Undergraduates in Research

Many undergraduates at Texas A&M mistakenly assume that research projects and theses are reserved for graduate students. Take a look at the English undergraduates who are currently involved in research, and discover how you could get involved!

Tolkien Research in Oxford

During her internship at Cushing Library last summer, junior Maddie Keyser conducted research on the literature collections of the Garnet family and discovered some fragments of notes by J.R.R. Tolkien concerning a language he was developing. This summer, she will travel to Oxford to research another collection of notes on the same language, which will be the focal point of her undergraduate thesis.

Summer Research on Combat Veterans

This summer, English majors Neddie Ann French, Adelia Humme, and Alyssa Spoonts will work at Cushing Library as part of SPUR, the Summer Program for Undergraduate Research. As part of their work, some of these students will be preparing an exhibit centered around Aggies who fought in WWI. Their research will likely focus on literature of or related to combat veterans. (More about a related project on page 6.)

Student Research Week Award

After finishing a UPREP (Undergraduate Professional and Research Experience Program) under Dr. Margaret Ezell, English major Cecilia Morales decided to write a thesis and participate in the Undergraduate Research Scholars program (URS). During Student Research Week 2013, her thesis “Creating Mother: Mothers’ Legacies in the Context of the Conduct Literature of Seventeenth-Century England” won 2nd place in the Fine Arts category.

A good way to get started in undergraduate research is to apply for a UPREP or talk to a faculty member about possible topics or opportunities. For more information on UPREPs, see page 7.

Stressed about finals? Refer to the back page for inspirational quotes on writing that will remind you why you love being an English major!
Preparing for a Corporate Future

Even with finals looming between English students and summer break, many English Aggies are already planning what they will do during their time away from school. Whether you are taking more classes, applying for jobs, or interviewing for internships, you are already planning ahead, even in the midst of essays and exams.

English Major Erin Williams shares her insights

You aren’t the only one. Erin Williams is a senior English major currently working for the Center for New Ventures and Entrepreneurship (CNVE), a part of Mays Business School’s Department of Management. Through her experience with the world of business and communication, Erin has learned many valuable insights about planning ahead for life after graduation, and has found some practical benefits to being an English major in the corporate world. Here are a few things she has learned:

1. English majors are Communicators

Erin is pursuing a minor in business, which, paired with her English degree, sets her up to be a well-balanced individual with a variety of skills and abilities. One of Erin’s comments about being a student of English is the seemingly innate ability most English majors have when it comes to choosing the words they use to communicate. An understanding of words, especially the importance of connotation, is one of the skills we develop by reading literature and writing essays. This gives us an edge when applying for positions that require someone who can communicate effectively with many different people.

2. Professionalism is Important

When she heard about the job opportunity with CNVE through a journalism advisor, Erin went to the trouble to prepare more than just the minimum. Even if a resume is all that is required, she says, write a cover letter. Submit writing samples chosen from your best academic essays or creative works, depending on the nature of the job. In short, go above and beyond the employer’s expectations to show them your professionalism and demonstrate your capabilities. Also, Erin recommends that students create an account on a networking site such as LinkedIn.com and begin thinking now about how professional their online presence is (especially on websites like Facebook and Twitter).

3. Your major may not get you a job

...but your experience will. Start looking now for internships and jobs that will best prepare you for the job you hope to secure after graduation. Erin says that many business students expect their major to get them a job someday, but if it comes to choosing between an English major with communications experience and a Business major without, which do you think employers would choose? In short, experience explains how you can and have used the skills acquired through your English major and allows potential employers to see the possibilities. If you are looking for internships, start early. Erin applied in October 2012 for the internship she will complete this summer.

4. Learn what you love

Some of Erin’s responsibilities at CNVE include writing articles for their quarterly newsletter and coordinating events, which involves extensive communication through both email and social networks. Erin also has enjoyed participating in the unique events the CNVE offers, such as the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV), which offers training to post-9/11 veterans with disabilities who have an interest in creating or running a business. These aspects of her position with CNVE have given her some insight into the sort of work she will seek after graduation.

Over the summer, Erin plans to intern with BP America, and will graduate in December 2013.
Liberal Arts and Humanities Building

Above, President R. Bowen Loftin speaks at the Grand Opening. Below right, Performance Studies Major Taylor Mead and English Major Cecilia Morales welcome Liberal Arts students to the new building.

Below, (left to right) Dr. Charles A. Johnson, Dr. Claudia Nelson, and Dr. Nancy Warren observe the ceremony.

Right, English graduate students and undergraduates in a course taught by Dr. Britt Mize recite Beowulf in the original Old English.

Left, Dr. José Bermúdez, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, speaks to Dr. Margaret Ezell and student Cecilia Morales at an exhibit featuring English students’ research.

A SUMMER IN Dublin

Junior English major Cat Monaco will be participating in a Summer 2013 Work Abroad Program in Dublin through EU-SA, an organization that helps students connect with international internships in European countries.

After being accepted into the program through the career center, Cat worked with a representative from EUSA Dublin who interviewed her to find out about her interests and where she wants to intern. Cat’s top three preferences were journalism, PR, and Production, and she hopes to get an internship with a magazine. She and five others from A&M will be living in student housing apartments in Dublin.

Above: Dublin’s Ha’penny Bridge, a popular landmark

On the weekends they will also be taking excursions as a group to places like Newgrange and Wicklow. Cat writes, “This program is an amazing opportunity because they help you find a placement in a field you are interested in while still getting credit and staying connected to A&M.”

For more information on the exciting internship and work possibilities, visit http://careercenter.tamu.edu/events/EUSA.
English Department Awards Ceremony and Reception

Spring 2013

Students (above, left to right) Melissa Neybert, Mac Boles, Briana Santiago, Jourdan Webb, and Cecilia Morales enjoy refreshments and literary discussion as they attend the annual English Department Awards Ceremony and Reception.

Among other honored students pictured here, Mac Boles and Melissa Neybert were recipients of the Barbara Kurrus Memorial Award and Scholarship, and Briana Santiago is a graduating senior in Sigma Tau Delta. We are so proud of you, English Aggies!

Margaret Fleming (left) is a graduating officer of the Inkling Society. She was recognized for her involvement in this special group by Dr. Vasilakis (center) and Dr. Nancy Warren (right).

Senior Cecilia Morales (center left) was awarded the English Faculty Outstanding Graduating Senior Award, as well as the 2012 Research Essay Award by Larry Oliver (left), Dr. Nancy Warren (center right), and Dr. Margaret Ezell (right).

Emily Johansen (left) and Dr. Nancy Warren (right) announced Julia Medhurst-Bray (center right, a student of Dr. Jan Swearingen (center left), as winner of the Rhetoric and Discourse Studies Essay Competition.

From left to right, The Gordone Awards were presented by Dr. Janet McCann to Jourdan Webb, who won first in the non-fiction category and Emily Sturrock first in the fiction category. Right is Dr. Nancy Warren, Head of the English Department.

Margaret Fleming (below left), Margaret Fleming (below right), Briana Santiago, Meagan Brown, Catherine Brunt, Christine Brown, Deborah Elbert, Julia Eichel, Mary Gohmann, Frida Hernandez, Liza Linney, Alyssa Rivers, and Michael Hawthorne (president)
Critical Childhood Studies seminar

English Honors Students present “The Politics of Child Homicide: Warped Media Coverage, Racial Disparity, and Political Fallout”

If the title of this unique seminar did not catch your eye, then perhaps the topic of the latest event did. “The Politics of Child Homicide” is a topic that does not often surface in ordinary conversation, but the purpose of the Critical Childhood Studies Seminar is to stir up questions and discussion about often neglected topics in the intellectual community here at Texas A&M.

This March, graduate advisor Rene Trevino and a team of English Honors students worked with Professor Lucia Hodgson, co-director of the seminar, to prepare and present the research for this topic. “The Politics of Child Homicide” ties in with the novel Leaving Atlanta, the Brazos Valley Reads selection for this semester. Leaving Atlanta is about the Atlanta Child Murders that took place from 1979 to 1981, during which at least 28 black residents were murdered, the youngest of whom was 7 years old. Author Tayari Jones grew up in Atlanta during the time of the murders, and experienced firsthand the fear that pervades a community affected by child homicide.

Three groups of two honors students each worked to provide research for the presentation. The first group gave a synopsis of the book as a backdrop for discussion, and the second group presented research concerning actual cases of child homicides, raising questions about why the murder of white children is often more actively publicized in media than the murder of children of Hispanic or African American heritage. An example of this is the Amber Alert system, which was created after the 1996 kidnapping and murder of 9 year old Amber Hagerman, a white child from Arlington, TX. This system is now active in all 50 states, and in several foreign countries, but the question remains: why was this sort of system not enacted in 1981 after the murders in Atlanta of more than 20 black children? The third research group focused on the political usage of child homicides, drawing from the all-too-recent example of the Sandy Hook tragedy. Because this heartbreaking event involved school children, the political atmosphere shifted to a mass demand for regulation, presumably in direct response to the fact that the victims were children.

After a 15-minute presentation in which the honors students presented their research, the floor was opened for questions, and it is estimated that between 10 and 15 students out of the 57 who attended took part in the discussion. The Critical Childhood Studies Seminar is a 3-year seminar that will run from 2012 to 2015 under the leadership of Dr. Lucia Hodgson and Dr. Claudia Nelson. The previous event included a discussion of child actors, presented by undergraduate intern Marissa Madsen. Also involved in the research for this project are graduate convener Shawna McDermott and UP-REP intern Allison Ward. The information for the final event of this semester is below.

Topic: After Newtown: Will More Police in Schools Make Children Safer?
Date: Thursday, April 25
Time: 7:00 pm-8:00 pm
Location: MSC 2501
The Stories of Post 9/11 Combat Veterans

Undergraduate Research Spotlight

In 2011, the College of Liberal Arts invited incoming freshmen and other students to read the book *Lethal Warriors* and join the discussion about PTSD and the hardships of combat veterans returning from deployment. Because *Lethal Warriors* paints a dark picture of returning combat veterans, Dr. Marian Eide and Colonel Michael Gibler of Texas A&M decided to conduct their own research on the subject that would involve discovering the average combat experience among war veterans—looking at a variety of cases, and not just the stories that ended in tragedy.

Since the summer of 2012, undergraduates Marissa Madsen (above center), Stephen O'Shea (right), and Neddie Ann French (left) have been involved in collecting and organizing research for this project. Here are a few things they have done that will set them apart when they talk about their undergraduate experience:

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<th>Research</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Thesis</th>
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<td>Senior English majors Marissa Madsen and Stephen O'Shea have been working on their theses since they were selected for a summer project that introduced them to this cornerstone learning experience. Neddie Ann French, Class of '15 joined the group through a UPREP in 2012 and loved it so much that she asked to stay on for another year. The undergraduates spent several weeks in the summer collecting over 200 sources, from popular media to movies to books about combat veterans, and organized them into a database to which Professor Eide could refer when researching.</td>
<td>In March, the team took a trip to New York City that was funded by the university and the Undergraduate Research Scholars program. While in the city, they interviewed combat veterans they had contacted through Professor Eide’s sources and through the social media of local veterans’ organizations. Their mission was to gather stories from returned veterans with different jobs and in different settings so as to get a broader range and an overall view of combat experiences rather than limiting their information to stories from veterans close to home.</td>
<td>Each undergraduate is also developing a senior thesis that relates to Dr. Eide and Colonel Gibler’s project. Stephen, whose focus is Creative Writing, is working on a short story cycle about combat for his final thesis. Neddie Ann and Marissa are writing non-fiction theses, the former about the use of second person in the narratives of witnesses of combat violence (primarily soldiers and journalists) and the latter concerning the importance of military humor in bridging the gap between civilian and military groups.</td>
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Each of these undergraduates got involved in research by watching for opportunities through email loops or other forms of announcements. You do not have to be an honors or graduate student to be offered prime prospects for gaining experience and learning new things. You DO have to be interested in stepping out of your comfort zone and proving to the faculty of Texas A&M and your fellow students that you are more than just one of the crowd by being prepared to go above and beyond what is expected of you. Look for opportunities today!
Poet Spotlight: 

Hannah Alger

Even as an English minor and a member of the Inkling Society, Wildlife and Fisheries major Hannah Alger never dabbled much in writing poetry until she participated in Dr. McCann’s ENGL 348 course in the fall. Her poem, “Bus Stop,” was included in the anthology Poetry of Place: Mind, Body, and Soul that the class created to showcase the poetry they had written during the semester.

“Bus Stop” was born from a photograph Hannah took one evening while waiting for a campus bus. Using ekphrasis, she chose to describe the feelings and thoughts she experienced when taking the picture instead of describing the picture itself.

Hannah’s favorite poem is “Where the Sidewalk Ends” by Shel Silverstein, a children’s poet who often includes deep ideas in his poems. She also enjoys reading works by Neil Gaiman, and admits that while she sometimes writes free-verse poetry, she much prefers to author short stories and longer fiction.

After graduating in 2015, Hannah would like to travel to Africa and work at a wildlife reserve.

Ekphrasis: a literary description of or commentary on a visual work of art

**Bus Stop**

*By Hannah Alger*

It is in the darkness of night
That a Grimmer version of Nature
Hides mysteries beneath her dark cloak:
Monsters hidden in shadows,
Or doorways leading to new worlds

In the absence of brightness,
Magic swirls through imaginations
To show open minds
Lights that shine like planets or stars or
Perhaps even like a little woman that
Can lead you past
The second star to the right
(And straight on ’till morning.)

However, on this night, there
Are things are things that are more
Beautiful and eternal
Than the land of endless boyhood
Will ever be able to bring

Whispers of growth from all living things,
A sweet breeze that caresses the face,
And a promise:
Something new could happen
With the fall of a star,
Or the rise of the sun.
These are a few of our **FAVORITE THINGS**: 

**QUOTES ON WRITING**

For each edition of *The English Aggie*, we will feature a section of “favorites.” Students will have the opportunity to respond with their “favorites” on the Texas A&M English Undergraduate Facebook Page.

- “Don’t think. Write.” -Michael Hawthorne
- “If it doesn’t come bursting out of you in spite of everything, don’t do it...” (“So You Want to Be a Writer” by Charles Bukowski)—Amanda Eddie Mikeska
- “A blank piece of paper is God’s way of telling us how hard it is to be God.” (Sidney Sheldon)—Sarah Zimmermann
- “The pages are still blank, but there is a miraculous feeling of the words being there, written in invisible ink and clamoring to be come visible.” (Vladimir Nabakov)—Jonathan Rogers
- “At painful times, when composition is impossible and reading is not enough, grammars and dictionaries are excellent for distraction.” (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)—Alyssa Spoonts
- “There is no rule on how to write. Sometimes it comes easily and perfectly; sometimes it’s like drilling rock and then blasting it out with charges.” (Ernest Hemingway)—Aida Guhlin
- “Write the kind of story you would like to read. People will give you all sorts of advice about writing, but if you are not writing something you like, no one else will like it either.” (Meg Cabot)—Elizabeth Anderson

**Upcoming Events**

- May 3, 6-8—Finals Week
- May 9—Beginning of Summer Break!
- August 23—Last day to register for fall semester classes
- August 26—First day of fall semester classes

**Stay Informed**

Wishing you had more opportunities to use those excellent essays, creative fiction, and poetry that are languishing on your hard-drive or in the back of your mind? Like “Texas A&M English Undergraduates” on Facebook or follow @TheEnglishAggie on Twitter to stay informed about contests, magazines, and journals to which you can submit your work.

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