

## So You Want to Be an English Major

### LCCC Career Exploration Podcast

Music:	<a href="#">00:04</a>	[inaudible]
Janet Maltbie:	<a href="#">00:08</a>	From Lorain County Community College. This is the career exploration podcast on LCCC radio.com the Boom. I'm Janet Maltbie. We explore careers, college majors, and more so you can be a success here on the LCCC campus and beyond. I believe completing a degree, pursuing passionate work and debt free living is key to your future. I'm here to help you on your journey and so are my guests.
Music:	<a href="#">00:38</a>	[inaudible]
Janet Maltbie:	<a href="#">00:38</a>	As a career counselor since 1985 I've helped thousands of undecided students and people in transition pursue a college major and a career that's right for them. What I found is that most people want options and choices that fit their lifestyle and who they are. That's what this podcast is all about. Finding out what's out there and what might be right for you
Music:	<a href="#">01:02</a>	[inaudible].
Janet Maltbie:	<a href="#">01:02</a>	Each week we explore specific professions and journey into the lives of people who have experienced the joys and trials of the work they do, how they got started and what they learned along the way.
Music:	<a href="#">01:16</a>	[inaudible]
Janet Maltbie:	<a href="#">01:16</a>	Today our topic of conversation is so you want to be an English major and on our program we have two people who can be very helpful to you as you pursue or consider your degree in English. Arlena Lockard and Krista O'Neil. Both Arlena and Krista have majored in English in college and have found employment they love. They'll talk about where they've been, where they're going and how they can help you decide if an English major is right for you. So let's begin that journey right here, right now on LCCC radio.com
Music:	<a href="#">01:53</a>	[inaudible]

Janet Maltbie: [01:54](#) We'll begin our conversation with Krista O'Neil. Krista graduated from Hiram college in 1985 with her bachelor's of arts degree in an English or English degree. Served her well as she progressed from her role as an academic advisor to the coordinator of counseling and advising here at Lorain County Community College for over 30 years. She has advised thousands of college students helping them overcome obstacles and plan a course for success as they complete a degree here at LCCC studying literature. And its deeper universal meanings helped Krista develop her critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills. But more than anything else, it helped her to see the humanity and struggle of each person, the shared human condition, which gave her greater empathy, especially for Community College students. Welcome to the program, Krista.

Krista O'Neil: [02:43](#) So happy to be here. Thank you. Janet.

Janet Maltbie: [02:45](#) You love words.

New Speaker: [02:46](#) I absolutely love words. How did that start? It started at a very young age for me. I really loved vocabulary. So back in school when students were learning their spelling and vocabulary was fascinated with words and the power of words to express ideas to people. So I've always was interested in that. And then when I got into high school, I started writing for the college newspaper or the high school newspaper, I'm sorry. And then became the editor of my high school newspaper. Wow. And thought maybe I would pursue a career in journalism. And then I got off to college at Hiram college and there I thought I might be a theater major or an elementary ed major. I was a communications major for a little bit and then I found English. And in particular English literature, English literature.

Janet Maltbie: [03:40](#) Was it the reading of it that you enjoyed? Was it the writing of it that you enjoy? What was the part that you enjoyed the most?

Krista O'Neil: [03:47](#) There's a lot of things that go into an English major, a lot of course a lot is reading and a lot is writing, but it's deeper than that in that you're looking at a poem or a short story or a piece of fiction or nonfiction, and then you're looking for the deeper meaning underneath. That was the part that appealed to me what it was on the surface. But what were the universal themes that impacted humanity and people that were underneath the surface. So there's a lot of problem solving and critical thinking. That's part of an English degree.

- Janet Maltbie: [04:22](#) So over the years you've met with literally thousands of students. You've helped them decide on a, on a major. If a student came to you and said, I am thinking about becoming an English major, how would you advise them?
- Krista O'Neil: [04:37](#) Well, first of all, I and I have recently had some students in that situation. First of all, I honestly believe that English majors can do anything. It's great training for law school. It's great training for anything that you're going to be working with people because in English, not only do you study the words, but you learn about these deeper understanding of humanity in general. You know, universal themes such as grief and um, love and joy. All of these things you learn about in literature and it gives you a deeper understanding of the world around you. I also think that lots of people need people who can really write and communicate effectively.
- Janet Maltbie: [05:22](#) Right the English language is not an easy thing to know. Are there any particular courses that, let's just say that somebody came here as a freshman. Okay. Um, and they're thinking about it, but they're not sure that they want to be an English major. What kind of courses would you recommend for the first semester?
- Krista O'Neil: [05:38](#) Sure, absolutely. You want to start off with your English composition courses. Um, it's also good to get grounded in your arts and humanities courses. So good courses for an English major, philosophy, really a broad liberal arts type of course selection is good. Then later on the American literature series, the British literature series, those would be important things to get. I also think it's also very helpful to get a foreign language in. It's interesting. I have a minor in Spanish. My learning Spanish helped me to truly understand English because of the breakdown of the grammar and learning the different elements of a foreign language I think really will help students if they want to pursue an English degree.
- Janet Maltbie: [06:26](#) Okay. So I'm, I'm coming to you as an English major for the first semester. Give me, and I want to be here full time. Give me the four classes that you would recommend.
- Krista O'Neil: [06:36](#) I think that ideally we want students to start with English and math because those are considered gatekeeper courses and if they get into those gatekeeper courses and are successful, research shows us that they're more likely to finish their degree. So ideally I would want a student to take English. I'd want them to take their math. I would probably suggest a social science like psychology or sociology or history or political science, and then

maybe a arts and humanities, a philosophy or music appreciation, theater appreciation, a film appreciation, intro to humanities, some of those courses. And if a student was up to it and wanted to take 15 to 16 hours, maybe a science course, maybe not the lab one, but maybe that and that would give a really rounded schedule for a student.

Janet Maltbie: [07:26](#) And if a student is already here, they're an English major, they know for sure that that's what they want to do, but they're going to transfer. Okay, so they're sitting in your office. How would you advise them in terms of the fact that they know that they are not going to complete their four year degree here, they're going to transfer over to another school. How would you advise them?

Krista O'Neil: [07:48](#) Well, first of all, that student would be wanting to follow the Associate Arts pathway and within the Associate of Arts there's a fair amount of electives. So we would want to tailor those electives towards the four year school they were planning on transferring to. So it's important for students when they are planning to transfer that they have somewhere in mind where they think they might want to go.

Janet Maltbie: [08:11](#) Correct?

Krista O'Neil: [08:11](#) Correct. Now, if a student doesn't have an idea through the state of Ohio, we have what's called transfer assurance guides. And so there are a grouping of courses appropriate for the major that we know will transfer to all the State schools in Ohio. So when in doubt, we could look at some of those courses. I believe courses like American literature are on, on the tag guides. And so we would pursue that. But yes, those sooner a student can find out where they want to transfer to the better.

Janet Maltbie: [08:41](#) And the scheduling of classes, you recommend that students do this on their own?

Krista O'Neil: [08:45](#) I believe it's really appropriate to meet with your advisor. We are here to help and assist. And I do think of, especially if you're planning on transferring, that it's appropriate to meet with an advisor at least once a year, if not every semester.

Janet Maltbie: [09:01](#) Right. And hopefully they will have visited these college campuses that they're thinking about transferring to get a feel for that and get a feel for what that college is going to recommend. For instance, if they were going to go to a private school, they'd want to know what requirements they have.

- Krista O'Neil: [09:20](#) Absolutely. Because each school will have individual requirements. Some might want you to have an intermediate level of a foreign language. Some might want you to have a particular math course, so it is appropriate to get that information as soon as you can.
- Janet Maltbie: [09:35](#) So what you can do as an advisor is to help these students guide them into taking classes that they will need that aren't going to be a waste of time, that most likely they will transfer over to the four year college or university.
- Krista O'Neil: [09:50](#) Yeah, that's correct. And also, I think as advisors, we're here to encourage and support students and help students find and seek out their passion. And a lot of times students are so caught up into, what is my job going to be? That really at some stage you really want to study what you're passionate about learning.
- Janet Maltbie: [10:12](#) Right? What qualities or skills or interests do you think a student would need to have in order to succeed as an English major? How would they know that it's right for them?
- Krista O'Neil: [10:25](#) I think that if you're comfortable living in the gray, then you're a perfect English major.
- Janet Maltbie: [10:31](#) You got to tell me more about that.
- Krista O'Neil: [10:32](#) Well, mathematics oftentimes is very black and white. You know, you get any, you have any equation, you solve it. That's the solution. When you're interpreting a poem, people can interpret it in many different ways and you have to have support to support your argument. But there's no definite black and white answer when you study English. That is something that was very appealing to me because I like a little bit of ambiguity. Um, so I think that that is important, but also you have to be very disciplined about making sure you'll do your reading. Because if you're an English major, you can't just skim a document when you, we normally, when you're reading something, you're taking notes on it or you're marking it up. You're looking for different patterns and tendencies. So you have to have a discipline to, to make sure you can keep up with the reading.
- Janet Maltbie: [11:29](#) And you need to love words. You do. And you love words. We had started this conversation with your love of words and I think, did you bring something? Do you have an example of something that you love some words that you love that you'd like to share with us and tell us why you picked that?

Krista O'Neil: [11:48](#) Sure, absolutely. I am a huge fan of E.E.Cummings because he was also a little rogue in how he put his syntax and his punctuation and how he laid out his poems on the paper. So they're almost like a work of art. So oftentimes it's better to look at E.E.Cummings poems than to read them. But I'm going to read a poem of his that is somewhat, I'm gonna read it somewhat, how it's laid out on the paper. And what I like about E.E.Cummings is he is whimsical, um, but very authentic and there's a lot of deep understanding that comes behind the words. So this is my all time favorite poem and it's appropriate because we've had sort of a rainy spring. So the poem I'm going to read is called in just spring or in just.

Krista O'Neil: [12:42](#) In just spring when the world is mud luscious, the little lame balloon man whistles far and we. And Eddie and bill come running from marbles and piracy and it's spring. When the world is puddle wonderful. The queer old balloon man whistles far and wee. And Betty and Isabelle come dancing from hopscotch and jump rope and it's spring and the goat footed balloon man whistles far and wee.

Music: [13:20](#) [inaudible]

Janet Maltbie: [13:20](#) Krista, thank you so much.

Krista O'Neil: [13:21](#) My pleasure.

New Speaker: [13:23](#) Thank you for sharing with us today. If you're interested in speaking with Krista, please call (440) 366-4033 today.

Music: [13:36](#) [inaudible]

Janet Maltbie: [13:37](#) We're going to take a short break and when we return we'll speak with Arlena Lockard, who is also an academic advisor. She majored in English and we'll speak about what she's doing with her degree and the job options out there for English majors. It's all here right now on LCCC radio.com the Boom

Music: [14:04](#) [inaudible]

Janet Maltbie: [14:04](#) The Boom is a student radio station on the campus of Lorain County Community College. The views and opinions expressed by the on air talent do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of Lorain County Community College faculty and staff. Thank you for listening to college radio, heard round the world LCCC, radio.com the Boom

Music: [14:36](#) [inaudible].

Janet Maltbie: [14:36](#) Welcome back. This is the career exploration podcast on LCCC radio.com our topic of conversation today is so you want to be an English major. We just heard from our guest, Krista O'Neil, who is an academic advisor here at LCCC. Next up, we'll hear our colleague and friend Arlena Lockard, who's also an academic advisor and is completing her master's degree in English.

Music: [15:02](#) [inaudible].

Janet Maltbie: [15:02](#) Arlena Lockard brings a level of compassion and empathy and humor to her advising role that is rarely seen. Having been an adult learner herself. She truly understands the thirst for knowledge and the daily struggles with life that her students overcome. She's a great problem solver and cheerleader for her students. Currently, Arlena is finishing her master's degree in creative writing at Ashland university. She received her AA degree at Lorain County Community College and holds a bachelor's degree in English from the university of Akron. She is the 2016 recipient of the Sam Ella Dukes Memorial poetry prize and edited Ashbelt, University of Akron's undergraduate literary journal, Arlena and lives in the frog jump capital of Ohio with our two wild children, affectionately called the crazies and her husband dapper Dan. Welcome to the program Arlena Lockard.

Arlena Lockard: [15:52](#) Thank you Janet. Despite my docile tones. I'm very excited to be here. I did some substantial research. Listen to a lot of NPR, watched many SNL delicious dish skits on YouTube last night. So.

Janet Maltbie: [16:06](#) You are ready for this.

Arlena Lockard: [16:07](#) I'm locked and loaded and ready to go with my radio voice.

Janet Maltbie: [16:11](#) Okay. Arlena how did you tell, tell us about your master's degree program and what you're doing with that right now.

Arlena Lockard: [16:17](#) Okay. So I'm currently, I'm in the final semester, so I'm about to go into my final residency for the master's of fine arts and creative writing. Uh, my focus is creative nonfiction. It's at, uh, Ashland university. So the past two years have been spent really looking at storytelling from the creation process. How do people write stories? Why are they impactful? What are the tools that they use as far as structure and theme and plot and character

development? And how do you bring that to real life stories, um, that touch upon some universal themes.

- Janet Maltbie: [16:53](#) Wow, that sounds like a lot of fun. But it sounds like a lot of work too.
- Arlena Lockard: [16:57](#) Yes. It's both.
- Janet Maltbie: [17:00](#) Like Krista, you love words.
- Arlena Lockard: [17:02](#) Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.
- Janet Maltbie: [17:04](#) And how did, how did that start for you?
- New Speaker: [17:06](#) Um, well, honestly, I, at one point words literally saved my life. I had struggled with some depression and some postpartum depression. I was a young mother in the midst of like a quarter life crisis, trying to figure out what I wanted to do. I had, uh, started college here when I was 18, but I dropped out and started raising a family. And working. And I found myself floundering for a while. And what I learned was when I started writing these strange little short stories, I felt the most alive. I felt the most uniquely me. I suddenly wasn't just a wife and a mom and supplier of breast milk. I was me. I was, I'm so, even though those stories were horrible, horribly written, I mean, um, I, I really felt I'm alive in that moment. And so then the question became, well, how can I do this better and what do I need to learn to do this better? And how do stories and language, how does that impact me and make me feel good? And how can I do that for other people?
- Janet Maltbie: [18:11](#) Where are you at all at that point wondering what am I going to do for a job?
- New Speaker: [18:16](#) Well, absolutely, because you come in as a nontraditional student, and many of our students are at that precipice where, okay, I need to be, I need to make money for my family, right? So I'm going to be a nurse or something that the job market's there. So you're constantly being asked the question like, you're going back in your thirties to be an English major. Like that's interesting. And so I always looked at it like, well, what can't I do with an English major? So I, with an English degree, I always looked at it as I'm, I'm really, um, developing those soft skills. Those are the ability to read and write analytically to think in the higher level cognitive kind of skills that you can't like quantify, right? Like you could add a different degree. Um, and I'm just gonna echo what Krista said as well, like I in, in most of

my life, embrace that liminality so I enjoyed the idea that it was open-ended, that there wasn't a, like prescribed a career lined up for the degree I was seeking, but I was trying to enhance something that I felt passionate about and that was the ability to write well.

- Janet Maltbie: [19:26](#) So you really felt like, I'm going to do this. I feel, I, I love, I feel alive doing this. I feel like I have a little bit of skills in this area. Um, I'm not sure that you probably felt like you were, you know, um, Hemingway at that point.
- Arlena Lockard: [19:43](#) Yeah. Right.
- Janet Maltbie: [19:44](#) But you were enjoying the process of, of, um, of writing.
- Arlena Lockard: [19:50](#) Absolutely.
- Janet Maltbie: [19:50](#) What that meant for you. And then you just figured, well, I'll just figure it out like later on in terms of a career.
- Arlena Lockard: [19:57](#) Right. Because I had, you know, viewed other English majors and how they were able to find success in a variety of different, like diverse backgrounds. So there were some English majors that we were all together and they ended up finding work in nonprofit work and counseling careers, but also in journalism and radio. Some went to law school. So it was the idea that you could plug in all of those great soft skills that we were talking about earlier into a variety of different careers. And so I felt like the world was my oyster at that moment.
- Janet Maltbie: [20:34](#) And so tell us about the job that you do here at LCCC.
- Arlena Lockard: [20:38](#) So I'm a career and academic advisor. So my primary focus is really the social science and human service division. I don't work that much with English majors. That's our liberal arts team. But I primarily just help and advocate and try to be a person, that person for that point of contact for our students that are pursuing degrees in education and social work and those fields.
- Janet Maltbie: [21:03](#) And how has your English major help you in this job? How have you applied those skills?
- Arlena Lockard: [21:10](#) I think it's again, the empathy. I think it's the ability that as again what Chris was saying, that when you are delving deep into literature and you're understanding those universal connected threads, those big meta narratives they talk about and how they apply to your life, but other people's lives despite all of our little

nuances and, and um, differences. Um, and so the ability to recognize that on a theoretical level but then see it in the everyday allows you to be a very compassionate listener. And you never take anything at face value. If somebody comes to you with an attitude, there's a reason, right? So there's always, so I think it's that precocious nature of an English major to always investigate the why. Why are they acting this way? Why is this happening that I think, you know, really made me well-suited for the position I'm in now.

Janet Maltbie: [22:06](#)

Is there anybody in your life that that really had influence in making that decision to become an English major?

Arlena Lockard: [22:14](#)

Well, I have to say when I came back as an adult, I took introduction to creative writing with Bruce Weigl here. Again, the seed of wanting to be a writer was already there, but it was that intro class and him stopping me after like one of our workshops and saying, what do you really know?

New Speaker: [22:33](#)

What are you doing here? And I'm like, I'm going to school Bruce, what are you doing here? And he's like, you're a writer. And I just stopped. Like that's all I ever wanted to be. Right. And for the, for him to kind of like reaffirm that or confirm that to me was really impactful. And so he took it upon himself to work with me kind of independently on some pieces, one of which ended up winning that award at Akron. That was a piece that I started off working with Bruce here. And then he, you know, also wrote a really amazing reference letter to get me into grad school. So I have to say my writing pathway and just like that affirming experience really came from my interactions with him when he was my professor here.

Janet Maltbie: [23:13](#)

What would you say to a student that they're not quite sure that English is the right major for them? What would you say to them?

Arlena Lockard: [23:22](#)

Right. I think you have to be, again, okay with the gray area, that liminal area. And I always say, but are you inquisitive? Are you precocious still. Are you willing to ask those questions? Are you willing to create arguments on both sides of an issue and just put it in MLA format? And so being grounded in composition and rhetoric is important, but then also exploring, you know, wide variety. You can pick a minor in composition, you can pick a minor in literature, you could pick a minor in writing. So I think even within the English major, there's a lot of diversity. Okay. So exploring all of those options is always important. I think right now. I know Kim Karshner teaches one of our intro to creative writing courses, but if you are writing is

something that you're interested in, definitely taking that intro course as an elective for your AA is important.

Janet Maltbie: [24:17](#)

Okay. So like Krista, you love words too.

Arlena Lockard: [24:22](#)

Yes.

Janet Maltbie: [24:23](#)

And did you bring anything for us to share?

Arlena Lockard: [24:26](#)

Okay, so this is a Mary Oliver poem called the journey. It's probably my, my favorite poem. So I'm going to do my best to read it with my aging eyes here on my cell phone.

Arlena Lockard: [24:37](#)

One day you finally knew what you had to do and began though the voices around. You kept shouting their bad advice though the whole house began to tremble and you felt the old tug at your ankles mend my life. Each voice cried, but you didn't stop. You knew what you had to do though. The wind pried with its stiff fingers at the very foundations though their melancholy was terrible. It was already late enough and do wild nights and the road full of fallen branches and stones. But little by little, as you left their voice behind, the stars began to burn through the sheets of clouds and there was a new voice which you slowly recognized as your own that kept you company. As you strode deeper and deeper into the world, determined to do the only thing you could do, determined to save the only life you could see.

Music: [25:39](#)

[inaudible]

Janet Maltbie: [25:39](#)

Arlena, thank you so much for joining us today. Many thanks to Dano music who provided the music for this program. This program was brought to you by the generous support of enrollment, financial, and career services. Who reminds you that enrollment for the semester has begun. Call (440) 366-4033 for an appointment today.

Music: [26:05](#)

[inaudible]

Janet Maltbie: [26:06](#)

That's it for our program today. I hope you found it inspiring and I hope it causes you to think about your life and the changes you want to make. I hope it causes you to pick up the phone and make an appointment to see an academic advisor today so you can take the first step toward pursuing the life you want to live and the person you want to be. That number is (440) 366-4033 you are listening to LCCC radio.com the Boom. I'm Janet Maltbie. Thanks for listening.

Music:

[26:43](#)

[inaudible].