

the gonzaga english department

NEWS

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2018 — 2019

Gonzaga University's
Speaker Events
Fall 2018

Art Spiegelman

On **Sept. 25**, Pulitzer prize winner Art Spiegelman, best known for his graphic novel, "Maus" came to Gonzaga to deliver a presentation entitled, "What the %@&*! happened to Comics?" It was a chronological tour about the evolution of comics, and a defense of the value of the medium.

On **Oct. 17**, senior English major, Chris Barker gave a presentation called "Shonda Rhimes and the Postmodern Author: Representational Strategies of a Black Woman in Primetime" for Gonzaga's Pop Culture and Lecture Series.

Chris Barker

Sierra Golden

On **Oct. 18**, Gonzaga alumna and award-winning poet, Sierra Golden visited campus for to read from her new collection, "The Slow Art," which won the Dorothy Brunzman Poetry Prize.

On **Nov. 8**, award-winning essayist and author of "Let Me Clear My Throat" and "Animals Strike Curious Poses," Elena Passarello held a reading and book signing as part of Gonzaga's Visiting Writers Series.

Elena Passarello

Melissa Click

On **Nov. 14**, assistant prof. in Communication Studies, Melissa Click gave a lecture titled, "Feminist Fan Studies: The things We Love (and Love to Hate)" for the Pop Culture Lecture Series here on campus.

Gonzaga University's
Speaker Events
Spring 2019

On **Feb. 27**, the poet and author of the poetry collections, "AMERICAN LETTERS: works on paper" and "Acension" will visit Gonzaga as part of the Visiting Writers Series.

giovanni singleton

*Helena
María Viramontes*

On **Apr. 2**, the author of "Moths and Other Stories," "Under the feet of Jesus" and "Their Dogs Came with Them" will visit Gonzaga as part of the Visiting Writers Series.

On **Feb. 5**, The Senior English major will present on Disney Princesses and racial representation as a part of Gonzaga's Pop Culture and Lecture Series.

Victoria Weible

Haley Miller

On **Mar. 6**, The Senior English and Communication Studies double major will present a feminist reading of the Star Wars films as part of Gonzaga's Pop Culture and Lecture Series.

On **Apr. 9**, The Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in Communication Studies will present on a public visual cultural production among Egyptian feminist activists as part of Gonzaga's Pop Culture and Lecture Series.

alma khasawnih

What Does

English

mean to

you?

Two Gonzaga students share what English means to them beyond the classroom



MJ

Norris

Q:What does English mean to you?

A:I've always liked reading and I've liked writing too. I remember when I was 5, I rewrote the princess and the frog with a different ending – I don't remember what the ending was, but I was so proud. I have always liked words and stories and I think English is a great way for minority communities, like LGBTQ+ and writers of color, to share their stories. There's something magical about seeing a story unfold like they do in books. Plus, everyone uses language. Words help us talk to people and express our feelings. It's cheesy but true.

Q:Did you come into Gonzaga knowing you wanted to study English?

A:No! All through high school I thought I was going to study English, but then my parents thought I should study computer science cause it's all up-and-coming. I said okay, I like video games, so why not. I studied that for the first year and a half, but it got so hard and it just wasn't what I wanted to do. So, I switched my major fall semester of my sophomore year.

Q: Do you have a favorite English class so far:

A: I like my Alfred Hitchcock class. It's an English class where we watch Alfred Hitchcock movies and talk about him and stuff, taught by professor Bolton. I'm going to take another class by him next semester. I'm in a lot of great classes right now. I'm taking two class on dystopian and medieval literature. Since I'm minoring in Spanish, I'm also taking Spanish lit.

Q: Does having so many minors help with your perception of English?

A: Yes! I like to diversify what I read. In high school, everything you read is the same and from the literary canon. I want to move on from that. A class I'm really excited to take next year is Women of Color Writers, which is taught by professor Baros, who I had for a multicultural literature class. He's amazing! And English helps me with my minors, too. A lot of classes require some sort of writing. I find that people from all majors come to me and ask for help with their essays.



Gabriel Rivas



Gabriel Rivas is the president and founder of the Gonzaga Hip-Hop and Rap club. Although the senior Political Science major isn't part of the English Department, his well-rounded values and passion of lyrical spoken word contribute to the community on campus.

Q: How do you use English in your own major?

A: Writing plays a huge role in political science. It's a major that depends a lot on huge research papers. It's half of the major as well. But it's a different type of English – the writing and reading are both really analytical. Political science is research, different from musical writing, which gets to be more metaphorical and personal. My studies and my interests overlap a little: I'm studying to go to law school for entertainment and new media law, or to deal with publishing contracts.

Q: How does writing fit into Hip Hop?

A: It's probably half of it. There's production, people making the beats, but then there's the writing. You don't have to be the best at it, there are levels and different depths, but high-up artists like Kendrick, their writing is super personal and plays a huge role in what they do cause every artist has their own experience, and how they choose to write it determines how they translate that experience into their music.

Q: Why did you start your club, and what do you hope to accomplish with it?

A: My friend and I had gone to high school together in LA. Freshmen year, we were walking down the club fair down bulldog alley, looking for something like a Hip-Hop Rap club, cause that was a pretty prevalent club back home. We didn't find, and we're surprised cause it's a big club at other universities. So over a year and a half after that, we were tired that Gonzaga wasn't putting on big events or concerts that we wanted to see, so we decided it was time to create our club. Last year was our first year. The point of the club is to bring awareness to hip hop and all of its elements, not just the music. There's graffitiing, DJing, dancing and fashion.

Q: Do you think there is a philosophy or a theme that runs through all the different majors in the humanities?

A: Maybe people wouldn't see it from the outside initially. How would poli sci and psych and English interact with each other? But the skills from each concentration overlap. For me, knowing how to write will help me in my major or with drafting formal letterheads to management or emails to agencies. You need more than one skill to be well rounded and to do any kind of work or concentration.

Q: And finally, what does English mean to you?

A: I've always liked English. I took all the Aps for English, and going into the application process, English was one of the three majors that interested me. There's poli sci, History and English – the three prevalent ones that lead into law school, and all three of those majors emphasize writing, reading and those kinds of skills. I was leaning more towards Poly Sci cause that's what grabbed my interest, but in college one of my favorite classes was an English class. It was the creative writing 101 that everyone takes, but instead of being super structured and having zero leeway, this professor let us choose topics for research papers, so I wrote one on the evolution of hip-hop because I finally had the opportunity to write about something other than a book. English will always be a part of my life. I read a lot, I listen to music, and English is a part of those things.

“Every artist has their own experience”

Where the
Good Folks
have gone

Gonzaga English Alumni



PHOTO COURTESY
OF COLIN BONINI



Colin Bonini

Colin graduated Gonzaga in 2018 with a Bachelors of English with a writing concentration.

Colin Bonini, who graduated in the Spring of 2018, was the recipient of the Fr. William Costello Outstanding Senior English Major Award. Since graduating, Colin has moved to Sydney Australia and started a blog called “Where The Good Folks Go,” an online public journal documenting the places he goes, people he’s met and stories they have shared.

Colin Bonini

Q: How has your blog helped you travel/move around?

A: It hasn't really. I'm working in hospitality around 30 hours a week at the moment and enjoying staying in Sydney, Australia. I take day trips near and around the city on my days off and try to write between exploring, working, and maintaining an everyday living schedule. What the blog has helped me to do is be more attentive of the people and places around me. I'm looking at buildings as histories to write about and buskers on the street as people with stories. It's tough, but I make notes of interesting locations and folks I see so I can return to them later to try and write about them.

Q: Why is English and writing important to you?

A: Writing is important to me, but I'm trying to find a good balance between writing and living. I love writing because it's so easy for me to clarify my thoughts. When I'm talking I can get distracted by a topic and go off on a tangent that really detracts from the point I'm trying to get across, or I might just need more time to formulate a way to say what I mean. Writing gives me that time, that organization, and eliminates interruptions.

Apart from the benefits writing allows me, I just think writing in general is one of the most important ways to communicate. People learn about the world around them from writing, whether it's from a news source or a fictional story or a poem. Reading will always make people think, make people examine new problems, new solutions, new ways of being, new ways to view themselves or people around them. And I think that reflection is important, and it only comes through good writing.

Worst case, if none of that's true, writing is fun.

Q: What inspires you to write?

A: I think when it comes down to it, other people. I might not feel like writing one day, but then I'll read

something that I really liked and want to imitate it, so I sit down on my computer and start typing. Or I'll be in a slump and I'll talk to a friend -- any friend -- and they'll inspire me to keep going because of something they said or some way they act. I don't think I'd write if other people didn't set an example for me first. Everybody has their passion, and it's amazing to see somebody follow through with it. I'm just hoping to do that one day.

Q: What else have you been up to since graduating? Any words of advice for people interested in creative writing?

A: I worked in Alaska for the summer. That was fun. I took a few road trips to visit friends and family, and now I've been living in Sydney for two months working in a restaurant. I don't think what I'm doing is super different from what most of my friends who graduated are doing. For the most part, I wake up, do normal everyday things, work a lot, and in my spare time I try and have fun or work on things I think are important. The only difference is that I'm a little farther away.

I don't have much advice for people interested in writing. I'm still figuring it out myself, and I think that's a big part of finishing school and trying to write. Finding

a balance is very difficult. I put a lot of pressure on myself to write, which can be counterproductive, especially when I don't meet the goals I set for myself. I've only written two blog posts in as many months, so I'm not exactly typing my heart away every day. I'm trying to enjoy my time in Australia rather than put so much pressure on myself that I implode. Writing is hard work and it takes time to find a rhythm. I'm still trying to find mine, but I think that's fine. There's no rush. I'm only 22, and I know that down the road I'll look back on this time and be thankful regardless of how much I was writing. I guess my advice is to just relax. Keep writing but relax and never lose sight of why you're doing it.

Follow Colin's journey: thegoodfolks.org

Erin CAIRNS



Erin graduated from Gonzaga in 2018 with a Bachelors of English with a writing concentration.

Q: What does English mean to you and how has it influenced your life?

A: Honestly, I chose the English major and specifically the writing concentration because a teacher from high school I really respected and grew close with told me to “keep writing.” But I had NO idea what learning the craft meant. For me, English and writing were huge growing experiences. The classes I took opened my eyes to new things while I was trying to figure out myself and life outside the classroom. I was exposed to amazing writers and work that I would have never discovered on my own. For me, English has influenced me on a deeply personal level more than anything else.

Q: What’ve you been up to since graduating? Did GU prepare you for it, and if so, how?

A: I wish I could say I was doing something awesome with my degree, but I’m one of those English majors who hasn’t done that yet. I work for PepsiCo and am being trained to become a Sales District Leader, so a manager for their salesmen. Yes, I think GU prepared me because of the critical thinking skills formed by the Jesuit education style. I think there’s this idea that corporate culture can be cold-blooded and lifeless, but I think it’s the opposite. You must have a lot of social and emotional awareness of the people around you and who you’re working with and be able to think critically in on-the-spot situations. You also need to be able to speak up for yourself when in a room of counterparts 10-30 years your senior. The only things I didn’t know, were the business stuff that I never took classes for.

But honestly working for PepsiCo feels like a Masters in business. It’s hard sometimes, but like the English major, I am growing a lot both inside the office, out in the trade and in my own personal life. I still use my English education outside work. A group of friends I made in a writing class still send work to each other on a Facebook page we made one semester. We encourage each other a lot and message each other on a weekly basis.

Q: What advice would you give your younger self about college? What advice do you have for those thinking about studying English?

A: I would say, “Erin, please for the love of God don’t care so much what others think, dammit! You do you and if others don’t jive with that, that’s on them. Also, don’t feel the pressure to be the next Joan Didion or Virginia Wolff every time you write a first draft. That will creatively paralyze you. It’s a process and you gotta fall in love with that or else you’re doing it for the wrong reasons. Also, screw being Wonder Woman; don’t overfill your plate. Pick a few things to be involved with and leave some time for yourself. Humans need that!”

If you want to major in English Literature or Writing, take a class or two beyond the core requirements. You never know until you try! Or go chat with Professor Daniel Butterworth; that dude gives brilliant life advice. But after you’ve done all that, make sure you love the process itself because that’s what you’ll be doing for the next 3-4 years. Honestly, you can use it for anything. You can always tag a minor to another major as well, why not!

What We're Reading

A list of book recommendations from current English majors

Emma Craven
Junior

I would definitely recommend **Louis Erdrich's** novel, *Tracks*. I was reading the novel for a class but got swept away by the author and the story. If you are looking for a quick fiction read with a story about mysticism and family, this is the novel for you!

Spencer Brown
Sophomore

American Housewife by **Helen Ellis** is an amazing book of essays that are both incredibly dark and relatable. This book covers a range of topics, from the thrilling life of a being an invalid, to writing under the sponsorship of Tampax, to being in a codependent relationship with your dead doormen. Helen Ellis is a very underrated author, and this is one of the best light reads I've ever read.

Daisy Johnson
Senior

I would recommend *Tar Baby* by **Toni Morrison**. It's socially relevant and by a classic author but Tar Baby is one of Morrison's lesser known works. Also, it's set in a warm climate which is a good escape from the Spokane winter.

Lizzie Vosler
Sophomore

The Name of The Wind by **Patrick Rothfuss**. This is MY FAVORITE BOOK OF ALL TIME. It is the first book in the Kingkiller Chronicles and is divided into two timelines. The first timeline is the present, told through a third person narrative, and the second is in protagonist, Kvothe's past told by Kvothe himself. It has magic, science, faeries and basically everything anyone should want in a boo. I would read an entire book of nothing but a character walking down a road if Patrick Rothfuss wrote it.



Behind the Newsletter

Olivia Froehlich '20

Olivia is a Business student at Gonzaga University studying Marketing, with minors in Psychology and Art.

Grace Nakahara '19

Grace is a student at Gonzaga University studying Studio Art and English with a Creative Writing concentration