

**The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Student Language and Literature Conference Program**  
**April 10, 2026**  
**Sponsored by the Department of English**

**Friday, April 10**

**7:45 – 8:00am Thomas Hall Atrium:**

Welcome and Registration

**Thomas Hall North Entrance:**

Sigma Tau Delta “Blind Date with a Book” Sale (All day)

Nebraska Emerging Writers & Artists Welcome Table (Afternoon)

**Sessions 1-3 (8:00 – 9:15am)**

**Session 1. Passions, Politics, and Poetry: Ancient Greek Literature**

**Thomas Hall 106**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marguerite Tassi

Moderator: Joszelyn Nichelson

Sarah Voss, “Grief—Goddess, Sing the Grief: An Exploration of Mourning as Expressed in *The Iliad*”

Jenna Strampher, “A Poetry Cycle of the Twenty-Second Book of *The Iliad*”

Jordan Beatty, “*The Iliad*—A Love Story”

Mary Osterman, “Stolen Honor and Military Politics”

Jennifer Ochoa, “Camaraderie and Sacrifice Creating Glory”

**Session 2. The Legacy of Ann Petry’s Innovations**

**Thomas Hall 212**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Janet Graham

Moderator: Abby Trantham

Ella McDowall, “Ann Petry and the Craft of Interior Monologue”

Victoria Perez, “A Year in Bronzeville”

Emma Huggins, “Back for Bub: An Alternate Ending for Petry’s *The Street*”

Kaitlynn Ashlock, “What About Bub?”

**Session 3. Images of Women and Marriage**

**Thomas Hall 113**

Faculty Sponsors: Dr. Janet Graham and Dr. Megan Hartman

Zoom Link: <https://unk.zoom.us/j/94371862123>

Katherine Lindfors, "Memories of the West"

Liz Eberspacher, "Willa Cather and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: Reimagining the Feminine Ideal"

Ella Furgeson, "Marriage Choice and Fate: Icelandic and Norse Literature Destigmatizing the Medieval Damsel"

### **Sessions 4-6 (9:30 – 10:45am)**

#### **Session 4. Mythic, Fantastic, and Ethereal Spaces: Worldbuilding in Fiction**

##### **Thomas Hall 113**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Theodora Ziolkowski

Moderator: Joszelyn Nichelson

Josh Andrews, "Evrith's Remains"

Dylan Harvie, "Wandering Flame"

Autumn Lindsley, "Clocking Out"

Mary Osterman, "The Woman in Black"

#### **Session 5. Planning to Teach Critical Literacy**

##### **Thomas Hall 106**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Janet Graham

Moderator: Dr. Megan Hartman

Walker Gullicksen, "Dystopias and How You Could Be the Villain"

Jenna Strampher, "Survival, Society, and Sacrifice in The Hunger Games"

Ellie Thede, "Reading Grendel by John Gardner"

Abby Trantham, "Exploring Narrative Writing"

#### **Session 6. The Pastoral in Modern Poetry**

##### **Thomas Hall 212**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marguerite Tassi

Mara Soto, "Haunted by Absence: Reverberations of Loss and Longing in Edwin Arlington

Robinson's 'The House on the Hill' and Robert Hass's 'Meditation at Lagunitas'"

Sarah Voss, "The Hill and the Valley: An Examination of Pastoral Poetry Through Two Divergent Poems"

Anaïs Dettman, "'By the Sound' and 'The Idea of Key West': The Sea's Relationship to Humanity in Poetry"

### **CONFERENCE and ALUMNI LUNCHEON (11:00am - 12:15pm\*)**

Ponderosa Room A, UNK Student Union, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

\*Room available until 1:30pm

#### **Alumni Speakers:**

Micah Carlson

Selena Bloos

Tyler Jacobs

Speaker Q&A Moderated by Abby Trantham

**Sessions 7-9 (12:30 – 1:45pm)**

**Session 7. Vincente Minelli's "A Hundred or More Hidden Things" and The ABCs of Cinema  
Thomas Hall 113**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Rebecca Umland

Moderator: Liv Williby

Taylor Beierman, "The ABCs of *Unforgiven* (1992)"

Sixto Delgado Sandoval, "The ABCs of *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995)"

Tony Morales-Rodriguez, "The ABCs of *Big Fish* (2003)"

Kailee Webster, "The ABCs of *Big Fish* (2003)"

**Session 8. Letters of Recommendation from English 101  
Thomas Hall 111**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Annarose Steinke

Moderator: Josh Andrews

Kenia Garcia Morales, "Haunted by Your Ex: The Strange Psychology of Moving On"

Angel Hauschild, "In Praise of the Accidental Nap"

Evelyn Morales, "The Crucial Part of Lasting Impressions"

**Session 9. A Session on Renaissance Literature  
Thomas Hall 107**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Marguerite Tassi

Zoom Link: <https://unk.zoom.us/j/96787628364>

Anna Stephens, "The Tempest's Miranda: The Eye of the Storm"

Chrissy Hansen, "Sidney's Manifesto: The Political World of Mary Sidney's Psalm 82"

Amelia Rodgers, "Detecting Donne in Dorothy L. Sayers's *Busman's Honeymoon*"

**Sessions 10-12 (2:00 – 3:15pm)**

**Session 10. Dante Alighieri and his Poetic Afterlife  
Thomas Hall 113**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Rebecca Umland

Moderator: Macy Pergram

Taylor Beierman, "*The Divine Comedy*: A Synesthetic 'Aliveness'"

Ella Ferguson, "An Indistinguishable Sword and Crook: Separation of Church and State in *The Divine Comedy*"

Kajetan Hubl, "The Amorous Subject: Character Examination of Dante and Goethe's *Werther*"

Tony Morales-Rodriguez, "Visions of Beatrice Post-Dante: Holding onto a Lover Gone with Poe and Rossetti"

## **Session 11. Some Marvels of Modernist Literature**

### **Thomas Hall 111**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Annarose Steinke

Moderator: Dee Coble

Zoom Link: <https://unk.zoom.us/j/97611211824>

Emily Kjenaas, "What is Freedom? Free Verse in the Poetry of Mina Loy"

Gracie Luebbe, "Gender Politics and Role Reassertion within T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*: A Feminist Critique of 'A Game of Chess'"

Amelia Rodgers, "Are Detectives Human? Integrating the Mind, Body, and Heart of Detective Fiction's Central Character"

## **Session 12. Prose With Heart: Navigating Desire and Grief on the Page**

### **Thomas Hall 107**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Theodora Ziolkowski and Dr. Megan Hartman

Moderator: Liv Williby

Cassie Phillips-Ernest, "A Manual on the Steps to Grieve"

Abby Trantham, "Reflections of a (Sanguine) Magnolia"

Lila Waterfield, "The Squall"

Walter Gullickson, "Between Mound and Church: Death and Religious Transition in Laxdæla Saga"

## **Sessions 13-15 (3:30 – 4:45pm)**

## **Session 13. Representations of Knighthood in Hollywood Film**

### **Thomas Hall 113**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Rebecca Umland

Zoom Link: <https://unk.zoom.us/j/96260877361>

Moderator: Dee Coble

Brandi Edmond, "Knights without Kingdoms: Liminal Heroes and Hollywood's Collective Memory"

Elijah Lynch, "*The Big Sleep* and the War: How Wartime Hollywood Reimagined Raymond Chandler's Pre-War Knight-Detective"

Anna Stephens, "The Black/Dark Knight: Both Less and More than Arthur"

## **Session 14. Poetry**

### **Thomas Hall 111**

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Brad Modlin

Moderator: Macy Pergram

Zoom Link: <https://unk.zoom.us/j/98018557710>

"Time Makes You Bolder," by Kaitlynn Ashlock

Poetry by Lila Waterfield

Poetry by Emma Huggins

## **Session 15. The Nebraska Emerging Writers & Artists Contest**

### **Thomas Hall 107**

Faculty Sponsors: Dr. Annarose Steinke, Dr. Theodora Ziolkowski (English), and Professor Samuel Rapien (Art & Design)

Panel Chairs: Dr. Annarose Steinke, Anaïs Dettman (Sigma Tau Delta), Emma Huggins (Sigma Tau Delta), Juliana Schmitz (Sigma Tau Delta), Ariaah Peterson (Art Society), and Jay Castañeda (Art Society)

#### *Essay*

First Place: Arabella Durr, Parkview Christian, "What an Honor to Spend it with You"

Runner-Up: Caleb Black, Exeter-Milligan-Friend, "An Encounter with the Sublime"

Honorable Mention: Lydia Turner, Parkview Christian, "Memories of a Nebraska Born Child"

#### *Short Story*

First Place: Madeline Wallace, Omaha Marian High School, "Kara's Walk"

Runner-Up: Ian Crockett, Creighton Community School, "Nayeli: One with Nebraskan Nature"

Honorable Mention: Hana Butters, Grand Island Senior High School, "The Farm to the River"

#### *Poetry*

First Place: Abigail Just, Millard South High School, "The Good 'Ole Red, White, and Blue"

Runner-Up: Kylie Kumpf, Hemingford High School, "Her Song"

Honorable Mention: Brynley Thompson, Omaha Marian High School, "Spring"

#### *Art*

First Place: Jesus Rocha, Gibbon High School, "Buffalo Bloom"

Runner-Up: Addie Gibbons, "Haliaeetus leucocephalus"

Honorable Mentions: Naomi Gahan, Oakland-Craig Public Schools ("Prairie Passage"); Joey Gibbons, Ansley High School ("Rainbow Trout"); Kiersten Hans, Wynot Public Schools ("The Evacuation of Tranquility"); Echo Hansen, Ashland-Greenwood ("Sterling Skies"); Kyle Horn Fullerton High School, ("Busted!"); Caleb Raulston, Wayne Jr. /Sr. High ("Nostalgic Corn"); Bayla Rodriguez, Gibbon High School ("The Crane")

**Awards Ceremony, Thomas Hall Atrium: 5:00 p.m.**

***Carillon Release Party:* Immediately Following**

**[Acknowledgments and Program Notes](#)**

The Conference Committee would like to thank the Department of English Faculty and Students, and office associates Jessica Wall Alber and Elle Zimniak for their assistance with several conference tasks, from catering orders to awards disbursements.

This year, our conference celebrates the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mark Twain's novel, *Tom Sawyer*, first published in 1876. Thanks to Dr. Seth Long for the t-shirt design.