



OCTOBER  
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# THE ENGLISH AGGIE



NEW FACULTY Q&A  
AGGIES ABROAD  
CENTER OF DIGITAL  
HUMANITIES  
RESEARCH



# New Faculty Q&A

## Meet Sarah Bankston



### Introduce yourself to the English faculty and students.

I'm one of the faculty members who moved over from the Libraries. I worked at the University Libraries for 7 years, first starting at the Medical Sciences Library working as a liaison to the

BIMS program and most recently working in Evans Library focusing on user experience of physical and virtual spaces. Before working in libraries, I earned an MFA in Creative Writing.

### What is something about you that your students might not know?

I graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in English. It was here at A&M that I first attended a reading, and I got to hear Yusef Komunyakaa read his poetry. This ignited my love of going to readings, and I highly, highly recommend students attend a literary event at least once, in-person or virtual. They have their own special magic.

### What's the best book you've read in the past year?

*My Name is Lucy Barton* by Elizabeth Strout – I went on a bit of a Strout bender after that one.

### What's your number one piece of advice for students?

Stay curious!

## Meet Kathy Anders



### What is your focus area within English?

I focus on the intersection of writing studies and scholarly communications as well as 19th Century British Literature.

### What is your favorite class to teach so far?

For next year I am developing a digital publishing and open educational resources class that I think will be fun and interesting. Over the past several years I have been teaching workshops on copyright, open access publishing, and graduate research.

### What is something about you that your students might not know?

I am newly joining the Department of English after eight years as a faculty member in the University Libraries. I came to Texas A&M after completing a Ph.D. in English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Because of my background in both English and librarianship, my research and teaching focus has been at the intersection of writing studies and scholarly communications for many years.

### What's the best book you've read in the past year?

This is an impossible question to answer! I reread *Emma* by Jane Austen recently. It's interesting how each time I read a really good book, like *Emma*, new themes and ideas emerge. Right now, I am in the middle of *The Immortal Game: A History of Chess* by David Shenk, and that book is engrossing as well.

### What's your number one piece of advice for students?

Read a wide range of texts. Read works of enduring meaning, books for fun, and texts outside your disciplinary comfort zone. It's wonderful to see the richness of the broad array of human thought.

## Meet Sarah LeMire



### Introduce yourself to the English faculty and students.

Howdy! My name is Sarah, and I'm excited to be joining the English department this semester!

### What is your focus area within English?

I'm a librarian by training, so I focus on the intersection between research and writing. I often visit English classes to provide students with hands-on help finding sources for their papers. I also do a lot of work with Open Educational Resources (OER) textbooks. I've been part of project teams that have developed OER for three different English classes so far.

### What is your favorite class to teach so far?

My favorite has been English 104. Students work on a wide variety of research topics in that class, so it's always a lot of fun for me to get to explore those topics alongside them.

### What is something about you that your students might not know?

Before I began working in higher education, I served in the Army as an Arabic linguist. Because of my military background, I really enjoy working with student veterans and connecting veterans with library resources.

### What's the best book you've read in the past year?

I recently re-read *Jane Eyre* while working on an OER project. This was one of the first "grown-up" books that I read when I was young, and I had forgotten how much I enjoy it.

### What's your number one piece of advice for students?

Ask for help! Texas A&M has so many resources to help students. I always tell students to reach out to me if they have questions or need help with their research, and I really do mean it. It makes my day when a student emails me with a research question.

## Meet Michael Hessel-Mial



### Introduce yourself to the English faculty and students.

Hi! My name is Michael Hessel-Mial. I'm a Midwesterner, from Wisconsin and lived in Atlanta and Kansas City before relocating here. I just moved to College Station with my fiancée, Lindsey, and our small baby Melody.

### What is your focus area within English?

My lifetime literature passion will always be poetry; it's what I care about most. If I never was a professor, I'd still be writing my overly ambitious poems by myself. But in grad school I specialized in digital media poetry and crossovers between poetry/philosophy. Today, I'm most focused on science fiction on social justice themes, and the role of poetry in intellectual history, especially the history of philosophy and the history of science.

### What is your favorite class to teach so far?

I have a long love of teaching world literature, because it really shows how diverse, complex, wise and unexpected literature can be. But this semester, returning to creative writing is a real treat.

### What is something about you that your students might not know?

My first love was music! I used to play jazz saxophone pretty seriously, considered pursuing it professionally, and have played in a handful of bands. I've also played the ukulele, synthesizer, and concertina.

### What's the best book you've read in the past year?

It was a difficult read, but Marlon James's *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* really expanded what I thought fantasy was capable of.

### What's your number one piece of advice for students?

Be a little rebellious! I was probably a little over-dramatic in undergrad, but I remember skipping my literary theory class to read poetry sometimes. In all seriousness, demand the education you want and make it your own. Create your own publications and readings, and take lots of creative risks.



**Presley Graves** is a senior English major at Texas A&M University, and she recently had the opportunity to study with Cornell Law students at Panthéon-Sorbonne University. She first heard about the program in an email from her academic advisor, Sarah Borden. Presley expressed her interest to her advisor and to Dr. Vasilakis, and they both encouraged and supported her through the application process.

Presley spent four weeks in Paris learning alongside graduate and undergraduate students from Cornell University. The program began with introductory lectures and tours of the university and many cultural experiences in Paris. She toured museums and churches, drank hot chocolate at the Angelina, visited Versailles, and saw the Palais Garnier Opera House. As a huge fan of *The Phantom of the Opera*, Presley was thrilled to see the place the novel was based on. Of course, she also visited the Eiffel Tower. Her group actually visited on Bastille Day, so she was able to see fireworks shooting off the Eiffel Tower.

Presley recalled one of the very first tours, which was to the Conseil d'Etat, the French supreme court. She felt like she was on "an insider tour" because the Cornell professors all had ties back to France and a wealth of knowledge that they were eager to share. They often offered to take the group of students to dinner to continue to share their knowledge, swapping stories over focaccia sandwiches along the Seine.

# Aggies Abroad

**Presley Graves '24 on Cornell Pre-Law Program in Paris**

The professors expressed a genuine interest in getting to know their students, and they used their knowledge to write recommendation letters for each student at the end of the program. "One of the greatest things I found over the course of the program," Presley said, "was the professors really do care about each of us individually, and they made it a point to tell us to email them and keep up with them... which is a really cool tool that I've been able to use over the past few months."

**"One of the greatest things I found over the course of the program was the professors really do care about each of us individually."**

After the first introductory week, Presley began a course on the global study of law. It was initially intimidating to be in classes with Ivy League students, but she quickly realized that there were very few differences between them. "I had the same academic advantages from A&M that they did from did from their Ivy League schools," Presley explained. "I really think it has a lot to do with how intimate and how intentional the department is. I felt like I was on a level playing field the entire time." While A&M is one of the

largest universities in the country, the English department is much smaller, which allows students to make connections, participate in research opportunities, and take control of their education. Presley noted that there is "a lot of one-on-one time with professors and they all know my name and they know my classmates' names." That personal connection makes a big difference, and it was one of the main things that prepared Presley for her Cornell classes.

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While Presley appreciated the small, close-knit nature of the English department, she also appreciated the far reach of the Aggie network while abroad. She continued traveling around Europe after the program ended, and she saw Aggie rings everywhere she went. On one of her flights, she even sat beside a family who had just finished touring A&M and encouraged the prospective student to attend. Even Aggies not physically present were showing their support. Presley heard from Dr. Vasilakis, Sarah Borden, and Dr. Miles often. "I just never felt like I was too far from home because I had the English department behind me."

**"I just never felt like I was too far from home because I had the English department behind me."**

Presley is already using her knowledge in her classes this semester, and she plans to continue applying her knowledge in law school after graduation. When applying to law schools, Presley will have the advantage of Cornell University listed on her transcripts alongside Texas A&M University to help her achieve the next step of her educational journey. Her career goals include becoming an international human rights attorney and starting her own nonprofit organization to end human trafficking.

Presley encourages any Aggie considering study abroad to take the opportunity. She knows that if she had discounted herself, if she had bought into the idea that she is somehow less capable or less worthy than Ivy League students, then she never would have applied and discovered just how successful and just how prepared she already is. She hopes other students truly believe that "the world is their playground" and never pass up a great opportunity.



Presley enjoyed many tours during her month in Paris, including a trip to the [location], pictured above.



Presley still keeps in touch with many of the friends she met during the study abroad program, and they have been extremely helpful with LSAT study tips, law school application questions, and general support.



One of the best parts of her time abroad was the amazing food!


# The Center of Digital Humanities Research

## CoDHR announces awards garnering international recognition for Digital Humanities at Texas A&M University

The Center of Digital Humanities Research (CoDHR, pronounced “coder”) was awarded center status by the Board of Regents on February 10, 2018, promising them to build an early modern data center that would be the largest worldwide and of the highest scholarly quality. A presentation of CoDHR’s work on October 2, 2018 at the National Humanities Center earned their support as well as commendation from TAMU’s Chancellor’s Office. CoDHR’s goal is to become a leading publisher of digital scholarly works in an Early Modern Data center offering unprecedented opportunities to humanities researchers. This goal is now closer to being realized thanks to recent and forthcoming grant awards and publication rights received by CoDHR from the Modern Language Association of America, Duke University Press, Vanderbilt University, and the

Folger Shakespeare Library, our national library containing the largest Shakespeare collection in the world. Awarded its first HIAS Fellow in 2020–2021, [Professor Lena Cowen Orlin](#), who will arrive on campus October 1, serves on the boards of the Shakespeare Institute and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. With her guidance, CoDHR hopes to bring actors, directors, and scholars to campus in 2023 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s first publication. Collaborating with members of the Texas Art Association, CoDHR hopes to add digitized artworks created in Texas, many of them by Aggies, to our data center.

**Director Dr. Laura Mandell**  
**Associate Director Daniel Schwartz**



**Science Fiction & Fantasy Contest**

**Accepts all forms of speculative fiction from science fiction to fantasy and more!**

**Winners will have the chance to perform their pieces at a public reading and win cash prizes!**

**You must be a currently enrolled undergraduate student at Texas A&M to submit. The word count is limited to 3000 words.**

**Submission link:**  
<https://forms.gle/4XSUCpQyLjFFx-kaJ6>

**Submission deadline: Feb. 13, 2023**

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