

In this issue, meet two graduate students, see the adventures you can have with London Calling!, watch and listen to how lyrics are a form of creative writing, remember the fun we had at the faculty and student social, and check out a creative writing class or two.

Just a  **Minute**
with the Department of English *or two*

July 25, 2025

Charting a new course: A veteran's path from Navy service to academic advocacy

Ph.D. student spotlight with Patrick Greene.



Patrick Greene thinks back on his past and what led to his journey as a Ph.D. student at Virginia Tech. Photo by Maggie Sheridan for Virginia Tech.

by Maggie Sheridan, Words & Pictures correspondent

From the Navy to Rhetoric and Writing Ph.D. program, **Patrick Greene's** path to academia is driven by resilience and a deep love of language. A disabled veteran and former technical editor, Greene now researches disability in higher education, with a focus on writing center leadership. [Read his story.](#)

Through the lens: London Calling! 2025





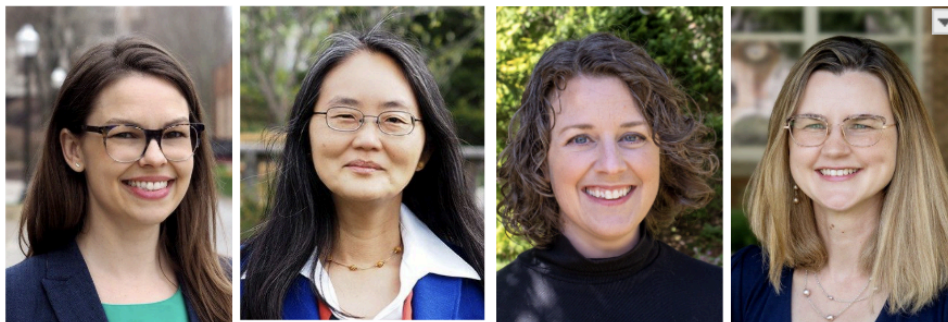
London as a textbook. Our students did more than flip pages. They lived the experience. Photos courtesy of Katie Carmichael.

By Katie Carmichael, Associate Professor

Another fantastic year down for our London Calling! program. Over the 4-week program, students got to experience life in London and consider the city's multi-layered, multi-faceted identity from a number of angles — historical, cultural, political, literary, linguistic, culinary, and more. Highlights included excursions to the British Library, the Tower of London, and Westminster Abbey, not to mention six theatrical performances around the city.

News

New program directors.



From left: Carolyn Commer, Su Fang Ng, Katie Carmichael, and Katharine Cleland. Photos by Leslie King for Virginia Tech.

As we look ahead to a new academic year, we're pleased to announce several faculty members stepping into key program director roles. Their leadership ensures continued excellence across our graduate and undergraduate programs. **Carolyn Commer**, associate professor and Ph.D. program director, will now serve as director of graduate studies. **Su Fang Ng**, professor, is directing the English M.A. program. **Katie Carmichael**, professor and co-director of the Speech Lab, will direct the language science program, and **Katharine Cleland**, associate professor, will take on leadership of the literature program.

We extend our sincere thanks to **Cleland** for her dedicated service as director of graduate studies and the M.A. program; to **Andrew Wadoski**, associate professor, for his leadership of the literature program; and to **Abby Walker**, associate professor and co-director of the Speech Lab, for her service as director of the language science program.

Crime genre's appeal.

Ingrid Johnson's interview about 'Dexter: Resurrection'



Ingrid Johnson. Photo by Leslie King for Virginia Tech.

by Kelsey Bartlet

From true crime to scripted dramas, audiences' appetite for crime-related entertainment continues to expand.

Despite a saturated genre, one character has fascinated viewers since his 2006 television debut in the namesake series "Dexter." Based on books by **Jeff Lindsay**, the show follows forensic analyst Dexter Morgan, who is also a serial killer and, in his mind, a vigilante. He returns to the small screen July 11 on Showtime in "Dexter: Resurrection," the third spinoff since the original show ended in 2013.

Ingrid Johnson, advanced instructor, teaches a true crime course at Virginia Tech. She considers the lines between fact and fiction and why audiences' obsession with the macabre endures. [Read the interview.](#)

From the College of Liberal Arts & Human Sciences

New digital magazine launches.

Hot off the digital press! The first issue of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences digital magazine, ECHO, is available!

Explore stories that celebrate bold research, creative teaching, and the powerful impact of our students, faculty, and alumni. [Read the first issue.](#)

M.A. student spotlight: Isaac Riddle

Getting involved and giving back.



Isaac Riddle. Photo courtesy of Riddle.

Isaac Riddle, a rising second-year student in the English M.A. program, was recently awarded a College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Faculty Campaign Scholarship.

“Isaac has done an impressive job honing his leadership skills and contributions by way of various campus-level initiatives, which the CLAHS Faculty Campaign Scholarship seeks to reward,” said **Silas Cassinelli**, assistant professor, and Riddle’s nominator. “Such experiences are great for how they strengthen and deepen the professionalism he’s gaining through research and scholarly work in

the M.A. program, while also giving back to various Virginia Tech communities. Congrats, Isaac!”

Research

Riddle’s research focuses on trans studies, performance, and new media, and his capstone explores how self-representation across an autobiographical one-woman show, a comic, and a video game helps trans and queer people navigate and orient their identities.

Favorite memory

“One of my favorite memories was the Ta-Nehisi Coates talk we went to as a program! It was the only event I really remembered attending where everyone in both cohorts had gone, and since I was in the M.A. program I was able to go to his small-group session too. I’ve really enjoyed any events we’ve had where both first and second years all attend — it makes it feel more like a community!” Riddle said.

Lyrics as creative writing

Video: Where it all began: Emma Marshall’s first lyrics.



Video by Elizabeth Gill for Words & Pictures.

Emma Marshall, Virginia Tech alumna and lead singer of Dripping Candles, reflects on her earliest lyrical memory and the creative

path that led to her debut studio album. In this Words & Pictures video, correspondent Elizabeth Gill captures how songwriting — like poetry — is a powerful form of creative writing that blends memory, voice, and rhythm. Watch Marshall's story unfold. [Watch the video](#).

The English Podcast: Songwriting Secrets Uncovered.

“Music is a powerful art form that we use in our daily lives, but how often do we stop to really listen to the lyrics and consider their connection to English? Beyond musical talent, successful artists must master lyric writing, shaping their words to fit the tune of the story they're telling,” Gill wrote in her description for this podcast.

Taking a deeper dive, Gill continues the conversation with Marshall. [Listen to the podcast](#).

Kudos

Katie Carmichael, associate professor, and **Aaron Dinkin**, published “[Making a merger: Social and linguistic factors in the low-back merger in New Orleans English](#)” in the Journal of English Linguistics.

Silas Cassinelli, assistant professor; **Katherine Hall**, advanced instructor; and **Spencer Bennington**, instructor, participated in the first AANAPISI Faculty Development Cohort, hosted by the APIDA + and Indigenous Community Centers. The cohort supports faculty in fostering inclusive teaching and engagement with Asian Pacific Islander Desi American and Indigenous student communities.

Rhetoric and Writing Ph.D. candidate **Lin Li's** article, “Invitation Rhetoric as a Method for Supporting Multilingual Writers in the Writing Center,” was published in WLN :A Journal for Writing Center Scholarship.

Remembering the good times

From the Spring Faculty and Student Social.





Photos by Elizabeth Gill for Words & Pictures.

By Elizabeth Gill, Words & Pictures Correspondent

At our Faculty & Student Spring Social — held last spring — we welcomed current and prospective students for a lively afternoon of conversation, connection, and lunch. We look forward to seeing many of them in class this fall, in courses like Detective Fiction, Screenwriting, Magic and Ritual in Russian Literature, and a deep dive into Geoffrey Chaucer.

Creative Writing

Scenes from a classroom.



Photos by Maia Tartaglino, Words & Pictures Correspondent.

By Maia Tartaglino, Words & Pictures Correspondent

Fez Fessenden and **Elisha Brewer**, recent M.F.A. alumni, merged their Intro to Creative Writing classes for a fun poetry scavenger hunt last semester. The classes ventured to the library uncovering hidden gems of literature while completing their given prompt. This hands-on experience shows how Virginia Tech's creative writing professors inspire students to think outside the box, blending learning with creativity and discovery.

"Getting students familiar with the resources available to them at the library is necessary if we want to keep our libraries open and thriving. On top of that, getting their hands on all kinds of contemporary poetry books shows them how diverse the poetry scene is these days. These collections are colorful, experimental, funny, and definitely not covered in dust!" Fessenden said.



Just a Minute or Two is a monthly email newsletter brought to you by
the Virginia Tech Department of English

Kelly Pender, Chair
Gena E. Chandler, Associate Chair
Jared Gibbs, Assistant Chair
Leslie King, Communications Manager
Melissa Hafer and Mary Denson Moore, Editorial Consultants
Contributors: Kelsey Bartlet, Katie Carmichael, Silas Cassinelli,
Elizabeth Gill, Emily Meade, Isaac Riddle, Maggie Sheridan,
Maia Tartaglino, and Travis Webster

Email Leslie King at lsking@vt.edu for submission information.

[Subscribe](#) | [Just A Minute or Two Archive](#)

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)