

ENGLISH DEPT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 10

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University
of San Diego®
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Department of English

Important Dates

- **May 13:** Last Day of Classes
- **May 13:** USD Conversations
- **May 13:** USD Just Read!
- **May 14:** Study Day
- **May 15-21:** Final Examinations
- **May 22:** Harvey Milk Day
- **May 25:** Memorial Day
- **May 26:** Founders Hall Moving Day
- **May 29:** Final Grades Due
- **May 31:** Pentecost (Whitsunday)
- **June 1:** First Day of Summer Classes (Pre-Session)
- **June 14:** Flag Day
- **June 20:** Summer Solstice
- **June 21:** Father's Day



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English Dept Announcements

Cropper Creative Writing Contest Winners

It is with great excitement that we announce the winners of the 2020 Lindsay J. Cropper Center Undergraduate Creative Writing Contest. This year we had an exceedingly high number of entries, and our judges—all professional writers—picked a winner and a runner-up in each category. Each winner will receive a \$125 cash prize.

This year's Prize in **Fiction** was judged by Robert Glick, Associate Professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology, and the author, most recently, of the short story collection *Two Californias*.

- Winner: **McKenna Christian**, *Target Weight*
- Runner Up: **Thomas Dolan**, *Look on my Work*

This year's Prize in Nonfiction was selected by Alex Webb Wilson. Mr. Wilson's work has been published in *Tin House* and *The New York Times*, and he is the editor of *The*

Surfer's Journal.

- Winner: **Gurleen Kang**, *Gudi*, "Goody," and *the Ghost of Punjab*
- Runner Up: **Shaun Morand**, *Home*

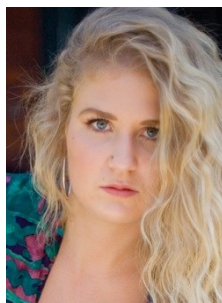
This year's Prize in **Poetry** was selected by our Fall semester Cropper Reader Jacqueline Osherow, Distinguished Professor at the University of Utah. Professor Osherow has selected co-winners.

- Winners: **Olivia Hunt**, *Infinity Pool and other poems* and **McKenna Christian**, *Atonement and other poems*

Many of these writers read their work at the Cropper Student Reading, which was held live via Zoom on April 30, 2020.

The winners and runners-up will also have their works published in the Fall 2020 issue of the *Alcala Review*.

Congratulations to all of our winners and runners-up!



McKenna Christian



Thomas Dolan



Gurleen Kang



Olivia Hunt

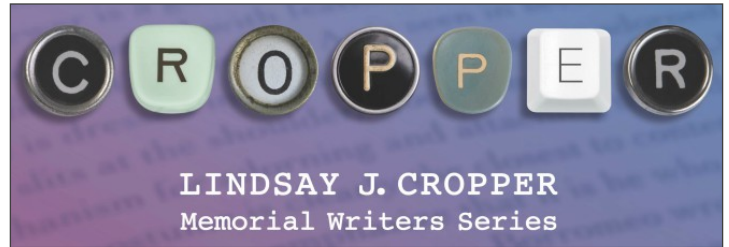


Shaun Morand

English Dept Announcements

Cropper Creative Writing Student Reading

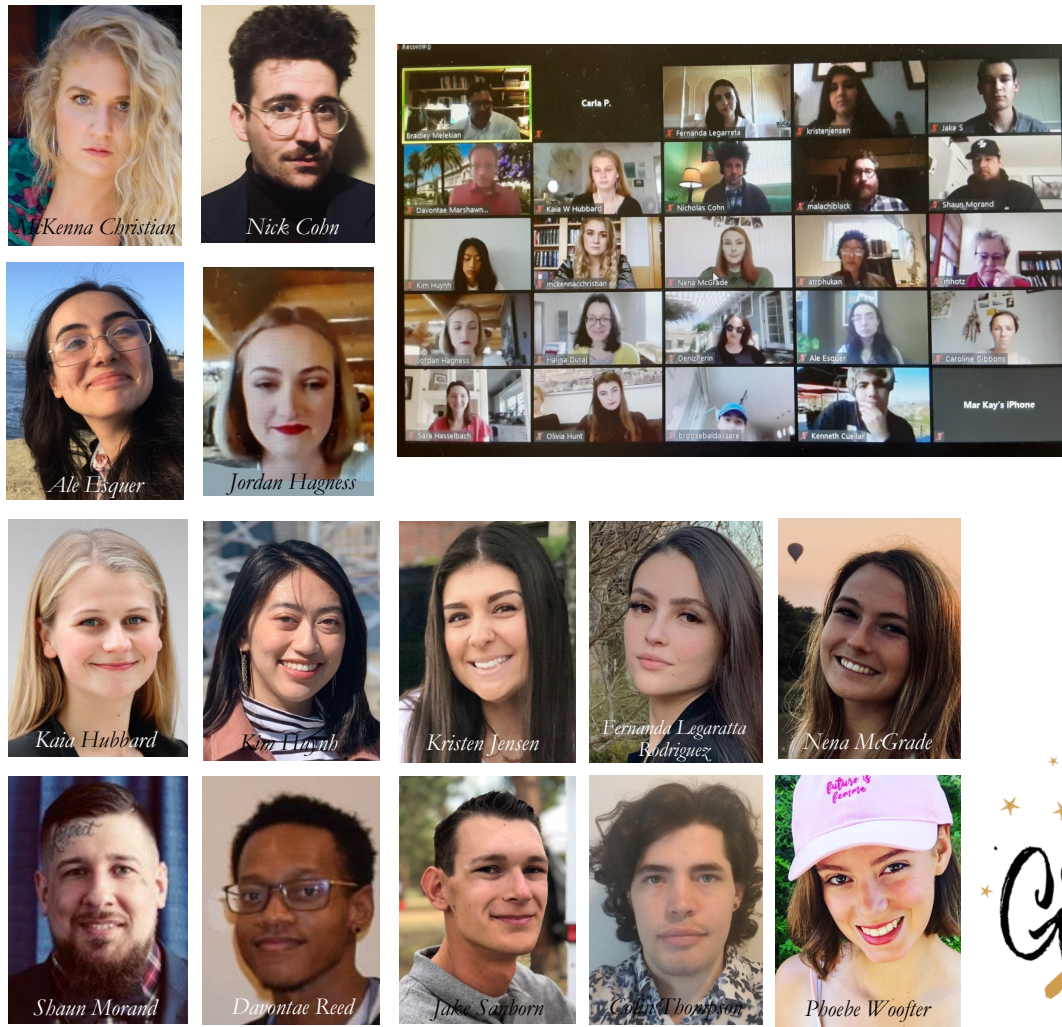
Though these strange times in which we live find us stretched to our various individual corners of the earth, we, as a USD English community, remain bound together by our love of literature and our deep and abiding faith in its power to connect us both to our own sense of humanity, and to one another. It is with this belief, and in this spirit of community, that we held as scheduled (albeit digitally) our annual reading of English majors graduating with the Creative Writing Emphasis on April 30, 2020.



Via Zoom, our Seniors graduating with the Creative Writing Emphasis read their work. Our featured readers were:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| McKenna Christian | Kaia Hubbard | Nena McGrade | Jake Sanborn |
| Nicholas Cohn | Kim Huynh | Shaun Morand | Colin Thompson |
| Ale Esquer | Kristen Jensen | Davontae Reed | Phoebe Woolfer |
| Jordan Hagness | Fernanda Legaratta Rodriguez | | |

Each year, this event is a milestone that celebrates the work of these student authors within the Major and Emphasis. Congratulations to all our students completing the Creative Writing emphasis!



"A GOOD LAUGH IS SUNSHINE IN THE HOUSE."

—WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY





English Dept Announcements

What is Good Literature?

“What is Good Literature?” by Beth Ann Fennelly (Notre Dame, '93), from *Notre Dame Magazine* (Spring 2020).

Greetings from an evangelist for a declining field: the study of literature. English majors, like all humanities majors, are on the wane. According to education commentator Jeffrey Selinger, writing in *The Atlantic*, until 2011, one-third of the degrees from U.S. liberal arts colleges were awarded in the humanities. Now, “well under” one-quarter are. At research universities during the same period, humanities degrees dropped from 17 to 11 percent of the total number conferred.

What accounts for this trend? Probably practicalities. Consider that 2011’s graduates were choosing majors during the 2008 recession. Given the increasingly absurd cost of a college degree, who can blame students for choosing majors in more vocational fields such as business, health and technology? I, too, have college-tuition woes — my husband and I have a freshman, with two younger children approaching the starting block. And I, too, have heard the old joke: Q. What’s the difference between an English major and a park bench?

A. A park bench can support a family of four.

So it makes sense, in a way, that the study of literature is less popular. But guess what else is on the outs? Empathy. A 2010 University of Michigan study that analyzed data from surveys taken over 30 years by 14,000 American college students found them scoring 40 percent lower in empathy than those in the past. And today’s students are even less likely to agree with statements such as, “I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective,”

and, “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.”

What’s the connection? I’ve spent the past two decades in the classroom reading readers, and what I deeply believe — and what the emerging field of literary neuroscience is beginning to prove — is that literature makes us more empathetic.

Are we frustrated or sympathetic with Hamlet’s reluctance to avenge his father? When Jane Eyre discovers Mr.

Rochester is married, do we urge her to flee Thornfield, or to stay?

During engaged reading, we compare the protagonist’s actions to what we’d do in a similar situation, or what we’ve done in the past. We practice making decisions that have consequences, which is to say, we practice adulthood. Cognitive psychologist and novelist Keith Oatley calls reading “the mind’s flight simulator.” Speaking to *The New York Times* in 2012, he suggested that “just as computer simulations can help us get to grips with complex problems such as flying a plane or forecasting the weather, so novels, stories and dramas can help us understand the complexities of social life.”

Through the flight simulator of reading, we get “all the feels,” as the kids say. Paying attention to our feelings educates our emotional intelligence, a necessary task because while we somehow assume our emotions are perfectly accessible, transparent and straightforward, that’s very rarely the case. It’s hard work to know what we’re feeling, especially in this air-

brushed age of social media that rewards us for masking our authentic selves. Reading exposes us to the fully expressed, uncensored heart of a narrator who has nothing to gain from disguising her vulnerability.

The mind reading we do when thinking through a character helps us develop social sensitivity, as demonstrated ingeniously in a 2013 study by social psychologists at New York’s New School for Social Research. Participants were given five minutes to read excerpts of award-winning literary fiction, popular novels, nonfiction articles — or nothing — then took one of five tests that measure a person’s ability to decipher or predict emotions in various scenarios. In one test, the subjects were presented with a series of gray-scale photos cropped to reveal only a person’s eyes, then asked to identify the expression contained in the eyes from four options, such as “jealous,” “panicked,” “arrogant” or “hateful.” Readers of the literary fiction excerpt scored higher on this test than the other readers — or nonreaders — did. Literature, the study theorized, gives us practice in taking on another person’s point of view, making readers better at inferring someone else’s mental state in just a few minutes.

We stereotype bookworms as paste-eating, awkward loners, but the truth is that reading improves our social awareness by honing our ability to interpret both our own and others’ moods. Reading literature helps us read the room.

Read remainder of essay at: <https://magazine.nd.edu/stories/what-good-is-literature/>.



Illustration by Keith Neigley

**“PEOPLE
MAY HEAR
YOUR WORDS,
BUT THEY FEEL
YOUR
ATTITUDE.”**

**—JOHN C.
MAXWELL**



Student News

Welcome English Majors & Minors!

The English Department welcomes the following new English majors & minors:

- **Aracely Aldana**, English major, Spanish minor
- **Hana McAnally**, English major, Asian Studies minor
- **Cathryn Nye**, Communications Studies and English double-major
- **Alexa Gonzalez**, Political Science and English double-major
- **Anna Palagano**, English and Communication Studies double-major
- **Avery Barrett**, Political Science and English double-major
- **Matthew Olson**, English major
- **Alyssa Moreno**, English major, Leadership Studies minor

Welcome to the Department of English!



**"DON'T CRY
BECAUSE
IT'S OVER.
SMILE
BECAUSE IT
HAPPENED."**

—DR. SEUSS

English Majors at Honors Colloquium

The Honor Program presented its Honors Colloquium virtually this year. Have you checked out the Honors thesis projects yet? It's not too late!! Access to 45 incredible senior thesis presentations are available for you to view by clicking going to: [https://](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScQGC5okQAGX7VaZX505eN4iQakT-gqKiwzotGvnxGhZutXA/viewform)

docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScQGC5okQAGX7VaZX505eN4iQakT-gqKiwzotGvnxGhZutXA/viewform (or email the Honors Program at: honors@sandiego.edu)

to request access. Don't delay...the 15-minute presentations will only be accessible through this Wednesday, May 13, 2020.

English majors who participated in the Honors Colloquium are:

McKenna Christian

Major: English (Creative Writing emphasis)
Thesis Title: **Poetry as a Conversation: A Collection of Poetry by McKenna Christian**
Thesis Advisor: Malachi Black



Nicholas Cohn

Major: English (Creative Writing emphasis), & Math minor
Thesis Title: **Space for All: A Case Study of the Outer Space Imagination in Argentina**
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Atreyee Phukan



Jake Sanborn

Major: English (Creative Writing emphasis) and Political Science double-major
Thesis Title: **Exploring the Truths and Fabrications of Sir John Mandeville**
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Irene Williams

Job well done to our Honors Program seniors on their thesis and presentations! Congratulations!



Student News

Playwriting Course

THEA 365 Playwriting is open to all levels of writing. Learn the basics of good storytelling in a creative, supportive, and fun environment. For more information, please contact Prof. Evelyn Diaz Cruz at: diazcruz@sandiego.edu.



Film Studies Course

ARTH 494 Nuclear Cinema is a new class that is taught in DAA+AH and counts towards the Film Studies minor. It is an upper division course with no prerequisites. For more information, please contact Dr. Hannah Holtzman at: hholtzman@SanDiego.edu.



SEE YOUR STORIES COME TO LIFE

PLAYWRITING

FALL 2020

THEA 365
T/Th 2:30 to 3:50 p.m.

Learn the basics of good storytelling in a creative, supportive, and fun environment.

Diverse plays, interactive exercises, dynamic in-class readings.

All levels of writing are welcome.

For more information email Professor Evelyn Diaz Cruz at diazcruz@sandiego.edu.

ARTH494: Nuclear Cinema*

Wednesdays, 5:30 - 8:20pm

Dr. Hannah Holtzman

*Counts toward the Film Minor.

Face one of humankind's greatest threats and fears on the big screen and from the comfortable remove of the classroom!



We hope to never experience nuclear disaster ourselves, so what can we learn from films and philosophical reflection about nuclear concerns? And how can we use what we learn to prevent another global disaster?

Screenings include *Godzilla* and *Dr. Strangelove* and arthouse masterpieces *Hiroshima mon amour* and *La Jetée*.

This upper-division course (CRN 4263) has no pre-requisites.



**"THE JOY OF LIFE
COMES FROM OUR
ENCOUNTERS WITH
NEW EXPERIENCES,
AND HENCE THERE IS
NO GREATER JOY
THAN TO HAVE
AN ENDLESSLY
CHANGING HORIZON,
FOR EACH DAY TO
HAVE A NEW AND
DIFFERENT SUN."**

**—CHRISTOPHER
McCANDLESS**



Student Career Assistance

Virtual: Articulating the Value of Your Liberal Arts Education

In the USD Career Development Center's hour virtual workshop students will learn to connect their liberal arts education to the competencies employers/graduate schools seek. Students will practice articulating the value of their liberal arts education in both written professional documents and orally during interviews.

This virtual workshop is available online for students to complete at any time.

If you are in a Career Readiness Program (COMPASS/

CONNECT/PASSPORT), go to <https://sandiego.talentlms.com/> and click "forgot password" to create an account and access the Articulating the Value of the Liberal Arts online module. Everyone else, please email Judd Mateo at jmateo@sandiego.edu for login instructions to access the Articulating the Value of the Liberal Arts online module.

Career Readiness Program Approved:
COMPASS: 1 core point



Masters Review Flash Fiction Contest

Never before has each word in a submission been worth so much... You might be limited to 1000 words, but the winner will be rewarded with \$3000! Second and third place receive \$300 and \$200, respectively, and all stories are considered for publication. We're only looking for previously unpublished stories, but you're allowed both simultaneous and multiple submissions. Our guest judge is Sherrie Flick, and we're asking you to dazzle her! Don't miss it! <https://mastersreview.com/flash-fiction-contest/>. The entry fee is \$20. Deadline is May 31, 2020. *



"LIFE'S MOST
PERSISTENT
AND URGENT
QUESTION IS,
'WHAT ARE
YOU DOING
FOR OTHERS?'"

—MARTIN LUTHER
KING, JR.



Alumni News

Brooke Didyk to American University

Brooke Didyk (English, 2017) has been accepted into a Masters program with scholarship at American University in Washington, D.C. She writes, "I recently received admission to the MS in Marketing program at American University. The Masters of Marketing program is facilitated through the Kogod School of Business, where I will be attending classes this upcoming Fall. I am extremely grateful and excited for this opportunity, as it was my ambition to achieve a Masters degree after completing my bachelors of English. I owe a great deal of gratitude to USD and its dedicated professors who have supported me through the undertaking of my bachelors. I am looking forward to exploring my interest in business, through courses such as 'Brand Identity' and 'Understanding the Marketplace and The Consumer.' I encourage students to remain disciplined and ambitious as your hard work will indeed reward you."

Congratulations, Brooke!





Alumni News

Sarah Jorgensen Publishes Essay on CNN



Sarah Jorgensen (English, 2013) is a field producer at CNN, and on April 28, 2020, they published her personal essay "Coronavirus and a case of shingles left me more alone than any time in my life" about her experience of living alone in New York during the pandemic. Read the essay at: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/28/health/coronavirus-diary-living-alone-shingles/index.html>.

Professor Brad Melekian, English, writes, "Sarah was taught by many of us, and she was a student in some of my very first Non-fiction Writing classes back in 2012/2013."

Sarah has a Twitter account and a professional Instagram account, [@sarahljorgensen](https://twitter.com/sarahljorgensen).

Stephanie Meraz to Columbia University's School of Journalism



Stephanie Meraz (English, Creative Writing Emphasis, 2019) has been accepted to the Columbia Publishing Course within Columbia University's School of Journalism.

Stephanie was Sigma Tau Delta president her senior year at USD. Congratulations, Stephanie!

Leilee Ghassemi to Loyola Marymount Law School



Leilee Ghassemi (English, Creative Writing Emphasis, 2019) will be attending Loyola Marymount Law School this fall.

Congratulations, Leilee!

Emma Uriarte to Oregon State University's fiction M.F.A.

Emma Uriarte (English, Creative Writing Emphasis, 2017) will be attending Oregon State University's fiction M.F.A. program in Fall 2020.

Congratulations, Emma!



**"GOOD FRIENDS,
GOOD BOOKS
AND A SLEEPY
CONSCIENCE:
THIS IS THE
IDEAL LIFE."**

—MARK TWAIN

English alumni: Send us your updates & photos!
Please email to English@sandiego.edu. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you—



Faculty News

In Good Company With Josh Hall

Our very own Josh Hall, faculty, participated in USD's "In Good Company Video Series." Inspired by Desert Island Discs, USD faculty, staff, and students share three creative pieces (music, literature, film, artwork) that are keeping them company during this time. See Josh's video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bsSsEN5Kcc&feature=youtu.be>.



Alexis Jackson Places in Kore's Poetry Prize

Alexis Jackson, faculty, received some good news that her manuscript won 2nd place in Kore Press Institute's First Book Award (and there is no second place usually); it was selected by judge Erica Hunt, and will be published by the press!

Congratulations, Alexis!

Selected by Erica Hunt for Kore's Poetry Prize!
Second place winner is *My Sister's Country* by Alexis Jackson
Runner up is *Chamber After Chamber*
by Saara Myrene Raappana
 THANK YOU to ALL the WRITERS WHO ENTERED the CONTEST

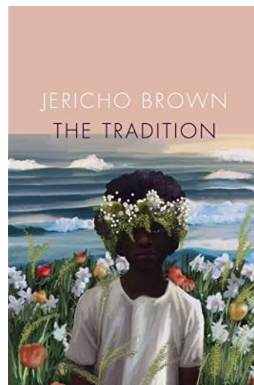


Jessica Lawson (*above, left*) (she/her/hers) is a Denver-based poet, scholar, teacher, and activist. Raised in the Midwest, she holds a B.A. from Smith College, where she was the first English student to write a creative thesis. At the University of Iowa, her Ph.D. research examined feminism and the body politics of metaphor in 20th and 21st century literature. Turning back to creative writing following her doctorate, she earned an M.F.A. from the University of Colorado-Boulder, where she served as an editor for *Timber Journal*. Her poetry and essays have appeared in *The Rumpus*; *Dreginald*; *Entropy*; *The Fanzine*; *Yes, Poetry*; *Cosmonauts Avenue*; *The Wanderer*; *FLAG + VOID*. She is a queer, single mother of two children.

Alexis Jackson (*above right*) has an MFA from Columbia University's School of the Arts, and her Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a concentration in writing from Messiah College. Jackson studied post-colonial literature/poetry and Shakespeare in Oxford University. Jackson's interests are in exploring the connectedness of "holy text" and the words of Black women. In Jackson's work, June Jordan is placed in conversation with Missy Elliott, Hortense Spillers, and the women in Jackson's own matrilineal lineage. Influenced by M. NourbeSe Philip's Zong! and Robin Coste Lewis' *Voyage of the Sable Venus*. She is heavily influenced by her identities as a 90s-raised, darker-skinned, Black woman, Philadelphia native. Her interests include the tradition of black woman poets, womanist theology, poetic form, and womanism.

**"BE KIND
WHENEVER
POSSIBLE.
IT IS
ALWAYS
POSSIBLE.**

—DALAI LAMA



Former Faculty Member, Jericho Brown, Wins Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

Former USD English faculty member, Jericho Brown, has won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

From [Decaturish.com](https://decatourish.com) article by Dan Whisenhunt (May 4, 2020): "Jericho Brown, Emory's Winship Distinguished Research Professor in Creative Writing, has won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for poetry for his collection, "The Tradition."

The Pulitzer board described the work as, "A collection of masterful lyrics that combine delica-

cy with historical urgency in their loving evocation of bodies vulnerable to hostility and violence."

Brown is an associate professor and director of the Creative Writing Program at Emory University, according to [Pulitzer.org](https://pulitzer.org)."

Read remainder of article at: <https://decatourish.com/2020/05/emory-creative-writing-professor-wins-pulitzer-prize-for-poetry/>.





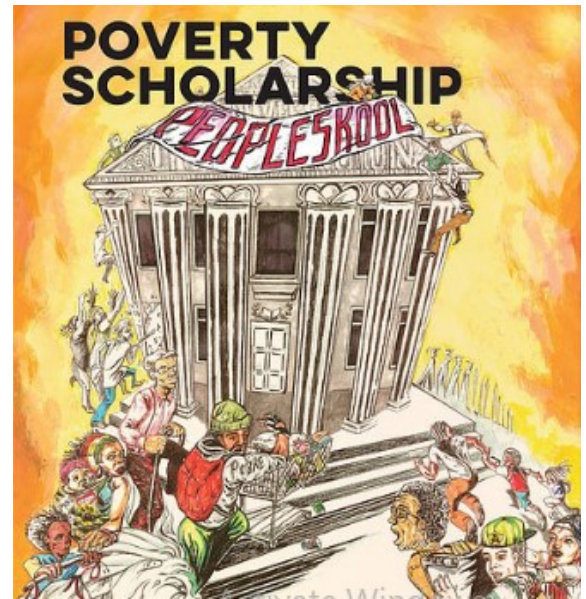
Other Announcements

USD Just Read! Poverty Scholarship: From Criminalization to Corona on Stolen Land...

Wednesday, May 13, 2020, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Zoom. Community activists Leroy Moore & Tiny Garcia will be presenting on their new topic "From Criminalization to Corona on Stolen Land"

The USD Just Read! program welcomes all to attend this special Zoom live presentation with community activists Leroy Moore and Tiny Garcia. Leroy and Tiny will discuss how we have collectively created a poor people's history, a herstory and a pedagogy of the ways to lift up, enact and fight for the everyday needs of survival while actually building and manifesting a poor people-led solution to poverty, houselessness and scarcity models, especially now under COVID-19.

For more information and to register for this free Zoom event, please go to: <https://www.sandiego.edu/cee/detail.php?focus=75954>.



USD Conversations: "How to Teach Theatre When the Lights Go Out"

Watch the 55-minute video recording of the first USD Conversations, "How to Teach Theatre When the Lights Go Out" with Jesse Perez, Director of The Old Globe and University of San Diego Shiley Graduate Theatre Program and Craig Noel Chair, and Shana Wride, Program Coordinator of The Old Globe and University of San Diego Shiley Graduate Theatre Program. View on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYYzL-yHYxs&feature=youtu.be>.

Join the University of San Diego weekly for "USD Conversations" where faculty, alumni and friends share their insights around current events and timely themes. These events are free and available for all audiences to attend.

The next USD Conversations is "Federalism and Pandemic: Who Calls the Shots?" with Prof. Del Dickson on Wednesday, May 13, 2020, at 12:00 p.m. How should we strike a balance between federal and state governments, in a time of national crisis but divergent local circumstances? How the novel coronavirus might result in a healthier democracy. Register in advance for this free event at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/USD-conversations-federalism-and-pandemic-who-calls-the-shots-tickets-103747625942>.

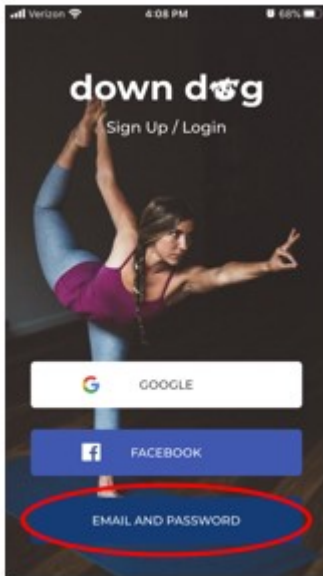
"ATTITUDE
IS A LITTLE
THING THAT
MAKES
A BIG
DIFFERENCE."

—WINSTON
CHURCHILL





Other Announcements



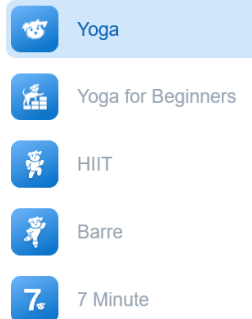
Free Yoga (plus more!) App for USD

USD Student Activities and Involvement was able to secure a free trial for Down Dog, a set of fitness and wellness apps for the USD community. Anyone at USD —students, employees— may get the free trial that ends on July 1, 2020.

Go to: <https://www.downdogapp.com/schools/instructions/sandiego.edu>.

down dog

Great
fitness
anywhere



**"DO NOT DWELL
IN THE PAST,
DO NOT DREAM
OF THE FUTURE,
CONCENTRATE
THE MIND ON
THE PRESENT
MOMENT."**

—BUDDHA

The Happiness Lab

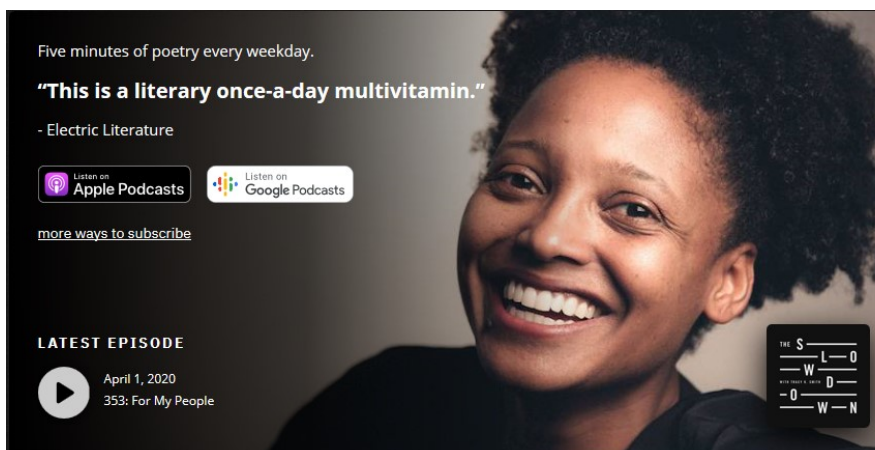
The Happiness Lab: a podcast from Dr. Laurie Santos examining the latest scientific research on happiness and sharing practical takeaways that will forever alter the way you think ...

You might think more money, a better job, or Instagram-worthy vacations would make you happy. You're dead wrong. In "The Happiness Lab" podcast, Yale professor Dr. Laurie Santos will take you through the latest scientific research and share some surprising and inspiring stories that will forever alter the way you think about happiness. She's changed the lives of thousands of people through her class "Psychology and the Good Life," and she'll change yours, too. Are you ready to feel better?

Find the Happiness Lab at: <https://www.happineslab.fm/>.*



The Slowdown: Daily Poetry Podcast with Tracey K. Smith



The Slowdown: 5 minutes daily podcast with Tracey K. Smith. Listen on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, or go to: <https://www.slowdownshow.org/>.*

Smith, former U.S. Poet Laurette, was also our Lindsay J. Cropper Memorial Writers Series guest reader for our series' 15th Anniversary event in 2019.

