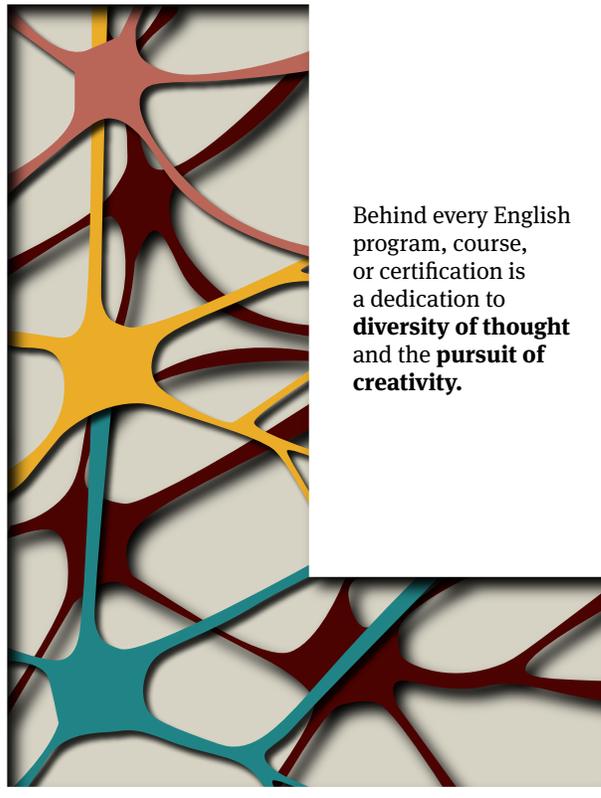
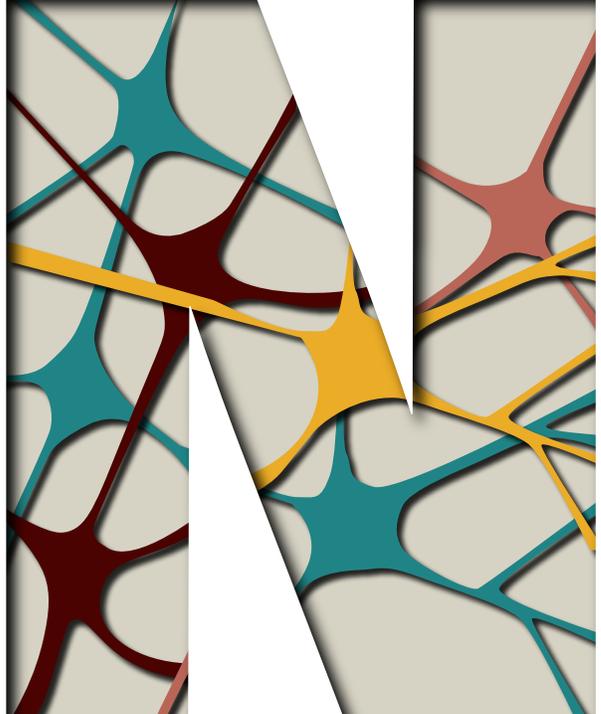
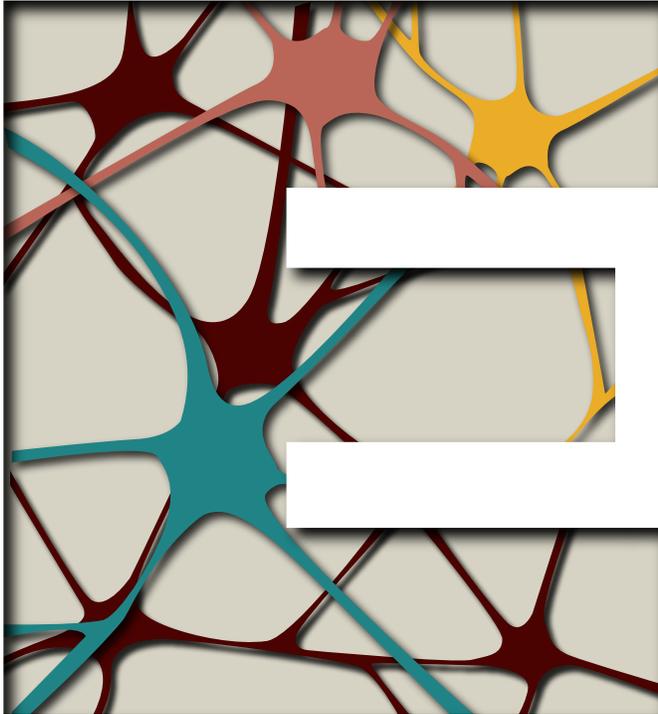


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# The English Aggie

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Behind every English program, course, or certification is a dedication to **diversity of thought** and the **pursuit of creativity**.

# Latinx Literature Class Explores Latinx Identity and Culture

The Latina/Latino perspective, as several news media outlets, political analysts, and marketing firms would call it, is actually made up of several diverse groups with different histories and cultures. A new course within the Department of English aims to delve deeper into the rich diversity of Latinx Literature.

Literature can change lives. For Dr. Regina Mills, Assistant Professor of Latinx Literature in the Department of English, it influenced her entire academic career. As the daughter of a Guatemalan immigrant, Dr. Mills didn't encounter her first book by a Guatemalan-American author until graduate school.

"It was so powerful, and it had such an impact on me. It's even why I become the type of Latino Studies professor I am," Dr. Mills said about the experience. Bringing that experience to students was the motivation behind offering a new Introduction to Latinx Literature course.

The new lower-level course, ENGL 262, will provide the groundwork for the more advanced ENGL 362: Latino/Latina Literature class offered by the Department of English, which is currently the only course that focuses solely on Latinx Literature. The new lower-level course will focus on teaching the fundamentals of Latinx literary history and relevant approaches to studying Latinx Literature. Making this new class a lower level class will hopefully make it more accessible for freshman and sophomore students.

Currently taught by both Dr. Mills and Dr. Juan Alonzo, Associate Professor, the ENGL 362 class carries the burden of providing a holistic understanding of Latinx history and culture, when in fact, the subject is much more complex.

"How do we identify people as Latinx? Is it by language, is it by skin color, is it surname? Is it by experience of Spanish colonization?" asked Dr. Mills as she reiterated the types of questions posed in her class. "I call it the Diversity of Latinidades:

Cubans have a very specific history that's very different from Mexican American, which is very different from Guatemalan Americans, which is very different from Puerto Ricans."

According to Dr. Mills, the differences in history and culture of these various Latinx cultures is partly why Latinx Literature classes can be so engaging, and so challenging.

"One thing that makes Latinx Literature unique is this awareness of the group as so different. There's been a lot of writing and scholarship about if it is even meaningful for us to call ourselves Latino or Latinx. Is there even such a group as Latinx?" Dr. Mills said. "The class really is in many ways about how we can define [Latinx] and how literature defines it."

Dr. Mills hopes that students take her class and leave with more of an understanding of how Latinx culture not only affects their own lives but how it is integrated into American life overall.

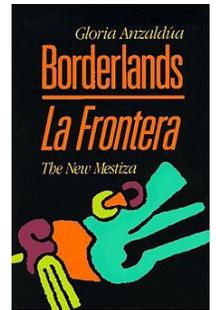
"In many ways Latinx literature is a very quintessentially American literature. It's so concerned with who is American and who is not. I really hope that [ENGL 262] will give students an idea about how these pieces are in conversation with American literature they've read in the past," Dr. Mills said.

Besides being quintessentially American, Latinx culture is becoming uniquely relevant to Texas A&M's student population as well. According to Texas A&M's published statistics, the Hispanic population at Texas A&M, which represents about 22% of the total student body, is the second largest student demographic, with consistent growth over the past six years. In addition, the Hispanic

student population has had the largest increase in enrollment year over year on average for the past six years. It is evident that the need for more courses that integrate Latinx culture and history is imperative to providing a formative and relevant student experience.

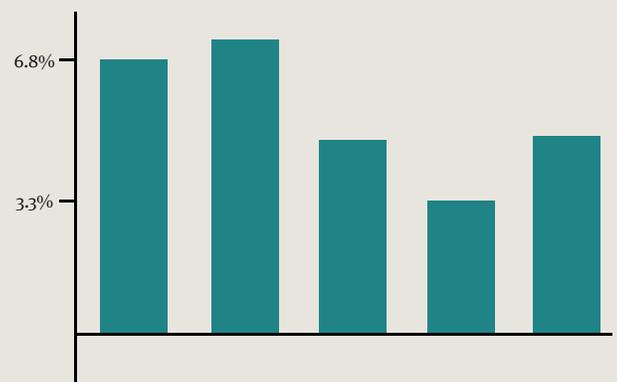
Dr. Mills hopes that additional course offerings will eventually extend to a possible concentration, track, or minor within the Department of English for Latinx studies. Students passionate about the subject could continue to study it in graduate school or apply it to their careers in politics, non-profits, and other related fields.

"Literature makes you imagine things that you otherwise never would have known. It's that ability to think otherwise, and to move beyond what you know, which is such a limited perspective," Dr. Mills said. "I can't wait to have this opportunity to expand Latinx Literature to a larger number of Texas A&M students."



Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands | La Frontera: The New Mestiza* is a classic in Latinx Literature and is a featured book in Dr. Mills' class

Percent growth year-over-year of Hispanic students at Texas A&M, Fall 2015-Fall 2020



The Hispanic student population at Texas A&M has consistently grown over the past 6 years and now makes up 22% of the student body.

Source: [accountability.tamu.edu](http://accountability.tamu.edu)

# Dr. Portia Owuso, professor and researcher of African American and Africana Literature, answered my questions about her recently published book, *Spectres from the Past: Slavery and the Politics of “History” in West African and African-American Literature*.

**What was your inspiration and/or motivation to write your book, *Spectres from the Past: Slavery and the Politics of “History” in West African and African-American Literature*?**

I wanted to interrogate slavery as a lived experience and as a shared historical experience between African and African-Americans in literature. I am particularly interested in memory and how it functions according to space, place, culture and gender and so forth.

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**What do you hope readers of the book will take away from it? What lessons, insights, or main ideas do you think are most important?**

My hope is for readers to understand the different cultural and historical perspectives from which Black writers engage with slavery. I hope readers will learn of the different cultural and political frameworks that influence how slavery is remembered in different societies and relatedly and how this plays out in the literary imagination.

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**Do you have a project you are currently working on right now? What fields of study are you most interested in pursuing?**

I am currently working on a book project on death and mourning in African diaspora literature. I am interested in the unique ways Black people think and relate to death and dying.

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**Do you have any book/film/short story/etc. recommendations for students interested in learning more about West African and African-American Literature? Any other recommendations for how students can learn more about West African and/or African-American Literature and make it a bigger part of their education here at A&M?**

For West African literature, I'd recommend Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It is a very well-known text which has served as influence for a lot of writers, both on the continent and beyond. I find that it always speaks differently to you depending on when and where you are. For African-American texts, there are so many but I really like the Harlem Renaissance period because I find the art so powerful and yet so accessible. The poetry of Langston Hughes is brilliant!

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# Aggie Creative Collective

## Creating a Legacy of Creativity On Campus

**A**t the crossroads of creativity and research sits the Aggie Creative Collective program. Supported by the Department of English, University Writing Center, LAUNCH, and most recently, the Department of Visualization, the Collective aims to support students as they develop, write, and publish their own creative work. The program begins in the summer, where students participate in a six-week intensive program designed to help them develop their ideas, conduct research, receive feedback, and begin working on their project.

Florence Davies, Program Coordinator at the University

Writing Center who helps facilitate this program each year, said, “This is an opportunity for students who are uniquely creative - and I say that on purpose because I don’t think this is a program bound by major - to make that creative project that they’ve always wanted to work on.”

Each year, the Collective accepts eight students to work on their English-related creative projects. The group is split into two groups of four, and each group is assigned an English faculty member to guide them through the thesis-writing process. Last year, the Collective added a Visualization

component and allowed four more students to join the program with a Visualization faculty member overseeing those works.

“My goal is to help them achieve whatever their idea is,” said Dr. Lowell Mick White, an English Instructional Associate Professor and faculty mentor in the program. “We want to get them across the finish line and get them finished.”

Dr. Jason Harris, Instructional Associate Professor, who also serves as an English faculty mentor in the Collective, explained that the program is meant to give students a starting point in developing long form creative projects. “It’s a way of starting to do a thesis, usually having some sort of audience for it, and getting feedback,” said Dr. Harris. “In some ways, what they’re

▲  
*The Aggie Creative Collective gives students the opportunity to write a creative thesis, starting with a intensive six-week program in the summer.*

doing is even harder than writing just a creative work because they're having to do research about what sort of context it comes from, who's written similar works, and what sort of critical issues there are. There's actually more involved than the creative side for this, which is a tall order for students to do, but they've all done it very well."

As an extension of the LAUNCH programs, which oversees several high-impact educational experiences at Texas A&M including undergraduate research programs, research is an important focus of the Collective. To Dr. White, the relationship between creative writing and intensive research is only natural.

"I get a lot of students coming into my creative writing classes that think they are going to make something up. That's not how it works. In either writing fantasy, science fiction, or realistic literary fiction, there has to be a believable base of fact down beneath it," said Dr. White.

In only three years, the Aggie Creative Collective has seen a wide variety of ideas and creative writing formats. Past topics include compulsive daydreaming, life in the 1980s, war trauma, mythology, addiction, magic and religion, gender identity, and complex family relationships. Examples of past formats include novels, memoirs, collections of short stories, collections of poems, and screenplays. Kyrie Garlic, a student who completed the program last year, wrote a novel based in West Virginia.

Garlic entered the program with 30 pages of a novel that she had tried to write over the past 2 years,

but never seemed to get the chance to finish. Setting strict writing times and word count goals for herself, she worked with Dr. White and her cohort to complete multiple drafts of her novel, completed her creative thesis, and is now working on getting her novel published through the traditional publishing process.

"My favorite thing about the entire program is just the community. There are only eight of us, so we got pretty close. We really supported each other and our writing journeys." Garlic added, "I didn't realize how important it was to have something like that until I was in the Aggie Creative Collective."

Garlic continued, "I am so glad I did it. I've been wanting to write a novel my entire life, and if I had not participated in the Aggie Creative Collective, I don't know how long it would've taken me to do that."

**"My favorite thing about the entire program is just the community."**

In the future, the Aggie Creative Collective hopes to expand its offerings to Performance Arts, such as dancing or acting, with the intention of furthering the opportunities available to creative students here at Texas A&M.

"Our goal of this program is for Texas A&M not only to be known for its STEM and its agricultural resources, or even business. There's a lot of creative opportunities for any kind of creative student here on campus. Part of the goal of the program is so more creative students have those direct routes that are kind of already built in STEM," Davies said. "We want that to be a part of the A&M legacy."

The application for the Summer 2021 Aggie Creative Collective will open in January and close late



*Because of the small cohort, participants in the Aggie Creative Collective have the opportunity to form friendships within their tight-knit community.*

February or early March. Students can find the application on the University Writing Center Website: <https://writingcenter.tamu.edu/Students/The-Aggie-Creative-Collective>.

Any student with a creative idea, the passion to pursue that idea over a long period of time, and a willingness to work in small groups to give and receive constructive feedback are highly encouraged to apply. This program is especially applicable to any student considering a Master's in Fine Arts or other graduate programs.

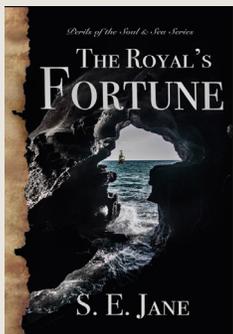
"If you are even remotely interested in writing a novel or especially if it's something you're really passionate about, you need to do the Aggie Creative Collective," Garlic said. "I definitely believe that all those people [in the Collective] will be on bookshelves someday."

Zoe Sherman, John Heselton, and Kyrie Garlic presented their works at the Capitol of Texas Undergraduate Research Conference.

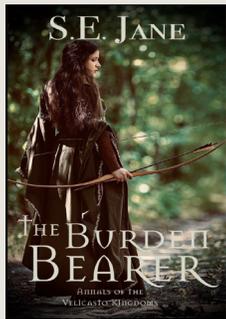


# For the Love of Stories

How Sarabeth Erdner, Texas A&M Student Class of '23, Became a Published Author



Erdner published her first novel, *The Royal's Fortune*, in January this year



Erdner's second novel is currently in revision and formatting stage and will be published late this year

Publishing a book is no easy feat. Neither is surviving college as a freshman. Doing both at the same time is arguably much more challenging, but that's exactly what Sarabeth Erdner, student at Texas A&M, did and is planning to do again in her second year of college.

Erdner, a current sophomore English Honors student with an Anthropology minor, started writing when she was around 16 years old. Her first book was inspired by a story she had read about the infamous pirate Bartholomew Roberts. Set in the 18th century, her historical fiction novel started as a fun pastime, but at the urging of her family and one of her teachers, she decided to self-publish the novel in January of this year.

But like all great stories, Erdner's journey as a published author wasn't all that easy. When Erdner started writing, it took a passion for story-telling and a lot of perseverance—a trait Erdner has cultivated since 3rd grade when she was diagnosed with dyslexia.

"Writing and reading were very challenging for me," Erdner said. "But my teacher found in me an absolute love for stories, to the point where I was willing to read a page just to get more of the story."

This love of stories persisted even as Erdner began her first novel. "Honestly, I just kind of wrote it for fun when I had time, and it kind of became an addiction," Erdner said. "I would think about it all the time."

Even for someone who loved stories, writing a novel was daunting. To handle the intimidating process, Erdner



looked to other authors, books, and her own experiences for guidance, noticing how other writers used certain techniques to capture and hold a reader's attention.

"It's almost the psychology of it, or getting into the reader's mind and figuring out what's easier for them and also what's enough to make them interested and feel respected," said Erdner, describing her approach to writing. "[An] author knows the tricks of how to catch a reader's attention, how to keep a reader's attention, where to hold the meat of the story, the excitement, the climax, and when to feed their reader so they don't lose interest or become too confused."

As many writers already know, the writing process can be grueling at parts, filled with uninspired moments. "No matter what you're writing, a lot of people picture it being this process that just flows and happens and what you write, it's perfect, but it's a lot harder than that," Erdner said. "The challenging parts are the parts where you are not inspired. The parts where you don't really have anything necessarily in mind."

Erdner, currently a sophomore at Texas A&M, self-published her first novel her freshman year and is currently working on her second novel

Pushing through these uninspired moments doesn't always produce uninspired results, as Erdner found in her own writing. "A lot of the time, when I do push through and go ahead and write something, it's good enough that I can fix it or it ends up being a lot better than I would have thought," she said. "You can work with something. You can't work with nothing."

For aspiring authors, Erdner offered this advice: "Don't be constrained by whatever reason you give yourself or whatever your interpretations are for how you should do something. If you want to write a book, sit down. Do it."

Erdner plans to become a professor of creative writing in the future, and wants to continue writing on the side. Her published novel, *The Royal's Fortune*, is now available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).

Spring 2021

# ENGL Class Guide

Featured  
writing-rich  
courses

## ENGL 304

### Topics in Digital Research

with Prof. Hoyeol Kim

With the advance of technology, humanists have begun to deploy computational approaches to humanities research. In this course, we will delve into the ways in which we conduct digital research with humanities scholarship/data/methods. We will learn how to perform and create word frequencies, digitizations with OCR, network analyses, humanities data, and visualizations with humanities data. We will use Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* as a primary text for class discussion and computational analysis. This class is an introductory to the digital humanities; prior knowledge of computer skills is not required.

## ENGL 435

### Advanced Studies in Creative Writing

with Dr. Marcela Fuentes

Students in Prose Book Project will combine their reading of literary prose (fiction and creative nonfiction) with the production of their own new texts. This is a craft-based, workshop course. It requires a prodigious amount of reading and writing. Workshop: i) students will produce and submit original creative works during the semester; the class at large will discuss the work and offer revision suggestions; ii) the class will produce critique letters for each workshop; iii) students will use feedback for revision. The goal is to create and polish three chapters, stories, or essays of a larger book project. Additionally, we will read and respond to contemporary literary works of fiction and creative nonfiction on a weekly basis. This is specifically designed for the writing and revision of a portfolio of work suitable for publication and manuscripts appropriate for application to graduate writing programs. This class will be extremely rigorous while preserving the supportive and constructive atmosphere of the writing workshop.

## ENGL 462

### Rhetoric in a Cultural Context

with Dr. Matt McKinney

Theories concerning the influence of socio-cultural context on expressive forms and how such forms are used to achieve social and communicative aims; analysis of examples of written, verbal, and visual rhetorics from various cultures illustrating the impact that expressive forms have on social life. Instead of focusing on more traditional, literary, or "high-brow" texts, this course uses popular culture as an access point for better understanding rhetorical frameworks and concepts. Movies, fashion, television shows, video games, podcasts, comics, musical genres, and even memes often serve as ideological and cultural mirrors for our society. By analyzing these mirrors, we can not only learn more about ourselves and the values instilled in us, but actively work to change those values for the better. The assigned textbook and readings provide critical frameworks for you to apply rhetorical theory and analysis in a pop culture context. While we will also examine some preselected pop culture artifacts as a class (such as *Cowboy Bebop*), you will have plenty of opportunities to apply course concepts to texts of your choice. This is partially to account for the minute-to-minute changes in the landscape of pop culture, and also to ensure that we focus on texts that are of interest to you specifically.

Proposed Readings: *Rhetoric in Popular Culture* by Barry Brummett (5th edition); *I Am Not Your Negro* by James Baldwin and Raoul Peck; *Cowboy Bebop* by Shinichiro Watanabe.

## ENGL 241

### Advanced Composition

with Prof. Lori Arnold

In Advanced Composition, we will explore the writing practices of writers in community through readings that are focused on both student writers in the classroom and the writing processes of professional writers. Through writing we will explore the literacy practices that have shaped our own attitudes toward reading and writing. We will further consider communities of writers on the internet and our membership in those communities through an analysis of the identities we craft for ourselves on social media platforms.

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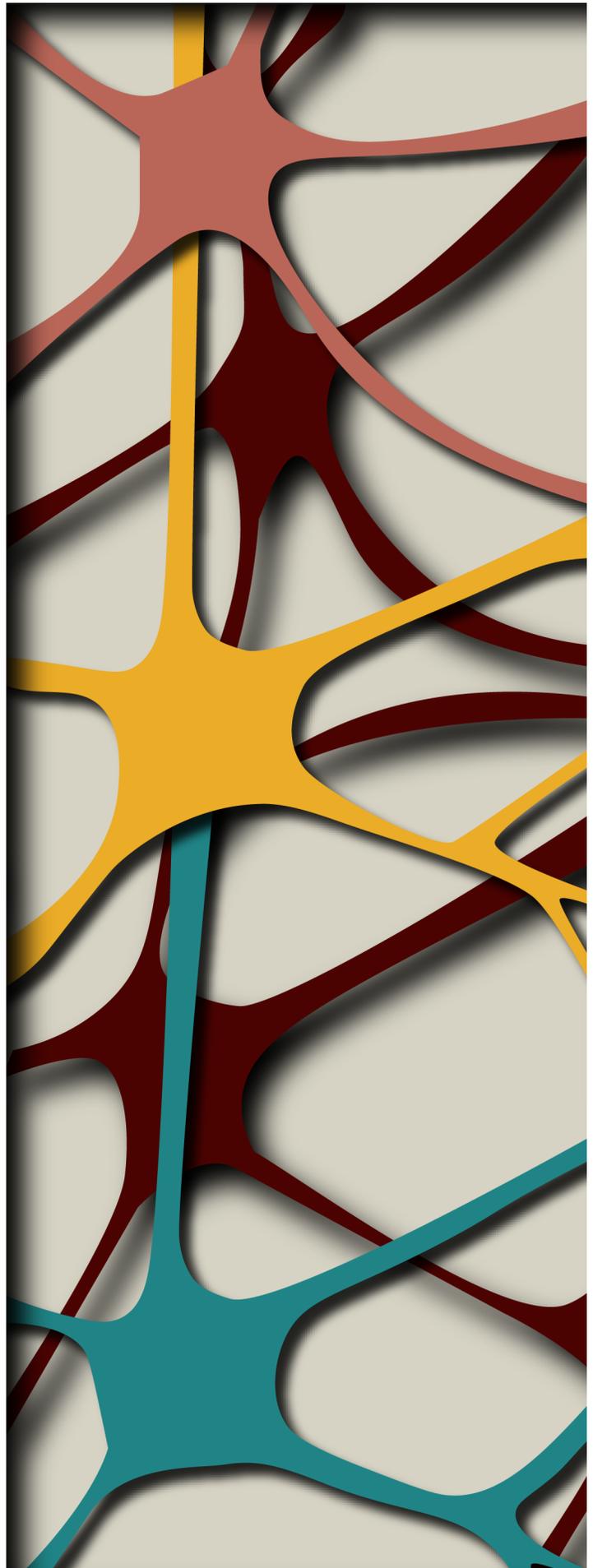


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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
Department of  
English

This publication is brought to you by:  
Texas A&M Department of English  
Editor: Sarah Roberts '21



# SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

presented by the Texas A&M Department of English &  
Texas A&M University Libraries/Cushing Memorial Library and Archives

**Attention all Texas A&M undergraduate students:**  
Submit your speculative fiction piece for a chance to perform  
your piece at a public reading and win cash prizes!

All pieces of speculative fiction are accepted. You must be a  
currently enrolled Texas A&M undergraduate student to submit.  
Submission word limit is 3000 words.

Submit here:  
<https://forms.gle/vh5Q1jgsa72Lgkkk9>

Submission Deadline:  
February 15, 2021

