

ENGLISH DEPT NEWSLETTER

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Important Dates

- **May 29:** Final Grades Due
- **May 31:** Pentecost (Whitsunday)
- **June 1:** First Day of Summer Classes (Pre-Session)
- **June:** Pride Month
- **June 1:** Global Day of Parents
- **June 5:** National Donut Day
- **June 8:** World Oceans Day
- **June 14:** Flag Day
- **June 19:** Juneteenth
- **June 20:** Summer Solstice
- **June 21:** Father's Day
- **June 22:** Mid-Session Summer classes begin
- **July 4:** Independence Day



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English Dept Announcements

English Department Virtual Commencement

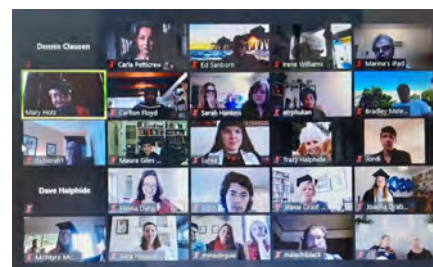
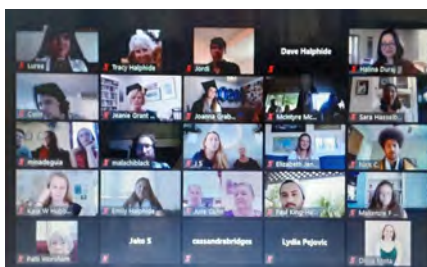
On Sunday, May 24, 2020, the originally scheduled day for commencement, the English Department held

its own virtual graduation celebration for our English seniors. Sister Mary Hotz, our interim department chair, and "Master of Ceremonies" lead the ceremony on Zoom with the playing of "Pomp and Circumstance," read the roll-call of our English graduates, and gave the following reading.



"Words Matter" by Mary Hotz, RSCJ (May 24, 2020): Linda Hogan, in her memoir, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, writes: "Words . . . are the defining shape of a human spirit. Without them we fall. Without them, there is no accounting for the human place in the world. Language is an intimacy not only with others, but even with the self (as perhaps we have discovered in our quarantines). Language creates a person. Without it, in the dawn, in the dark of night, there is no way to know who or what we are" (56).

English majors believe deeply (having taken the risk to major in English in the first place) that words "put a human life together." Words are "the defining shape of a human spirit." And because words have such power, we must always be thoughtful about them, for they heal a devastating



and difficult past, they describe a troubled and perplexing present, and they express our deepest desires and aspirations for a bright and better future.

And because we know the power of language, we also know how tricksters manipulate language to serve their own purposes. This is also why we must be practiced and vigilant, sensitive and perceptive about language, discourses, arguments, and justifications. To be good citizens, we must be attuned and passionate about language. When you commit yourselves to language, to a passion for words, you thereby commit yourselves to identity, which, in Hogan's sense of the word, involves community, love, compassion and hope for friends, for enemies, for family, town, the nation and the world. Linda Hogan reminds us again—and very powerfully—that words matter.

Congratulations to our graduates. And when you find yourselves under pressure from someone who wants to know what in heaven's name you had in mind by majoring English, simply tell them, "Words matter."



English Dept Announcements

Honors Convocation: Special English Department Awards

Annually each May we celebrate the USD Undergraduate Honors Convocation. We congratulate our 2020 award recipients, who are recognized for their academic and involvement efforts! Students will be receiving a congratulatory package in the mail. For a full list of recipients, please review the Honors Convocation 2020 program at: <https://www.sandiego.edu/news/detail.php?focus=76788>.

The English Department gives two special department awards at Honors Convocation. This year, these awards go to:

- Scholastic Achievement Award: **Nicholas Cohn**
- The Literary Achievement Award: **Sarah Hankins**

Nick Cohn, recipient of the Scholastic Achievement Award, is the kind of student who inspires his professors. His depth of

thought, his original observations, and his insights into literature and societal issues—all delivered in an articulate yet unassuming manner—raise the level of class discussion far beyond expectations. Nick academically and personally has earned the highest respect from faculty and peers.

Sarah Hankins, recipient of the Literary Achievement Award, brings her ebullience into the classroom in a way that enriches her perceptive contributions to class discussion. Often approaching literature from an original angle, she is able to shed fresh light on issues surrounding the texts. She not only sets a high standard of academic excellence, but she also provides a personal example of integrity and positivity.

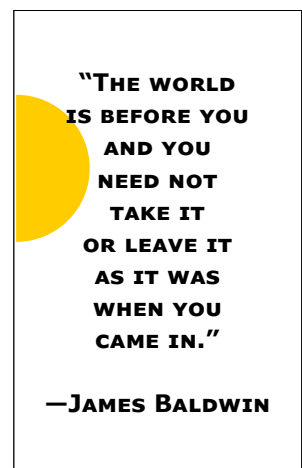
We congratulate you both on earning these prestigious awards!



Nick Cohn



Sarah Hankins



Honors Convocation: Southeast San Diego Tutoring Project Award

Also announced by the 2020 Honors Convocation Committee is a special award for a student partaking of the Southeast San Diego Tutoring Project. This year, the award goes to:

- Southeast San Diego Outstanding Tutor Award: **Celeen Gharibian**

Professor Timothy Randell, Director of the Southeast San Diego Tutoring Project, tells us “Celeen earned this award by dedicating 180 hours of service to the children and faculty of Our Lady's School over four semesters, proudly representing the program and earning exceptional praise from teachers, students, and administrators.”

We congratulate you, Celeen!



Celeen Gharibian



English Dept Announcements

Honors Convocation: Writing Center Awards

The Writing Center special awards were also announced by the 2020 Honors Convocation Committee. View the virtual Honors Convocation 2020 program at: <https://www.sandiego.edu/news/detail.php?focus=76788>. This year, the two Writing Center awards go to:

Outstanding Contributions to the Writing Center:

- **Jordane Schooley**
- **Nicholas Cohn**

Jordane Schooley and Nicholas Cohn received this year's award for "Outstanding Contribution to the Writing Center." Both Jordane and Nicholas ran the day-to-day operations of the Writing Center, which includes oversight over a staff of 35, as well as running weekly training workshops for Writing Center Consultants. One of their most notable achievements this year was overseeing the transition to online tutoring when the university shut down.

Congratulations, JJ and Nick!



**"WITH THE
NEW DAY
COMES
NEW STRENGTH
AND
NEW THOUGHTS."
—
ELEANOR
ROOSEVELT**





English Dept Announcements

Honors Convocation: Departmental Honors

Department Honors were also announced by the 2020 Honors Convocation Committee. View the virtual Honors Convocation 2020 program at: <https://www.sandiego.edu/news/detail.php?focus=76788>.

Departmental Honors is for graduating seniors who have a 3.5 or higher in the major (English). A certificate will be mailed to each student. Our 2020 Departmental Honors awardees are: (and includes December 2019 graduates):

Reid Arno	Celeen Gharibian	Brianna Jurries	Nicole O'Farrill
Addison Baffert	Joanna Grabowski	Gurleen Kang	Lydia Pejovic
Ashley Barraugh	Emily Halphide	Paul King-Hernandez	Gabriel Rementeria
McKenna Christian	Sarah Hankins	Milena Kufa	Jake Sanborn
Nicholas Cohn	Kaia Hubbard	Nena McGrade	Luree Scott
Gabriel Cruz	Omar Jawdat	McIntyre McQueen	Sarafina Silveyra
Mina De Guia	Lizzy Jennings	Makenzie Melheim	Colin Thompson
Ale Esquer Castañeda	Kristen Jensen	Emily Mulhausen	Phoebe Woolfer

Congratulations to all our Departmental Honors awardees!



Sigma Tau Delta Graduating Seniors

We recognize the graduating members of Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society:

Mina de Guia	McKenna Christian	Milena Kufa
Jake Sanborn	Nicholas Cohn	Lydia Pejovic
Gurleen Kang	Ale Esquer	Luree Scott
Gabriel Rementeria (fall 2019)	Sarah Hankins	Colin Thompson
Reid Arno	Kaia Hubbard	Phoebe Woolfer
	Maggie Lehmann	



SIGMA TAU DELTA
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

**"IF YOU DON'T
LIKE SOMETHING,
CHANGE IT.
IF YOU CAN'T
CHANGE IT,
CHANGE YOUR
ATTITUDE."**

—MAYA ANGELOU





English Dept Announcements

The Alcalá Review

The Alcalá Review would like to recognize the outgoing editorial staff that includes **McKenna Christian**, who's been involved in AR since 2016, served as the Managing Editor for 2017-2018, and served as Poetry Editor for the 2019-2020 academic year; and **Gurleen Kang**, Prose Editor, who's been involved since 2019 and served as Prose Editor for the 2019-2020 academic year.



AR announces that Dr. Duraj has generously agreed to take Dr. Black's place as faculty advisor while he's on sabbatical for the next academic year.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding COVID-19, the *Alcalá Review* has elected to delay the publication of Volume 5, Issue 2, until the coming fall.

In the meantime, we are pleased to offer the following preview material, which includes a downloadable sample of the forthcoming print edition and a selection of poems read by AR contributors and staff members Davontae Reed and McKenna Christian: <https://www.sandiego.edu/news/cas/detail.php?focus=76664>.



Sigma Tau Delta, English Honor Society



"WE
KNOW WHAT
WE ARE,
BUT KNOW
NOT WHAT
WE MAY BE."

—WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE

Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society, is pleased to announce the selection of their new chapter president for the 2020-2021 academic year: **Emily Jewett**. Congratulations, Emily!

Outgoing president, **Mina De Guia**, writes us, "I want to thank all of Sigma Tau Delta for their commitment to remaining connected and supportive of one another during this time. I especially appreciate the members who helped put together the virtual ball and support fund! I'm very lucky to work with such fun, generous, and kind people. It is my hope that Sigma Tau only grows closer in the coming year. Congrats to the class of 2020 and best wishes to those continuing on at USD."

Thank you, Mina, for all your hard work this year!

SIGMA TAU DELTA
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY





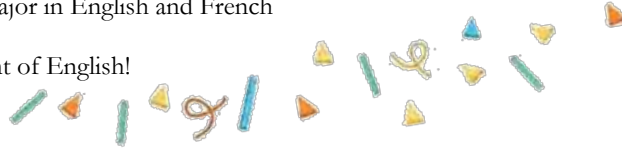
Student News

Welcome English Majors & Minors!

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

- **Davis Ambagtsheer**, English major with Creative Writing emphasis
- **Megan Valadez**, double major in English and Sociology (with Law, Crime, Justice concentration)
- **Olivia Sutton**, double major in English and French

Welcome to the Department of English!



**"WHAT LIES
BEHIND US
AND WHAT LIES
AHEAD OF US ARE
TINY MATTERS
COMPARED TO
WHAT LIVES
WITHIN US."**

**—HENRY DAVID
THOREAU**

Keck Fellowship Awarded to Emma Heflin

Emma Heflin, '21, double major in English and Philosophy, has been selected to be a Keck Humanities Undergraduate Research Fellow in the Humanities Center for 2020-21 for her proposed project "Shakespeare and Virtue: Literary Conveyance of Ethical Thought."

Keck Humanities Fellows work under the close guidance of a faculty advisor to conduct original, substantial research, scholarly activities and/or creative work advancing the interdisciplinary humanities over both the Fall and Spring semesters. Keck Fellowship benefits include:

- Stipend of \$2,800 per semester (\$5,600 total)
- Research materials funds totaling \$1,000 for the year
- Conference travel funds totaling \$1,000 for the year

More information on the Keck Humanities Undergraduate Research Fellowship program at: <https://www.sandiego.edu/cas/humanities-center/collaborative-research/keck-fellows.php>.

Congratulations, Emma!



Keck Fellowship Awarded to Samuel Hixon



Samuel Hixon, '21, Interdisciplinary Humanities and Biochemistry Major, was awarded a Keck Humanities Undergraduate Research Fellowship for next year. Prof. Brad Melekian will be working with Sam as he writes about climate change as seen through the eyes of literature, using as a springboard his own personal reflections on his 17-day solo sailing voyage to USD last summer from his native Hawaii.

Keck Humanities Fellows work under the close guidance of a faculty advisor to conduct original, substantial research, scholarly activities and/or creative work advancing the interdisciplinary humanities over both the Fall and Spring semesters. Keck Fellowship benefits include:

- Stipend of \$2,800 per semester (\$5,600 total)
- Research materials funds totaling \$1,000 for the year
- Conference travel funds totaling \$1,000 for the year

More information on the Keck Humanities Undergraduate Research Fellowship program at: <https://www.sandiego.edu/cas/humanities-center/collaborative-research/keck-fellows.php>.

Congratulations, Sam!



Student News

Sarah Hankins Wins 1st place in the Library UG Research Awards



Sarah Hankins' ('20 English major) Senior Project won first place in Copley Library's first annual Undergraduate Research Awards. Her paper "Torture the Women: A Gaze at the Misogynistic Machinery of Scary Cinema" was from her Senior Project course in Fall 2019, taught by Dr. Giles Watson. Her senior project faculty advisor was Dr. Robinson.

Michael Epstein, Copley Library, wrote, "This award recognizes your exceptional use of library resources and services in the writing of your paper. On behalf of the judging panel, I offer congratulations on your achievement."

As part of this award Sarah will receive a check in the amount of \$800 as well as an award certificate and letter of recognition from the Dean of the University Library. Her paper will also be featured in

Copley Library's online repository Digital USD.

The Copley Library Undergraduate Library Research Awards were established to recognize students' exceptional research papers using library resources and services. Award amounts are: First Place Paper, \$800; Second Place Paper, \$400. For more information on the library undergraduate research awards, please go to: <https://www.sandiego.edu/library/about-us/awards.php>.

Congratulations, Sarah, on your award!



**"KEEP YOUR FACE
ALWAYS TOWARD
THE SUNSHINE -
AND SHADOWS
WILL FALL BEHIND
YOU."**

—WALT WHITMAN

Kaia Hubbard Takes Third in National Journalism Competition

We congratulate Kia Hubbard, '20 English Major, on taking third place in "The Big Scribble" national journalism competition! Read the USD News article below, by Ryan Blystone:

As March began, Kaia Hubbard's focus was split between taking her last semester of classes as a University of San Diego undergrad and leading the USD Vista newspaper as its editor-in-chief.

Then came the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and USD's decision to shift all class instruction to remote learning and move all students off campus. Hubbard and Vista staff members worked through the disruption, attended classes and kept going, all while still covering university COVID-19-related developments and other campus news through its last issue in early May.

It was a lot to handle during a pandemic in which states enforced a stay-at-home existence. But Hubbard, an award-winning

college journalist carved out enough time during the pandemic to compete in an impromptu five-week national student journalism contest called The Big Scribble.

On May 24, after writing five diverse stories, getting professional critique of her work and outlasting 400 others to be a Top 10 finalist, Hubbard learned she finished third overall.

"I am so shocked that I made the top three," said the English and psychology double major and now graduate. "It didn't seem possible in the beginning with 409 participants in the contest, and it felt even less possible last week when I was in 10th place."

The Big Scribble was a first-time competition hastily arranged by veteran professional writers Jeff Pearlman and Jonathan Eig and other industry colleagues who gave young writers something productive to do during this unprecedented time. At best, organizers thought maybe 100 students might apply. But the 409 who entered included Hubbard and two of her USD Vista colleagues and mid-year class of 2020 graduates, Luke Garrett and Anderson Haigler.

The first four story topics, each 350 words, were do a profile on someone you know, a food review, a story about hair in the pandemic and write an obituary on one of four living people...

Read full article at: <https://www.sandiego.edu/news/detail.php?focus=76790>.





Student News

Senior Spotlights!

We invited all of our graduating English majors to share with us their post-graduation plans and a favorite memory from the English Department. Here are the ones we received:



Emily Halphide

After graduation, I plan on looking for a job in the publishing field.

One of my favorite English memories is Friday classes with Professor McGowan!



Nena McGrade

I am planning on pursuing a career in digital marketing.

My favorite memory of being an English major was my Nonfiction Creative Writing class with Prof. Melekian. It was my favorite class I've ever taken, and our bond as a class is something I will truly never forget!



Joanna Grabowski

My plans after graduation are to continue working at the social media agency I work for currently where I write blogs and am in charge of sales but eventually, I hope to write and publish a book!

My favorite memory within the English department is one from recently! It would without a doubt have to be meeting and taking Professor Duraj's course.

She is an exceptional woman and helped me find myself as a writer and a person! Without her I would never have found my true voice.



Sarafina Silveyra

I will be attending Graduate School this fall at California Lutheran University to pursue a Master's degree in School Counseling.

I took a couple of classes with Dr. Floyd over the course of my undergrad years and he helped me look at the world around me in ways I didn't even know was possible. I owe it to him for broadening my perspective on

life itself. He was one of the many amazing professors I came across in the English department at USD!



Phoebe Woofter

Summer has lots of writing submissions in store for me while I teach English with VIPKid. I'm planning a few backpacking trips, including a thru-bike of the PCT.

My favorite memory of college is when I met my girlfriend in a creative writing class.



Colin Thompson

I will be attending USF Law in the fall with a partial scholarship.

My favorite English memory is playing queer transhumanist punk music for my Senior Project presentation—and getting to write about it!



Student News

Senior Spotlights, continued



Sarah Hankins

Upon graduation, I plan to teach English abroad in Madrid, Spain!

My favorite English memory is when I was treated to an exquisite sushi dinner for my "Food as Narrative" (Dr. Koonyong Kim's) course.



McKenna Christian

After graduation I will be working full time managing San Diego's very own vegan cookie company, Maya's Cookies, while also applying to graduate schools to study creative writing.

I've loved being the poetry editor of the Alcalá Review as it has taught me a lot of about what it is like to be in editor and what the publishing business is like.



McIntyre McQueen

After graduation I am now starting to apply for grad school.

I feel so lucky to have been a part of this department... I don't think I can pick a favorite memory. I will cherish each day in the classroom with such compassionate, challenging, and brilliant people. I am looking forward to hearing everyone else's plans.



Mina De Guia

I will be starting my PhD at the University of Washington this fall! I'm so excited to start teaching and researching in my home state.

What is your favorite English dept. memory? Late nights goofing off in senior project, loitering in the Writing Center when I was not a consultant, and all of my favorite professors' "-isms?"

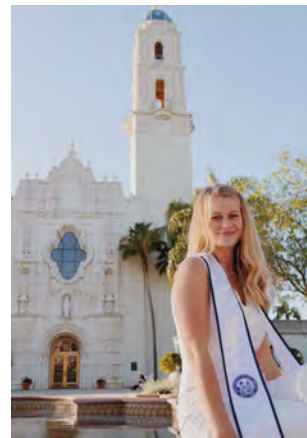


Lizzy Jennings

I will be working as the Associate Editor for iGrad, a company that specializes in financial literacy and financial wellness for undergrad and recent graduates, in Cardiff!

My favorite English memory is by far Nineteenth Century Novels with Sister Hotz. We covered books that have become some of my favorites, and Sister Hotz is one of the

most amazing professors, and one of the most amazing people, that I have ever met. I also took the course with two of my closest friends, Addison Baffert (an English major!) and Regis Bridgeland (an English minor!) and we had such a good time together.



Kaia Hubbard

After graduation, I plan to apply to grad programs, and take some much-needed time to relax after a busy four years.

My favorite memory of the English department is not one particular moment, but the daily interactions while walking through the halls of Founders. There was nothing more comforting throughout my college experience than poking

my head into the writing center to see who was around, or dropping by my professors' office hours for no reason other than to chat. I'll miss those daily walks more than anything else at USD.



Student News

Senior Spotlights, continued



Makenzie Melheim

I am taking a gap year before I am off to medical school! I am currently working on applications. I hope to pursue a career in pediatrics whilst continuing my passion for both reading and writing.

I often find myself contemplating the late

nights of Senior Project. The comradery surrounding mutual procrastination and literary curiosity is something that I will think back on fondly for a long time to come.



Jake Sanborn

I am currently searching for jobs that will allow me to use the skills I have developed through my experiences in the English and Political Science departments at USD. I'm hoping to find a job opportunity in the security industry or government contracting!

I cherished every moment I got to spend in the English Department; the faculty, staff,

and courses are truly the best that the university has to offer. However, I especially enjoyed working for the English Department as an office assistant. Being able to interact with my fellow English Majors and faculty on a daily basis was truly an amazing experience.



Gurleen Kang

After graduation, I plan on taking a long, well-earned nap. After that, I want to pursue writing and teaching as a profession. I'll be preparing applications for MFA and Ph.D. programs in literature and hopefully finding time in between to continue writing stories.

I honestly don't know how to answer this question. Every moment spent in the English department has been special to me and I've truly cherished my time in Founders Hall and the Writing Center. But if I have to pick, I think my absolute favorite is my first time walking into the Writing Center for my interview, seeing so many English inclined people hanging out, having fun, and getting work done, spooked me but also I realized I finally found my niche at USD.



Nicholas Cohn

After graduation, I hope to write and teach—these have long been my greatest loves, something continuously emphasized to me by my experiences in both creative writing classes and workshops and consulting sessions in the USD Writing Center. Ideally, I will have the chance to do these at the university-level, and I will be studying and preparing applications to graduate schools in the next

year, pursuing a Ph.D. in literature. I hope to fight for a more just world, even if that means starting in the realm of outer space.

Most of my time at USD has been defined and brightened through my involvement in the USD English department--from the moment that the combined kindness of Sr. Hotz and Professor Hasselbach convinced me to trust in this caring community and to trust in my own love of stories. It is difficult to choose just one favorite memory, but I think I would be foolish to say anything other than the Writing Center's Nights Again Procrastination--these were the perfect moments, where my love for my peers and my love for the power of the written language could most cross paths. My favorite memories have been made by my fellow English majors, brilliant people whom I am so fortunate to have worked alongside.



Student News

Senior Spotlights, continued



Davontae Reed

After graduation, I plan on doing an internship as a film judge and figuring out which film school I want to attend.

My favorite English Department memory is Alcalá Review inviting me to join the Jack Kerouac discussion panel. It was a refreshing experience to join Dr. Robinson, Dr.

Black, and Thomas Dolan to discuss the legacy of the Kerouac. This was a great moment to help me foster friendships on campus and become more involved in USD activities. Probably wouldn't do it again (facing the crowd is a little different than being a part of it!) but I am grateful for the opportunity.

Congratulations to ALL our seniors, including those not represented here (some chose not to be respond). We wish all of you the best!!



Ale Esquer Castañeda

I plan to work for a few years (hopefully in something related to community organizing) and then go to grad school. Ultimately, I want to be an English professor with a focus in Ethnic Studies and Marxist thought.

My favorite memory is the moment that I declared my major. I became an official English major as soon as I could. It's what I came to USD for (actually, it was the reason why I was studying in the US at all), and as soon as the paperwork went through, it felt magical. I'd wanted to study literature my whole life, and I'd wanted to be surrounded by friends that wanted to do the same, and as soon as I knew that I would get to do that, I was the happiest that I'd been in a long time. And now that it's done, I still feel the same way about being an English major. It was truly wonderful. I just wish it could have been longer!

Student Photo of the Week



Sarah Hankins' amazing photo of an other-worldly sunset in front of the UC was shared in the 5/26/20 Torero Weekly's Student Photo of the Week!

Sarah writes "I can never forget the striking beauty of this sky. Everyone around me for a moment marveled at how the setting sun made clouds turn the color of fire!"

Students, send your photos that convey your campus experience or simply capture beauty, with a short caption, to:

dcim@sandiego.edu.

"I
DWELL
IN
POSSIBILITY."

—EMILY
DICKINSON



Alumni News



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



"YOU HAVE TO PICK THE PLACES YOU DON'T WALK AWAY FROM."

—JOAN DIDION

Carr Cavender Produced and Acts in New Film *To Hell and Gone*



Carr Cavender's (2011 English and Theatre double-major) new film *To Hell and Gone*, a "neo-western tale," is available to view on multiple platforms. Carr writes us, "It has been over 4-years in the making, and getting to finally share the finished film means the world to me. Below are links to a teaser trailer and a longer theatrical trailer. I produced and acted in this film, which we shot on my family properties out in Southern Arizona. We used my family's

get back to normal), please know that Carr would be more than happy to help put that together (please contact Carla if interested).

Full trailer:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBShLXMNeo8>

Teaser trailer:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRWVGOTHnZA>

ranch in Klondyke, AZ as the location for most of the movie. We cast the film with actors from New York City and Los Angeles. We were able to secure a digital distribution deal with Gravitass Ventures, which is how we got to be streaming on everything from Amazon Prime to XBOX and Fandango Now."

Faculty and student organizations: if you would be interested in doing a private screening and talkback on campus (once things



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Faculty News

Joseph Babcock: New Book Project



Joseph Babcock, faculty, has a book project, *Other Moons*, to be published August 4, 2020, by Columbia University Press. It's an anthology of short fiction about the war in Vietnam by Vietnamese writers; he served as translator and editor of the anthology with his friend Quan Manh Ha, who teaches at the University of Montana.

This is the first time that any of these stories have appeared in English; it's an opportunity for English-speaking readers to experience how Vietnamese writers (many of them veterans of the war themselves) continue to think about and remember the conflict.

Here are links to the Amazon and Columbia UP pages for the book:

- <http://cup.columbia.edu/book/other-moons/9780231196093>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Other-Moons-Vietnamese-American-Aftermath/dp/0231196091>

Congratulations, Joseph!



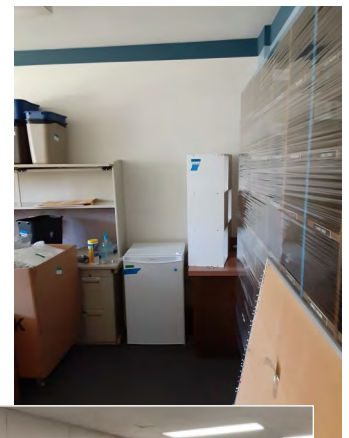
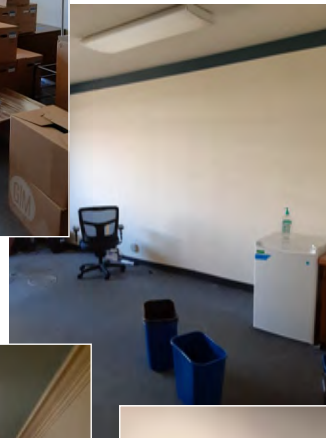
Founders Hall Move to UMOs

**"MAKE A
DIFFERENCE
ABOUT SOMETHING
OTHER THAN
YOURSELVES."**

—TONI MORRISON



On May 26, 2020, the English Department and all the units in Founders, Camino, and Sacred Heart Halls, were moved out in advance of the Renaissance Renovation Project, now underway. English will be moving to the University Modular Office (temporary "trailer"), or UMO, 200, located in the law school parking lot.



English hallway with construction lights strung up overhead



Inside new UMOs: reception areas for English and Philosophy



Other Announcements

What Jane Austen Can Teach Us About Staying Home

By Raisa Bruner, May 15, 2020, [Time.com](https://www.time.com)

Long, solitary walks. Family dinners. Days spent wondering when life might change. Evenings spent in quiet entertainment: reading, scrolling, reminiscing. These are the routines of present-day isolation. But give or take a few centuries, a few social-media apps and more than a few civil rights, I might as well be describing the days of Jane Austen's heroines. There's a strangely comforting echo between the staid lives of her early 19th century women and current circumstances, for those of us fortunate enough to have our greatest challenge be coping with staying home.

In my first 50 days of isolation with family in our Idaho town, I read only Austen's novels—and I read them all. Something about the old-fashioned language, rules and predictably happy endings of her sharp romantic comedies offered stability. I was privileged to be safe and well. But like so many others coming to terms with a confined reality, I also felt somewhat adrift, cut off from the gratifying motion of life in the 21st century.

I benefit from many freedoms, including my choice of a profession, far more than Austen's characters could claim. But the more I immersed myself in the worlds of *Persuasion's* sweet-tempered Anne Elliot, *Sense and Sensibility's* thoughtful Elinor Dashwood and fellow protagonists, the more I found an unexpected kinship. To be a woman of a certain class in Regency England was to be socially distanced by default—isolated in the country-side, living at the pace of the seasons, beholden to restrictions set by others (namely, men). Set aside the reasons for being confined and we're left with a defining commonality: the need to fill our days at home.

Take Fanny Price of *Mansfield Park*, treated by family like a servant. With no opportunity for escape, Fanny relies dearly on her patience. While her cousins chase romance, she serves her aunts: as an

exploited companion, sewing in demure silence, and as a constant target of snide comments. If Fanny can be kind and forgiving to less-than-deserving relatives—well, that's a humbling example for someone who recently snapped when asked to fix the TV.

At heart, Austen's heroines are homebodies, attached deeply (by default, perhaps) to their families and the locations they frequent on their moody walks. Emma Woodhouse is so committed to her father and their estate that she persuades her future husband to move in. The Dashwood sisters, though forced to move to a small cottage after their father's death, find joy there. "Is there a felicity in the world," Marianne asks while on a walk in nearby fields, "superior to this?"

Thanks to her family's precarious finances, Austen herself relied on the generosity of relatives, moving often. In the last year of her life, she was working on *Sanditon*, about a young woman visiting a family at their seaside home, when she became ill. "Sickness is a dangerous indulgence at my time of life," she wrote to her niece, forbearing even in bad

health. She died a few months later, leaving the bulk of *Sanditon* unwritten. Even so, it is her most acute social critique, a spiky takedown of social climbers and travelers. It hints at her distaste for those who could not be satisfied with staying home, a luxury she could not always afford.

It can be strange to reorient to a single place, to recognize that our modern transience—moving homes,

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IF WE WOULD
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THAN ANY OTHER
PERSON CAN BE."**

—JANE AUSTEN



Illustration by Jenny Kraok for TIME

taking vacations, mingling with strangers in bars—is in some ways a recent privilege. Before this year, I had never noticed the snow's slow retreat from our porch or watched the buds on the cottonwood trees turn spring's iridescent green. I hadn't sat down to dinner with the same people every night in years; hadn't helped plan a week's worth of home-cooked meals, written a letter or sipped a drink with nowhere to go. Things are not as they should be, but I can admit that these are joys too—modest domestic pleasures that Austen's women know and cherish so well. *