project seeks to explore machine-assisted research practices when analyzing digitally- preserved literary documents. In doing so, this project will emphasize how to use AI to locate unique patterns and trends in language use within digitally-archived artifacts. This project seeks to overcome limitations regarding material access to contemporary cloud-based and subscription-based AI platforms while also familiarizing students with mixed-methods research strategies and essential AI literacy skills.

## **AI-Ethics and Enhanced Storytelling: Building Technological Opportunities in the Classroom** (Hüsing)

This project aims to enhance the sharing on productive uses of AI in the classroom while focusing on the ethical integration of AI in interactive and modular learning content. More specifically, this project will develop and test course materials and teaching resources that focus on AI ethics and AI-enhanced storytelling practices. The materials will be tested in the cross-listed senior undergraduate seminar titled ENGL 4397/5369 “Exploring AI: Storytelling, Ethics, and Multimodal Science Fiction”.

The digital resources and materials will study:

- The ethical implications of AI by analyzing literary text with AI tools
- The potential of generative AI for enhanced and creative storytelling
- The potential of generative AI for text analysis of science fiction narratives, its opportunities and limitations
- Experiential and interactive learning in Virtual Reality (VR) headsets and how VR could be combined/enhanced with generative AI

# Where can an English degree take you? (Hint: More places than you'd think!)

**Benjamin Barnett | MA English, 2010**

I started the master's program in 2005 just a couple of weeks after getting married and starting my first "real" job as a teacher (a combination I recommend no one do all at once!). Two decades on, I've had a different journey than many.

Teaching overseas was always my plan. After teaching bilingual elementary and Spanish in Tyler, I moved to Guatemala to teach AP English. My wife and I then taught in Abu Dhabi's government schools for four years, spent a year in Mexico, and I later became a high school principal in Cambodia while pursuing a Doctorate of Education. Each role demanded not just English skills but also analysis, critical thinking, and communication—all strengthened by my degree.



Having collected four children by then, we sort of accidentally ended up back in Texas - El Paso, this time. And I settled in to finishing my doctorate and teaching online. At first, I was teaching Spanish, but as my interests have changed and grown, I started teaching technical CTE classes online like coding, programming, and other similar courses. Things were going well, so we sent in an application to move to Portugal and settle down a bit.

Then, COVID! Did I mention that the university where I was pursuing my doctorate closed its doors with just a few weeks' notice, leaving me with a halfway complete Chapter 3 of my dissertation? I decided to let that go and move on.

With our visa plans canceled, we were lucky in that we had just bought land in South Texas, intending to build a campground one day—which became that day. Five years and a lot of work later, it's up, running, and mostly self-sufficient.

Now, I'm using my analytical skills from my master's degree as a bookkeeper and tax preparer, focusing on expat teachers. Flexibility, adaptability, and clear communication make anything possible. The career path isn't always linear, but the skills are invaluable in any field.

I try to keep my life interesting and pivot before I get bored. My kids have grown up with a different worldview than most. With the business stable, we are planning another move abroad. Be open to unexpected career shifts; your English degree equips you for adaptability.



# Everything Changes: The Fluidity of the English Major

**Ashley Johnson | MA English, 2018**

“It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes.”

— Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

The excerpt from Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic theory sits italicized on the first page of my dissertation. Their concept challenges readers to follow flows rather than define containers. As I reflect on my academic, career, and life journeys, I am drawn to reconsider their call to look at things from outside of the middle and to consider the fluidity of life courses.

I began a BA in English, hoping to graduate and head to a big-city publication, living out my Lois Lane dreams of hard-hitting journalism. Five years later, I would not have believed that I was beginning a PhD in literature. There, I found myself both fascinated by what I was learning and slowly burned out by the ever-present need to be perfect and to produce more.

The pandemic did not help. However, the pandemic showed me that the deep personal worth I had tied to my degrees and academic production were not the only thing worth pursuing. I was a successful researcher, writer, and teacher — all things that the English Major prepares you for. But, looking forward from the end of my educational journey, I realized that I wanted beauty and flexibility and something different.

After a while, I transitioned to nonprofit work in development. Reflecting on my journey now, I realize that in the middle of every completed English degree, I kept being surprised by where I found myself next, even though I believed I had my future definitively contained and planned.

Having finished my degrees, and worked both in and outside of academia, I can see that my time as an English major was meaningful even though I am not a journalist or a professor; those degrees helped me to be a capable, thoughtful, and empathetic human with a variety of transferable skills.

Being a forever English major allowed me to develop the skills of critical thinking, research expertise, and ability to communicate complex ideas to diverse audiences, which are foundational assets in nonprofit work, particularly in donor relations and fundraising. These skills help me create compelling grant applications and successful fundraising campaigns that resonate with donors.

English majors excel in crafting narratives that motivate and inspire, making them invaluable assets in roles requiring emotional intelligence, storytelling, and attention to detail. Ultimately, an English major provides a rich skill set that prepares students for a broad spectrum of graduate programs and diverse careers, equipping them to thrive in both expected and unexpected roles. It was not always easy to see that in the middle, but on the other side, my perspective allows me to appreciate my time spent pursuing English degrees.

*For Dr. Stephanie Odom (1979-2018), without whom I might not have felt brave enough to apply for a PhD. She was a bright, shining light at UTT, and I am forever indebted to her mentorship and kindness.*



# Dr. Zita Hüsing Joins the Patriot Family

## *Katherine Hare | Current English Student*

**D**r. Zita Hüsing, Assistant Professor of Digital Rhetoric and Writing in the Department of Literature and Languages at UT Tyler, is excited to join the Patriot family! Growing up in both Germany and France, Dr. Hüsing brings a multilingual, diverse, interdisciplinary background to the community here in Tyler.

Much to the disappointment of her French teachers, she chose to study and pursue a bachelor's degree in English Studies, earning her undergraduate degree at the University of Bonn in Germany, and later earning master's degrees in North American Studies and English Literature while enjoying study abroad programs at the University of Sheffield in the UK and Louisiana State University in the US.

For her PhD, which she earned in English Language and Literatures, she attended Louisiana State University, bringing her closer to Tyler, Texas, and the Patriot community. When it comes to her teaching and scholarly interests, she has a fondness for science fiction studies. Her work explores the intersections of literature and technology, with a particular interest in how generative AI is reshaping writing and communication and what science fiction stories can teach us about our engagement with digital technologies today.

In the classroom, she aims to foster critical thinking and creativity, helping students engage with multimodal and technological tools. Dr. Hüsing's experiences of studying abroad and teaching at campuses across the United States have helped shape her dynamic teaching style and the ability to connect with students from diverse backgrounds.

Outside of the classroom, Dr. Hüsing likes to explore national parks, which she says are one of her favorite parts of living in America, and enjoys hiking and swimming, which she has done with sharks and turtles! Not surprisingly, she is also an avid traveler, finding inspiration in the cultures and unique landscapes of each place she visits.

Dr. Hüsing is excited to bring her unique, international perspective to UT Tyler, and looks forward to connecting with students and staff alike; networking and forming relationships is one of the biggest pieces of advice she offers, citing this as one of the instrumental keys of her own success as a student and now professor. She is very excited to be a part of the Patriot community and wishes to let students and staff know that her door, CAS 239, is always open to talk about anything from pursuing a degree in English, studying abroad or visiting different countries, where the good hiking spots are, or anything science fiction related (ask her about her dissertation)!



# Dr. Goodale Joins UT Tyler

## *Samantha Susewind | Current English Student*

**D**r. Brandon Goodale joined us at UT Tyler in August of 2024 as an Assistant Professor of Spanish and Linguistics. He brought along with him a rich background in language education as well as a fresh perspective that will in no doubt be an asset to the university's Spanish and Linguistics programs.

When speaking to Dr. Goodale one can feel the genuine passion he has for language and his desire to share that passion with others. Dr. Goodale spent two years in Chile and after immersing himself in the Chilean culture and language he came back to the United States and taught high school Spanish. While teaching high school, however, he realized that his long-term aspirations lay elsewhere. This realization led him to pursue a Master of Arts as well as a PhD in Spanish Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It was during his graduate education that he discovered a fascination with sound patterns and systems found in languages. This fascination is seen in his research which is focused on the phonetic variations of the Spanish language, specifically those found in the Southern Cone region of South America.

Dr. Goodale also has experience in contributing to scholarly literature in his field as he recently co-authored a chapter in Spanish as a Second and Third Language. When asked if he had any key takeaways from the process of co-authoring a chapter in a book, he says to “strap in” because it takes a lot of work. He finds that reading and organizing information take more time than the actual writing. He emphasizes the importance of planning and collaboration as well as the rigorous review process. One of the biggest challenges he found was navigating page limits and says, “You have to decide what gets included and what to leave out.” A sentiment that probably every English major can understand.

Since arriving at UT Tyler, Dr. Goodale has been impressed by the department and the students he has taught. “Students here work a lot,” he observes, comparing the work-life balance to students from his previous teaching experiences. Balancing work and school is a common experience for students at UT Tyler, and Dr. Goodale strives to help students navigate this challenge. He also adds that UT Tyler students “handle their struggles gracefully, and their respectfulness stands out.”



Looking ahead, Dr. Goodale is eager to enhance the Spanish program and help create a stronger sense of community among students. He is currently working with the department to establish a Spanish club as well as a study abroad program with summer trips to Spain and Peru in the works. Dr. Goodale's passion for Spanish Linguistics and his commitment to student success make him a valuable addition to UT Tyler.

# There's No Need to Cry When you Take Dr. Cryer!

## *Jaiden Craig | Current English Student*

I would like to introduce Dr. Billy Cryer, who has received a warm welcome in his first year at the University of Texas at Tyler. This is far from his first year as an educator! Starting as a TA in 2003, Dr. Cryer has taught at Indiana University, South Texas College, El Paso Community College, University of Texas at El Paso (hey sister school!) and even Nacogdoches High School. With a list as extensive as that, we Swoops will have to work overtime to make this his best year ever.

Dr. Cryer came to UT Tyler this year because "UT Tyler has a small campus feel, which I knew would offer me the opportunity to get to know my students more." And he came with several accomplishments under his belt. He has been a chair twice for the Texas Library Association, is a published author and book reviewer, and is a member of many education and literature-based associations.

The most heartwarming and noteworthy thing about him is his respect and care for students. He's written many conference presentations on student motivations, success, and educational psychology, such as "He Gave Me a Voice': Valuing What Students Say," and others which you can read more about through his Curriculum Vitae link in his faculty and staff page. He also shows his care for students through his PhD Dissertation, "Motivation and the Young Writer," which explores theories of motivation in the context of enhancing learning in the writing class.

He explains his teaching philosophy, "I find that how I fashion and teach my classes is informed more and more by that student I wish to see at the other end of the semester. I take as my starting place the specific ways I hope my students will be different than when they first stepped foot into the classroom. In particular, there are three changes I aspire to see in each student." Dr. Cryer defines the three stages as the creation of confidence, the construction of a solid learning framework, and an awareness of the power of language to shape their futures.

Besides working as an Assistant Professor of Instruction, he is also working with his colleague, Dr. Miriam Rowntree, on a project tied to a grant from The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board that UTT was recently awarded to enhance our developmental English program. Our goal is to create a summer program for students who are TSI-liable, to help them accelerate through their degree program here at UT Tyler. He would like everyone to know: "I'm always looking for a good book recommendation, especially when it comes to science fiction and speculative literature. Please stop by my office to share recommendations and to talk all things books!"

Find Dr. Cryer in CAS 233, and remember, "there's no need to cry, when you take Dr. Cryer!"





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