

Fourth Annual Master's in English Regional Conference (MERC)

**Saturday, February 10, 2024
Salem State University, Ellison Campus Center,
MLK Room, Second Floor**

Organized by Salem State University and Bridgewater State
University Graduate Programs in English

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EVENT SCHEDULE

8–8:30 am: Coffee and Welcome

8:30–9:45 am: Gender and Genre, Reinvention and Reading

- **Attainable Felicity:**
Kinship and the Queering of Mody Dick's Ocean *Martha Anderson*
- **"A World of Our Own:"**
A Study on the Dalloways in Virginia Woolf's
Pre- and Post- WW1 Writing *Leanne Oden*
- **Romantic Reinvention of the Sonnet form:**
Rhyme, Form, and the Volta *Alisa Chen*
- **Virginia Woolf and Ernest Hemingway:**
An Analysis of the Effect of Gender on the
Portrayal of Mental Illness *Ellen Pariser*

10–11:15 am: Literatures of the Americas: Borders and Bridges

- **When the Voiceless speak:**
The Parsley Massacre, Trujillo, and Antihaitianismo
in Dominican and Haitian narratives *Valeria Araujo*
- **Trans-versing the Wastelands:**
Translation and Borders in Señales que
precederán al final del mundo *Abigail McCabe*
- **Confronting Over-sexualization of Afro-Latina Women
in The Bluest Eye and The Poet X** *Brittany Caprio*
- **Bridging Affect and Culture:**
An Analysis of Tiphonie Yanique's Short Fiction *James Rego*

11:30–12:45 pm: Division and Unification

- **Contrived Realities and the Depths of Desire:**
A Psychoanalytical Reading of How Three Novels
Depict Race, Identity, and Class Divisions in the Antebellum South *Kalimah Rahim*
- **Creating America:**
Hawthorne, Morrison, and Two Visions of
America's Origin Myth *Luke Woodward*

- **Tearless Solimões, an example of Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor**

Luiz da Costa

- **Abjection and (Dis)passion:**
Cleaving Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Emily Beckler

*****Lunch Break 12:45-1:15 pm*****

1:15–2:30 pm: Creative Works

- **Hard Times**
- **Ocean Mother**
- **THE MUSEUM**
- **Literary meditations on women and water**

Shauna Briggs

Alex Romano

Soph Green

Gabriella Fryer

2:45–4 pm: Building Character

- **Shadows of a Father**
- **Twilight and the Mafia:**
Maintaining Characters in Adaption
- **Apathetic Anatomists and Mercurial Doctors:**
The Fall of Dr. Robert Knox in the Age of the Penny Blood
- **Fanaticism and Banality of Evil in Quo Vadis, Aida?**

John Mullady

Gwendolyn Humphreys

Marry Ann Orfanos

Heather Maes

4:15–5:30 pm: Healing, Learning, Growing

- **Writing in Witch City, Unveiling the Craft of Graduate Student Writers at Salem State University**
- **The Healing Imperative:**
Reconstructing the Self as An Act of Resistance
- **The Psychological Effect of Book Ban/Censorship on Children**
- **The Benefits of Creative Writing Instruction:**
Fact or Fiction?

Delia Cullity

Dariana Guerrero

Goodness Rex Nze-Igwe

Madeline Sullivan

PRESENTERS' BIOS

Martha Anderson is a first year MA English student at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She previously earned her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Massachusetts Boston in the summer of 2023. In 2023, Martha was the recipient of the Book Prize, a departmental award for distinction in the English major. In the spring of that same year, they participated in the 15th Annual Undergraduate Literature Conference at Stonehill College, where they presented their paper, "You Are Not What You Are: Reimagining Malvolio." Martha is expected to graduate in the spring of 2025.

Valeria Araujo is a first-year English MA student at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) planning to graduate Spring 2025. Her studies include the significance of tropes in Latino and Caribbean literature, specifically Latino folktales, and Magical Realism; and research into Caribbean history, with a focus on Hispaniola and the cultural evolution of the island through Colonialism and beyond. She obtained her English BA from SCSU, with a concentration in creative writing and journalism, in the Fall of 2022. During her undergrad, she served as the Editor-in-Chief of the SPJ award-winning student publication, Crescent Magazine, and had also been published in SCSU's Folio Literary Magazine. She hopes to start a career in Journalism after finishing her studies next year.

Emily Beckler is a second-year M.A. candidate at Boston College, whose research interests center on the intersection of twentieth-century Gothic literature and critical theory. Her work involves questioning and disentangling the socially constructed fear of the Other, such as in a recent paper on Afropessimism and J.M.W. Turner's *Slave Ship* which she will be presenting at the Psychoanalytic Practices Seminar at the Harvard Mahindra Humanities Center in the spring. She also enjoys teaching two sections of the First Year Writing Seminar at Boston College.

Shauna Briggs is an English teacher and track coach at Barnstable High School. Her passions include: punk music, horror movies, and running.

Brittany Caprio is a high school English teacher and coach at Methuen High School. She is currently attending graduate school at Salem State University where she is working towards a Masters of English degree with a concentration in Literature. This will be Brittany's second graduate degree. Her thesis was inspired by literature written by women of color and her students of color who challenged her to think about the world around her. Similarly, Professor Keja Valens' class, *Literature of the American Dream*, was the course that introduced her to *The Poet X*, one of the feature novels of her thesis.

Alisa Chen is a second-year English master's student at Northeastern University on the Literature track. She is pursuing Digital Humanities and Women's, Gender, and Sexualities Studies certifications. She studies British Romantic and Chinese Tang poems with interests in Romantic ecology, affect theory, eco-narratology, anthropocene consciousness, and aesthetics. Currently she is working on a DH project in developing a website for British Romantic and Chinese Tang poetry analysis.

Luiz da Costa is currently enrolled in Salem State University's Master of Arts in English Writing, with an expected graduation by Fall 2025. He wants to become a better writer. He has published three books: two collections of poetry (Reencontro "Reencounter" 2019) and (Retrajectoria "Re-Trajectory" 2020) and one work of illustrated children's literature (Grilherme, the Dreamer 2023). He is fascinated with the art of crafting stories and poetry and discovering his creative writing voice. He wrote "Tearless Solimões" after his research study of Slow Violence and the Environment of the Poor by Rob Nixon. He is becoming aware of the intensity, urgency, and seriousness of the impact of extreme climate change on our environment. His environmentalist voice is practicing its first steps as his concerns about the need for a global and more sustainable approach to the problem have grown.

Delia Cullity is a graduate student from Cape Cod working on her MA in Creative Writing and working as a Graduate Assistant at Salem State University's Writing Center. She enjoys reading about folklore, psychology, and worldbuilding, and she dreams of working in speculative fiction as a developmental editor.

Gabriella Fryer is a writer, wife, and mother of three. Originally from the Midwest, Gabriella is enjoying life in New England while working on her MA in English at the University of Maine and is expected to graduate in August 2024. She writes blended genre essays of literary criticism on primarily Medieval, gothic, and 19th c. literature and creative non-fiction. She recently published her first poetry chapbook, Muted Red, with Bottlecap Press; her poetry can also be found in Broadside Journal, Shemom, and 12 Willows Press.

Soph Green is a genderqueer Black and Filipino writer from Trenton, New Jersey. They are currently a first year English MA student and GTA at the University of Rhode Island. They finished their Bachelor's in Philosophy and English the Spring of 2023 at St. Lawrence University. Their focus of studies currently revolve around Creative Writing, Gender and Sexuality Studies in Literature, and 18th Century Romanticism. They've previously been published in several editions of The Laurentian Magazine. From 2021-2023 they worked as a Writing Tutor and attended the 2021 and 2022 Overcoming Racism Conference as a presenter on Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Epistemology.

Dariana Guerrero (she/her) began her journey as an artist, activist, and educator in her hometown of Lawrence, Massachusetts. After graduating from Smith College in 2017, she taught high school English committing herself to creating equitable and safe spaces for underrepresented students. In 2018 the Institute of Caribbean Studies recognized Dariana as a 30 Under 30 Caribbean American leader and change-maker for her community leadership and social activism in Lawrence. Her passion for fat liberation, youth education, accessibility, and spoken word poetry aided her in the start of body-positive youth programming and her eventual induction as a board member for the national non-profit, The Body Positive. In 2022, Dariana was named one of Amplify Latinx's Amplifiers, for uplifting and sharing the voices of those in Lawrence. Then in 2023, Dariana was named a Social Practice Artist in Residence in Lawrence. In addition, Dariana is the winner of the 2023 Mass Poetry Community Award for her outstanding poetry and community leadership. Dariana has recently finished an artist book titled, "The Sancocho Shuffle: A Card Deck Con Sabor" which debuted in November 2023. Dariana is completing her Masters in English at Salem State University. You can connect with Dariana on her website, www.darianaguerrero.com or Instagram @darianawrites.

Gwendolyn Humphreys is a first year English MA student at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She recently earned her bachelors in English from UMB. While in undergrad, she presented at the 2022 Intercollegiate Undergraduate Literary Conference with UMass Boston, Stonehill College, and Bridgewater State University. After her masters, she plans to pursue a doctorate where she will study adaptation and derivative works. Gwendolyn also works as a Hebrew school teacher, and in her spare time she enjoys reading (and sometimes writing!) fan fiction.

Heather Maes is a high school special education teacher at Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District. She obtained her B.A. in English from UMass Amherst and her M.Ed. in special education from Salem State University. Heather volunteers for the Hamilton-Wenham Human Rights Coalition and the North Shore NAACP. She is currently enrolled in Salem State's Holocaust and Genocide Studies graduate certificate program.

Abigail McCabe is a graduate student in poetry at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Her research focuses on migration, cultural narratives, untranslatability, and alternative modes of translation in multilingual literatures. Abbie holds an M.A. in English from UMass Boston, where she also teaches.

John Mullady is a High School History teacher at Manchester Essex Regional High School. He is a father of three, Jack, Teddy, and Mary. He lives in Beverly with his family.

Goodness Rex Nze-Igwe is a second year Masters Student in the University of Vermont. She is interested in Migrant Fiction, Diaspora Literature and Black nature Poetry.

Leanne Oden is a Teaching Assistant and an English literature MA student at the University of Rhode Island anticipating a Spring 2024 graduation. The primary focus of her work in the program involves the works of Virginia Woolf and queer theory. Her research interests include Anglo-American modernist texts, and she investigates the themes of individualization and alienation within a fragmented pre- and post-war world that is common among works of modernist literature. In her writing and research, she focuses on modernist works that often break from traditionally linear narrative structures to challenge what is considered normative and what is deemed deviant. Leanne presented at the 2023 MERC conference at Bridgewater State University. Her current work analyzes the ways in which interior monologue links the physical and psychological landscape of Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Marry Ann Orfanos is a first-year English master's student at Boston College. Her subject area of interest is the literary Gothic, primarily in England within the Romantic period, however she also works on outlining parallels and iterations of similar themes in modern literature and media. Among her secondary but prominent interests are the EcoGothic which is emergent later into the nineteenth century, the significance of transitional genres, and Shakespeare as political performance.

Ellen Pariser is a first year graduate student at Salem State University. She is working towards her master's in English literature and education. Ellen earned her bachelor's in English literature and Classical Studies from Bridgewater State University, where she specialized in Milton and Ancient Greek literature. While there she presented various creative works at the Undergraduate Literature Conference and worked at her school's astronomical observatory. Currently, Ellen is a high school English teacher and next Fall she will be starting another degree at Villanova University to earn her master's in Classics.

Kalimah Rahim is a native of Boston and is a seasoned educator with a strong background in English Literature. Holding dual Master's degrees in English Literature and Education, she has developed expertise in African American Literature, Post-Colonial Literature, and Ethnic and Women's Studies. Beyond her academic achievements, Ms. Rahim's career has been sustained by a commitment to urban education, demonstrating her dedication to fostering academic excellence and preparing students for higher education. She currently teaches English and Humanities for Boston Public Schools. Her interest in language, literature, literacy, and the ongoing conversations about race, mental health, and identity, has led her to her current interest in psychoanalysis and exploring the field of Psychology as her next academic endeavor. Her commitment to learning by reading broadly and deeply allows her to push her thinking to explore new theories on trauma, race, and educational attainment.

James Rego is a graduate student in the MA English program at Salem State University. James holds a BA in Philosophy and Communications from UMass Lowell. His interests include fiction, memoir, poetry, and critical pedagogy. He hopes to become a teacher, continuing to learn alongside others.

Alex Romano is an MAT English graduate student, working toward earning her teaching licenses in Special Education and English. She currently works as a paraprofessional at Lynnfield High School. Sculpture is just one of the many art forms she has dabbled in, including painting, pottery, sewing, and writing. Alex received her BA in English and minor in Spanish at MCLA in North Adams, MA. She'd like to thank her family for their unwavering support and love.

Madeline Sullivan is an eighth- and ninth-grade teacher at Uxbridge High School. In the first year of her Master of Arts program at Bridgewater State University, Madeline is interested in conducting research involving creative writing and composition studies. In her spare time, she is a powerlifter and enjoys playing board games.

Luke Woodward is an upper school English teacher at Sacred Heart Greenwich in Greenwich, Connecticut. He is currently pursuing an MA in English from Southern Connecticut State University.