

English Newsletter

November 2026

English Connection: Bridging Past and Present, Creating Collective Futures



UW English alum, Laramie native, documentary filmmaker, University of Arizona Professor Emerita, and activist, Beverly Seckinger ('81) returned to Laramie for a screening and discussion of her documentary *Laramie Inside Out* at this year's Shepard Symposium for Social Justice. The film explores the aftermath of Matthew Shepard's October 1998 murder in Laramie. Since its completion in 2004, *Laramie Inside Out* has won numerous awards, has aired on PBS, and has been screened at dozens of universities, conferences, community events, and churches across the country.

Seckinger believes the film is "as relevant now as when it came out." She describes the LBGTQ+ rights movement as one of uneven progress over time with "two steps forward and a step back" and believes we are at another inflection point. Yet, instead of inspiring activism as it did in the early years after its release, the film functions now as both a historical document and as a continued call to action. Seckinger writes, *Laramie Inside Out* "takes its place among other documentaries that bring the history of the struggle for LGBTQ rights alive for succeeding generations." The film encourages us not to become disillusioned in our current moment; it teaches us about our shared histories and compels us to keep pushing for progress.

Intergenerational engagement is an important part of Seckinger's activism and teaching. Among her many activities, Seckinger is also the director of the annual Lesbian Looks Film Series, which screens cutting-edge features, shorts, documentaries, experimental films, and new media. "Learning about the history of the movement is really important," she says. She likes to show films with historical dimensions. In talks after the screenings "older folks" who lived through the experiences depicted can teach "young people about their history," while "older folks learn what their experiences are and what their lives are like as LBGTQ+ youth today."

Laramie Inside Out is now part of a long activist tradition, one that, Seckinger notes, "builds common cause so that we can change the world together."

Highlight

MFA Alum Publishes Second Novel

MFA Creative Writing Alum Leyla Brittan's second novel *Different in the Dark* is forthcoming from Holiday House in fall 2027. A young adult summer camp thriller, the novel follows a 16-year-old girl sent to a Wyoming ranch after a traumatic incident back home, where the camp's rodeo queen and her friends may be hiding dark secrets.

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Thank You For Your Generosity

During 2026's annual UW Giving Day, English raised over $16K to support the new Brad Watson Creative Writing Fund and other English accounts. That's twice as much money raised as Giving Day 2025! Nearly 90 donors contributed! That's almost 3x as many donors as last year.

The Department of English thanks everyone who donated. Your generous support will fund BA and MFA creative writing students' travel, research, and writing. Thanks to everyone, too, who posted a video or who shared Giving Day updates on their media.

Brad was a beloved professor at UW for 15 years. A founding member and former director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing, he is remembered as a generous mentor. Your contribution ensures that his legacy of supporting students lives on.

IMPORTANT DATES

Shepard Symposium

November 2-6
Wyoming Union
This year, the Shepard Symposium for Social Justice examines the historical roots of current social and environmental injustices to inspire deliberate action to create more just futures.

Keywords: Sovereignty

November 11
12-1:30 pm
Native American Resource and Cultural Center
200 s. 10th St.
Keywords for the Public Humanities is a series that examines important ideas in publicly engaged research and practice.

Paul Bergstraesser Book Launch

November 12
4-6 pm
Coe 506
Join the Department of English as we celebrate the release of Paul's debut novel *The Less Said* by What Books Press. *The Less Said* follows a terminally ill narrator who gathers with family and friends for one final celebration while secretly arranging for a killer to end his life sometime during the weekend.

Remembrance



With heavy hearts we share the passing of Arthur "Art" Simpson. Art came to UW in 1968 after graduating from Rice Institute, later Rice University, and retired in 1996. His accomplishments at UW are too many to list. A dedicated teacher and scholar, he believed universities exist to help people become more complex, not to help them earn more money. A memorial service will be held at 2:00 pm Friday, November 13, 2026 at Montgomery-Stryker Funeral Home in Laramie.

Making Connections



Dr. Tracey Owens Patton with English MA student Melissa Albin at Western Washington University's "World Issues Forum." Dr. Patton was the invited speaker and gave a book talk and presentation on her recent book, *A Nation's Undesirables: Mixed-Race Children and Whiteness in the Post Nazi-Era*.

Dr. Patton's book centers interracial coupling, German women's rights, mixed-race children, and racism while questioning how the German Nation State removed mixed-race persons in favor of fantasies of whiteness.