

March 2021

The English Aggie



WELCOME TO
AGGIELAND

Professor Profile:
Dr. Marian Eide

Coming Out
Monologues &
Inclusive Aggie
Identity

Student Orgs
for English
Majors

From Student to Teacher



We talked with Aleyda Solis-Cano, a former student and current English teacher at Cypress Ridge High School in CFISD. Solis completed her undergraduate degree in English and also got her Master of Education degree from Texas A&M and has been teaching for five and a half years.

but there's a whole lot more to teaching. There's also classroom management, learning how to work in a team, and effectively sharing your ideas.

Q: Do you have any advice for current English students that are considering being a teacher after graduation?

A: I feel like for teaching, you just really need to get yourself in the classroom. Observation is going to give you a feel, but when you're the teacher, it's a whole different experience. I would say to try it out, and even try it out for more than a year because usually that first year is a little difficult. It takes a while to be the best teacher you can be, but it is definitely worthwhile. The beauty of teaching is that every day is a new opportunity for you and your students. If something doesn't go as planned, you can start fresh the next day.

Q: Do you feel like your undergraduate and graduate education at Texas A&M prepared you for being a teacher? Were you well-equipped going into the field of teaching?

A: I feel like it definitely did help me, especially my master's degree in combination with my English degree. Since I was just majoring in English, I didn't really have a feel for the education aspect, so the Master of Education program really helped me out in learning how to create lesson plans, how to use applications that will make student learning more engaging, and how to assess student learning. I feel like it was really helpful.

To read the full article with Aleyda Solis-Cano, and other articles featuring possible career paths for English students, visit The English Aggie blog:

www.englishaggie.blogspot.com.

Career Spotlight: Teacher



Teaching is one of the most popular career choices for English students after they graduate from Texas A&M. According to Texas A&M's Career Center, almost 2 in 5 English graduates in 2018 or 2019 became a teacher or a professor after graduating.

[Note: interview edited for length and clarity.]

Q: Did you always want to be a teacher?

A: Yes and no. I recently found a letter to myself that I did in elementary school—I don't know what class it was for or when I wrote it specifically—but we had to write about where we saw ourselves in 10 years. I wrote that I was going to be a teacher. It was something that I wanted to do at an early age, and I feel like I changed, but then I went back into it. Actually, when I came into A&M, I was a biology major, but after a while, I realized where my strengths were, and I switched to English.

Q: What is your favorite part about teaching?

A: For me, my favorite part is being with the students, being a positive influence on them, leading them, and being that person that believes in them. I really had great teachers growing up that believed in me, and I feel like that's part of the reason why I am where I am.

Q: What are some of the biggest challenges that you face in teaching?

A: I think at the beginning, it was a matter of learning what the expectations were for teachers. I came in thinking that my responsibility was to teach,

Professor Profile

Indefinitely Curious

English professor Dr. Marian Eide follows her curiosity wherever it takes her—and she wants her students to do the same.

For Dr. Marian Eide, English professor at Texas A&M, learning is a way of life. As a self-described “nomad,” Dr. Eide has lived on three different continents, eventually landing at Texas A&M in the 1990s. Her passion for education started during her undergraduate days at Barnard College, where she was a double major in comparative literature and psychology.

“I didn't want to graduate from college,” Dr. Eide explained. “I would count the semesters down in the opposite way. I wished I could have done five majors because everything was so interesting.”

However, when the inevitable happened and Dr. Eide graduated, she started a job as an editor for a magazine, but found herself missing the classroom setting: “I was bored out of my skull. It was a really good job that would have been the ideal career trajectory for lots of people, and there was nothing wrong with it. I was just bored,” Dr. Eide said. “So I went back to school because I knew I liked school, and I never left.”

After getting her master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Eide became a professor, eventually making her way to Texas A&M. Her research and her interests span a wide array of topics, inspired by her experiences and her natural inclination to be curious. Some of her favorite past works, including her book *Terrible Beauty: The Violent Aesthetic in Twentieth-Century Literature* and related article “Steve Biko & the Torture Aesthetic,” was inspired by her involvement in the Anti-Apartheid movement in the 1980s. Her other works include an essay on joking in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and the book *After Combat*:

True War Stories from Iraq and Afghanistan, just to name a few.

Dr. Eide's diverse interests influenced her new projects as well. Her current lineup includes article topics ranging from environmental justice, to modern feminist theory, to ethics. She is also currently working on two books—one about book clubs and why people join them, and the other about spinsters in the early 20th century.

“As a friend once said to me, we reinvent ourselves for each project we do,” Dr. Eide said. “So we just don't settle into one thing, but try out a bunch of things.”

Dr. Eide's deep love of learning carries over into her classroom. Her class offerings include a senior seminar on Literature and Violence as well as classes on Cultural Memory and Historical Narrative, Literature from 1798-2009 and Approach to English Studies. In all her classes, Dr. Eide helps her students cultivate an appreciation for literature's ability to transport readers into different mindsets and worldviews.

“Teaching at a public university where I feel like there is wider access to the classroom has been one of the great pleasures of my life.”

Speaking about her teaching, Dr. Eide said, “One of my students put it really beautifully on a teaching evaluation. I thought, ‘Oh, I did what I wanted to do’ when I read that teaching evaluation. She said, ‘I learned to see things from the perspective of a stranger.’”

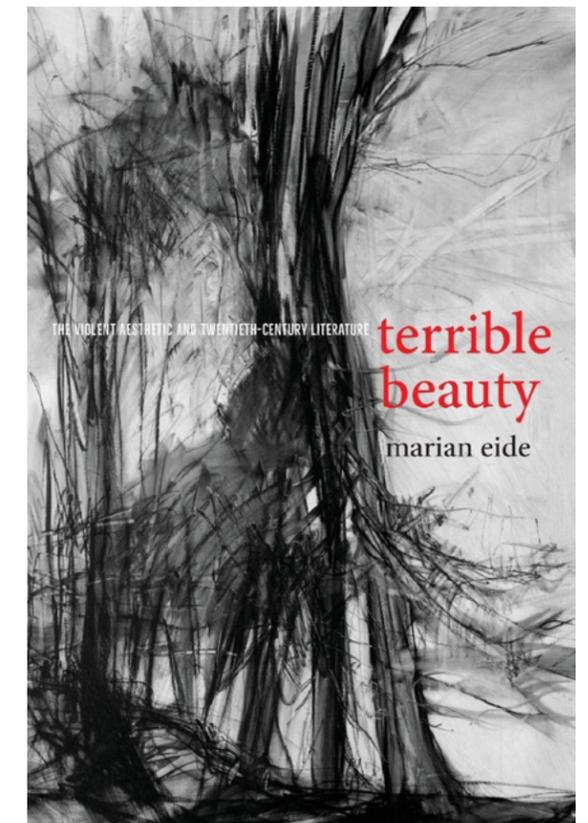
Beyond teaching, Dr. Eide also works with students on advanced research projects. About her role as a mentor for these projects, Dr. Eide said, “My number one thing is to help them see their own method. So by method I mean,

what can literature answer? What pressing problems, challenges or opportunities can the methods that we hone in literary and rhetorical studies bring to us? So it's methodological, but it's also about making sense of the English major and what spending four years reading poetry, essays and novels can give us.”

Dr. Eide's immersive teaching style and focus on students' education is central to her approaches to being a professor. According to Dr. Eide, meeting students where they are—whether that be in developing a research idea or while struggling in a writing course—is fundamental to running a successful classroom. This approach has positively impacted Dr. Eide's students, and made her teaching career especially fulfilling.

“I am unusually happy in my job,” Dr. Eide said. “Teaching at a public university where I feel like there is wider access to the classroom has been one of the great pleasures of my life.”

Dr. Eide's book, *Terrible Beauty: The Violent Aesthetic in Twentieth-Century Literature* was published in 2018. The book was one of Dr. Eide's favorite projects.



“We’re Not All The Same”



How the Coming Out Monologues, an event started by a former English student more than 10 years ago, continues to highlight LGBTQ+ stories to promote an inclusive Aggie narrative

The stage lights shine. A hush falls over the audience. Performers await their cue. Unlike typical plays, the performance about to begin will profoundly impact the audience members and performers, alike. This is the Coming Out Monologues. Hosted around the country by numerous college campuses, this event usually takes place in early April at Texas A&M University to celebrate LGBTQ+ Awareness Month. According to Texas A&M’s LGBTQ+ Pride Center, the experience is “raw, inspiring, transformative, and intimate.”

The Coming Out Monologues was originally created by Nancy Tubbs, a College Station native who graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in English. She started the event while she was the coordinator for University of California-Riverside’s LGBTQ+ Resource Center. The first Coming Out Monologues was held in 2007 on UC-Riverside’s campus. The event’s concept was inspired by *The Vagina Monologues*, an episodic play by V (formerly Eve Ensler), and was intended to give LGBTQ+ students a platform to share authentic stories to amplify LGBTQ+ voices.

Inclusivity and the Aggie Narrative

The first Coming Out Monologues event on Texas A&M’s campus was performed around 10 years ago, and since then, the event has grown substantially. The LGBTQ+ Pride Center now supports efforts to put on the event every year, and the event has received multiple sponsorships, including from the Department of English. Last

year’s performance was virtual due to COVID-19 safety concerns, as will be this year’s performance. Directors of the event hope to return to Rudder Theater, where it was originally located, as soon as next year.

Dr. Kris May from the Department of English currently serves as a Co-Director for the event, along with Dr. Jesse O’Rear from the Department of Performance Studies. To Dr. May, who also performed in the first Coming Out Monologues event at Texas A&M 10 years ago, the event is important to promoting inclusivity on campus.

“The Coming Out Monologues is a way to bring visibility and attention to the LGBTQ+ population here. Something that the students who work with the Coming Out Monologues are invested in saying is ‘I really am an Aggie, this is who I am, and I don’t fit into these boxes and stereotypes,’” Dr. May said. “They really want to make ‘Aggie’ a more inclusive term.”

▲ *Performances in past Coming Out Monologues events have included poetry readings, prose readings, drag performances, dances, or art presentations.*

Dr. May says this event, which is one of the most visible LGBTQ+ events on campus, focuses on stories that are potentially hidden or overlooked.

“For people who have felt like they’ve never been able to share their stories or have not been encouraged to share their stories, they can enter this space with the Coming Out Monologues where their story is appreciated. They realize that they do have something to say and their stories are valuable,” Dr. May said.

Center Stage

While the performers at the Coming Out Monologues are generally LGBTQ+ students, being a student is not a prerequisite to performing. Past performers have included LGBTQ+ alumni, faculty, staff, community members, and friends and family who are LGBTQ+ allies seeking to learn more about how to support their loved ones.

According to Dr. May, the Coming Out Monologues is for anyone with a story, no matter how complicated it may seem.

“I think any LGBTQ+ person, any and all of them, have stories. Anyone who is or has struggled with some issues [with their identity], and maybe aren’t LGBTQ+ but are trying to figure it out...has an important story to tell.” Dr. May added, “Allies who have stories that involve LGBTQ+ people, and how they’ve supported them....that’s part of the overall story as well.”



▶ *Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coming Out Monologues was performed in Rudder Theater.*

All of these stories are not only a mechanism for performers to process and articulate their struggle, pride, or otherwise emotional journey tied to their identity—it’s also highly impactful for audience members as well. In Dr. May’s experience co-directing the event, there have been multiple students who were inspired to perform because they participated as an audience member in a previous year.

“Something that’s always really noticeable to me, even in the early days, is after the performance walking around and hearing people’s conversations as they’re leaving or as they’re coming up to meet the performers—it really makes an impression on so many of the audience members,” Dr. May said.

“Just the process of writing and telling your story can give those moments where you have some incredible insights about yourself.”

Developing the Story

As Co-Directors of the Coming Out Monologues, Dr. May and Dr. O’Rear conduct multiple workshops throughout the academic year to help students refine their pieces before submitting a final version to perform. According to Dr. May, the benefits of the writing process and reading different perspectives in literature can be essential for students grappling for insight into who they are and how they define their identity.

“Just the process of writing and telling your story can give those moments where you have some incredible insights about yourself,” Dr. May said. “In reading a story, you’re also thinking about your own life, your own experience, and how you relate to the world that makes that really meaningful.... Some aspects might be completely different from you, but yet you still maybe shared an identity with

that character in the book or the writer, so you’re broadening your horizons.”

While Dr. May helps students write their pieces to submit to the Coming Out Monologues, he also stresses that students who don’t want to write can still perform.

“[Performances] can start with a photo, maybe a photo you took. It could start with a self-portrait or any piece of artwork that you’ve done, a piece of music that you’ve performed that maybe you didn’t write,” Dr. May said. “Some people are intimidated or nervous about putting words down, but those can be another person’s words, or they don’t have to be words, and you could start with just an image.”

Working with students to develop these stories is a task that Dr. May finds very rewarding. According to him, the success of the Coming Out Monologues can be entirely afforded to the hard work of the LGBTQ+ Pride Center, and the students who participate in the event.

“It’s a really exciting process for me to see and have every year. There’s always something that’s surprising. It’s great to see those new things come through every year,” he said.

This year’s performance of the Coming Out Monologues will take place virtually on Zoom on April 2nd. To learn more about the details of this year’s Coming Out Monologues performance and to find ways to become involved in future performances, please visit the [LGBTQ+ Pride Center’s website](#).



Student Orgs for English Majors

Note: this is not an exhaustive list. There are hundreds of student organizations at Texas A&M, and these are just a few that might interest English majors. To find more student organizations that share your interests, go to stuactionline.tamu.edu



The Eckleburg Project

About:

The official undergraduate literary journal at Texas A&M University.

What current members say:

“Being part of The Eckleburg Project has been one of the best parts of my time at Texas A&M. I found some wonderful friends and an outlet for my creativity. I also made some great memories along the way!”

- Ashley Zbylot, Staff Writer

Learn more:

Instagram: @TheEckleburgProject

Email: theeckleburgproject@gmail.com

Website: theeckleburgproject.com

odyssey
Texas A&M

Odyssey

About:

Odyssey is a Texas A&M organization that is based in New York. We are a group of writers who believe in amplifying multiple perspectives, opinions, and ideas - including yours.

What current members say:

“Being a part of Odyssey has not only been a highlight of my present time in college but has also illuminated key goals in my professional and personal future. While in this community of world-shakers and word-makers, I’ve discovered my voice in my writing.”

- Riley Farrell, Editor-in-Chief

Learn more:

Instagram: @tamu.odyssey

CWTC

Creative Writing Techniques Club

About:

A place where creative writers of any kind can improve their technical skills.

What current members say:

“It’s always hard to find beta readers dedicated and unbiased enough to trust with your writing, and CWTC has an endless source of just that. Anyone who wants to improve their creative writing skills in any way is welcome and will be met with many helpful listeners.”

- Ryan Kulcak, President

hc
TEXAS A&M

Her Campus

About:

The Texas A&M chapter of the online collegiate women’s magazine, Her Campus, that forms a tight-knit community of like-minded creatives.

What current members say:

“I am so thankful for Her Campus and the impact it’s had on my college experience. I’ve been exposed to the world of journalism, marketing, PR, and social media through this organization. I feel that I’ve strengthened my communication skills in so many ways! Besides career help, I’ve made a ton of friends and am so thankful to have them in my life!”

- Nadia Garcia, President

Learn more:

Instagram: @hctamu

Website: hercampus.com/school/tamu

ABC

Aggie Book Club

About:

Aggie Book Club is a place for readers to meet and discuss different topics related to literature. ABC welcomes all readers and book lovers!

What current members say:

“I love Aggie Book Club because not only do I get to explore different forms of literature, I also get to talk about them with others that enjoy books just as much as I do!”

- Caitlyn Tomaselli, Vice President

Learn more:

Instagram: @AggieBookClub

Editor’s Note

Making the Case: Getting Involved

As a freshman, I heard it all the time: “You get out of it what you put into it.” As a senior, I know now that this was one of the most important pieces of advice I received coming into college. So, how did I put in all of the rewarding experiences, meaningful accomplishments, and unforgettable memories that I hoped to get out of my college experience? Great question. It starts with getting involved.

Like most freshman students, I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to do after I walked across the graduation stage. However, I did know what I loved, and that was English, especially if it related to reading, writing, and publishing. Using my passion for English as a guiding light, I applied to be a part of the undergraduate literary magazine here at Texas A&M, *The Eckleburg Project*. Two years later, I became the Editor-in-Chief of that organization, and I played a direct role in telling students’ stories—one of my most rewarding experiences in college. The memories I made and the goals I accomplished while in that leadership position were unforgettable and truly enriched my college experience. I don’t know where I’d be if I didn’t apply.

I want every undergraduate student who enrolls at Texas A&M to have the same experience. I don’t mean by joining the same club or playing the same part as me. I mean the same enrichment, gratification and connection to the university and the student body. I believe those feelings can only be replicated by becoming involved outside of the classroom. Whether that’s applying to be a part of the literary magazine or other student publication, volunteering off-campus, working a part-time student worker job at an office they enjoy, or even starting their own organization if they can’t find one that fits them, everyone who wants to should find the place where they can make a difference, no matter how big or small.

If students seek out these opportunities, the benefits that come out of that will last forever (not to mention make for great talking material during job interviews). So do it! Join an organization. You never know what you might get out of it.

Share Your Story!

Tag us in your post
[@theenglishaggie](#)

Use our hashtag
[#theenglishaggie](#)

Want to share your work?
Email EnglishAggieStories@gmail.com

Follow us!

 englishaggie.blogspot.com

 facebook.com/TheEnglishAggie

 [@theenglishaggie](https://www.instagram.com/theenglishaggie)

 [@theenglishaggie](https://twitter.com/theenglishaggie)

 EnglishAggieStories@gmail.com



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Department of
English

This publication is brought to you by:
Texas A&M Department of English

Editor: Sarah Roberts '21

