

June 17 2025

Dear Colleagues, Friends, and Family of UCR's Department of English:

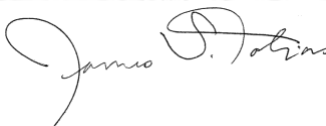
I'm thrilled to announce honors and awards recipients for 2024-2025 in the Department of English. The full slate of award and honors recipients follows.

Our awards and honors recipients this year represent excellence and achievement across the board: from the undergraduate and graduate recipients of our long-running essay or teaching assistant awards, to the undergraduate and graduate recipients of our donor-funded awards recognizing excellence in scholarly writing, academic excellence, and outstanding community service, to the faculty recipient of our newest award, the Award for Faculty Excellence in Service to Undergraduate Education, awarded for the first time this academic year.

To the award committees who reviewed applications and did the hard work of making selections, thank you for your work recognizing and highlighting English Department achievement this year. To all those who make funding possible for these awards, we are deeply grateful.

And to the recipients: warm congratulations on your outstanding work! Read on for the good news.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "James S. Tobias". The signature is fluid and cursive.

James Tobias, Ph.D.
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Department of English Awards and Recognitions

2024-2025

English Department Faculty Award Recipient

Award for Faculty Excellence in Service to Undergraduate Education 2024-2025

Dr. Christopher Seiji Berardino. For the inaugural version of this award recognizing faculty contributions to undergraduate education in English, we are pleased to honor Dr. Berardino, in whose teaching and mentoring clarity meets care meets dedication. Nominated by three undergraduates, his students observe:

"I am applying for grad school and Dr. Berardino was very insightful about things I should look into when it comes to this. These things were ideas I didn't even think about. He was also very helpful when it came to class work and feedback - there weren't too many assignments where I felt lost, but if I did, he had no worries on breaking it down in multiple ways."

"Recognizing Dr. Berardino for their contributions to undergraduate education in the English department at UCR would not only be recognizing his ability to teach well but also his genuine care for students. Introducing myself to him early in the quarter, I shared with him my personal goals and current undertakings, which include two part-time jobs in addition to being a full-time student. Dr. Berardino checked in with me throughout the quarter in hopes of facilitating any issues or problems I might be encountering. In addition to being conscious about my undertakings, he also contributed towards connecting students to resources, clubs, and events on campus such as the Academic Resource Center's writing program and the English Majors Association at UCR.[...] Recently meeting with Dr. Berardino to gain insight into graduate programs, he happily shared his educational journey with me in addition to his ongoing research, cementing with me his sensible effort to help me further my studies and fulfill my goal of becoming an English teacher."

"Dr. Berardino is dedicated to his job, his students, and the quality of education."

Congratulations, Dr, Berardino!

English Undergraduate Scholars Awards Recipients

Our undergraduate awards recognize both high quality scholarly essays across topics and disciplines, as well as all-around performance in US literary and cultural studies recognized in the Emory Elliott Memorial Undergraduate Award. Congratulations to this year's recipients!

Undergraduate Essay Award (Department of English)

Diana Montes, "‘In Death Love Lives’: Unresolved Love and Feud in Edit Villarreal’s *The Language of Flowers*"

From the awards committee: "This essay examines two literary works that navigate the language and legacy of Shakespeare from the perspective of Chicanx and Indigenous linguistic and cultural traditions. These include "In Death Love Lives" (2024), a bilingual sonnet in Shakespearean form composed by the author themselves, and a 1991 play that inspired the sonnet, Edit Villarreal's *The Language of Flowers*, an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* set in a Mexican American community in Los Angeles during Día de los Muertos. The essay thus offers a creative, analytically exacting and sophisticated approach to literary composition as critical and cultural intervention. In the process, it argues for the political and artistic importance of grappling with colonial logics of "Shakespeare" in American culture and education."

Honorable mention:

Hannah LeBrun, "The Cost of Success in Akhil Sharma’s *Family Life*"

From the awards committee: "Through close and careful analysis, this essay argues for the tragic costs of neoliberal concepts of happiness and productivity in Akhil Sharma's autobiographical novel, *Family Life* (2014)."

Kimberly Calderón, "An Exploration of Hawkins Fuller’s Dominant Nature in *Fellow Travelers*"

From the awards committee: "This well researched essay argues for the relationship of homophobia and trauma to the conspicuous performance of masculine dominance in the American television miniseries *Fellow Travelers* (2023, based on the novel by Thomas Mallon by the same name)."

Madison Zepeda, "Parts Sold Separately: Blazons and Gazes Reworked in Ryan Blackwell’s Film Adaptation of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 130"

From the awards committee: "Drawing on poetic theory, film theory, and strategies of close analysis, this essay argues that Ryan Blackwell's 2014 film adaptation of Sonnet 130 "reworks Shakespeare's own answer to Petrarch's poetry." It does so by "inverting the logic of the male gaze" in Shakespeare's poem itself, imagining the *speaker* (rather than simply the speaker's beloved) as the embodied antithesis of the poetic ideal."

Emory Elliott Memorial Undergraduate Award (Department of English)

Anthony Alfaro

This award recognizes distinguished work in the study of US Literature and/or Culture. The award committee looks at the overall record of achievement and GPA in US literature and culture courses, and considers specific recommendations from faculty. From this year's awards committee: Anthony Alfaro "has been stellar" in US literature and culture courses, and we are "thrilled for him to be considered" for this award; further, Anthony "is an outstanding student." And finally: Anthony's writing "stands out to me as some of the very best writing I've seen from a student."

Graduate Scholars Award and Honors Recipients

Our graduate scholars awards include recognition within and beyond the Graduate Program in English. We are especially grateful to the donors whose support makes the Lindon Barrett, Emory Elliott, and Community Service awards possible. To all of this year's awards and honors recipients: your work makes clear that intellectual excellence, passion for innovation and discovery, and commitment to engaged scholarship is as strong as ever in the Graduate Program in English. Congratulations!

Lindon Barrett Black Studies Prize 2024-2025 (Department of English)

Donald H. Zarate Jr., Department of Political Science, for “Here and Now: Black Perspectives on Antiutopianism”

From the award committee: “The judges were impressed by the depth and breadth of research into Utopianism and utopian theories as they do and do not adequately describe such investments in Black literature. We appreciated that author's ability to balance the wider implications and applications of utopian thought with the longstanding and enduring visions of utopia found and, importantly, rooted in Black folks' traditions as these extend back more than one hundred years—in many ways predating the more familiar and, and the author notes, more recent understanding of Utopianism in current literary studies.”

Emory Elliott Graduate Essay Award 2024-2025 (Department of English)

Carolina Hernandez-Bachman, for “The Latina Spectrogothic in *Beast Meridian* and *Painting their Portraits in Winter*”

From the award committee: “Recognizing this essay, the award committee is impressed by the expertise with which the research identified and theorized an emergent genre within the growing field of Latinx speculative fiction. We appreciated the author's ability to engage with but also to extend the cutting-edge scholarship on the uses of the Latinx gothic, by reflecting on how Vanessa Angélica Villarreal and Myriam Gurba mobilize the gothic by engaging with horror and with magical realist elements in the service of their critiques of U.S. colonialism. As such, this work is an exciting and lasting contribution to a developing subfield, one that will certainly help to shape it.”

Graduate Essay Awards 2024-2025 (Department of English)

Kristen Lien, first place, for “Animation from Cape Dorset”

From the award committee: “This essay on *Animation from Cape Dorset* is as much a pleasure to read as it is a pleasure to learn from. From the paper's introduction, the essay strikes a delicate balance between the stakes of the research and thoughtful attention to the text, foregrounding the resistant potential that animation holds while underscoring its inherent capacity to foster play and

levity. What is perhaps most interesting was the paper's ability to move beyond the animation itself to reveal the intricate webs of social relations, power dynamics, environmental concerns, and Indigenous histories that underpin the very process of creation. The best essays are the ones that excite, inform, and demand you see for yourself. This essay does all three."

Rhiannon Rogers, second place, for "Amy Matilda Casey Album"

From the award committee: "This wonderful essay on the Amy Matilda Cassey friendship album is an excellent example of original archival research. We thoroughly enjoyed learning about Cassey's ornate compendium of personal messages, sketches, and poetry and appreciated your ability to reformulate this text into a focused lens capable of surveying the intricate negotiations between private and public spheres in nineteenth-century Black social life. The argument is as interesting as it is incisive, penetrating the album's glitzy leather trimming and embossed foliage to reveal its vital function as a record of intimacy, preserving networks of kinship vital to recovering the equally intricate contours of upper-middle-class Black Philadelphia. Within a paper of interest to scholars from several subfields of Black historical, literary, visual, and cultural studies, it elevates the less attended-to but significant archive of the friendship album as a site for Black collectivity and belonging in the nineteenth century."

Sayeong Kim, third place, for "Deconstructing Myths of Black Beauty"

From the award committee: "This paper on Black beauty politics takes seriously the under-considered terrain of digital beauty culture as a site of identity formation, subjectivity, and resistance to hegemonic ideologies of femininity, desirability, and value. The paper innovatively draws on an archive of Black women aesthetic laborers' experiences of beauty culture from the Netflix documentary, *The Black Beauty Effect*. It provides a well-structured and thoroughly historized Black feminist analysis of contemporary Black women's aesthetic practices, also giving needed attention to the complex, swiftly-changing digital contexts in which they continue to evolve."

Community Service Awards 2024-2025 (Department of English)

Jenna Wilson

Jenna is recognized with a Community Service Award 2025 for her work as a founding member of the "Bar None Collective," which carries out letter writing events during which attendees reach out to, respond to, and share resources with people who are incarcerated in California state prisons. The Bar None Collective and our letter-writing attendees have written to people at over twelve different California state prisons and have responded to all of the people who have written back. In the future, we hope to build out a more robust pen pal program, create a guide to filing grievances in California state prisons, publish zines featuring the art, poetry, and other creative work of incarcerated people, and forge relationships with media partners with whom we can put people in contact if they want to share their story with the greater public.

Carolina Hernandez-Bachman

Carolina is recognized with a Community Service Award 2025 for her volunteer work at both Riverside City College and at UC Riverside. Carolina has been a Puente mentor to RCC students for two years, where she mentors students about the process of transferring to UC Riverside.

Carolina also participates in ALAS, or the Association of Latinx faculty Advocating for Students, and LASSE, the LGBTQ+ club for faculty and students on the RCC campus. At UCR, Carolina has served as co-organizer of SALLAS, supplemented by the UC multi-campus initiative Global Latinidades which has been anchored at UCR by Dr. Richard Rodriguez, where, as co-organizer, Carolina works to create spaces for Latinx and first generation students to learn more about Latinx cultural traditions and literature.

Dissertation Program Fellowship (UCR Graduate Division, 2025-2026)

Carolina Hernandez-Bachman, in support of the dissertation project “Weirding the World: Latina Gothic Expression.”

Dissertation Completion Fellowships (UCR Graduate Division 2024-2025)

Gabriela Almendarez (Ph.D. 2025)

Abigail Uribe (Ph.D. 2025)

Juan Valadez (Ph.D. 2025)

Barricelli Memorial Grant for Graduate Research 2025 (Comparative Literature and Languages Department)

Jovana Isevski

“Established in 1997 to honor Dr. Jean-Pierre Barricelli, the grant encourages highly motivated students to pursue comparative studies in literature and another discipline. Awardees receive research support for one quarter and the honor of delivering the Annual Barricelli Public Lecture in the Department of Comparative Literature and Languages. Historically, the selection committee has favored applications from students engaged in comparative studies between literature and the arts. However, it also welcomes applications from students doing interdisciplinary work with literature and the law, science, and other disciplines.” <https://complitlang.ucr.edu/about/barricelli-award/>

Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award 2024-2025 (Department of English, two awards for 2024-2025)

Ashley Valle, ENGL 20A "Literature of the British Empire" W25

Gabriela Almandarez, ENGL 20B "Introduction to American Literature and Cultural Studies," F24

Graduate Scholarship Publication Awards

Amy Duong, recognized for:

[Review](#) of *Romantic Escapes: Post-Millennial Trends in Contemporary Popular Romance Fiction*, ed. I. Pérez Fernández and C. Pérez Riu, *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* (December 2024).

Josie Holland, recognized for:

["Leading Towards the Queerest Insurrection: Queer Anarchism and Leadership Studies."](#) *Interdisciplinary Journal of Leadership Studies*, volume 3, article 1 (2024).

Emily Mulvihill, recognized for:

"The Highway Between Oceans' in James McCune Smith's Nicaragua Articles," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth Century Americanists* (forthcoming).

Serafina Paladino, recognized for:

[Review](#) of *Autism in Film and Television: On the Island*, ed. M. Pomerance and R. B. Palmer, *The Polyphony: Conversations across the Medical Humanities* (May 2025).

K Persinger, recognized for:

"Consuming the Other: Necropolitics, White Violence, and Titan A.E" in *Science Fiction Film & Television*, vol. 18, no. 1 (March 2025)

Review of Hannah Goodwin's *Stardust: Cinematic Archives at the End of the World*, *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, (Forthcoming).

Drew Trinidad, recognized for:

Review of Jaya Keaney's *Making Gaybies: Queer Reproduction and Multiracial Feeling*, *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* (forthcoming Summer 2025).

Patrick Vincent, recognized for:

Review of Evan Brier's *Novel Competition: American Fiction and the Cultural Economy, 1965-1999*, *Western American Literature*, Issue 60.3 (2025).

Review of *Italian Science Fiction and the Environmental Humanities*, ed. D. A. Finch-Race, et al. *Modern Language Notes*, Issue 140 (2025).

Co-authored with Lauren White. "Don DeLillo." *Oxford Bibliographies* in "American Literature," eds J. R. Bryer et al. Oxford University Press (2025).