

AWP 2022, Philadelphia

Where Every Voice Matters: Community College Literary Journal Showcase

9:00–10:15 AM, Saturday, March 26, 2022 | 115C, Pennsylvania Convention Center, 100 Level

Event Description: Community college literary journals offer new and emerging writers, many of minority and underrepresented backgrounds, unparalleled access to publishing their first works, learning about journal design and production, and the literary world at large. Panelists from around the country (CA, FL, MD, MI, NY) will share strategies to engage community college students and other writers from local communities in practices of the literary marketplace and the nuts-and-bolts of running different journals.

Event Agenda: Following the moderator’s introductions, each panelist will read a short (two-minute) writing sample from their community college journal, representative of the communities their college serves, and then describe the innovative aspects and special challenges of producing a college literary journal, emphasizing strategies for student and community engagement. The panel will end with a 15-minute Q&A. A handout with links to the journal sites and other resources will be provided.

Statement of Value: BIPOC, LGBTQ, and other underrepresented communities constitute a large segment and often a majority of student population on community college campuses today. For these students, the college journal is often the first opportunity to share their stories. The showcase will present a variety of formats in which journals are published – print, online, podcast, and even hand-sewn – along with the journal-related courses, contests, conferences, and other modalities for nurturing these new voices.

Participants

Lane Igoudin, Moderator laneigoudin@gmail.com, www.laneigoudin.com

Lane Igoudin, MA, PhD, is a non-fiction writer who has published in *AJS*, *Family Equality*, *Adoption.com*, *The Citadel*, and *The Forward*. A tenured English/ESL professor at Los Angeles City College, he is familiar with LACCD literary journals.

Maria Brandt, Participant mbrandt@monroecc.edu, www.mariafbrandt.com

Maria Brandt teaches Creative Writing at Monroe Community College in Rochester, NY, where she guides capstone students through the annual production of a hand-crafted literary magazine. She herself has published a novella, a short-play collection, and several short stories around the country.

Omar Figueras, Participant ofiguera@mdc.edu

Omar Figueras is a Professor at Miami Dade College and sits on the Advisory Board of Reading Queer. In January 2019, he received a KWLS Teacher & Librarian Scholarship,

and in 2020, with the sponsorship of The Humanities Edge Grant, he created the MDC Student Writers Conference.

Magin LaSov Gregg, Participant maginasovgregg@gmail.com @MaginLaSovGregg

Magin LaSov Gregg is an associate professor of English at Frederick Community College. She has advised the student newspaper and began advising the literary magazine in Fall 2021. Her essays appear in *The Washington Post*, *NPR*, *The Rumpus*, *Bellingham Review*, *Full Grown People*, and elsewhere.

Joe Baumann, Participant jbaumann@stchas.edu

Joe Baumann teaches composition, literature, and creative writing at St. Charles Community College, where he leads the creative writing program. He possesses a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

I. Featured community college literary journals

Cabbages & Kings (Monroe Community College) is a student-run literary and visual-art magazine, which has two faculty advisors. The college now offers an experimental 3-credit Practicum as an Independent Study to provide the *CK's* Literary Editor with deeper engagement with the professional world of the literary magazine and the journal with a deeper platform for training and legacy. In addition, as part of our Capstone course, Creative Writing majors co-construct an annually renamed Class Magazine. This entails telescoping into the editing process, as well as the design process, helping students understand better real-world aspects of the literary marketplace, and providing our department an important archival reservoir.

The Citadel (Los Angeles City College), for almost 50 years, have published student, faculty, and community writing. Part of the journal is reserved for the winners of the annual LACC Creative Writing Contest, with separate categories for English native and ESL writing. Our sister college, East LA College, produces a similar magazine, *Milestone*. Some writers who published in these magazines went on to become quite famous, e.g., Sam Eisenstein and Luis Rodriguez.

Mid-Rivers Review (St. Charles Community College) is a faculty-led literary journal. Each year, it features approximately 100-125 pages of student- and community member-submitted fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and photography. All students enrolled in the college and any person living within St. Charles County, or having some previous connection to the college, is eligible to submit for free. In addition, winners of three writing awards (winners selected by the faculty editor and other English faculty) are included each year.

Tuscarora Review (Frederick Community College) will publish its 42nd annual issue in May 2022. It features the creative writing and visual art of students, staff, and alumni. *Tuscarora Review* is produced in a Creative Writing course, open to anyone who has completed ENGL101. This semester, our editorial staff ranges from on-campus high school students to a retiree.

II. Core questions to the panel

1. *What does your journal do to help writers grow their skills or develop their literary careers?*

Joe: More than anything else, we think that our journal *Mid-Rivers Review* has helped students build confidence in their work. Students don't participate in the production of the journal, but many of those whom we publish are seeing their work in print for the first time and often *submitting* their work for the first time.

Lane: We help our student writers improve their skills through editing advice on their submissions. The journal publication is also a mark of excellent for the winners of our annual creative writing contests – something they can proudly include in their CVs.

Magin: A few members of the staff have gone on to write professionally in the community, mostly for the local newspaper. Others have pursued the study of English and/or creative writing at four-year institutions, such as Goucher College and Gettysburg College. A member of our staff has recently been accepted to the B.A. in English at the University of Iowa. Since the course that produces *Tuscarora Review* focuses on editing and journal production, students primarily learn the nuts and bolts of how to create a publication: everything from editing and layout to balance, cohesion, and representation. Additionally, they learn how to respectfully evaluate the work of their peers. They also learn leadership and project management skills.

Maria: Both versions of our magazine provide students with hands-on opportunities to learn editing and design processes relevant to the literary marketplace. Students also learn how to collaborate, how to think more broadly about the role of the literary magazine in the world, and how to publicize their work. For example, the *Cabbages & Kings* students meet weekly not only to plan the logistics of their magazine but also to formulate language for their About page, and the Capstone students not only work through deep levels of the revision and editing processes but also work together to choose the name and epigraph for that year's magazine.

2. *How does your journal serve underrepresented communities in your area? What does it do to reach out to them?*

Joe: At St. Charles Community College, we have a fairly sizable population of rural students who are also first-generation college students, and we make a particular attempt to reach out to them when soliciting submissions. We produce flyers that talk about the value of hearing all voices, so why not theirs? This has increased the diversity of content and approach that we've seen in submissions and thus consequently in the magazine itself.

Lane: Our magazine, *The Citadel*, provides a platform for voices from central Los Angeles, for our urban writers, many of whom are writers of color. A demographic snapshot of our campus: 54% of our students are Hispanic, 12% Asian American, and 6% African American. We reach out to the students in our creative writing courses, sometimes with in-class presentations about the journal. We make it free for students to submit.

Magin: Our editor-in-chief is working on a public relations campaign to increase visibility and outreach of *Tuscarora Review* to all students, including students from underrepresented communities. We've also talked about direct outreach to clubs and student organizations that serve underrepresented students, and we plan to seek support from the Office of Multicultural Student Services.

Right now, the staff is deciding how to rewrite our Call for Submissions to be more welcoming and inclusive of underrepresented communities and to specifically solicit creative work from these communities. The Call for Submissions will be shared on college social media channels and with all faculty, who will hopefully share with their courses to reach maximum number of students.

I do a lot of personal recruiting for submissions in Intro to Creative Writing, which I teach. In the past, I have directly solicited manuscripts from students writing about underrepresented issues on campus, including queerness, racial identity, impacts of racism, culture shock of immigrant experiences, bilingualism, and threats to reproductive choice. I include readings about these topics in the course to prompt student thinking about how they can produce writing that intersects with these issues.

As a journal advisor, I encourage the editorial staff to think about whose voices are being included and how selections represent diverse experiences within the student body. Recently, our discussions along these lines have prompted the editorial staff to consider featuring the program managers of our adult-education ESL or credit-ASL programs in the journal's interview slot to raise awareness about these populations and to elevate their importance on campus.

Maria: Both magazines at Monroe CC serve directly only our students. But, insofar as our students are diverse and local and use both magazines to express aspects of their own diverse and local communities, both magazines also underscore the relevance and leverage of the community college in encouraging equity and empowerment in our area. Indeed, students emerge more aware of their power, and their conversations during magazine construction reveal their awareness of their legacy.

3. Are there any interesting/unusual features in your journal format or operations?

Joe: Each year for the past several years, the editor-in-chief of our *Mid-Rivers Review* (usually a 3-5 year gig) has included an in-depth interview with one of the creative writing faculty. Not sure if this counts as unusual or unique, but it's the best I could come up with.

Lane: On the journal cover, and as inside illustrations, we use artwork and images produced by LACC students. The LACC Foundation has sponsored *The Citadel* issue launches with live readings (and food!) in the center of the quad.

East Los Angeles College, our sister college, offers 2-unit College Literary Magazine Editing and Publishing courses in both its English and ESL programs. Students taking these courses participate in the writing, design, and publishing of two literary magazines: *Milestone* (ENL 32) and *Hybrid Culture* (ESL 32). ELAC students, as well as artists from surrounding communities, share their creative works in *The East Side Rose Podcast*, a companion production to the campus's literary journal.

Magin: *Tuscarora Review* has never missed a printing deadline, even during the disruptions caused by Covid-19. For quite a few years, it has won a first-place award from the American Scholastic Press Association (magazine category), under the guidance of former advisors Ramón Jones and Pam Lilly.

We are beginning a re-naming campaign since the name *Tuscarora Review* was originally taken from the Tuscarora People, who migrated to what is now Frederick County before migrating to what is now New York State, where they joined the Six Nation Iroquois Confederation. The staff would also like to consider ways to be in more meaningful relationship with Native people, culture, and history in our region. This spring, student editors will be deciding how to invite the entire campus community into the discussion and voting process.

Maria: At Monroe CC, we're just starting to experiment with adding a 3-credit Practicum to our literary journal operations, in part as a service to our students, as part as a service to the magazine, which has two faculty advisors but no faculty oversight. Regarding the Capstone magazine, so much feels unusual: the annual renaming, the handcrafting of its cover, the hand-stitching and hand-lettering, the synchronicity between in-class deep-level revision work and the material construction of the magazine itself.

4. What advice would you give to another college considering launching a literary journal?

Joe: Two particular forms of engagement are really important: gathering interest from student writers, and gathering interest from faculty to help in the production. The EIC will have a lot to do, and delegating some tasks—such as reading submissions, or contacting someone in the art department to do cover art—will make things more efficient. Also, coming up with an efficient method of receiving submissions is key. For a long time, our process was complicated and outdated, and students were thus reticent to submit only because it seemed too hard to figure out how to do so. Making things as simple as possible for reception of submissions is a foremost concern.

Lane: This is best of time to produce one, and easy to distribute it via Amazon. The real challenge is finding readership beyond the writers' friends and family. Literary journals should consider other media that merges text and visual images to attract younger audiences.

Magin: The journal is foremost a learning experience. Students need a lot of support, especially in terms of nurturing their confidence. It can also be a great place for students to develop leadership and assertiveness skills and learn how to respectfully negotiate conflict.

Free and responsible expression policies are important in protecting and honoring student voices, and for allowing an authentic representation of student work. I see them as an important part of demonstrating to students that we value their voices and stories. I developed a student publication policy to protect student free expression and student publications, including the student newspaper and literary journal; fortunately, a new law was passed in Maryland to protect student newspapers, and the college had to approve the policy to comply. Other states have since adopted similar laws. I am happy to share our campus policy with anyone who is considering launching a literary magazine.

Maria: Explore options from the enhanced class magazine to the campus-wide magazine. Consider processes for training/growth. Foreground the role of collaboration in practical construction and decision-making as well as in ideological wranglings and community responsibility.