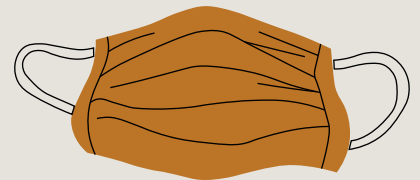
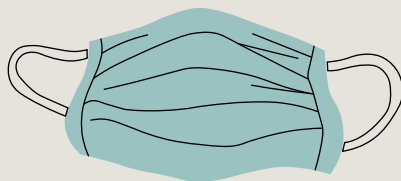
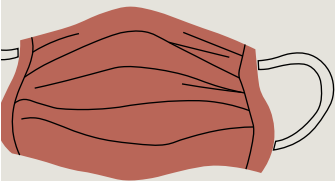
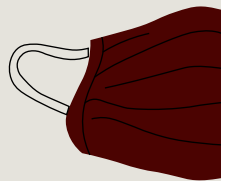
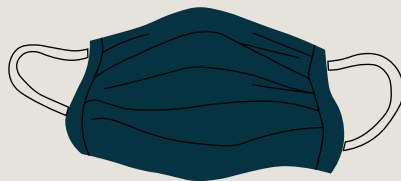
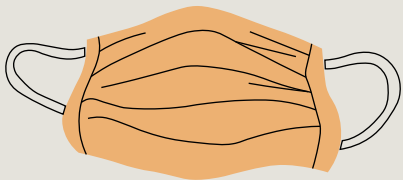
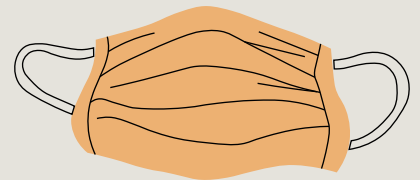
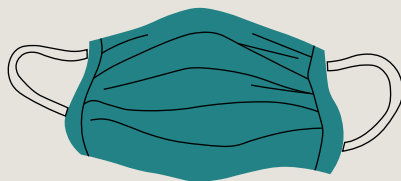
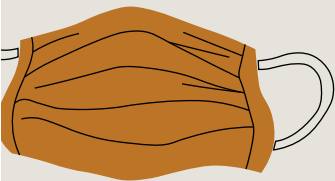
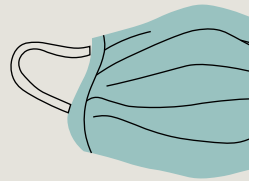
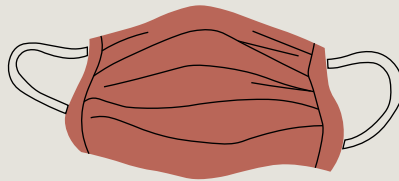
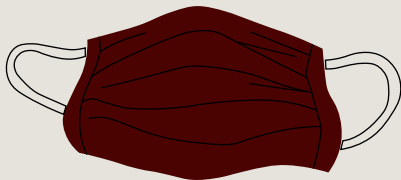
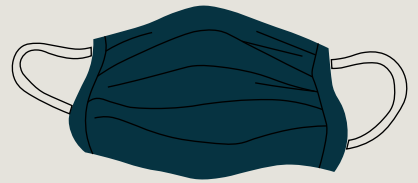
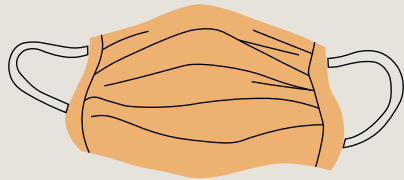
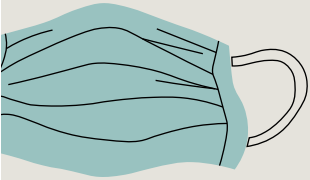
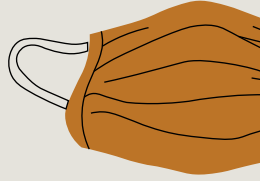
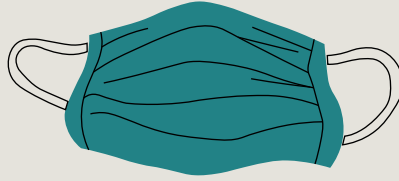
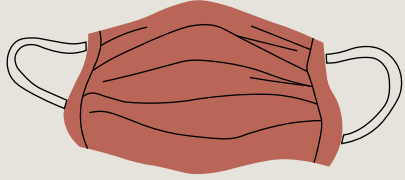


September 2020 Issue

# The English Aggie



Interview with Katherine Kimball | New Health Humanities Minor | Sci Fi & Fantasy Creative Writing Contest



# Editor's Note

What has going to college during a global pandemic been like?

My answer: not ideal.

I can't say that this semester is living up to every expectation, but who can? I think most of us (if not all of us) wish we were mad at ourselves for forgetting our notebook, not mad that we forgot our mask. That we were asking if we could get an extra copy of the paper assignment rather than becoming a well-versed Zoomer with mad screen-sharing skills. That we were getting to hang out with our friends without worry rather than fighting with our internet in a fruitless, frustrating battle of the bandwidths (SuddenLink, am I right?). And, we wish we didn't have to walk through 100 degrees in a mask.

It's a gross understatement to say this semester didn't live up to our original expectations. We, however, have learned a lot. We've grown a lot. We've lost a lot, but we've also found a lot. In short, we have been through a lot.

This pandemic is a once in a lifetime, and once in a century, event. Most of us are just trying to keep going. We succeed some days, but then some days are hard, no doubt about it. We're not thinking too far into the future because who knows what the future actually is? That's what happens when stability turns into instability and when your foundation drops out from under your feet. You take it day by day. You control what you can control.

We're doing the best we can. Sometimes though, you really just need to vent. So vent! Tell it like it is! Lay it out in the open! If you do that, you'll find one truth that, at least for me, provides comfort: none of us are alone in this. We're all going through this together, and we'll all get through this together. Separated, masked, and distanced, but not alone.

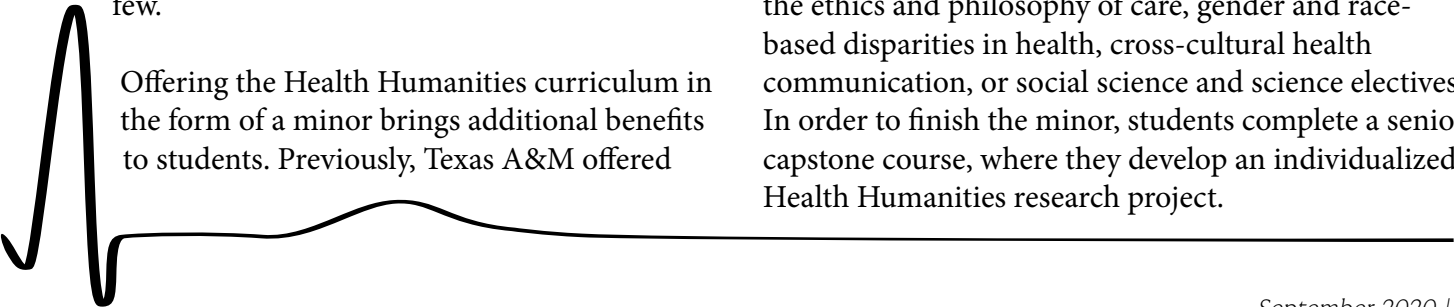
# Art of Health

## New Health Humanities Minor Offered by the Department of English

In the time of a pandemic, when coronavirus is touching nearly every aspect of daily life, it's no surprise that students would want to study not just the scientific implications of the virus, but the cultural implications as well. This field of study is known as Health Humanities, and starting next semester, students will be able to minor in the subject through Texas A&M's Department of English.

"The subject of Health Humanities is the analysis of cultural representations of health and illness. Those could be as varied as medical portraiture, for example, narratives of patients' own illness or healing, poetry by physicians, or it could be a film about a pandemic or an outbreak," Dr. Jessica Howell, an English professor and convenor of Texas A&M's Health Humanities curriculum, explains. "Health Humanities tries to apply more than one disciplinary approach to understanding those representations, and it's based on the assumption that our experiences of illness and healing are never just biological or cultural, but that they're always both."

Since the early 2000s, the number of Health Humanities programs in the nation has increased from roughly 15 to more than 100 today, according to a report published by the Case Western University School of Medicine in March of this year. Health Humanities programs not only develop highly beneficial skill sets to those going into healthcare—it also teaches students how to appreciate diversity of thought, critically think across disciplines, and appreciate the holistic nature of health and medicine. Such skills can be used in careers in politics, social justice, healthcare marketing, health or science journalism, or health advocacy, just to name a few.



Offering the Health Humanities curriculum in the form of a minor brings additional benefits to students. Previously, Texas A&M offered

a concentration in Health Humanities within the University Studies major, but with a minor, students will have more flexibility in order to achieve their individual goals, have access to the Department of English advising resources, and are able to take advantage of the knowledgeable English faculty members leading the program.

During the COVID pandemic, Dr. Howell sees the need for an appreciation of Health Humanities growing substantially. "What we're seeing emerge is a truly collaborative model to problem solving during this time of acute crises where, during COVID, we need to have epidemiologists, historians, public health experts, and philosophers who understand the ethics of quarantine and patient autonomy." Dr. Howell added, "We have to have literary scholars equipped to analyze the narratives as well as, for example, the documentaries and the photography produced by people who have suffered through this illness."

Never in recent history has it been more clear that science and humanities intersect in a profound, substantial way. Studying that intersection in a holistic manner greatly benefits students, especially if studied at the baccalaureate level. As Dr. Howell stated, "people who are equipped to critically engage with issues in the contemporary moment and bring to bear multiple perspectives and understand them are acutely needed at this time."

The minor consists of nine required hours related to health studies in English, including classes in narrative medicine and graphic medicine, literature and medicine, and health rhetoric. The other nine hours may be earned through classes focusing on the ethics and philosophy of care, gender and race-based disparities in health, cross-cultural health communication, or social science and science electives. In order to finish the minor, students complete a senior capstone course, where they develop an individualized Health Humanities research project.

# Plot Twists & Pandemics

Author Katherine Kimball, Class of '17, on Finding Opportunity in Crisis

Katherine Kimball, who graduated in 2017 from Texas A&M with a B.S. in Economics and a B.A. in English, is used to rolling with life's punches. Working as an ESL teacher in China at the time news of the pandemic broke, Kimball had just returned to the city of Shenzhen, located in the Guangdong province of China, when she was quickly ushered into quarantine as she arrived.

Faced with the boredom that accompanies a Chinese government-sanctioned quarantine, Kimball turned to one of her passions for distraction—writing. “You’re basically stuck with nothing,” Kimball said. “And I wasn’t given any head’s up that I’d be going into quarantine. So it was kind of a surprise, and I didn’t really have anything to prepare me. So, I just wrote a bunch of poems.”

**“I definitely would have never been able to do it without my English degree from Texas A&M...”**

On her last day of quarantine in China, Kimball received the unexpected news that her grandmother had passed away back in the United States. That same day, China announced that its borders were closing and travel would be restricted from outside countries. Kimball had to choose between staying in China for her job, or returning to the United States and being indefinitely trapped outside of the country where she worked. Kimball ultimately returned to the United States for her grandmother's



*Katherine Kimball, author and Texas A&M graduate Class of 2017, wrote Truth And Poison during quarantine.*

funeral, where she had to enter a second two-week quarantine, almost back-to-back with the one she just completed. Soon after, she was furloughed from her ESL teaching position until she could return to China. As a mechanism for processing the grief of a loved one's death, the loss of her beloved teaching job, and the anxiety surrounding quarantine and the pandemic, Kimball continued to find refuge in writing. Eventually, Kimball's growing stack of poems turned into a new book, called Truth And Poison, which was published September 8th.

Kimball found a healing catharsis in writing: “I sort of realized that in all of the frustration that sort of comes with quarantine and things like that, that writing poetry really helps me process stuff. So, when I would write something, even when it turned out not to be a good poem that made the cut from the book, afterwards I would feel better about whatever I was writing about.”

**“You can’t control the plot twists in you life, but what you can control is how you write your reaction to them.”**

By publishing her new book, Kimball realized a dream that she has always wanted, but never really thought possible. During her time at Texas A&M, Kimball was unsure how she would use her English degree in her future career, even though she loved the subject. “For a long time, I really thought my path was going to be Economics-oriented. Like I was going to do Behavioral Economics or Microeconomics for some nonprofit, and I even looked into getting a PhD in Economics,” Kimball said. “Being in the world, in the working world, English has actually helped me, as an ESL teacher, more than Economics ever did.”

Especially writing and publishing a book, Kimball heavily depended on the skills her English



*Katherine Kimball discussed her experiences during the pandemic and her best advice with coping with anxiety.*

degree afforded her. “I definitely would have never been able to do it without my English degree from Texas A&M because I learned so much about poetry and writing from my degree.” Kimball continued, “Being able to communicate my thoughts on paper is huge because even if you’re not doing something English related, being able to sort your thoughts out and writing helps a lot more.”

Kimball’s return to her love of English has also prompted her to pursue her passion even further by getting her PhD in Literature—something she’d considered before but never did. Having taken a couple of years to discover her next step, she understands it can be hard for college students who haven’t pinned down the next five years of their life just yet, and encourages them to take all the time they need, despite the pressure they might feel to follow a certain path.

“I think it’s great that you don’t want to pick something that is going to tie you down and not give you options. Whereas I feel like people are going to try and tell you you need to pick something,” Kimball said. “No, that’s great. Don’t. Don’t pick anything. Just keep trying things!”

In addition to reminding college students that it’s okay to take the time they need to figure it out, Kimball also offered this advice to college students struggling with the chaotic virtual college environment, isolation, and the pandemic: “you can’t control the plot twists in your life, but what you can control is how you write your reaction to them.” From her extensive experience with the pandemic, quarantine, and the havoc it can wreak on future plans, Kimball added, “Remembering that even though we feel out of control over everything right now, we have control over what we do and how we react to things. I think that’s what has kept me sane in all of this. There’s still things I can control.”

Katherine Kimball’s new book, *Truth And Poison*, is on sale now at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Read the full article on The English Aggie Blog: <https://englishaggie.blogspot.com/>



# New 3+2 English B.A./M.A Program

The Department of English now offers a five-year combined degree program that provides the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master of Arts in English.

In this program, the undergraduate degree requirements are slightly modified to require more theory and methods courses in an effort to prepare students for the more rigorous masters-level coursework. Students will double count six hours of masters-level coursework toward the undergraduate degree and complete both the undergraduate degree and the 36-hour Masters degree in five years.

Students interested in this program will apply during the spring of their junior year and, if

admitted, begin taking masters-level courses in the fall of their senior year. Students should make appointments with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Undergraduate Studies at the end of their sophomore year to discuss their intention to apply to the program, and to determine necessary requirements that need to be met before the end of their junior year.

This program is a great springboard for any student interested in doctoral programs in English or related humanities, teaching composition, or working in editorial and other writing-centered employment.

Students interested in learning more can contact Dr. Vasilakis at [vasilakis@tamu.edu](mailto:vasilakis@tamu.edu).

# SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

presented by the Texas A&M Department of English and Cushing Library

**Attention all Texas A&M undergraduate students:**

Submit your speculative fiction piece for a chance to perform your piece at a public reading and win cash prizes!

All pieces of speculative fiction are accepted. You must be a currently enrolled Texas A&M undergraduate student to submit. Submission word limit is 3000 words.

Submission Link:

<https://forms.gle/vh5Q1jgsa72Lgkkk9>

**Submission Deadline:**

February 15, 2021



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