

Newsletter

Welcome

Greetings, and welcome to the Viterbo English department's annual newsletter. Our faculty members and students have been busy, and we are excited to share our news and updates with you. Join us in celebrating the 2023–24 academic year.

Department News



Trip to Zamora, Spain

Vickie Holtz-Wodzak, PhD, organized a successful trip in which she and 14 students spent a month in Zamora, Spain. She will lead another trip this year.

Students Participate in CIC Work-based Learning Pilot Program

This spring, students in ENGL 218: The Journalism Experience course, taught by **Jackie Herbers, PhD**, participated in a campus-wide grant pilot program, the College of Independent Colleges Work-based Learning Consortium, which allowed them access to a digital platform that matches instructors with employers who want to create unique learning opportunities as part of existing courses.

The students wrote blog posts for June Adaptive, a company that sells adaptive clothing for people with mobility challenges, disabilities, or sensitivities. The posts are live and available for reading in the “Our Community Blog” section of the company’s website.

Interdisciplinary Collage Art Workshop

Vincent James, PhD, paired up with the art department’s **Kira Peters, MAE**, to offer a workshop on the theory and practice of collage. Following a brief introduction with instructions, students and community members were provided materials and each participant created their own piece of artwork.

English Faculty Receives Ethics Research Fellowship

Alexander Ashland, PhD, was awarded the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership Fellowship for 2024–25. He plans to use this incredible opportunity to help finish his book manuscript, *The Documentary Turn: U.S. Literature in the Age of Compromise*.

Apryl Denny Bottner Honored at Rose Awards

Congratulations to **Apryl Denny Bottner, PhD**, who received her professor emeritus medal during this year’s Rose Awards ceremony. One of the university’s highest honors, professor emeritus status is awarded to faculty members who



Denny Bottner with President Rick Trietley

possess the rank of professor or associate professor at the time of retirement, have completed at least 10 years of full-time service, and have made substantial contributions to Viterbo through their teaching and scholarship. As she reflects on her first semester in retirement, Denny Bottner admits, “I miss my colleagues and students terribly, but retirement is fabulous!”

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Department News *continued*



New Baby!

Alexander Ashland and his wife, Sarah, welcomed their second child, Ava Claire Ashland.

Lumen to Celebrate 70 Years

Founded by Celestine Cepress, FSPA, and established in 1954, Viterbo's student newspaper, *Lumen*, will celebrate its 70th anniversary in the upcoming 2024–25 academic year.

English Class Field Trip



Alexander Ashland and his ENGL 250: Topics in American Literature students celebrated the end of the semester by taking a guided tour of the Mississippi. Together, they boarded the La Crosse Queen, which is described as a “modern-day replica of the grand river boats that plied the Mississippi River in the early 1900’s.” Students used this experience to reflect on the course theme, “A River Runs Through It: Water and the American Literary Imagination.” Also in attendance were *Lumen* staff and a biology class taught by Ted Wilson, PhD, all of whom enjoyed the opportunity for interdisciplinary conversations about science, literature, and local ecology.

Faculty Updates



Apryl Denny Bottner, PhD

I delivered a paper entitled, “Dracula and ‘His Kind’: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* as a Treatise on Homosexual Identity,” at the Literary Twilight Zone conference in Birmingham, England, in June. In fall 2023, I was on quarter-time Scholar’s Release researching the topic of skin color and hierarchy in Charles Dickens’ *Bleak House*. I retired from Viterbo in December after 31 years of teaching in the English department.



Vincent James, PhD

I released a novel, *Acacia, a Book of Wonders* (Texas Review Press), in November 2023 and read from the book a few times regionally. In February 2024, I participated in two readings during AWP (Association of Writers and Writing Programs) as well as did a book signing event during the book fair.

I continue to host Vanguard, a creative writing group for Viterbo military veterans, and serve on the board of The Driftless Writing Center, which is an amazing organization that hosts top-notch writing programming in the Driftless region. Later this year, I’ll work on a conversation with Steven Dunn and Katie Jean Shinkle for their novel, *Tannery Bay* (FC2, 2024). Over this next year, I’m the most excited to support the launch of a Viterbo club for creative writers of all majors, genres, and levels that will write together, host open mics, and bring amazing writers to campus to share their work.



Alexander J. Ashland, PhD

I was awarded a 2023 Quarry Farm fellowship. As part of this incredible opportunity, I was invited to lecture on Mark Twain at Park Church in Elmira, N.Y. An interview about the project was published in the *La Crosse Tribune*. Additionally, my article, “The Archival Borderlands of Civil War Testimony,” will be published in an upcoming issue of *The Simms Review*. I was also awarded the William Gilmore Simms Visiting Professorship to conduct research at the South Caroliniana Library in Columbia, S.C. Beyond that, I have been working on a grant-funded initiative with faculty in multiple disciplines to develop a health humanities program at Viterbo. This year, I have also been busy presenting at conferences. The first was for a paper titled “Poetry in the Wake: Herman Melville’s Reconstructive Poetics,” which I presented at C19: The Society of Nineteenth-

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Faculty Updates *continued*

Century Americanists in Pasadena, Calif. The second was for a paper titled “Reconsidering Compromise: Documentary Aesthetics in 19th-century U.S. Literature,” presented at the American Literature Association conference in Chicago. This semester, I was also fortunate to receive a Scholar’s Release to continue working on my book, *The Documentary Turn: U.S. Literature in the Age of Compromise*. Lastly, I’m honored to have received the D.B. Reinhart Institute for Ethics in Leadership Fellowship.

Jackie Herbers, PhD



I am happy to announce I am in my third and final year as core curriculum director and first-year experience faculty lead. This role has provided me with both challenges and rewards, and as I reflect on the experience, I am glad to have had the opportunity to work with faculty from across campus and support them as they provide stu-

dents with the foundational knowledge and skills needed to become engaged global citizens. On top of my responsibilities as core director, I advised our journal of first-year writing, *Backspace*, and our student newspaper, *Lumen*. Recently, I presented “Feedback First for Beginners” at Viterbo’s Celebration of Teaching and Learning, and “Is It Ethical to Require Students to Use Generative AI” at the Minnesota Writing and English Conference. I also have the article “Feedback First Classrooms: Rethinking Grades in College English” forthcoming in the *Minnesota Writing and English Journal*.

Vickie Holtz-Wodzak, PhD



I presented the paper “Do Not Look in When the Candles are Lit: Tolkien’s Dead Marshes as Unholy Relic” at the Northeast MLA Conference in Boston in March.

Adjunct Faculty Updates

Sarah Clements

I signed on with Spellbound Publishing to re-release my self-published debut novel, *Wild Order*. Working with a publisher that loves my work has been such a blessing and helps relieve the stress of self-publishing. The book is about a world that is decimated from war and natural disasters. There are science fiction and fantasy elements, action, some romance, wholesome moments, and betrayals.

Recent Course Offerings

Topics in World Literature: Postmodern Detective Fiction

Historical detective fiction positions a crime, shrouded in mystery, against a supersleuth, whose specialized experience and intelligence afford *him* the tools to solve that crime. The reader experiences the story from the backseat as the sleuth does their stuff. What happens, however, when authors invite the reader to play the detective? What happens when the mystery of missing knowledge gives way to the mystery of being? What happens when the traditional mystery of a grisly murder or a missing person is replaced by a house whose measurements are larger from the inside than the outside, or by the existence of a secret postal society, or with a town populated entirely by ghosts?

Beginning with a few classic works of detective fiction (Poe and Doyle), this class will examine the postmodern, global evolution of the detective genre and its peculiar treatment of mystery through Karen Green’s *Frail Sister*, Gabriel García Márquez’s *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Hiroko Oymada’s *The Hole*, Eric Chevillard’s *Palafox*, Teresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictee*, and Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*.

Instructor: Vincent James, PhD

A River Runs Through It: Water and the American Literary Imagination

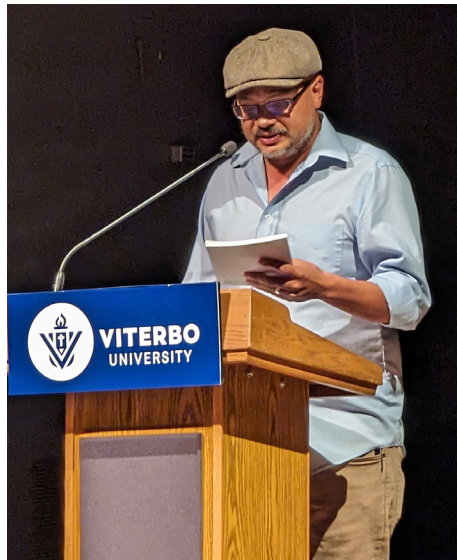
Wisconsin’s poet laureate, Nicholas Gulig, asks the provocative question in his book, *Orient*, “where is water safe...?” This course centers “the river” and other bodies of water as complex sites of freedom and restraint. In the 19th century, rivers were simultaneously places of slavery and human trafficking, but also sites of liberation and emancipation. Rivers become a way to explore different currents of thought and depths of human experience. Water can be a source of life, sustenance, and nourishment, but it can also be a source of destruction, disaster, and catastrophe. I ask students to consider the ways in which critiques of the environment enable us to interrogate the ecologies of race, gender, and capital that flow through ourselves and society. How, for example, might the legacies of slavery and the exploitation of Native lands and Black labor intersect with a major U.S. waterway like the Mississippi, a “body” that students of Viterbo and residents of La Crosse encounter daily. This class invites students to think critically about the literary and cultural histories of the environment that are so crucial not only to our city’s past, but the country’s past as well.

Instructor: Alexander J. Ashland, PhD

Events

Wisconsin Poet Laureate Visits Viterbo

Wisconsin's Poet Laureate, **Nicholas Gulig, PhD**, joined us on campus for a generative day celebrating poetry and poetics. The author of three books and the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, Gulig led Viterbo students in a lecture exploring Keats' idea of "Negative Capability," met with students from the honors program, and gave a well-attended public reading of his work in the evening.

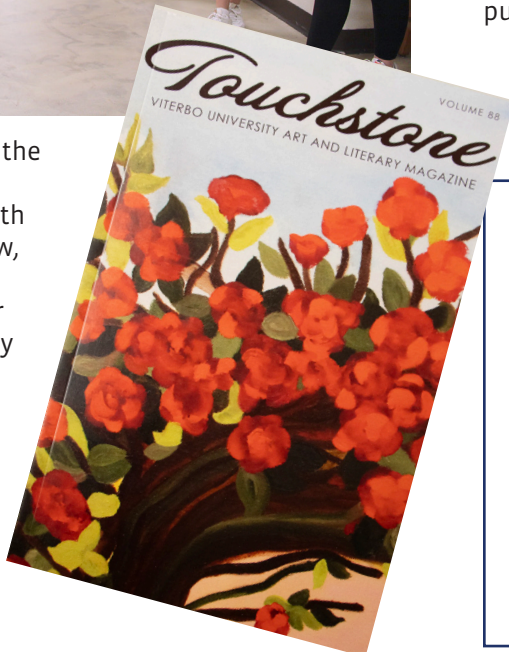


Left: Wisconsin's Poet Laureate, Nicholas Gulig. Right: Alexander Ashland and Jackie Herbers attended the event.

Touchstone Hosts April Release Party



Touchstone celebrated the release of its 88th issue this year. Coinciding with the All Student Art Show, several of the issue's authors read from their work outside the gallery space surrounded by beautiful paintings, sculptures, prints, collages, and an excellent charcuterie spread put together by Kira Peters.



Alumni Spotlight

Grace Monk '23, former English major and *Lumen* editor, accepted a job as digital content producer at WKBT 8 News Now in La Crosse.

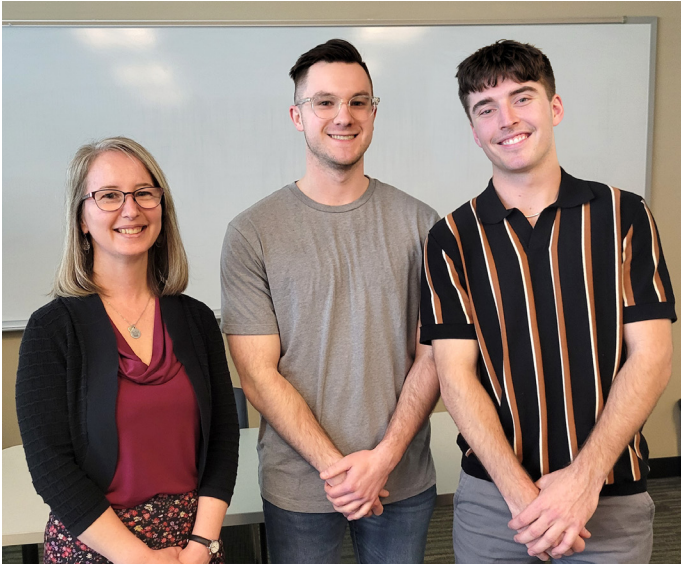
Phoebe Rodriguez '21, who minored in English, recently published *Fatherland / Motherland* (Kith Books, 2023)

English Department Mission

In the English department, we prepare students to succeed in careers that value critical thinking, writing, artistry, researching, teaching, and a variety of other skills. Additionally, we offer students valuable research and creative opportunities, and invite them to participate in student-led university publications. As faculty and mentors, we value building dedicated relationships with students in the hopes of not only enriching their academic experiences, but providing crucial aspects of a liberal arts education that prepare students for life beyond the university.

Student Internships, Projects, and Publications

Seniors Successfully Present Senior Theses



Carter Steger (center) and Garret Locy (right) pictured with Jackie Herbers

Congratulations to our 2024 graduating seniors, **Carter Steger** (English education) and **Garret Locy** (English), who presented their senior thesis projects this year. Steger's literary analysis, "Kratos: The Role of Parenting in Creation and Redemption of the Anti-hero," explored the way parenting influenced the anti-hero's creation and redemption by examining the protagonist, Kratos, in the video game and book series *God of War* by Matthew Stover and Robert E. Vardeman. Locy's creative writing work, "Expanding Genre for Tribute Purpose" used what he learned about creative non-fiction, magical realism, and imagery to create a special and touching tribute piece to his friend.

Ava Stoeckly to Publish Novel



Ava Stoeckly with Vic V-Hawk

First-year English major **Ava Stoeckly** received the exciting news that she will be working with Atmosphere Press this summer to publish her debut novel *The Archive*. She says about writing her piece, "I felt I was in a whole other world...I felt so much joy and happiness when I received the news that I got into a publishing place."



Viterbo Student Accepted to Graduate Journalism Program

Noah Nelson, who was an English minor and spring 2024 *Lumen* editor, was accepted to a graduate program in journalism.

