

Joshua Johnston, B.A. English Creative Writing, 2014

By Madelyn Chambers

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“Even the more mundane aspects of living take on a more curious quality when viewed through the lens of poetry.”



Joshua Johnston graduated from WKU in 2014 with bachelor’s degrees in Creative Writing and Anthropology. He went on to obtain his Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from Indiana University in 2017. He is currently a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Florida State University, where he is pursuing his PhD in Poetry.

Johnston wasn’t sure what university he wanted to attend until he met WKU professor Dr. Tom Hunley at a gathering of Governor’s School for the Arts alumni. “We immediately fell into a conversation about our shared love for the work of James Tate and Charles Simic. I thought, ‘Here’s my guy!’ WKU was the clear choice after that.”

Johnston’s love of poetry and creative writing was fueled by his classes at WKU. He recalls Dr. Tom Hunley, Dr. Molly McCaffrey, and Dr. David Bell encouraging his pursuit of creative writing. “I worked with Dr. Hunley most frequently, and he was always supportive of my being a total poetry junky, constantly loaning me books and encouraging me to experiment in my own work as much as possible. Dr. McCaffrey was my advisor, and her help with the more practical aspects of my college experience (scheduling classes, etc.) kept me from losing my mind on many occasions. I didn’t see Dr. Bell nearly as much, but his good humor and encouragement were indispensable nonetheless.”

After obtaining his bachelor’s degrees, Johnston immediately began pursuing his MFA in Poetry at Indiana University, which he feels was the best decision for him. He also fueled his interest in teaching as an associate instructor at IU. After graduating in 2017, Johnston moved to Florida to pursue his PhD in Poetry at Florida State University, where he continues to teach. While at IU and FSU, he has published poetry in [Salt Hill](#)

[Journal](#), [Ninth Letter](#), [New South](#), [Passages North](#), and [Hobart](#). Currently, he is working on assembling poetry for his dissertation.

Johnston finds his work as a graduate teaching assistant incredibly valuable, and he intends to keep teaching after he receives his PhD. “The content is constantly challenging me to learn new things and improve my ability to communicate them (it also gives me a good excuse to constantly buy new books!), and the schedule is kind to my creative work outside of the classroom.” When he isn’t teaching or studying, Johnston enjoys recording music, making collages, and reading the works of James Tate.

Johnston recommends that all college students value the resources available to them. “Make a point of being curious and self-driven in your engagement with the arts. Expose yourself to diverse and challenging works outside of the classroom and beyond graduation. Thanks to online resources, literature, films, music, and art of all kinds ... are now readily available. Take advantage of that! And whatever you do, don’t take it for granted.”

