

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

January 27, 2023

Weaving Together the Narratives of Juneteenth



From the left: Ursilia Beckles and Eric Kim. Photos by Megan Richardson.

Student Researchers Work with Department of English Faculty

Who are the student researchers behind the Juneteenth Scholars Program? As the 2022 cohort finishes its projects, faculty scholars from the Department of English introduce their assistants. [Learn more about their contributions.](#)

Distinguished Alumni Board Spotlight

Michael Germana



“Because I went on to pursue a Ph.D. and then became an English professor, the degrees I received from Virginia Tech were integral to my future. Perhaps more important than the degrees themselves were the professors, colleagues, and fellow students I got to know along the way. The department is a wonderful community of writers, thinkers, and activists, and being a part of this community was the best training I could ever receive.”

Advice for Students

“Know that there is inestimable value in the skills you are honing and the degree you are pursuing!”

Events for Everyone



Visiting Writers Series Welcomes Douglas Kearney

When: Feb. 16

Logistics:

Craft Talk: 3:30 p.m. at Newman Library Multipurpose Room

Reading: 8 p.m. at the Performance Space at the Creativity and Innovation District Residence Hall

Who: **Douglas Kearney** has published seven books, most recently, “Sho” (Wave Books, 2021), a National Book Award, Pen American, and Minnesota Book Award finalist. “Buck Studies” (Fence Books, 2016), is the winner of the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Award, the CLMP Firecracker Award for Poetry, and silver medalist for the California Book Award (Poetry). A Howard University and CalArts alum, Kearney teaches Creative Writing at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities where he is a McKnight Presidential Fellow.

English Events Headline Humanities Week



Grace Turner, one of the top 10 finalists for last year's prize, posed with Nikki Giovanni after the reception in 2022. Photo by Richard Mallory Allnutt.

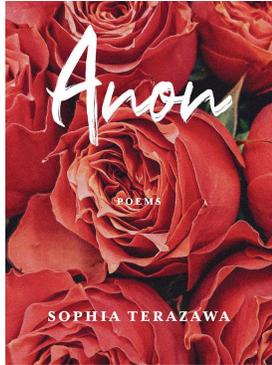
Giovanni-Steger Poetry Prize Ceremony & Reception

When: Feb. 21 | 5 p.m.

Where: Moss Arts Center

Free: [Register here for your tickets](#)

What: **Nikki Giovanni** established the poetry competition in 2005 and named it for its first benefactor, the late **Charles W. Steger**, who served as the university's president at the time. The prize honors the work of student poets at Virginia Tech. The Giovanni-Steger Poetry Prize Committee selects multiple winners, who read their poems as part of the celebration. All undergraduates of any major are eligible for the competition, which is considered one of the most prestigious undergraduate literary prizes in the nation.



Book Reading & Discussion with Sophia Terazawa

When: Feb. 18 | 2 p.m.

Where: War Memorial Chapel

What: **Sophia Terazawa**, visiting assistant professor, kicks off Humanities Week with this reading from her latest book of poetry, "[Anon.](#)" This is a free event and registration is not required.



Illustration created with DALL·E 2.

Reading Together: Surprised by Joy! with Professor Shoshana Milgram Knapp

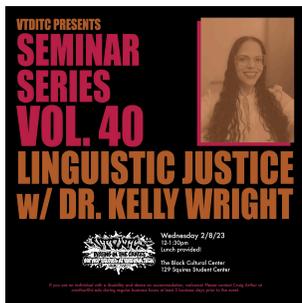
When: Feb. 24 | 1 p.m.

Where: TBD

Free: [Register here for your tickets](#)

What: In this miniature version of the humanities experience, we will take time to read, together, two early short stories by O. Henry. We will pause in the middle to reflect on what we know, what we guess, what we fear. Then, as we finish reading each story, we will revise our incorrect assumptions, and learn that O. Henry's world is brighter than we imagined.

In Other Places



VTDITC Presents Linguistic Justice with Kelly Elizabeth Wright

When: Feb. 8 | 12:30 p.m.

Where: Black Cultural Center, Squires

What: Virginia Tech Digging in the Crates and the Black Cultural Center presents Black True School Studios for Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy. Wright will equip you with knowledge regarding the power and scholarship of African

American Languages. Lunch will be provided by the BCC and Roots Natural Kitchen. This event is completely free and open to the public.

Valentine's Day Poetry Workshop with Sophia Terazawa FEB 14 2023 AT 7PM	Advance registration required. Cost is \$20 for the workshop and includes a copy of Terazawa's book of love poems, <i>Anon</i> . Limit is 20 people.
Open to writers of all levels!	This workshop will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-depth analysis of poetic themes• Discussion on how to write a love poem• Quiet writing time• Discussion + sharing <small>and chocolate</small>

Valentine's Day Poetry Workshop with Sophia Terazawa

When: Feb. 14 | 7 p.m.

Where: Blacksburg Books

What: Participation is limited to 20 people, so if you're interested, call Blacksburg Books at 540-315-9650 or [email them through the website](#) to reserve your spot! The cost is \$20 and this includes participation in the workshop, a copy of Terazawa's new book, "Anon," and some goodies from the Chocolate Spike.

Kudos



Khadijah Queen moderated a Q&A with poet Kevin Young at the Cube in the Moss Center on Feb. 24, 2023. Photo by Leslie King.

Congratulations to **Ursilia Beckles**, an English education major, and her advisor **Katie Carmichael**, an associate professor, who presented at the American Dialect Society conference. Their presentation was on an analysis of the ways in which communities in New Orleans are negotiating new uses for the label "Creole."

Katherine L. Hall, instructor, and **Leslie King**, instructor and communications manager, received grants to become certified by the International Association of Accessibility Professionals, and are now Certified Professionals in Accessibility Core Competencies.

Khadijah Queen, associate professor, moderated a Q&A with poet Kevin Young at the Cube in the Moss Center on Feb. 24. Young is the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. He previously served as the director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and is the author of fifteen books of poetry and prose.

Tyechia Thompson, assistant professor, received an NEH-Mellon Fellowship for Digital Publication for her project "Place, Memory, Poetry, and the James A Emanuel Papers at the Library of Congress." These are highly competitive awards, and Thompson is the first person in the university to secure this grant from the NEH.

Thompson also moderated "A Conversation with Ruth E. Carter" on Jan. 19 in the Moss Arts Center. The event was part of a weeklong series celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. at Virginia Tech. Carter is an award-winning costume designer with a career spanning more than 60 television and film projects including "Do the Right Thing," "Malcolm X," "Amistad," the television reboot of "Roots," "Selma," and "Black Panther."

Travis Webster, assistant professor and director of Writing Across the Curriculum for the University Writing Program, won the 2023 Conference on College Composition and Communication Lavender Rhetorics Award for Excellence in Queer Scholarship for his book, "Queerly Centered: LGBTQA Writing Center Directors Navigate the Workplace."

This Week's Diversity & Inclusion Highlight

From the Diversity Committee



Kat Gray. Photo courtesy of Kat Gray.

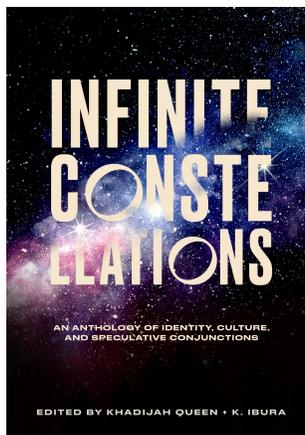
Kat Gray, graduate teaching assistant, shares: “I was fortunate enough to teach Writing and Social Justice in Fall 2022. This course let me bring together my interests in service-learning and justice-centered pedagogies — students and I learned about just technical communication, then applied those skills to Appalachia. In particular, this DEI-focused course centered on coalitional work. I helped students understand that, in order to be accountable to the communities we want to serve, we need to learn and practice rhetorical listening. We modeled this practice as well: in the first two weeks of the course, students and I co-created a definition of social justice to use (and modify) throughout the term. Then, students and I collaborated to write a code of conduct and grading standards for the course. (These exercises are published on Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative as [“Social Justice: A Definition and a Foundation”](#)). Creating this foundation allowed our classroom to be a space for conversation, and students did not hesitate to tackle difficult issues faced by them, their peers, and their communities. Students created a Course Goals Memo at the beginning of the term, assessed their progress and updated their work mid-term, and then assigned a grade to their work based on the shared criteria at the end of the semester. Mid-term, we reviewed our grading criteria and updated it for clarity to assist in this process.

“This assessment scheme is modeled on ungrading approaches, which focus on extensive instructor feedback throughout the design process. In Writing and Social Justice, I was able to test an ungrading approach to its fullest. If you’re not ready to take the plunge for an entire class, however, it is relatively simple to convert one course assignment. For the best results, choose a project that requires several weeks to complete. You should utilize time at the beginning of the unit to discuss project specifications and create a grading standard. Additionally, you can set up numerous opportunities for feedback — for example, peer workshops, write-pair-share activities, and instructor draft feedback. Utilizing this approach is a way to understand and begin to practice antiracist assessment, in addition, it gives students opportunities to find intrinsic motivation for their projects and to learn how to assess their own work.”

Got 5? Moving Toward Inclusion

Did you know that our campus map includes various layers for finding lactation spaces, gender-neutral bathrooms, and ADA-compliant pathways? Use this [link](#), click on ‘layers’ on the far left, and identify which layer you are interested in seeing mapped out on campus! This info is great to share with students and visitors to Virginia Tech. And it is also useful for identifying areas for improvement to make our campus more accessible to all, no matter where they are located on campus. Are there other layers you think should be added? Feel free to reach out to [Katie Carmichael](#) of the diversity committee and she can pass the ideas on to the mapmakers! (There is a changing table map in progress, for example, after it was requested).

The Bookshelf



Infinite Constellations

Edited by Khadijah Queen and K. Ibura

[Available for pre-order](#)

The innovative fictions in “Infinite Constellations” showcase the voices and visions of 30 remarkable writers, both new and established, from the global majority: Native American/First Nation writers, South Asian writers, East Asian writers, Black American writers, Latinx writers, and Caribbean and Middle Eastern writers. These are visions both familiar and strange, but always rooted in the mystery of human relationships, the deep honoring of memory, rootedness to place and the centering of culture.



LIBERAL ARTS AND HUMAN SCIENCES
ENGLISH
VIRGINIA TECH.



Just a Minute or Two is a bi-weekly email newsletter brought to you by
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