

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT RESEARCH DAY

# ENGLISH STUDIES CONFERENCE



**VIRTUAL  
CONFERENCE  
SESSIONS: TUES.,  
4/21, 5-8PM  
ONLINE**

**MAIN CONFERENCE  
WEDNESDAY,  
4/22,  
9:30AM-5:00PM**

**REGISTRATION & FREE BREAKFAST: 9:30-10:00AM**

**FREE LUNCH & KEYNOTE SPEAKER: 12:00-2:00pm**

Prize Raffles/Give-Aways Throughout the Day!

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT PANEL SESSIONS & READINGS: 10:00am-5:00pm

EIU UNIVERSITY-WIDE GRAD SHOWCASE POSTER PRESENTATIONS: 3:00-4:00pm

FULL PROGRAM AVAILABLE AT CONFERENCE WEBSITE VIA QR CODE:



**● THIRD FLOOR COLEMAN HALL & ADDITIONAL SPACES ●**

# 2026 English Studies Conference Program

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English Studies Online Conference, Tuesday, April 22nd, 5-8pm  
Virtual Panels (available via Zoom links in each session)



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## **SESSION ONE (Undergraduate/Graduate Panel)**

5:00pm-5:50pm, Virtual Panel, Zoom

### **Panel 1A – Online**

**Moderator: Dr. Marjorie Worthington**

### **Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://eiu.zoom.us/j/9603230276?pwd=UDJSWIZDcTZienFBMHI3YWJjd05UQT09>

### **Landan Heath, “Religious Controversies of Dante Alighieri”**

A presentation over the religious controversies that influenced the creation of The Divine Comedy, his legacy, and the reception of his work.

### **Jo Davidson, “Macbeth: Witchcraft, or Reinforcement of the Patriarchy?”**

This presentation will focus on the witches' role in Macbeth and how this shows a transition from witchcraft as a part of folklore and fairy tales to reality in everyday life. I will seek to understand how the influence of the male patriarchy caused the increase of violence towards women and the subjugation of those who did not fall in line with societal standards

### **Sarah Smith, “Liminal Subjectivity and the Queer Heroics of Denver Suggs in Beloved”**

Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* dramatizes a family enclosed in a haunted house and frozen within the constraining trauma of life after slavery. This is especially true for Denver Suggs who survived the journey to freedom as the family’s first generation born outside of slavery. This paper argues that Denver’s coming-of-age constitutes the formation of liminal selfhood at the threshold of suspension and possibility.

## **SESSION TWO (Concurrent Graduate Sessions)**

6:00pm-6:50pm, Virtual Panel, Zoom

### **Panel 2A – Online**

**Moderator: Dr. Marjorie Worthington**



### **Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://eiu.zoom.us/j/9603230276?pwd=UDJSWIZDcTZienFBMHI3YWJjd05UQT09>

### **Allison Nichols, “We Are Not Horses. We Are Humans.”: Alienation and Family Dynamics in Squid Game”**

By following the main character of Seong Gi-hun across all three seasons of the series “Squid Game,” it becomes clear how his interactions with other characters display aspects of alienation, class consciousness/false consciousness, and other capitalist. These elements highlight the overall messages of the conflict between the love that humanity can foster and the systems that work to alienate the working class from one another.

### **Amanda Bauer, “Haunted Communication: From Gothic Ghosts to Cellphones”**

This presentation examines how epistolary media, from eighteenth-century letters to today’s texts, posts, and notifications, shape students’ sense of presence, attention, and relationality in the classroom. Drawing on Gothic studies, media theory, and original qualitative classroom research, this inquiry traces how contemporary “haunted” communication forms create cognitive and emotional fragmentation similar to that explored in epistolary fiction.

### **Abbas Khan, “Investigating Identity, Hybridity, and Resistance: A Critical Study of Postcolonial Narratives”**

This paper examines issues of identity and culture in postcolonial literature and emphasizes how these authors undertake a severe critique and resistance to the colonial legacy. Drawing from Said's Orientalism and Bhabha's (1994) ideas on mimicry and hybridity, this paper attempts to outline one direction through which postcolonial literature reflects the complexities of identity formation within societies that have undergone colonial domination. The current research determines how the three authors: Chinua Achebe in Things Fall Apart, Salman Rushdie in Midnight's Children, and Arundhati Roy in The God of Small Things are initiated to resist colonial narratives and reclaim cultural identity. Achebe deconstructs the descriptions provided by the colonizers for African culture, while Rushdie and Roy dive into fluid identities and hybridity in postcolonial societies. The paper argues that postcolonial literature does not simply critique colonialism's cultural and psychological effects; instead, it reshapes identity and sets up the aspects of resistance. It is finally noticed that postcolonial literature reshapes global understandings concerning identity, culture, and power in a postcolonial world, opening new ways for interpreting the continuous impacts of colonial legacies within contemporary society.

## **Panel 2B – Online**

**Moderator: Dr. Melissa Ames**

### **Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://eiu.zoom.us/j/96056688797?pwd=dVZPRUZodjA3WnEyUUdTMnlTb01Odz09>

*Fandom Studies, I. From Fanfic to Unit Plans: Digital Writing & Fandom Studies in Creative Writing & Pedagogy Projects*

In English 5091, students learned that what might seem like trivial online activity occurring on fandom sites and social media platforms is often powerful digital writing that strategically employs rhetorical strategies and genre conventions to reveal the most pressing cultural issues of our times. After being introduced to best practices, ethical debates, and methodological approaches to studying digital writing, students created a final project adapted to fit their area of study, professional development needs, or personal interests. This panel showcases three projects inspired by fandoms from across the media spectrum (e.g. the television series, *Teen Wolf*, the video game *Disco Elysium*, the Science Fiction series, *Red Rising*). Together these presentations will demonstrate the various ways that fandom studies is situated in various scholarly disciplines, how laypersons and artists alike engage in the production of fanfiction, and the potential pedagogical benefits of bringing fan practices into the English/writing classroom.

### **Presentation/Presenters:**

Shelbi Owen, “Queering the Narrative (Because Canon Clearly Forgot To): Academic Analysis and Fanfiction”

Anj Baker, “The Homo-Sexual Underground”: Queerness, Psychosis, and the Closet in *Disco Elysium*”

Ceila Cooley, “Digital Howlers: Exploring *Red Rising* Fan Communities with Secondary ELA Students”

### **SESSION THREE (Graduate Session)**

7:00pm-7:50pm, Virtual Panel, Zoom

## **Panel 3A – Online**

**Moderator: Dr. Melissa Ames**

### **Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://eiu.zoom.us/j/96056688797?pwd=dVZPRUZodjA3WnEyUUdTMnlTb01Odz09>



*Fandom Studies, II. Cultural Commentary, Celebrity Culture, & Market Influencers:  
Studies of Digital Writing Platforms*

In English 5091, students learned that what might seem like trivial online activity occurring on fandom sites and social media platforms is often powerful digital writing that strategically employs rhetorical strategies and genre conventions to reveal pressing cultural issues of our times. After being introduced to best practices, ethical debates, and methodological approaches to studying digital writing, students created final projects adapted to fit their area of study, professional development needs, or personal interests. This panel features projects that engage with a range of entertainment industries (e.g. music, film, stand-up comedy, as well as social justice movements (e.g. #NoKings) and looks at fan practices across different social media platforms (Reddit, TikTok, Online News Article Comments), providing insight into social trends and sentiments.

**Presentations:**

Hanah Clark, “Digital Mourning and Collective Grief: Parasocial Intimacy and Fandom Response to the Death of Liam Payne on TikTok”

Anita Gilliland, “Understanding Hashtags as a Community Building Tool: A Case Study of #NoKings”

Bridget Benson, “‘Last time I seen my brother. Last time I seen the sun’: A Case Study of the Subreddit r/SinnersbyRyanCoogler”

Dan Hahn, “Longform to Shortform: Comedy, Controversy, and TikTok”

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**English Studies Main Conference Events, Wednesday, April 22nd,  
Coleman Hall - Third Floor Classrooms & Coleman Auditorium**

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**Registration/Breakfast**

9:30am-10:00am, Third Floor Coleman Hall

Check-in to the conference & pick-up your program in the third-floor hallway and join us for an opening conference light continental breakfast spread before our day of celebrating English Studies at EIU begins.



**SESSION FOUR (Morning Opening Session)**

10:00-10:50am, Coleman Hall Auditorium, CH 1255

**Panel 4A – 1255 Coleman Hall**

**Moderator: Dr. Colleen Abel**

*Creative Reading*

Come support some of EIU's talented creative writers as they share their own original poetry and fiction at this opening plenary event.

**Readers:**

Jenna Tobias

Ty Rea

Pamela Zimmerman

Ian Rickett

Dani Fitch

Athena Ballard

Amy Schneiderman

Abbas Khan



**SESSION FIVE (Concurrent Panels)**

11:00-11:50am, Coleman Hall Third Floor

**Panel 5A – 3130 Coleman Hall**

**Moderator: Dr. Melissa Caldwell**

*Minding the Gap: The Importance of Differentiation in Teaching English as a Second Language*

Students in English 3902, Foundations of Second Language Acquisition, explore key issues in working with English Language Learners across the globe. Based on research and their tutoring experiences this semester, these students, who are completing the Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language Minor, will discuss the importance of meeting English Language Learners where they are at.

**Presentations:**

Sam Erwin, “The Overlooked Gap: Identifying and Teaching ELLs with Learning Disabilities”

Gracelyn Keith, “ESL and the Adolescent Brain”

Makenna McBride, “Ethics in ESL Testing and Assessments”

Grant Miner, “A TEFL Approach to Defining and Handling Cultural and Pedagogical Differences in the East Asian Region”

**Panel 5B – 3140 Coleman Hall****Moderator: Dr. Timothy Taylor***Press-Release Presentations about Recent Articles in Rhetoric & Composition*

In concise, press-release-like presentations, each participant will provide a summary of a research article from within the past five years in Rhetoric and Composition, and the conclusion of each presentation should answer this question: “How should this article affect how I teach writing at the college level or elsewhere?” After presentations about their research articles, there will be a discussion about connections among the articles & ideas for implementation in writing courses. Q & A will follow.

**Presentations:**

Anj Baker on “Establishing Best Practices: Guidelines for Starting or Improving an Embedded Tutoring Program in the Writing Center” by Caitie Wisniewski and Elizabeth Busekrus Blackmon

Ver Agbozo on “Orality and Literacy in the Workplace: Process- and Text-Based Strategies for Multiple-Audience Adaptation”

Tim Taylor on “How to Create and Communicate Weekly Check-Ins to Promote Community and Belonging” by Ruth Benander, Anna Hensley, Ian Golding, and Mwangi Alex Chege

**Panel 5C – 3150 Coleman Hall**

**Moderator: Dr. CC Wharram**

*AI & Frankenstein, I - Who is in Control? The Digital Frankenstein Epidemic, Ethics and Dynamics*

**Presenters:**

Gabrielle Hill  
Emma Skowronski  
Mono Gray  
Bailey Farris



**Lunch Break, Poster Presentations & Transition to Keynote**

12:00-12:50pm, Coleman Hall Third Floor

Grab your complimentary lunch, check out the poster presentations on display in the seminar room (and chat with the presenters who crafted those terrific projects), enjoy some leisure time with peers and professors, and then transition down to Coleman Hall auditorium where we will have our first prize drawing of the day prior to beginning the keynote presentation!

**SESSION SIX (Poster Presentations)**

12:00-12:50pm, Coleman Hall Third Floor

**Panel 6A – 3159 Coleman Hall (Seminar Room)**

**Moderator: Dr. Melissa Caldwell**

*It's a Comical World: Comics and Representation*

Students from Intro to Literary Studies present their work from our unit on graphic novels. Posters explore comics as literature, how to read comics, comics and the representation of history, the style of American comics artists vs. Japanese manga, and more!

**Presenters:**

Cole Campbell	Victoriya Cheesman	Valencia Crosby	Kara Tipsword
Taylor Ehret	Adrianna Haskins	Lexie Hauskins	and others
Cal Jimenez	Kaitlyn Krause	Neeley Powell	

## **Keynote Speaker (& Prize Midday Prize Give Away), Coleman Auditorium**

12:55-1:05pm, Midday Prize Give Away, Coleman Hall 1255

1:05-1:55pm, Keynote Presentation, Coleman Hall 1255



### **Secrets of the Past: Digital Detective Work in Humanities Archives Dr. Lydia Craig**

With unprecedented modern access to surviving archives, now digitized and uploaded to thousands of digital projects and databases, humanities researchers can quite literally uncover the secrets of the past with a few keywords searches and downloads. Doing so often solves longstanding mysteries, revealing historical facts either buried, lost, or even deliberately concealed from us by past generations. In this talk, Dr. Craig will demonstrate how to conduct such research, both technically and ethically, and discuss its ongoing and potential effects both on the humanities field and public knowledge of literature & history.

### **SESSION SEVEN (Concurrent Panels)**

2:05-2:55pm, Coleman Hall Third Floor

**Panel 7A – 3130 Coleman Hall**

**Moderator: Dr. Melissa Caldwell**

*Sigma Tau Delta: Convention Presentations*

### **Presentations:**



Allison Nichols, “The Power of Revenge: Connections Between Audition and American Mary”

This presentation examines how the female main characters in American Mary and Audition are manipulated and attacked by men in positions of power, but through acts of revenge, both characters alter how female characters are viewed within the rape-revenge horror genre.

Ophelia Klein, "'Her' and 'Woman': Creative Nonfiction Essays"

This presentation covers two creative nonfiction essays that discuss a young adult's lifetime experiences in managing matters of homophobia and sexism, with an emphasis on the importance of the right to love and the encounters/experiences of being a woman.

Madalynn Bloome, "Frankenstein & Motherhood in the Late 18th/Early 19th Century"

This presentation will analyze Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818) amidst the ongoing late 18th/early 19th century conversations about motherhood, breastfeeding, and maternal affection, with the novel acting as an outlet for Shelley's participation in the debates surrounding these topics.

**Panel 7B – 3140 Coleman Hall**  
**Moderator: Dr. Terri Fredrick**

*Enhancing ELA Curricula: Pedagogical Best Practices & Instructional Design*

**Presentations:**

Lainie Clark, "Incorporating Drama & Performances into the ELA Curriculum"

Student engagement is one of the most important parts of educational instruction. Educators must find ways to enhance student engagement while also integrating tools to develop literacy skills. Incorporating drama and performances into the ELA curriculum allows students to develop these skills while also exploring characterization and perspective.

Caleb Willson, "Building Our Dystopia: An Overview of a High School-Level Dystopia Unit Plan"

This presentation shares samples of a 11-12th grade unit plan created for English 4801, revised and edited since. The unit plan is a literary analysis unit centered around the Dystopian genre. The presentation will include a general overview of the goals of the unit, Sample mentor texts, a lesson plan, and the final summative assignment.

Josephine Moore, "Listening to Learn: Integrating Audiobooks into the Secondary Classroom"

With technology continuing to evolve, today's educators have the distinct opportunity to change how students are interacting with literature. One of the most

useful technological tools educators are turning to are audiobooks. The positive effects of audiobooks are evident in academic articles, as well as a current teacher's classroom procedures. From being multi-task friendly to helping students with language comprehension, audiobooks are proving to be an appropriate alternative to physical books.

**Panel 7C – 3150 Coleman Hall**

**Moderator: Dr. CC. Wharram**

*AI & Frankenstein, II - Remixing Frankenstein: AI's Invisible Hand*

**Presenters:**

Tamara Meyer  
Cameron Lewis  
Jacob Adcock  
Nevaeh Culp



**SESSION EIGHT (Concurrent Panels)**

3:05-3:55pm, Coleman Hall Third Floor

**Panel 8A – 3130 Coleman Hall**

**Moderator: Dr. Melissa Caldwell**

*Society and Representation in Literature Then and Now*

Students completing independent research and creative writing present work based on their independent studies.

**Presentations:**

Faith Gallagher, “Tuberculosis Depictions in 19th Century Literature”

Elijah Kubicek, “Reading from his Creative Thesis”

Anissa Massey, "We're Here, We're Queer: A Comparative Analysis of Queer Representation in Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* and Malinda Lo's *Last Night at the Telegraph Club*"

Meghan Bentley, “The While Plague Plot: A Journey of Injustice through Literary History”

**Panel 8B – 3140 Coleman Hall**  
**Moderator: Professor Whittemore**

*Mental Words: Depicting Mental Illness in Creative Writing*

One of the most difficult parts of talking about mental illness is how hard it is to explain. Living with a mental illness is an ordeal that is rarely captured by scientific or medical literature. The language of diagnosis and results cannot adequately describe or address the experience of individual sufferers; it falls flat because it is logical, clinical. This is why creative forms of writing are much more adept at getting to the crux of the truth for sufferers of mental illness. In the spirit of spreading understanding of and insight into these kinds of suffering, this panel will present work that describes or addresses mental illness creatively, with understanding rather than with prescriptiveness, with heart. Genres presented will range from fiction to poetry to creative nonfiction.

**Presentations:**

Anj Baker, Fiction

Nicholas Dillman, Poetry

Pamela Zimmerman, Creative Nonfiction

Jenna Tobias, Mystery Genre

**Panel 8C – 3150 Coleman Hall**  
**Moderator: Dr. CC. Wharram**

*AI & Frankenstein, III – Who Teaches the Creature? Language Acquisition, Mary Shelley, and Isaac Asimov*

**Presenters:**

Sam Erwin

Izzy Ledesma

Gracelyn Keith



**Final Prize Giveaways, Grand Prize Giveaway & Transition to Final Sessions**

3:55-4:05pm, Coleman Hall 3rd Floor Main Concourse (near Eng. Office/Writing Center)

After Session Eight Panels get out gather in the main third floor Coleman Hall concourse for our final prize giveaways of the day. Anyone participating in the final prize giveaway of the day should intend to attend one of the two final professionalization panels following the celebratory giveaway. (It's on the honor system, so be good department citizens!)

## **SESSION NINE (Closing Professionalization Panels)**

4:10-5:00pm, Coleman Hall Third Floor

### **Panel 9A – 3130 Coleman Hall**

**Moderator: Dr. Melissa Ames**

*Let's Talk Teaching (and Beyond): The English Educator Panel*

Join us as our guest educators discuss the directions their degrees have taken them. This panel includes novice and expert teachers, educators working in diverse districts across the state as teachers and mentors. Topics of discussion include student teaching, substitute teaching, the job market, mentoring young educators, and various challenges facing those in the field (e.g. the politicization of education, teacher shortages, the mental health epidemic, and more). Attendance at this panel is mandatory for undergraduate teacher certification (ELA) students currently enrolled in coursework on campus.

#### **Panelists:**

Reaghan Hale  
Ashley Manning  
Raymond Parott  
Maddy McLaughlin  
Allison Nichols



### **Panel 9B – 3140 Coleman Hall**

**Moderator: Dr. Terri Fredrick**

*Panthers on the Page: EIU Graduate Research in Literature, Creative Writing, and Composition Pedagogy*

#### **Presentations:**

Kiersten Holland, "She's Just Like Me: The Guise of Relatability in Performative Femininity" (Literature Graduate Thesis Project)

Performative femininity is a dangerous and controlling idea that subjugates women and places their inherent worth on how well they can conform to societal standards in male dominated spaces. Consequently, the reactionary messaging that surfaced as a result of these social pressures created a series of stereotypical female characterizations often depicted in the material and visual cultures of each period. By comparing contemporary literature with literature from the Victorian time period, it emphasizes the longstanding and controlling gender stereotypes pervasive throughout the past few centuries.

Jenna Tobias, "To Kill a Cupid" by Jenna Tobias (Creative Writing Graduate Thesis Project)

"To Kill a Cupid" is a meta-textual romantic comedy following Cupid and a divorce lawyer.

Dani Rose Fitch, "'To Hell with Words, [Say] Something!': An Expressivist Manifesto Toward Teaching the Art of Authentic Voice Amid the Echoes of Robo-Colonial Capitalism" (Composition & Rhetoric Graduate Thesis Project)

An argument for teaching authentic voice through process, poetry, and speculative fiction in composition studies as pedagogical antithesis to capitalist standardization of formulating language into mechanical discourse as performed by large language models.

**Notes:**

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# ENGLISH STUDIES CONFERENCE



THANK YOU FOR CELEBRATING  
ENGLISH STUDIES WITH US TODAY!