

# IN WRITING

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Joi Mays and her cohort at Bear River (photo: Joi Mays)

## Bear River Writers' Conference from A Student's Perspective

Joi Mays

Applying to all the opportunities for conferences and scholarships is stressful, no matter your major. But sometimes, the opportunities you gain from things outside of the classroom are what can carry you throughout your career. In the winter semester of 2023, I got the wonderful opportunity to go to the Bear River Writers' Conference along with Writing Department alum Emma Barrett free of charge by applying to GVSU's Bear River Writers' Conference scholarship. The application for the scholarship was due on March 21, but don't fret! Here are some things to expect and what we learned from this experience so that by next year, you can Bear River like a boss!

The Bear River Writers' Conference is a week-long conference that takes place at Lake Michigan, a

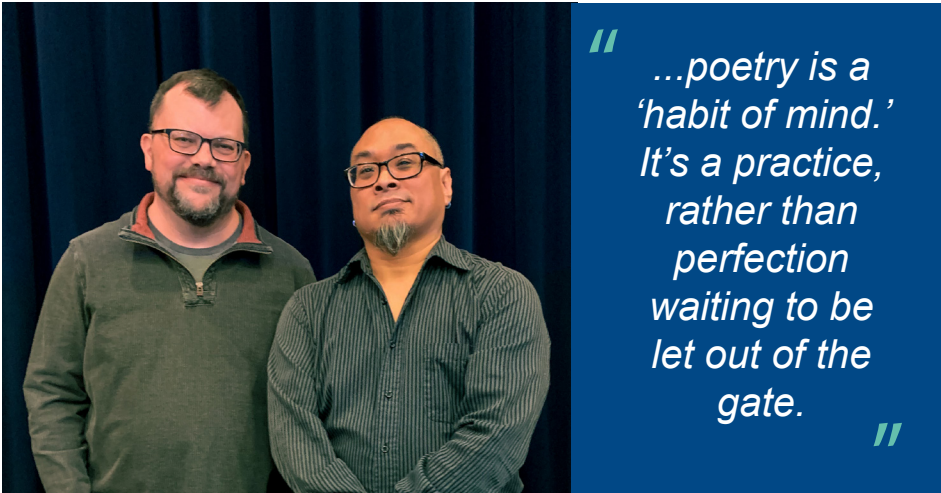
summer camp funded by University of Michigan Alumni, hosted by the University of Michigan's English Department. When you sign up for the conference, you will be prompted to choose your top three choices for a mentor. Your mentor will be an author/ professor who specializes in either Fiction, Poetry, or Non-fiction and you will be a part of their cohort for the whole duration of the conference.

When we first got there, Emma gave the perfect description of the conference. "Picture summer camp for adults who all are there with the same love for writing." I was a bundle of both nervous and excited energy on my first day. The drive was long and I was grateful for Emma

SEE BEAR RIVER ON PAGE 11

# Hardly Any Rules: A Reading by Professors Chris Haven and Todd Kaneko

Brooke Rempalski



Professor Chris Haven and Todd Kaneko  
(Photo: Brooke Rempalski)

As part of the GVSU Writers Series, Associate Professor W. Todd Kaneko and Professor Chris Haven came together on Feb. 13 for a joint reading of fresh, unpublished material.

Both professors referred to the audience of 50+ attendees as willing guinea pigs. About his reading selections, Kaneko said, “The theme is this: which poems do I have in my hard drive and haven’t sent out, or don’t know what to do with.”

In addition to being a Writing Professor at GVSU, Kaneko is the author of *This is How the Bone Sings* and *The Dead Wrestler Elegies: Championship Edition*. In much of his poetry, he tackles the concept of how endings and death evade most binary thinking.

In his poem, “Kill Screen,” he said of the nature of choice and moving through the world, “One – you die. Zero – you die. The future is written in a code for oblivion.” There is no way to write about life without shaping an outline of death, and through a deft blend of current events, personal narrative, and potent description, Kaneko crafts poems that do not pull

their punches.

He continued to read a series of works he had initially labeled prose poems, only to be met with publication rejection. He noted when he promoted them as flash essays instead, editors took notice of the works, which filled a void in the market.

Writing genres tend to be fluid, as Haven – a GVSU Writing Professor and author of *Bone Seeker* and *Nesting Habits of Flightless Birds* – also noted. He read from a project that began as a series of prose poems that he is adapting into an experimental novel. When the prose poems did not work for the novel form, he developed character and plot arcs to merge the genres. Working in an experimental mode freed him to explore the ideas as they showed up on the page, as he said there are “hardly any rules.”

In his selection for the reading, he drew mostly from a prototype character he called Terrible Emmanuel. “It began as an alteration on the Christ story,” he said. The character thought of himself as a supreme being, with the ability to

perform miracles, but some of his credibility is drawn from him having one wing. Haven’s readings were an exploration of character and how it exerts its power on the story. From Terrible Emmanuel sprouted a character called Irma, where Haven was able to further dive into the narrative.

The whole process of investigating these subjects, he said, was a continual experiment. Haven said he liked to play with memory, with the notion of fact and truth, and that something “might not have to be verifiable to be true.”

In a brief Q&A session, the professors responded to the demands of writing. Haven discussed Kaneko’s April challenge for one poem per day: “It cured me of the preciousness of the perfect space and time.” Kaneko added, “The answer is to steal time away from the rest of your life: sleep, job, wherever you can steal it.”

All writers looking for more time, for more inspiration, or for the perfect setup might be able to follow Kaneko’s advice: that there isn’t one right spark, but that poetry “is a habit of mind.” It’s a practice, rather than perfection waiting to be let out of the gate.

**AWP 2023-2024  
Fiction Winner**

**“On the Railroad”**

Joi Mays



# Getting Hands-On with the CLAS Website Redesign

Grace Hasley



Robert Trudeau (Photo: Robert Trudeau)

Within the Writing major modules, students have opportunities to learn skills that they will carry with them into their future careers. GVSU alum and Writing major Robert Trudeau was given that opportunity during the 2022-2023 school year.

In the Winter of 2023, Robert Trudeau took Advanced Writing for the Web with Assistant Professor Kylie Jacobsen. Trudeau had been experimenting with the ways he was building websites in class, and Professor Jacobsen took notice.

The website for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) was in the market for a revamp and Jacobsen was looking for someone who was ambitious and curious to help with the site. When Jacobsen noticed Trudeau's work she recommended him to Associate Professor Christopher Toth, who then passed on word to his contact within CLAS and spoke with Trudeau about the position to help them with their site remodel. Trudeau explained how his current job wasn't fulfilling, saying

he was "...really not happy doing what I was doing, so I was like 'yes please! Let me do something a lot better.'"

He began the project in the summer of 2023 by doing research on their current site, and Trudeau quickly recognized their need for a mobile-first design to promote usability. In addition, the project leaders had their hearts set on redesigning their site to be more student focused.

Trudeau put his passion for website building into this project that currently exists as a test site that the team at CLAS is still continuing to build off of today. With hopes of the site being published within the year, Trudeau shares his excitement: "I'm really excited to see the focus on students, too, and making it something that people use on a regular basis and that it is serving some kind of bigger function, not just existing."

## Part-Time Adjunct Faculty Profile: Nicole Golden

Hannah Applebee

After earning her BA and MA in California, Part-Time Adjunct Faculty Nicole Golden is currently working on her PhD at MSU. Her degrees are focused on rhetoric, writing, and the teaching of writing. "I found myself seeking out more teaching experiences in the community around me, and this ultimately brought me to GVSU," she says. At GVSU, Golden teaches WRT 150: Strategies in Writing, and she is excited to teach her students to "value both academic writing and the writing they do in their everyday lives."

As a professor, she hopes to impact her students through her support. "A core value I have as a professor is that my students know I'm in their corner, so I strive for consistent communication and flexibility. I meet [them] where they are and recognize that they're managing much more than my course alone," she says. In addition to this flexibility, Golden wants her students to "value their peers and writing broadly." She accomplishes this by providing time for them to get to know her as well as each other throughout the semester.

Golden's passion lies with rhetoric and writing, and she's "always trying to make more space in academic conversations for more stories." As a Japanese American, she uses a cultural rhetorical methodology as well as story engagement as a way to further understand her community, place, and belonging in the world.

When she's not writing or teaching, she enjoys "delicious flavors, the outdoors, and buying second hand whenever possible." We're so excited to welcome her!



Part-Time Adjunct Faculty Nicole Golden (Photo: Nicole Golden)

## Visiting Faculty Profile: Abigail Greff

Maddie Cesarz



Visiting Faculty Abigail Greff  
(photo: Maddie Cesarz)

For this round of new faculty profiles, I had the pleasure of chatting with Visiting Professor Abigail Greff who joined the Writing Department just before the Fall semester to teach WRT 150. Before coming to GVSU, she earned her PhD in English with a specialization in Medieval Literature from Ohio State University (OSU). While reflecting on how she chose to pursue Medieval Literature, she said: “I was very much a non-English major English major” because unlike many typical English majors, she’d always been more interested in interdisciplinary work and research in history, classics, and art. So for Greff, studying Medieval Literature felt like the best way to combine all of her interests.

Alongside working on her PhD, she taught various writing and English courses at OSU. Teaching, in the beginning, had only been a requirement of her PhD program that she had to fulfill, but after teaching a course of First-Year Writing, Greff quickly realized how much she liked

it. Thus, she went on to teach Second-Year Writing, Technical Writing, Intro to Shakespeare, Science Fiction, Intro to Poetry, and many other courses during the rest of her time at OSU.

Now at GVSU, Greff continues to have a strong passion for teaching writing to her WRT 150 students. Her favorite part is working with students and encouraging them to recognize how relevant and integral writing is to every part of their life. “These skills that they begin to develop through this program will only continue to serve them both academically and professionally in the future,” Greff said. Though at the end of the day, she hopes that with this, students feel confident in their writing and grow exponentially in the time that she has them in her class.

## Visiting Faculty Profile: John Gibbons

Abby Gallinger



Visiting Faculty John Gibbons  
(photo: John Gibbons)

John Gibbons, a Visiting Professor at GVSU since Fall 2023, has spent the last decade diving deep into the world of linguistics, uncovering a profound passion that has shaped his academic journey. Originally from Texas, Gibbons has brought his love for English, linguistics, and writing not only across the country, but to other continents! In 2014, he began teaching English as a second

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*“...this program will only continue to serve them both academically and professionally in the future.”*

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language in Taiwan and China, where his fascination with language continued to grow, inspiring him to transition into teaching English and Applied Linguistics at Texas A&M University-Commerce for over five years.

Gibbons was attracted to GVSU because of the opportunities “to contribute to, and learn from, the dynamic academic environment the linguistics program offers.” With dreams of publishing more research articles in the field, and eventually a book, he finds himself driven by the engagement of our academic community. He shared, “My passion lies in exploring the intersections of technology, writing, and second language acquisition, aiming to enhance the learning experience and outcomes for students in these areas.” His favorite class to teach, Foundations of Language Study (ENG 261), serves as a gateway to the marvels of linguistics, igniting an interest in language analysis among his students. In the last year, he also began teaching WRT 150 courses for the Writing Department.

Beyond the classroom, Gibbons participates in collaborative research – exploring the intersection of technology and language acquisition and contributing to scholarly publications that reshape the landscape of language education. Alongside the projects he partakes in, he remains dedicated to providing students with the tools needed to navigate the linguistic challenges of our ever-evolving world.



## Visiting Faculty Profile: Amanda Hawks

Sofia Pratt



Visiting Faculty Amanda Hawks  
(photo: Amanda Hawks)

Visiting Professor Amanda Hawks grew up with a lot of different ideas for her future, but one thing stayed constant: she was always writing. Hawks went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Writing, Rhetoric, and Technical Communication from Boise State University and a Master's

degree in Writing and Rhetoric at Michigan State University, and now, she's one of the newest editions to the GVSU Writing Department.

Hawks is currently teaching WRT 150: Strategies in Writing, and she's aware that the course can vary depending on the professor. In her class, she looks beyond the writing. "We're thinking about how to research ethically. We're acknowledging that every person in the world has bias and that bias isn't going to go away just because you're sitting down to write a research paper," she said.

Hawks reflected fondly on how friendly and helpful the department is. "You can always just walk down the hallway and talk to so many people," she said. "There are so many people in this department who know so many things and have been teaching for so long, and they're such great teachers to their students."

She also appreciated the opportunities made available after coming here. "As a visiting instructor, we get observed every year, and that's a really good mentorship opportunity," she said. "And when I

talked about wanting to go back to get my Ph.D. with some of the tenure track professors here, they were immediately so supportive." We're glad she feels welcome because GVSU feels lucky to have her!

## AWP 2023-2024 Nonfiction Winner

"Dear Earth"

Michaela Triemstra

## AWP 2023-2024 Poetry Winner

"My Backyard in  
the Summertime"

Hannah Applebee

## Spotlight on GVSU's Student Reading Series

Angelina Fimalan

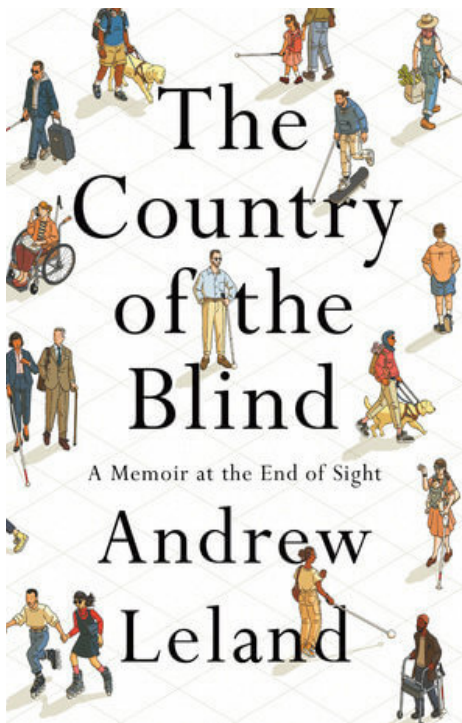


Writing Students Gathered for SRS (photo: Maddie Cesarz)

The Student Reading Series (SRS) is a safe space where anyone from any major can showcase their creative works. SRS is coordinated and designed entirely by students, for students. Those who do not wish to share their creative works or want to learn more about SRS are also welcome and encouraged to attend. SRS hosts 3-4 reading events each semester, many of which are themed, like their Senior Showcase. The Senior Showcase is the biggest event dedicated to celebrating graduating seniors and the work they've produced during their time at GVSU.

# Exploring The Country of the Blind with Andrew Leland

Anna Pettit



Cover of Andrew Leland's book, *The Country of the Blind* (photo: andrewleland.org)

On April 4th, GVSU finished its Winter 2024 Writer's Series by welcoming writer Andrew Leland. During his visit, Leland read from his book, *The Country of the Blind: A Memoir at the End of Sight*, which was published in July 2023 by Penguin Press.

Leland is an accomplished writer, audio producer, editor, and educator. He has written for *The New York Times Magazine*, and his work has appeared in *The New York Review Daily*, *McSweeney's Quarterly*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *BOMB Magazine*. He has produced several audio pieces, such as a podcast titled *The Right Stuff* for Radiolab. Leland has taught at Smith College, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and the University of Missouri.

Decades ago, Leland was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a disease which causes slow degradation of the retinas and

eventual blindness. As a result of this condition, his work often discusses issues within the deafblind community and the state of disability services in the United States.

In his book, *The Country of the Blind*, he speaks of his experience as someone who grows increasingly disabled and how his journey into blindness has impacted his life. Between poignant stories of his own life Leland includes well researched historical information on blind culture and perseverance in the United States.

Earlier in the day, Leland gave a craft talk at the Mary Idema Pew Library where he shared a writing exercise and discussed how he combined elements of memoir and journalism. In particular, he discussed how much value going to events and talking with experts can add to a nonfiction piece. It allows writers to not only explore the questions and "intractable problems" that they face, but to also seek out answers to those questions. He suggested thinking of the perfect person (real or imaginary) who you would like to speak to, and then go seek that person. You may find someone who you never knew existed or in your journey discover a new group who you can connect to.

On the evening of this reading, GVSU students and professors alike sat together to listen to Leland's words and to ask questions about his writing journey and his journalistic process. Leland read from chapter seven of his book, *The Country of the Blind: A Memoir at the End of Sight*. This particular section focused on the relationship of technology and blindness, and about how many technologies, such as text to speech and LP records, were born from the needs of blind people to more easily

access information. Despite the large amount of historical text in this chapter, Leland was able to expertly balance it with a witty tone and interjected detail heavy sections with personal anecdotes.

During the Q&A portion of the reading, Leland was asked about how, given his extensive podcast background, he decided which stories should be written and which should be recorded. He reported having a sort of "spidey sense" on distinguishing which medium his stories would be best suited to. He referenced his podcast episode on Radiolab titled *The Right Stuff*, a thrilling story which set out to show that disabled people could be astronauts if given the opportunity.

When deciding on how to tell this story, Leland reported having an "impulsive sense" that the content would be best suited for an audio medium, and settled on a podcast. Leland's ability to blend complex emotional struggles with comedic phrases and historical information is truly astonishing. Anyone interested in better understanding the blind experience should certainly give *The Country of the Blind* a read or a listen.

## AWP 2023-2024 Poetry Winner

"Reading Of Mice and Men Next to My Assailant Wasn't as Therapeutic as I Hoped"

Angelina Firmalan



# Major Collaboration for GVSU: Fireside Chat with Ami Hendrickson

Sarah Olivas



Ami Hendrickson (photo: eventbrite.com)

GVSU's Organization for Professional Writers (OPW) is co-hosting with the Society for Technical Communication Michigan Great Lakes chapter (STC-MGL) to present a Fireside Chat with Ami Hendrickson. The collaboration is extraordinary, as it is the first time these two reputable organizations are working together, and it is, in part, the product of some of GVSU's very own dedicated Lakers!

GVSU's Assistant Professor Kylie Jacobsen is on the council of the STC-MGL chapter, an organization comprised of writers around the world. Jacobsen proposed the collaboration to her fellow council members. Upon approval, she brought the idea to Genevieve Balivet, the president of the OPW, who accepted with enthusiasm.

When asked about the Society for Technical Communication (STC), Jacobsen said the organization's "purpose is to offer professional development, continued education, networking, and governance for people in the industry." STC-MGL even offers a mentoring program that pairs experienced technical communications professionals

with students or professionals who are seeking guidance. Mentees can gain insight, opportunity, and a wider network in the technical communications field, and mentors can grow their skills in leadership and problem-solving.

According to OPW's website – and similarly to STC-MGL – their purpose is to create a space where writers "can find information to help network, plan [their] professional career, and support [their] academic endeavors." The OPW website has several informational articles written for the benefit of developing writers. To this end, the organization meets every other Friday.

Though the collaboration is new, it does not wholly come as a surprise given Jacobsen's affiliations with GVSU as a faculty member of the Writing Department and her connection with STC-MGL as a senior member and council member. Jacobsen says she "thought the connection between the two organizations was a natural one." Lucky for us, the event is free to students!

Hendrickson is a professional writing coach and is participating in the Fireside Chat as part of STC-MGL's series: "Cool Jobs in Writing." Hendrickson is also a successful ghostwriter, screenplay writer, editor, and biographer. During the fireside chat, Hendrickson plans to share valuable tips and insights she has garnered in her career about writing and the writing industry. There will be an opportunity to engage with Hendrickson as GVSU's Randee Gage, Vice President of the OPW, will be running a Q&A after the presentation. This is a great opportunity for attendees to engage with Hendrickson.

Upon interviewing Balivet, it became clear that she enjoys working with the STC-MGL on this project; from a professional capacity, she endorses the collaboration, saying, "it can be a rewarding experience and a great way to help your members become connected to their career field." She also expresses her personal delight, saying, "this [was] a wonderful experience, and [she is] so grateful to be a part of it."

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*"it can be rewarding...  
to help your members  
become connected..."*

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Similarly, Jacobsen expresses her professional and personal satisfaction of the collaborative process, saying, "it's been a pleasure!" When asked if we can expect more collaborations between the two organizations, Jacobsen says she "would love the collaborative relationship between STC-MGL and OPW to continue to grow!"

**You're Invited to  
Attend A Fireside  
Chat with  
Ami Hendrickson**

**Thursday, April 25,  
7-8:30pm via Zoom**

Free to Students and  
STC-MGL Members

Anyone interested can find  
more information at  
<https://tinyurl.com/8eu4xfju>

## Recent Faculty Updates and Publications

### Poetry: A Writer's Guide and Anthology

Amorak Huey and W. Todd Kaneko

The expanded second edition of former GVSU professor Amorak Huey and Associate Professor W. Todd Kaneko introduction to poetry was published by Bloomsbury Academic

### "Consent and Mystical Marriage in the Late Middle English Prose *Life of St. Katherine* and John Capgrave's *The Life of St. Katherine*"

Abigail Greff

in *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 62-89, 2024

### "Toward Integrated UX Instruction with Symbiotic Classrooms"

Kylie Jacobsen and Danielle Devasto

in *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, Vol. 66, No. 4, pp. 394-406, 2023

### Part Time Adjunct Faculty Profile: Roz Roseboro

Ally Boudreau



Part Time Adjunct Faculty Roz Roseboro  
(photo: Roz Roseboro)

It seems as though everyone has read *The Handmaid's Tale*, doesn't it? Well, after speaking with Part-Time Adjunct Professor Roz Roseboro, it's definitely bumped to the top of my To-Be-Read pile.

Roseboro got chills as she recalled the exact moment she realized she wanted to learn about the craft of writing. After reading *The Handmaid's Tale*, she couldn't grasp how the author made her care so deeply about the characters. The novel inspired Roseboro's passion for writing and prompted her to begin taking writing classes at a studio in Chicago before going on to get her MFA in Creative Writing at Northern Michigan University.

She called this point in time her "midlife awakening," when she discovered that writing is how she processes things. "That's why I'm a creative nonfiction writer," she said,

"I don't create new worlds, I try to figure out my own."

When Professor and Department Chair at the time, Christopher Toth, emailed Roseboro regarding teaching at GVSU, she was on her way to a hair appointment, hardly able to contain her excitement. This moment possibly foreshadowed her nonfiction piece "The Heaviness of Hair," which was published in *Solstice Literary Magazine* in 2021 and was a finalist for the Michael Steinberg Award for Nonfiction.

Roseboro has taught at GVSU for three semesters now, while simultaneously working as a Principal Analyst in the telecommunications industry. Roseboro hopes to continue her writing and teaching career by combining her MBA and MFA to design her own course at GVSU that brings the writing and business disciplines together.



## Part Time Adjunct Faculty Profile: Sheridan Steelman

*Katherine Heil*



*Part Time Adjunct Faculty Sheridan Steelman  
(photo: Sheridan Steelman)*

Adjunct Professor Sheridan Steelman brings an incredible amount of experience to GVSU. This includes an undergraduate degree and M.A. from Michigan State University, an M.A. from GVSU, and a Ph.D. in English Literature and Language from Western Michigan. Sheridan also draws from a fifty-year teaching career at Northview High School. Born in Pontiac, Professor Steelman has lived and worked around Grand Rapids for much of her career. Here, she has supervised many student teachers here at GVSU and taught English Education courses at Aquinas College and Central Michigan University.

Steelman was inspired to come to GVSU and teach after only a year of retirement due to an interview with Professor Christopher Toth. She was impressed by the Writing Department and the work it does to help students through the Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors, the libraries, and

other opportunities like portfolio reviews. According to her, the best thing a student can receive is the opportunity for one-on-one engagement with others, even in larger classes, saying, “They need to know that I believe in them.” Her belief is that these one-on-one moments can help build the confidence of student writers. “Confidence is one of the most important things in writing – I want to teach them to be confident about struggling and about their writing abilities; to walk away knowing that they’re good at it.”

Her advice for any writing students? “Trust your instincts. If you want to write something new, you should. If you want to push the envelope, you should. You’ll learn as you go.”

## Visiting Faculty Profile: Alyssa Evans

*Hannah Applebee*

Visiting Professor Alyssa Evans’ journey at GVSU began five years ago in the M.A. English Program. She also worked as a graduate assistant for the English Department as well as a graduate consultant at GVSU’s Writing Center. During this time, her professors and the Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors shaped her and how she wants to teach.

After completing her master’s degree, Evans worked in the library at Kuyper College and taught English classes at Cornerstone University. Now back at GVSU, she says, “This time around, the experience has been even more rewarding. From the professors to the staff, my colleagues in the Writing Department and across the campus have been so welcoming and encouraging.”

Evans is currently teaching WRT 150: Strategies in Writing, and she has “incorporated [her] love for reading

and writing into the curriculum.” Her students are writing a literary analysis essay inspired by her time in GVSU’s graduate program. “My hope is to foster those same passions in my students while helping them develop confidence and competence when sharing their voice on the page.”

When she’s not teaching, one can find Evans reading a good book. “I love reading classic literature, especially from women writers, and am inspired by them when crafting my own work.” She has been writing mostly poetry and creative nonfiction, but her goal is to write fiction someday. “Experimenting with writing has fueled my creativity and broadened my imagination, and I hope to inspire that in my students as well.”



*Visiting Professor Alyssa Evans  
(photo: Alyssa Evans)*

**AWP 2023-2024  
Poetry Winner**

**“100 American Love  
Ballads for Piano”**

**Michael Breazeale**

# Post-Grad Transitions: Recent Writing Alumni Successes

Michaela Triemstra



Graylen Erdmann (photo: Graylen Erdmann)



Robert Trudeau (photo: Robert Trudeau)

For many students, the question of what to do after graduation is an anxiety-inducing topic that weighs on the mind. To ease those nerves, two recent Writing alumni, Graylen Erdmann and Robert Trudeau, have shared their experiences adjusting to life after graduating from GVSU and how the Writing Department has prepared and helped them succeed in real-world jobs.

After graduating in December 2023, Erdmann began working full-time as a human resources generalist for Learning and Development (L&D), which was also where she interned during the summer of 2023. At L&D, Erdmann completes administrative tasks and develops programs, including mentorship and intern programs for the summer. Erdmann is also a communicator for L&D, which has allowed for her experience in the Writing Department to shine. Using both writing and graphic design skills, Erdmann creates newsletters and communicates with other employees.

Having previous experience with the company helped make the

transition from full-time college student to full-time office worker much smoother for her. She had already developed relationships and adapted to the fast-paced environment.

Trudeau also graduated from GVSU in December 2023 and is currently working contract positions. He has been writing blog posts, video scripts, emails, and social media content. "I'm working with other writers, using my skill set with SEO research to assist the marketing team in their endeavors," Trudeau said. "My main focus and interest right now is finding ways to use organic traffic to drive predictable conversions and sales."

Trudeau's Writing degree has also been put to good use in his life post-graduation. "[My Writing degree] taught me how to write to multiple audiences," Trudeau said. "On a daily basis I'm writing to creators, engineers, and all kinds of people in between. I feel like the writing degree helped prepare me by testing my writing skills in multiple contexts." In addition to his degree, Trudeau's

work as a writing consultant, internship experience, and work with the Dean's Office on the CLAS website has helped him to develop a marketable skill set and begin to see himself as a professional.

Students' experience in the Writing Department, whether it is their internship or classes, can help them see who they are as writers outside of GVSU and develop their professional identity. "Consider how you feel about your internship in the broader scope of your life," Trudeau said.

Erdmann's advice for current students was to take every possible opportunity in internships. "If it is a company you could see yourself working for after school, make sure you stand out," she said. "Go above and beyond in your work and make every moment count. Build those relationships and advocate for yourself." Erdmann wanted to work full-time for her manager, so she worked hard to secure her spot on the team. She advised current students to do the same and to not give up on something if they really wanted it.

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***"Go above and beyond in your work and make every moment count. Build those relationships and advocate for yourself."***

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While post-grad life is daunting, these two alumni have shown that Writing students are not only prepared for life after GVSU but that they can succeed in whatever it is they do.



## BEAR RIVER

*Continued from page 1*

for being so kind to take us both there and back. When we arrived at the campsite, we were given our cabin numbers and told to unpack and meet in the main building for orientation. There I learned that I got the wonderful opportunity to work with my first choice mentor, Desiree Cooper. She is a former attorney turned creative writer whose workshop was focused on revision strategies for fiction writing.

At orientation, something that surprised both me and Emma was how few undergraduate students there were at the conference. “We were outnumbered by writers who had established literary careers, novels published, and a wealth of insight that they were all very generous in sharing to those earlier on in our paths,” Emma said. For us, this uneven split of expertise made us nervous in the beginning but became very beneficial later on.

As the conference progressed, we pushed each other out of our comfort zones and began talking to the older members at the dining hall during dinner and workshops. “The insight given out over dining hall dinners and in casual workshop conversation was a crash course I was very grateful to be a part of,” Emma said. Due to these connections, Emma and I were able to be a part of a late-night group that did writing blitzes, which not only strengthened our bonds with other writers but also helped create prompts and lines we were able to use for other writing projects. Expect many late nights, but also make sure to take care of yourself!

Desiree was a very laid-back mentor who assigned us few readings and very little work outside of our workshop time, so I found myself with an abundance of free time. The amount of free time was

startling to me at first, but the best way I was able to get the most out of the conference was by putting together a daily schedule. I planned a loose writing schedule around times the dining hall was open, workshop, the optional evening craft talks, and the optional evening readings. However, I recommend that you also make plans to engage in the activities that the camp provides for you to engage in as well, such as kayaking and hiking. You never know when inspiration will strike!

My workshop with Desiree was pretty similar to workshops at GVSU. With my cohort, Desiree would give us a prompt and time for us to freewrite before having us share our writing out loud. She would then facilitate a discussion about our piece along with the rest of our cohort. Then, when we were done, we were able to discuss different methods of revision for the piece we wrote. Something that was radically different from workshops at GVSU was the hands-on nature of how Desiree guided us. She often wrote along with us and included her work as an additional example and led us through her personal process. I appreciated this approach, as it helped break down the hierarchy I put myself at the bottom of as an “inexperienced writer”. She was warm and appreciated all of our insight, and after the conference she’s become a wonderful mentor to me and my work.

At the end of the conference, there is an opportunity for all of the individuals to share their writing in front of the attendees on a podium. “It is intimidating to present in front of both peers whose work you’ve quickly grown to admire as well as all the other decorated writers attending,” Emma said, “but I’m glad to have taken that opportunity.

Standing up there felt like an important culminating moment of my time there and the work I had been creating.” Both I and Emma, along with the rest of the friends we made within the week, signed up and read our work, nervous but knowing there was a crowd of support just a few feet away.

Bear River was an opportunity of a lifetime that I feel so incredibly privileged to have experienced. I recommend everyone apply to the Writing Department scholarship. If you get it, I hope that this article can help guide you on what to expect and how to make the most of your time at the conference.

## AWP 2023-2024 Honorable Mention

“A Worm Fact”

Grace Hasley

Interested in  
writing, reviewing,  
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Join us at the first  
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semester!

# A Letter from the Editor

*Alora Bowers*



*Alora Bowers (Photo: Alora Bowers)*

After four years at Grand Valley, I can proudly say that my time as a student within the Writing Department has been the most joyful and friendship-filled years yet. While I will not be walking across the stage quite yet, I will be completing my term as Editor in Chief this semester, and next fall beginning my teaching apprenticeship for English Secondary Education. Afterwards, I will be graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English Secondary Education, with minors in Writing and History.

While I have spent time within a variety of departments on campus, the sense of community that I have felt within the Writing Department has been unmatched. Initially, I began my time at Grand Valley as a Biology major however I quickly discovered that writing and sharing stories was where my passion lies.

When I began to take writing classes in my sophomore year, I immediately felt welcomed and comfortable. I never felt any hesitation in sharing work that was personal, as I knew my classmates and professors would make an effort to understand me and provide

helpful feedback.

Joining the Writing Center as a consultant was another experience that completely changed my life, as it inspired me to want to teach writing in a secondary setting. I made so many friends that shared similar interests as me, both in and outside of the classroom. Between the Writing Center, my writing professors, and all of my classmates within the Writing Department, I truly felt a sense of belonging here at Grand Valley.

I quickly felt comfortable enough within the Writing Department to join student-run publications such as InWriting, and I am so happy that I made that decision. InWriting not only taught me that I love to write nonfiction genres, but it also taught me a variety of skills that I will be able to take with me throughout my entire career.

Thank you to everyone in the Writing Department who has not only helped me in my journey, but also advocated for the emphasis of writing on campus as a whole. I am happy that I could be a part of a publication that contributes to building such a strong community within the department.

I want to especially thank everyone who has put so much hard work into InWriting, including professor Kylie Jacobsen and Maddie Cesarz, our dedicated faculty advisor and talented assistant editor. This publication would not exist without the help of so many amazing students and I am grateful for everyone who has contributed, reviewed, and copy-edited articles in the past year. It has been a great experience to get to know everyone and create these newsletters with you, and I am excited to see where the publication goes in the future!

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Winter 2024

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