



FALL SEMESTER

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December is here! For some this means graduation, while for others, this is another semester towards that magic date. The Graduate School wishes you Happy Holidays as you work toward and celebrate your progress! Within this issue you will find an interview with 3MT participant, Lyzzie Gollither, in addition to upcoming events and opportunities. Let us know your thoughts, what you like to see included in an upcoming issue, and if you would like to share your experiences! Above and beyond that, enjoy your break, and get ready for another period of growth and development. -Xavier-Lewis Palmer

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THE THREE MINUTE THESIS COMPETITION (3MT) WAS HOST TO NINE CONTESTANTS ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY’S ACADEMIC COLLEGES. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE READ THE UNIVERSITY NEWS LINK ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA. BELOW, WE PRESENT AN INTERVIEW WITH LYZZIE GOLLITHER, A 3MT CONTESTANT WHO WONDERFULLY REPRESENTED THE MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM IN CREATIVE WRITING.



What’s the MFA program like at ODU?

It’s a wonderful program! Super supportive faculty and a really great community of writers. We’re all writing completely different stuff and it’s really exciting to hear what everyone else is doing. People are always hosting events around Norfolk to drag us out of our writing holes and make us remember how to be human again. There’s this attitude that we’re all trying to do this really hard thing together, even if we have to face it alone. There isn’t any kind of competitive atmosphere among the students. If someone gets a publication, it’s a victory for the entire department. It’s motivating, too—like if that guy can do it, why not me?

What do you love to do?

Well, obviously I love to write! When I’m not writing, my favorite thing to do is play strategy board games. Over the years I’ve amassed an embarrassingly large collection of board games, and I like to spend my afternoons playing them with my boyfriend and family. Some of my favorites right now are Galaxy Truckers, Mage Knight, and Gloomhaven. I’ve found that playing games is a really great way to open up your mind and think about things in potentially new and interesting ways. When you have a limited amount of turns or space or actions and you have to do X number of tasks, you get really good at assessing your resources and coming up with solutions. Not a bad skill set for a novelist! My other hobbies include reading, cooking, watching TV, and playing music. I don’t do music as much anymore, but I’ve played the piano since I was eight, and while I was in undergrad I learned how to play the organ, which is an incredibly cool and unique instrument. I think that learning the organ was actually another helpful resource in learning to write a novel. The organ isn’t like other instruments—there’s a huge amount of stuff going on. Two to three keyboards for your hands, another keyboard for your feet, and over a hundred stops (knobs you pull to create unique sounds)! I kind of feel like a one-woman orchestra when I play.

Continued on page 2 and 3

LYZZIE GOLLIHER - MFA (CONTINUED)

Being in charge of so much and having to multitask all over the place, while also creating something beautiful for others to enjoy, it's not unlike playing God when creating new writing worlds. 'Guess I have a type!

What do you teach at ODU? How does this impact your writing life?

I teach Intro to College Composition, ENGL 110C. I've taught this class for the last two semesters and expect to teach again in the spring. A lot of MFA students with assistantships teach this class or English Composition, ENGL 211. I'm really grateful for the opportunity to try out teaching at the collegiate level. Most English degree earners just assume that after they graduate, they'll try to get some kind of teaching position, and I'm glad to be able to take the job out for a test run to see if I like it before getting locked in. Teaching has its ups and downs, but overall I'd say it's a positive experience. Writing can be very lonely at times, and I think it's good to be forced to interact with other people 2-3 times a week, even if those people are just your students. The main downside to teaching is that I think about my class a lot. Last semester it really caused me to write less. This semester I've gotten more of a handle on it, gotten a little better at time management. It's still hard, though. When you're a teacher you never really turn off that part of your brain.

Why did you decide to earn your MFA?

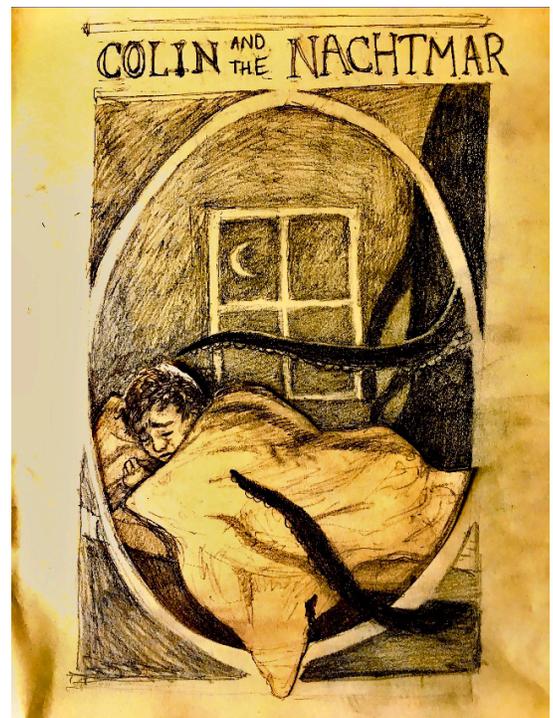
I was actually accepted into two programs for graduate school: the MFA in creative writing at ODU and a master's in human sexuality at Widener University up in PA. Both subjects really interested me, and it was hard to choose between the two. I got my bachelor's in psychology at William and Mary, so a human sexuality degree seemed like the natural next step. But I just couldn't do it. I took a ton of creative writing classes in college, and the more I took, the more addicted to it I got. I couldn't bear the thought of more tests and academia and textbooks. I've always loved to read and write creatively, ever since I was a little kid. I thought, this is my chance to actually do something I love, instead of doing something I just would 'enjoy academically.' So I went for it. I've never regretted it.

What is your thesis project?

The MFA department does theses a little differently than most other departments. Instead of a research project or literature review, we have to compose a body of work in our chosen genre. My genre is fiction, so I had the choice between a collection of short stories or a longer work. It wasn't much of a choice for me. I've always wanted to write novels, young adult (YA) novels specifically, and this was my chance. My thesis is called *Colin and the Nachtmar*, and it's a fantasy novel about a young boy and the monster who harvests his memories.

Can you briefly describe the plot?

Sure! So, the boy, Colin, has a rough life: his twin sister died when they were six; his parents got a divorce less than a year ago; he suffers from depression and social anxiety. He's having a really hard time in school and he doesn't have any friends. The Nachtmar thinks that he can help ease Colin's suffering by sucking out Colin's bad memories while he sleeps. But he's no good Samaritan; the people on his world are addicted to the substance derived from human memories, and he's part of an elite race tasked with their acquisition. Over the course of the book, the Nachtmar has to come to terms with the harsh realities of his world: that taking children's bad memories may not be as harmless as it seems, that his species' addiction to human memories was no accident, and that the corruption on his world runs far deeper than he could ever imagine.



Cover Artwork from *Colin and the Nachtmar*
By Lyzzie Golliher

LYZZIE GOLLIHER - MFA (CONTINUED)

Why did you decide to write about this topic/these themes?

I feel like not enough YA covers more serious topics like mental health issues. Fantasy especially is guilty of this—there's always some dystopian government to overthrow or some physical challenge to overcome, but how many books really talk about psychological issues? How many books have young characters whose actions have serious consequences? I want readers to see an eleven-year-old making mistakes and having to live with them. I want them to realize that even though they're young, their choices really do matter. Their thoughts are real and valid, even though other people might not understand or appreciate them.

Why did you decide to write in this genre?

I think writing young adult literature is extremely important. There's a lot of trash out there for kids, books with cookie-cutter plots and two-dimensional characters. I could see how a kid would read a few of those and get turned off to reading altogether, especially in the world we live in now, where reading isn't as popular as it once was. I want kids to have options that can outshine the appeal of their phones and social media. When I was little, I was really frustrated about the lack of quality literature targeted to my age group. I'm trying to write books that I would have loved to read when I was a kid, in the hopes that some kid today will pick them up and feel like someone out there understands them. Reading was my escape from reality when I was younger—the world often felt harsh and uncaring, but good books were warm and inviting. They gave me hope that life would get better, that there was more out there than my tiny slice of the world. That's why I think it's so important to put high-quality literary YA out there. I think kids need it more than anyone.

What are your favorite books and TV shows?

My answer to this changes often, but here's a brief sampling of my all-time favorites mixed with recent finds. Since I'm a Young Adult (YA) author, I'll only list my favorite YA books. A lot of these are hidden gems, so if you're looking to read more YA, you should definitely check these books out!

Books:

- The Bartimaeus Sequence by Jonathan Stroud (all time fav)
- The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer
- Chaos Walking Trilogy by Patrick Ness
- Anything written by William Sleator
- The Scythe series by Neil Shusterman
- The Midnighters series and Uglies series by Scott Westerfeld

TV Shows (not limited to YA):

- Big Mouth
- A Handmaid's Tale
- Brooklyn-99
- Tabula Rasa
- Star Trek: Voyager and Star Trek: Deep Space 9
- Avatar: The Last Airbender

3RD ANNUAL GRADUATE SUMMER AWARD PROGRAM

Old Dominion University's Graduate School in partnership with the Office of Research is pleased to announce the return of the Graduate Summer Award Program (GSAP). Open to graduate students from across the University, the GSAP is a competitive program that supports a range of original graduate student scholarship, including basic research, field study, data analysis, performances and exhibitions, and community-based learning initiatives. The program can be used to support thesis or dissertation projects or other capstone projects at the master's or doctoral level. The scope of the proposed project should allow the graduate student to produce a measurable research or scholarly product by the end of a minimum of six uninterrupted weeks during the summer months.

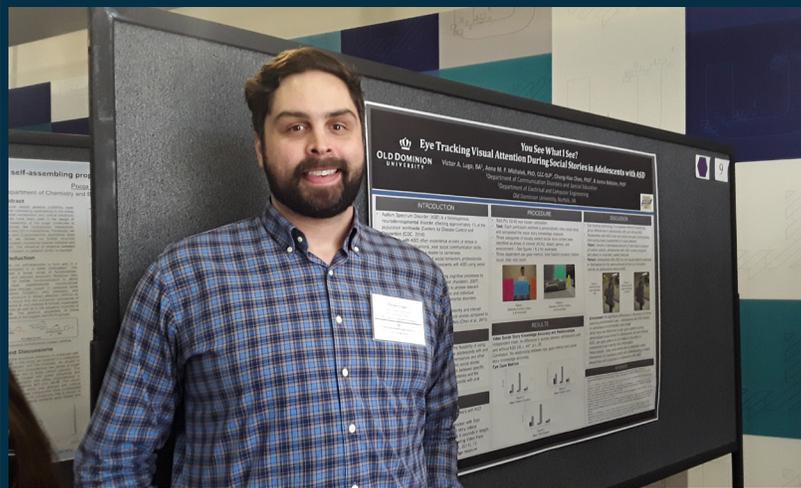
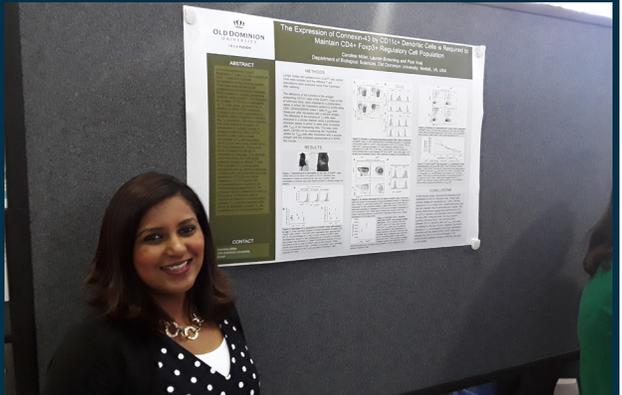
Graduate students wishing to apply for this award must identify and approach a faculty member to serve as a mentor during the tenure of the program award. The faculty member may advise the student in creating a strong project proposal, explain the expectations for scholarly activity, supervise the scholarly activity, and provide advice from the proposal stage to the completion of the final report. However, the faculty member is not permitted to produce work on behalf of the student. Students applying for the award will be the primary investigators for these projects. It is expected that a graduate student with this funding will produce a work with original scholarship. The award is not for lab assistant or graduate assistant duties that support a faculty project. Look for an RFP in early January 2020. Its submission deadline will be February 15, 2020.

odu.edu/graduateschool

GET READY FOR GRADUATE

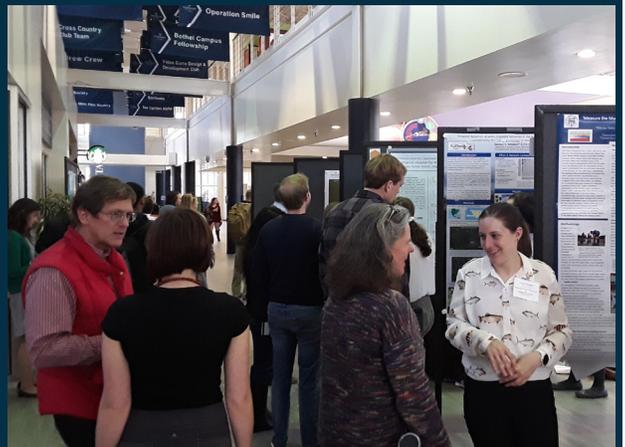
RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT DAY 2020!

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL WILL BE HOSTING THE EIGHTH ANNUAL GRADUATE RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT DAY (GRAD) ON THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2020, FROM 12:00 P.M. TO 2:00 P.M. IN WEBB UNIVERSITY CENTER. GRAD IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS TO SHOWCASE THEIR RESEARCH FOR THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY WHILE NETWORKING WITH OTHER STUDENTS AND LEARNING ABOUT THE GREAT DIVERSITY OF RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP AT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY.



STUDENTS INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING MUST SUBMIT A POSTER PROPOSAL THAT CONSISTS OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT'S NAME, ANY CO-AUTHORS, A PROJECT TITLE, AND A 300-WORD MAXIMUM ABSTRACT. THE PROPOSAL MUST BE SUBMITTED NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2020, AT 5:00 P.M. TO [HTTPS://BIT.LY/2mFNn92](https://bit.ly/2mFNn92). PROPOSALS THAT DO NOT FOLLOW THE FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS OR ARE SUBMITTED LATE RUN THE RISK OF NOT BEING ACCEPTED.

STUDENTS IN DISCIPLINES THAT DO NOT NORMALLY UNDERTAKE POSTER PRESENTATIONS AND WHO WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE MAY CONTACT MR. XAVIER-LEWIS PALMER, GRADUATE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT FOR THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, FOR ASSISTANCE AT [XPALMER@ODU.EDU](mailto:xpalmer@odu.edu). DISTANCE STUDENTS ARE ALSO WELCOME TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS. PLEASE NOTE, THAT WHILE FACULTY ADVISORS, UNDERGRADUATES, OR OTHER NON-GRADUATE STUDENTS MAY BE CO-AUTHORS OF PROPOSALS, THEY CANNOT BE FIRST AUTHORS OR PRESENT THE POSTER AT THE EVENT.



ABOUT

Find Graduate School News Online at: www.odu.edu/graduateschool, as well as updates on our Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter pages.

ODU doctoral student, Xavier-Lewis Palmer, compiled and edited this newsletter with help from Dr. Robert Wojtowicz, Dr. Bryan Porter, Missy Barber, Genieve Conwell, and Courtney Nishnick in the Graduate School.

If you have an idea, event, news, or anything otherwise notable that you would like to share, contact Xavier-Lewis at xpalmer@odu.edu.



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