

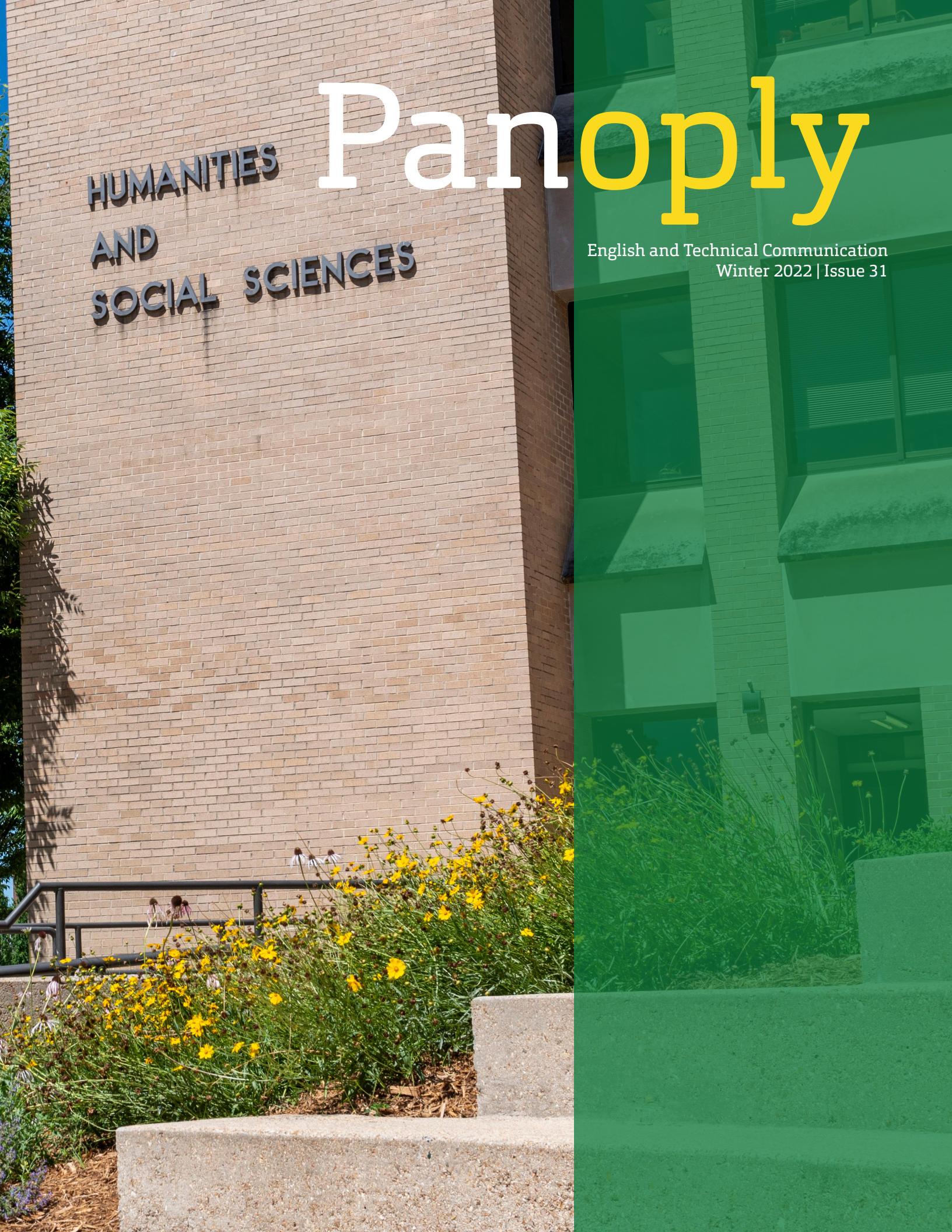
HUMANITIES

AND

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Panoply

English and Technical Communication
Winter 2022 | Issue 31



Preparing our students for tomorrow's world, today

The English and Technical Communication department prides itself on its ability to aptly prepare students to be leaders in the world, but we can't do it alone. Your support goes a long way towards giving students the best opportunities possible.

During our annual phonathon, please consider spending some time chatting with the student who calls you. You'll learn a lot about the department as well as campus as a whole. When your caller asks for support, please consider taking the step that will help our students take theirs.

give.mst.edu

Letter from the Chair

Greetings from the English and Technical Communication Department! It's a beautiful fall day in Rolla as I write this note. The leaves on the trees outside my window have turned and the temperatures are hovering in the low 70s. Fall is my favorite season, especially in Missouri, where we really do enjoy a season of "mellow fruitfulness," as Keats says in his wonderful ode, "To Autumn."

For me—as for many of us whose lives are ordered by the academic calendar—fall is a time of new beginnings. After all these years, I still find great pleasure in buying new books, notebooks, and even pens. I am excited to look out at new sets of students in my classes, wondering who and what I will get to know this year. Some lucky fall semesters, such as this one, I get the joy of working with new colleagues as well. I am so pleased to introduce to all of our friends and alumnae our newest faculty member, Karen Head. Karen comes to us from Georgia Tech, where she was professor and associate chair of the school of Literature, Media, and Communication. She is also an accomplished poet and will serve at S&T as the Founding Director of Arts & Innovation as well as teaching courses in our department. It's already clear to me that Karen is a great new asset to the department and the university.

I hope you get a sense from this issue of *Panoply* of how busy and productive we are in the department. The pandemic kept us at home and at our desks judging by the scholarly output of the last eighteen months. And I am very proud of how well our faculty rose to the challenge of pandemic teaching, pivoting from in-person to online and then back again without missing a beat, and always providing a safety net for students who were struggling during this difficult time. Students are back in our classrooms with new appreciation for those spaces and the value of their educations.

I continue to be impressed by the industry of our students and faculty just as I am grateful for their collegiality and good will. Thank you for your continued interest and support of English & Tech Com. We're also very interested in knowing how our friends and alums are faring, so please let us hear from you!

Kristine Swenson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair,
English and Technical
Communication



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Please Welcome Dr. Karen Head!



We are pleased to welcome Dr. Karen Head as our new Director of Arts & Innovation and professor of English and Technical Communication! After 17 years in the faculty of Georgia Tech, Dr. Head is excited to see what new opportunities await her at Missouri S&T. Dr. Head wishes to emphasize the role that art and creativity play in science and technology. As such, a STEM-focused school, such as Missouri S&T, is the perfect place to test out new ideas and ways of looking at technology. Dr. Head believes that art does indeed have a rightful place in science and technology to such a degree that, instead of referring to it as STEM, it should instead be called STEAM.

Dr. Head's main area of expertise is poetry, and she serves as the editor of the award-winning poetry journal *Atlanta Review*. Her mastery of the field is something she will be demonstrating to students in her class on creative writing, which is being taught during the Spring 2022 semester. In addition to teaching, Dr. Head plans to boost student involvement in the arts through a "trash fashion show." This will be used to build a collection of different art pieces around campus. Each piece will be discovered as part of a scavenger hunt, during prospective student tours and orientations, or as something any interested student may choose to partake in. Such a project would be a true collaborative effort between science/tech students and English/art students. It would be a realization of her idea that everything done in the fields of science and technology is done to serve others.

Dr. Head is very excited to join our team and is looking forward to the many great opportunities ahead!

-By Adam Rentz

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Ruminations on Crime

Over the last year, Trent Brown has continued to think a lot about crime. In 2022, LSU Press will publish his next book, *The Hattie Lee Barnes Case: A Roadhouse Shooting and Mississippi Justice*. Barnes, a young African American woman, killed a white man who broke into a bar in which she worked overnight as a caretaker. "The man intended to rape her," explains Brown. "Nevertheless, she was charged with murder and could easily have found herself in the state's electric chair. This was 1951. Barnes was enmeshed in a process that was systematically unfair." However, an area newspaper reporter and her court-appointed lawyer believed that Barnes was unjustly charged. Through their efforts and through Barnes's own determination, she was acquitted. "The story says a lot about the capriciousness of justice in the Deep South in the 1950s," says Brown. It is also a complicated case. Before her own trial, Barnes was shot and nearly killed by the bar owner. "He believed that Barnes might implicate him in the initial shooting. Also, the family of the man she killed was so mortified by the circumstances of his death—shot to death in a bar window while trying to assault an African American woman—that they even sued a life insurance company to try to have some other version of the story become public record." Brown says that he "learned about this story while writing my last book, which explored the murder of a twelve-year-old girl in a small Mississippi town. The district attorney who prosecuted that 1971 case was in 1951 the young lawyer who defended Hattie Lee Barnes."

Brown says that he intends to continue exploring southern crime and violence. "Not only are these stories inherently interesting, but they also offer insights into larger issues, ones of race, social class, and gender and sexuality." What's next for Brown? He says that he has two other books in progress. One of them is a history of Mississippi's portable electric chair, carried from county to county from 1940 to 1954 for executions. For the other book, Brown is studying a graverobber and murderer. "He was executed in Mississippi in 1935, but his trail leads back to Michigan and Indiana. It's hard to say how many people he killed. He did keep souvenirs, such as severed heads and strips of cured flesh. He denied killing all those people, saying instead that he just enjoyed collecting various pieces and parts."

A Word from the Forensics Team

When many people hear the word "forensics," images of a popular TV show probably pop into their head. *Forensics* actually comes from the word *forensic*, meaning belonging to debate or discussion. Debate is exactly what the 2-year-old Missouri S&T Forensics (or speech and debate) team has set out to do.

The team was founded by Assistant Teaching Professor and Debate Coach Kendrea James in the Department of English and Technical Communication. Since the team's beginnings a few years ago, they have competed in more than 8 tournaments, some as far as George Mason University.

Students have competed and taken home awards in individual events such as Poetry and Prose, as well as bringing home multiple trophies in Public Forum and Lincoln-Douglas Debates.

"With the pandemic, we've actually been able to compete virtually so it's been really cool meeting competitors from institutions we may never get to visit due to distance," says Professor James.

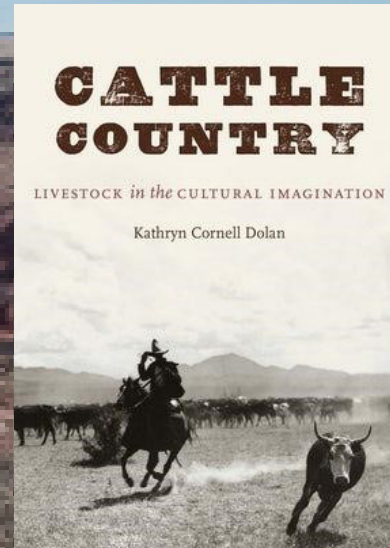
The speech and debate team focuses on individual events and all styles of debate.

"The honors program and I have teamed up with an SP&M S 1185 course section so students are able to get a taste of what academic competition is like," James says, "but any student is welcome to join!" -

If you are interested in competing in individual speaking events or debate events, please contact Coach Kendrea James jamesken@umsystem.edu.

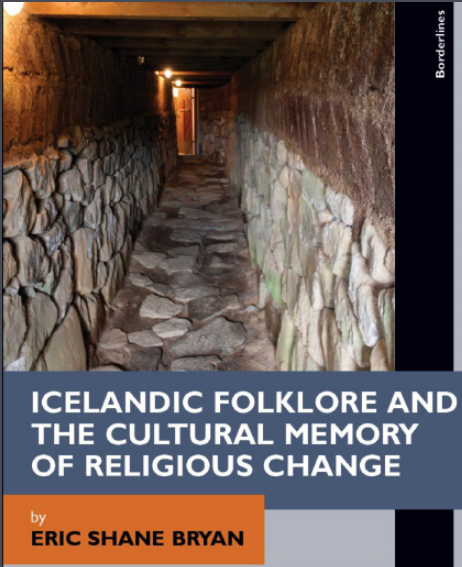


In Cattle Country



Dr. Dolan published her second monograph, *Cattle Country: Livestock in the Cultural Imagination*, in June 2021, as part of the At Table Series at the University of Nebraska Press. “A critical contribution to the field,” Catherine Keyser, author of *Artificial Color: Modern Food and Racial Fictions*, describes Dolan's book, “both in its individual arguments about literature and food and also in its modeling of a comparative methodology attuned to region, indigeneity, and global migration.” *Cattle Country* deeply considers the role of cattle as it became the dominant food animal in U.S. regional narratives during the nineteenth century. It discusses the progression of cattle-based territorial expansion across the North American continent through the literature of the period as the nation pursued its passion for cheap and plentiful red meat. Would the nation, for example, look different if our representative animal was chicken or sheep? How has the image of the cowboy influenced U.S. culture—and how did nineteenth-century expansion of territory on which to produce cattle contribute to the preeminence of this cultural icon? This monocultural food source came at a high price to humans, animals, and the land, as described in the works of Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper and Susan Fenimore Cooper, Henry David Thoreau, Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Charles Chesnutt, Upton Sinclair, and Winnifred Eaton.

These authors demonstrated the nation's struggles with issues of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and the environment within the bounds of settler-colonialism during the early stages of U.S. industrialization, using cattle as the representative U.S. food animal. In addition, they wrote of their efforts to survive and, if possible, to thrive during a time of dramatic changes in U.S. land, culture, and agriculture. Karen Piper, author of *The Price of Thirst: Global Water Inequality and the Coming Chaos*, writes of *Cattle Country*, “In an Anthony Bourdain-like journey across the country, this book gives you a sense of regional food history in America. You can really taste the food by the end.”

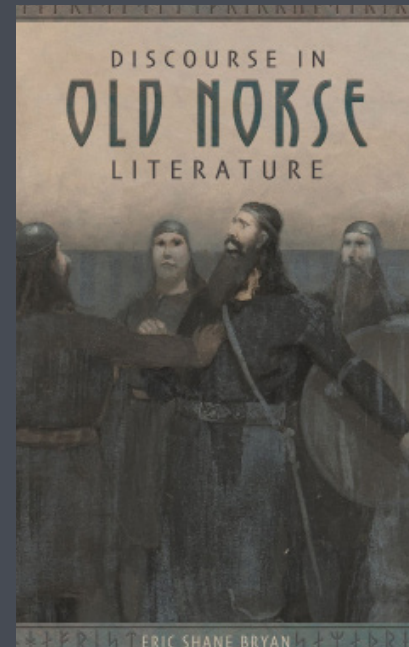


A Window into Icelandic and Nordic Culture

Dr. Eric Bryan was very fortunate to see two books published in 2021. The first of these, *Icelandic Folklore and the Cultural Memory of Religious Change*, examines five great Icelandic folktales collected after the Reformation. The goal of the book is to understand how these five folktales—each of them told and retold over and over since the medieval period or even well before that—indicates something about the two great religious changes in the North, first from Norse paganism to Christianity and second from Catholicism to Lutheranism. This is a fun book because readers get to learn about sorcerers, elves, trolls, and ghosts, but it also helps us understand the fundamental purpose of storytelling. Dr. Bryan argues in this book that stories become a kind of battleground upon which we work out contentious or confusing aspects in our lives. At certain key cultural moments in history, such as conversions from one religious structure to another, those battlegrounds reveal how a society processes and reconciles old beliefs with new.

Dr. Bryan's other book published this year, *Discourse in Old Norse Literature*, examines medieval Scandinavian literature from a linguistic perspective in order to discover fundamental mechanisms of verbal exchanges in Old Norse sagas. This literature preserves the language spoken not only by the Vikings, kings, and heroes of the medieval North but also by outlaws, missionaries, and farmers. Scholars have long recognized that the wealth of verbal exchanges in Old Norse sagas presents the modern reader with the opportunity to speak face-to-face, as it were, with these great voices of the past. This book appeals to the linguistic field of pragmatics, which recognizes that speakers often rely upon cultural, situational, and interpersonal context to communicate their meaning. The resulting, context-dependent meaning often deviates from the base semantic and grammatical components of an utterance: speakers may hedge, imply, deflect to save face, or obscure meaning to damage an opponent's self-worth. Saga writers, this work suggests, were masters of this type of indirectness in speech.

One thing Dr. Bryan likes about both of these books is that they tie in quite well with his teaching. Even though these books are scholarly works about far away times and places, everyone can relate to the subject matter. Storytelling and discourse are among the most fundamental of human characteristics. He tries to demonstrate that in his classes.



Promoting Linguistic Equality

In January 2021, Dr. Sarah Hercula published an article in the multilingual journal *Babylonia: Journal of Language Education* entitled “Social justice as the hidden curriculum: Making ‘small’ pedagogical changes to promote equity.” In the article, she proposes a method for integrating social justice themes—specifically, linguistic (in)equality—within the content of existing courses by harnessing the power of the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum can be defined as the implicit messages students receive as a result of teachers’ curricular, structural, and instructional choices in the classroom. An excerpt from the article explains:

Discussions of the hidden curriculum usually revolve around messaging we need to interrogate and dismantle, particularly due to its tendency to reinforce hegemonic practices and structures. For example, Michael Apple points out that, through the hidden curriculum of K–12 schools, “working-class students are taught punctuality, neatness, respect for authority, and other elements of habit formation.”

Using the Structural Inquiry of Stigmatized Englishes (SISE) approach as an example—which she developed in her recent book, *Fostering linguistic equality: The SISE Approach to the Introductory Linguistics Course* (2020)—she shows that by making “small” changes to their courses, instructors can frame social justice as the hidden curriculum in their classrooms. These changes are not “small” in that they are easy to implement or ineffectual; rather, small refers to making structural, background changes that can be implemented throughout the entire curriculum of a course, without replacing or supplanting existing content or units. She provides an example from her own experience:

When she was first designing her curriculum for the introductory linguistics course, she realized that, by situating an introduction to the field within the context of standard language (in this case, standard English), the hidden curriculum messaging was SLI: the promotion of standard English above other Englishes and, thus, the promotion of people whose dialects more closely resemble standard English over people whose dialects diverge significantly from standard English. This very recognition is what guided her development of the SISE approach. She hypothesized that, by substituting language data from socially stigmatized Englishes in place of standard English, she could send a different tacit message: that these dialects are structurally patterned, legitimate, and worthy of study (and, by extension, that their speakers are also legitimate and valuable).

Dr. Hercula also highlights the importance of researching and evaluating such curricular changes to determine that the changes are achieving the intended impact, pointing out that without careful implementation and study, such changes can unintentionally reinforce the very inequities that teachers are seeking to dismantle. The article ends with encouragement for teachers who would seek to do this work: “By subverting the traditional hidden curricula in our fields and courses, we have the opportunity to show students—little-by-little, day-by-day—that diversity is always already present and that working toward equity is a responsibility that should be shared by all.”

Interactive Storytelling: Game Studies, Narrative, and Technical Communication

Digital games—often called video games—are now the most popular entertainment in the world, surpassing even movies in overall sales. The design and marketing of games has therefore become a “zero-sum” game; success or failure for a game company often hinges on one title. Additionally, game companies were among the first to harness the power of social media as a PR and marketing tool—with decidedly mixed results.

In fall 2021, students in Dr. Dan Reardon’s English & Tech Com 3590: Game Studies course studied how games use technical content to teach players how to play games, and how both game companies and fans use social media to talk about games, form fan communities, and sometimes challenge or change game design. In class, students played BioWare’s 2010 science fiction role-playing game Mass Effect 2, often cited by critics and scholars as among the greatest digital role-playing games of all time. Working with the Missouri S&T IT department, Dr. Reardon arranged for a license to use logos, graphics, and images from Mass Effect 2. And in the first software installation of its kind at the university, S&T’s IT team installed the game on Apps Anywhere, a cloud service that allows students registered for the course to play Mass Effect 2 on any university computer.

In the course, players complete game logs in which they answer question Dr. Reardon asks them about each in-class play session. Students also take turns as session leaders during the in-class playthroughs, guiding their fellow students on the story elements of the session, as well as how the game functions as technical communication. The course therefore represents how English literary studies and technical communication function together in digital environments like games.

In addition to the in-class play sessions, students also work on a course project—the Video Tutorial. By creating their own videos about Mass Effect 2 or the Mass Effect series of games like the ones currently on YouTube and other visual mediums, students learn design thinking skills, video editing and creation, and vocal narration techniques. Student response to the course has been overwhelmingly positive.



A Study of the Mandative Subjunctive

Consider the following sentence with the subjunctive forms highlighted: “Tens of thousands of people rely on this aquifer for their water, and we are really concerned that it **not be contaminated** in any way and still **be** a viable drinking source for the city of Rapid City.” The concern is that the aquifer is not yet contaminated but may become so.

Now consider how the meaning changes when the subjunctive forms are replaced by indicative forms: “Tens of thousands of people rely on this aquifer for their water, and we are really concerned that it **is not contaminated** in any way and still **is** a viable drinking source for the city of Rapid City.” The concern now seems to be, illogically, that the aquifer should be contaminated but is not.

The difference between “We propose that the project **is finished**” (indicative) and “We propose that the project **be finished**” (subjunctive) is a difference between actualized and not yet actualized. The project referred to in the subjunctive clause is not yet finished.

For their recently published study of the mandative subjunctive in technical writing (*Technical Communication*, May 2021), Professors Ed Malone and Elizabeth Roberson analyzed workplace documents such as reports, manuals, and proposals. They also administered two versions of a performance-based elicitation test in eight sections of writing courses at S&T. For each of the twelve prompts on the test, a student had to either compose a complete predicate for a *that*-clause showing only a subject or supply the simple predicate (verb phrase) in an otherwise complete *that*-clause.

Supply a complete predicate (analogous to writing):

- Safety demands that the driver _____.
- The requirement was that the night manager _____.

Supply a simple predicate (analogous to editing):

- The department requests that the candidate _____ the application by June 5.
- It is vital that the user _____ all procedures.

Each *that*-clause contained a trigger word for the mandative subjunctive—verbs such as *require*, *suggest*, *demand*; nouns such as *requirement*, *stipulation*, *rule*; or adjectives such as *necessary*, *important*, *imperative*. The goal was to determine whether the students were more likely to use subjunctive or indicative forms in these clauses and whether the frequency of use would be greater in writing or editing. The hypothesis was that students would be more likely to use subjunctive forms in writing because they would be subconsciously accessing a large store of grammar rules acquired through performance, whereas in editing they would be consciously accessing a far more limited store of grammar rules acquired in school.

The results showed that the students used the mandative subjunctive frequently, but they used the mandative indicative more frequently. They were more likely to use the mandative subjunctive when they were generating complete predicates (applying the grammar rule subconsciously in composing/drafting) than when they were supplying only simple predicates (applying the grammar rule consciously in editing/revising).

The study has implications for copyeditors, among others, who are tasked with increasing semantic accuracy as well as clarity and consistency through editing.

| Code | Form | Examples from Responses |
|------|--------------------------------|---|
| I | indicative, present, singular | “submits,” “is provided,” “does not break,” “has completed,” “reviews and understands,” “has to wear” |
| S | subjunctive, present, singular | “submit,” “be locked,” “not break,” “have completed,” “read and follow” |
| M | modal | “should be,” “must complete,” “couldn’t move,” “can go,” “will alternate” (but not verb phrases containing <i>has to</i> , <i>is to</i> , etc.) |

Dr. Larson Emphasizes Empathy in Online Classrooms

March of 2020 was a threshold experience for students and educators alike. The pandemic forced us out of our classrooms and into tiny, one-inch square boxes that glitched across our computer screens. I wasn't worried at first. I'd been teaching online for a few summers, and my courses were strong—or so I'd thought. When the pandemic forced the university into lockdown and all students were shifted online, however, my colleagues and I discovered that our virtual courses had been designed around a specific type of student. We'd built the courses for students who wanted to learn online—students who had chosen this method because it suited their learning style best. But thanks to the novel coronavirus, we now also had in our virtual classrooms students who craved the personal connection that happens in face-to-face classrooms. These students knew that they worked better when their professors were physically present to look over their shoulder, to answer questions in real time (and not through chat or a microphone), and to share jokes and stories that make the content more accessible through conversation. When the lockdown notice hit our emails on the morning of March 16th, therefore, we had to reimagine how our online courses could be useful for all students. And we had to figure it out mid-semester. At some point that evening I realized that I had been searching Google Scholar for articles about online instruction for six hours in search of guidance, and I had exhausted every link six pages deep in the search. I understood then that I was, in fact, worried.

The University of Missouri System had anticipated these concerns when the lockdown became imminent. Administrators quickly partnered with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to deploy a twenty-five week course for faculty to strengthen online instruction in a manner that serves all students. ACUE uses evidence-based teaching practices that promote student engagement, persistence to graduation, career readiness, and deeper levels of learning. All campuses in the UM System enrolled cohorts of faculty in the course. Missouri S&T, ever the technological forward-thinkers, quickly boasted the largest representation of committed faculty-turned-students in the program.

The program contained twenty-five modules with titles like “Engaging Underprepared Students in Online Learning,” “Helping Students Persist in Online Learning,” “Providing Useful Feedback Online,” and “Facilitating Engaging Online Discussions.” Each module consisted of videos, readings, and peer-reviewed articles from prominent educators aimed at quelling the anxieties of faculty and students in this new virtual landscape. In order to complete each module, we had to take a quiz, participate in a discussion, and submit a reflection paper in which we analyzed our own virtual learning practices. We received feedback from our peers and from ACUE instructors, and met as a cohort each month for a conversation about practices that were working for us, and practices that weren't.

My faculty cohort certainly learned many new technical and instructional skills, but the greatest benefit of the course seemed to have been the achievement of new levels of empathy for our students. Because we'd been forced out of our faculty role and into the role of a virtual learner, we experienced first-hand what our students go through as they try to navigate a course online. We began to understand what we liked and disliked. We learned to appreciate discussion board posts with clear guidelines that allowed us to speak openly about our experiences and analyses; we learned that we struggled to respond to our classmates when clear guidelines for those responses were not present. We learned that feedback felt cold and unsupportive when it was generic and seemed autogenerated, but we felt connected to our instructors when that feedback specifically addressed our work. We felt the agony of falling behind in the course, and the thrill of completing a module.

When the pandemic began, many of us were under the impression that the shift was temporary. We would get through the crisis, and we would return to normal. Through ACUE, however, we understood that nothing will ever be as it was pre-pandemic, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. The empathy that we'd developed by learning to be students again will be carried into all of our classes, whether online or classroom-based. The tools we'd developed can be used in online instruction and as supports to face-to-face instruction. Most importantly, we learned that quality education can happen regardless of circumstances—even in events of global catastrophes and personal disruptions—as long as students and faculty work together to make it happen.

Meet Juliette Okel

Juliette Okel is a Senior in Technical Communication at Missouri S&T, graduating in May 2022. Although she did not start off her journey here as a Tech Comm major, she has quickly found her passion for the field. After switching to Technical Communication in the Spring of 2021, she has held a new and exciting internship each semester. Beginning as an unpaid Space and Defense Technical Writing Intern at LeNginer, Okel learned a great deal of proposal writing skills. "I learned how to condense and dissect intricate information given to me by the engineering team and turn it into an understandable, yet, intelligent piece of writing for entities like the US Army and Air Force. This internship opened a whole new world of opportunities for me," says Okel. She took from that experience and learned that her career goals lie in the writing and editing realm of engineering.

Next, Okel picked up a paid Sales Development Technical Writer position at Edge Impulse, a computer software company. "This is my current semester's internship where I write government proposals for software development and implementation. Here, I work as a point of contact between the engineers, sales development representatives, and the customers in order to explain in detail the product our company is producing." Okel works daily, between classes, with this team as a fully remote contract writer.

She will be rounding out her time at Missouri S&T in the spring of 2022 with the biggest position yet, a Technical Writer and Editor Co-Op position at Leidos, an American defense, aviation, and research company. "Here, I will be using a variety of word processing software to edit training, product, project, and technical infrastructure documents to ensure they comply with system specifications and report guidelines that meet contract requirements. I have found a love for the Technical Communication world and wish to always be in this field," says Okel.

Through Missouri S&T's degree program, Okel has been able to apply what she has learned in class to real-world opportunities. Each of the Technical Communication classes specifically touch the career field in their own way, allowing her to continue to learn and grow while she works.



An Alum's Story:

Peter Schonberg



I graduated with a bachelor's degree in technical communication at the end of the 2021 summer semester, and I'd be lying if I said I wasn't full of anxieties about the job search. During my time at Missouri S&T, I became extremely aware of just how difficult landing a job can be. The process itself of applying and interviewing is pretty straightforward, but there is no guarantee just how many times you'll have to apply and interview before you finally get that offer. If I remember correctly, I applied to roughly 80 jobs before I was able to land an offer. (Most of those were LinkedIn "quick applies," and some companies rarely check those.) My best advice is to just keep at it and establish a routine during those days between graduation and employment. For example, every day, I spent from 8 am to noon applying for jobs.

The job hunt can be a soul-sucking process, especially once rejection letters start coming through (and they will, but you just have to keep moving on). You eventually hit diminishing returns if you sit at your computer and apply for too long. Consistency and resiliency are crucial. Make sure you know your worth as well! A lot of companies try to exploit recent graduates because we're desperate to have an income, often offering less-than-fair wages and benefits. Don't be afraid to reject an offer if it doesn't meet your needs. Eventually, one will come along that does treat you fairly and offer you good compensation. Carry that confidence with you in your interviews and that will go a long way, and remember: Don't lose hope. Everything will be okay!

A Note from the Society for Technical Communication

Being a part of something larger than ourselves, a community where we can connect with like minds, exchange knowledge and ideas, gain inspiration and recognition, and have access to resources, provides us with a sense of belonging that improves our overall quality of life. The Society for Technical Communication (STC) presents such an opportunity. It is the world's largest and oldest professional and academic community that connects technical communicators from all over the world from diverse institutions of learning and fields of work. STC is committed to not only the advancement of the field of technical communication but also the continuous improvement and advancement of its members.

Members improve their professional skills by attending STC-organized seminars, live webinars, roundtable discussions, online certificate courses, conferences, workshops, throughout the year. They are inspired and abreast of current trends and developments in the field via the Society's vast library of publications and online resources. These events provide extensive knowledge in numerous areas, such as technology, management, and pedagogy. Furthermore, STC's annual national conference brings the entire body together to create an avenue for networks, exhibitions, and deliberations amongst like-minded individuals as well as the opportunity to interact with top influencers in the industry. Some important benefits to student members include access to the comprehensive job database, scholarships, and distinguished fellowships.

The Missouri S&T student chapter is currently recruiting officers and members for the new academic year. If you are interested in becoming an officer or a member of this growing community, please contact any of the following:

Chapter Advisor, Dr. Ed Malone (malonee@mst.edu)
Chapter President, Ivy Akula (iaacvd@mst.edu)
Chapter PRO, Asebi Bofah (abbhbx@mst.edu)

Sigma Tau Delta: Transforming the World with Words

Sigma Tau Delta is an international English honor society, the second largest member of the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS). Founded in 1924, it has been dedicated to promoting interest and achievement in English language, literature, and writing. Missouri S&T hosts the Alpha Gamma Nu chapter of the organization, which has been active on campus since 1993 and is advised by Dr. Kathryn Dolan, an associate professor at the university who specializes in nineteenth century American literature, food studies, global studies, and sustainability.

Like many other student organizations, during 2019 and the spring of 2020, Sigma Tau Delta adapted to and conducted activities from a distance. During this time, the club conducted weekly meetings over Zoom. The members selected and discussed short stories weekly, including *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and *There Will Come Soft Rains* by Ray Bradbury. They also upheld their semesterly tradition of reading a novel and watching a movie adaptation of it—this time from a distance. Some examples include *Little Women* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The increased availability of streaming content also allowed the club to watch the plays *One Man, Two Guvnors* and *Treasure Island* streamed from the National Theatre, London.

In addition to these club activities, Sigma Tau Delta also put on events for the campus at large. Previous to the pandemic, the club had a tradition of putting on what its members call their Brown Bag series, a series of lectures which highlighted the research of various professors in the humanities at Missouri S&T. In the spring of 2020, these moved to Zoom with Dr. Daniel Reardon's talk, "I'm Commander Shepard, and This is My Favorite Store on the Citadel': Emergent Narrative and the Illusion of Choice in the Mass Effect Video Game Trilogy." Talks given in the 2020-2021 year included "The Angry Professor's Face': Alcott's Professor Bauer and Woolf's Professor von X," by Weiner Visiting Professor, Dr. Marie Lathers, "Character and Conflict in Short Fiction Writing," by Professor Mathew Goldberg, and "Cats and Crime," by Dr. Jossalyn Larson. The club had its first student research showcase in April, 2021, in which senior students in the English and Technical Communication department were given the opportunity to present their research for around ten minutes each. The club also had a virtual poetry reading on April 23, 2021, to commemorate Shakespeare's birth/death day as well as National Poetry Month.

In the 2021-2022 school year, Sigma Tau Delta has a banner year of activities planned! In September, the group participated in the Solstice festival, presenting autumn-themed poetry. Sigma Tau Delta had its first "Board Game Bash" night in partnership with RHA and the History Club in October at the residence halls—providing pizza, prizes, and general merriment! Also in October, the club joined with the Ozark Research Field Station to host the inaugural Ozark Conservation Heritage Lecture, "Conservation of Endemic Ozark Foods," by Rob Connoley, a James Beard Foundation finalist and head chef at Bulrush STL. His focus is on contemporary interpretations of cuisine firmly rooted in Ozark history. This year's movie and book pairing is *Howl's Moving Castle*. In addition, the Brown Bag series continues, presenting the research of Drs. Karen Head, Anne Cotterill, Sarah Hercula, Daniel Reardon, and David Wright. In March, the annual "Spring Fling with a Book" event continues. Last year's virtual event was wildly successful, the club giving away 100+ books. The goal this year is to beat that number. Thanks to all who continue to donate!

Scan the QR
code to join the
Sigma Tau Delta



Southwinds

Covid-19 has disrupted everyone's lives for quite some time now, in ways both dramatic and small. With those disruptions in mind, in early 2021, the staff of Missouri S&T's campus literary magazine, *Southwinds*, and their advisor, Professor Mathew Goldberg, put out a call for submissions for a special section of their upcoming issue. The call asked for students, faculty, and staff to capture short flash nonfiction impressions of the effect of Covid-19 on life as we know it. Rather than asking for longer essays meant to capture everything that a person experienced over the course of the year, the staff asked contributors to focus on capturing one singular moment in 5-20 sentences.

Flash nonfiction or fiction, a form that is growing in popularity, offers the opportunity to catch moments that may not otherwise fit into larger pieces. When time moves strangely for many of us during this Covid-19 era, smaller bites of writing allow us to embrace and examine the feelings within a moment, elevating that moment into a small but powerful piece of writing. Interestingly, looking closely, a strong piece of flash nonfiction often does have a beginning, a middle, and an end, a sense of movement or realization. *Southwinds* is printing submissions that explore a variety of moments, including the excitement of discovering the power of gardening and of bugs, a mother's desire to protect her family as she watches her son play outside, and a description of a student's desire to stay on campus as his family members quarantine.

It may be too soon to make grand statements about this time period, but we can grab and crystallize these moments in writing, offering others a peek into our lives, expanding compassion and connection during dark times.



"I used to be a journalist and the editor-in-chief of my high school newspaper, so I mostly dealt with serious, formal, factual type of writing. I joined *Southwinds* to try something different and read something more casual rather than informative."

-Gladwin Labrague

"Wave of winds from the south inspires the inborn interest to be blessed by navigating the nature where the lands of lives weave and write all living literature."

-Abdullah Al Moinee

"When I took English with Professor Tate, she recognized my inner creativity and suggested I work with like-minded right-brained peers, specifically *Southwinds*. Through it, I've found an amazing group who loves to share art as much as they love to create it."

-Andreas Ellinas

"I became interested in *Southwinds* because I needed a creative outlet. I've always loved poetry, so this was a good bridge to getting to read more of it."

-Kyleigh Hines





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