



*Write your own story:
Join the UNH English major*

Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 2018

Why a UNH English major? Take a look at what the English major can do for you!

“English majors are used to getting a tough assignment, figuring it out, and getting it done” (Strauss, “Why I Hire English Majors”). English majors are experts in the art and science of words; the study of reading, writing, and thinking gives you skills to expand your imaginative potential and solve real-world problems.

“Plus, data shows that 73.4% of employers look for candidates with strong written communication skills, making it the third most sought-after trait, just behind leadership and collaborative ability” (Stoller-Lindsey, “Here’s Why We’re Underestimating the Value of English Majors.” *Forbes*).

Learn more English major successes here:



What the English major means to me: *On the Shape of Words*

by Jim Rioux

The stairway up to the third floor of Hamilton Smith Hall, steep and narrow in those days, gave one the feeling of rising into a turret. I was nineteen and stumbling, perhaps flailing, through my first year of college. I didn’t know then that I would be taking the next year off, but I did know that I was anxious to talk about my personal essay with my freshman English teacher. A small woman with a hive of dark curly hair, she commanded respect. We were going over a narrative I had written about being

suspended from high school, how I’d drunk a bottle of wine to get the courage to ask a girl to the prom, how by third period, I’d woken up in a small pool of my own vomit, my secret crush seated just behind me. I thought it was a good essay, full of drama and dark humor. “So what?” she liked to say, but I wasn’t expecting it now; after all, I’d been as honest as I ever had before in this essay.

“Why did you need a bottle of wine to ask this young woman to the prom?” She was looking

right at me, her eyes kind. “Was she that scary?”

My palms were sweating. I had no answer, but as I left her office that day, I began trying to find one. There were a lot of my own behaviors that I found either mysterious or even, at times, terrifying. Who was I? Was I being the person I really wanted to be? We’d been taught in class the history of the essay form, how Montaigne’s “attempts” had created a new genre, one that encouraged self-



exploration. This is when I began writing in a journal. “Attempting” to understand myself, I’d open that plaid upholstered little book with its blue lined pages, and I would lay a stretch of words across the page—angry words, frightening words, words searching for a shape.

Rioux, On the Shape of Words, continued

And so I began reading more, trying to find the right words to fill those strange spaces inside, as if by filling them I might feel more of what it meant to be myself. I read a poem by James Wright, for instance, called

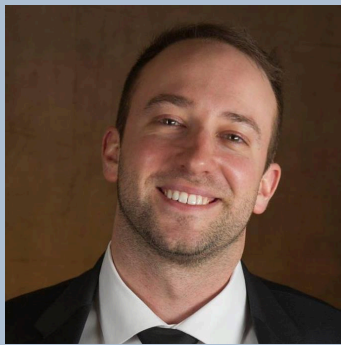
“A Blessing,” where he realizes “that if [he] stepped outside of [his] body he would break/ Into blossom.” I had always felt like some kind of imposter in the world. Words like these began to inhabit my body, giving it a greater sense of weight and presence.

I hadn’t asked myself, while writing that essay so many years ago, why my story was an important story to tell. And when I ask it now, I can still feel my heart race a little as I realize how invisible I felt then and how, my teacher, with her challenging words, was showing me that she could

see me and wanted me to see myself.



**Alumni Profile
Tate Aldrich, ‘08
2017 NH Teacher
of the Year**



What was your English major and graduation year?

I majored in English Teaching, and I graduated in 2008, Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude.

How did your UNH English major prepare you for your current work?

The classes I took as an English Teaching major at UNH were transformative. My favorite classes were Survey of American Literature with Professor Senier, Teaching Literature with Professor Krasner, Black New England with Professor Watters, and Creative Nonfiction with Leah Williams. In these classes, I learned to deconstruct my relationship with the written word, to reflect on the role of art and literature in our society, and to understand the value of multiple perspectives. Because of UNH, my teaching

philosophy is "to help students hone their critical thinking skills and access the humanity of others."

Aside from preparing you for work, how has your English degree enriched your life?

I always liked school, but UNH taught me to love learning. While there, I became a rapacious reader and incorrigible over-thinker. For the rest of my life, I'll be chasing the thrill of the learning experiences afforded to me at UNH--and I think that's a good thing.

What is your most valuable UNH English memory?

I wrote a lot of poetry at UNH, but it wasn't until my Senior year that I summoned the courage to read some of it at an Open Mic Night at the MUB. It was an unforgettable, exhilarating experience. Afterwards, I continued to read my poetry to Open Mic Night crowds, and I was published in the on-campus magazine "Aegis" a couple times.

What advice do you have for current UNH students?

Your life will never be so simultaneously comfortable and interesting again! So savor every detail of it! I can still remember (fondly) the way the old Hamilton Smith smelled...

Upcoming Events

First Fridays Speaker Series: Joseph Nugent, “Digitally Unbound or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Digital Humanities”
Friday, Mar. 2, 12:00 PM, Ham Smith 150

Visit from Tate Aldrich, 2017 NH Teacher of the Year
Tuesday, Mar. 6, 3:40-5:00, Ham Smith 240



Read more about Tate Aldrich

Join us on Facebook at UNH English Majors
or
<https://cola.unh.edu/english>