

UofM First-Year Writing Program

CAPster



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Happenings & Accomplishments

End of the Semester Celebration

For All-CAP on December 2nd, we will be eating pizza and celebrating the hard work you all have put in this semester! We will see you there!

Grades Due for Full Term on December 16th at 8am.

First Day of Spring Semester is Tuesday, January 20th, 2025.

Conference Presentation: Shahadur Rahman

Co-presenting an original work titled, "Exploring the Long-Term Impacts of Virtual Exchange in Teacher Education" with Dr. Sarah Dietrich at the 2025 AAC&U Conference on Global Learning (Online), November 12–14, 2025.

Conference Presentation: Shahadur Rahman

Co-presenting an original work titled, "Long-term Impacts of International Online Collaboration on ESOL Educators" with Dr. Sarah Dietrich at the 2025 TN TESOL Annual Meeting and Conference, November 13–15, 2025.

Publication Update: Shahadur Rahman

Manuscript titled, "Long Term Impacts of Virtual Exchange as Teacher Education," has been submitted to the Journal of Virtual Exchange and is currently under peer review..

Spring 2026 Example Syllabi

Spring 2026 example syllabi are now available. You can access them [here](#).

Please note that there are now more options for 1020!

Grading Information For Fall 25

As we enter Finals Week, there are a couple of things to note about final grades:

- **Entering Grades**
 - Final Grades are submitted on Banner which is under the “Faculty Grading” tab in [My Memphis](#). Click on “Final Grades” and then which course you would like to submit grades for. Then you can enter the grades manually for each student.
 - You can now [transfer your grades](#) from Canvas to Banner (where final grades are submitted). This allows you to skip the step of manually entering a grade for each student.
 - Make sure to click ‘Save’ and review each page of your class roster. Once your Grading Status is showing a green ‘Completed’ button, your course is entirely graded.

- **Last Attend Date**

- You are given the option to enter a “Last Attend Date” for each student. If a student attended class, but stopped attending during the term, resulting in failure, select a grade of ‘FN’ and enter the date/approximate date in the ‘Last Attend Date’ field.
 - DO NOT enter a date for students who COMPLETED the class.
 - DO NOT enter anything in the ‘Hours Attended’ column for students who COMPLETED the class.

- **Failure Due to Non-Attendance**

- For students who attended class but stopped during the term, resulting in failure, select a grade of “FN” and enter the date they stopped attending in the “Last Attend Date” field.
 - Never attended: If a student never attended class, and they failed the class, select a grade of “FN”, and enter a “0” (zero) in the ‘Hours Attended’ field to indicate they never attended.

- **Incomplete Grades**

- For students who qualify to receive an incomplete, you should select an “I” grade on the Final Grades roster, but with certain stipulations. For additional information and instructions, please see the “Giving an Incomplete” email that Bridget Wells will send on Dec 2nd.

- **Grade Corrections**

- If you need to make a correction to your final grades, you can go back in and change the grades as long as the grading period is still open.
- If the grading session has closed, you will need to submit the corrected grade through the “Grade Change Tool” under the “Faculty Grading” tab in My Memphis.

For more detailed info and additional tips for final grading, you can visit the Registrar’s [Grading webpage](#).

ReCAP, Pros of Using Labor-Based Grading Contracts

On Tuesday, November 11th, Jennifer Byrd, Kayla Lutes, and Spencer Horner shared their experiences with using labor-based grading contracts in the classroom. Here are some of the main points from that discussion:

- A labor-based grading contract is designed so that anyone can earn a “B” in the course if they meet the expectations negotiated by the students and professor.
- Some rationales behind labor-based grading contract:
 - The power in the classroom is shared among the students and the professor
 - The focus is placed on the students’ writing and work
 - Students are allowed to take risks and are given ownership over their own learning
 - Grading is less subjective

The panel shared some success stories from their classrooms that utilized labor-based grading contracts:

- Students were more motivated when they realized exactly what they could do to get an “A” (especially those students who didn’t typically get an “A” in English).
- Non-traditional students (such as parents or students with full-time jobs) are given more flexibility if they have to miss classes.
- Overall, the number of absences are minimized. Students don’t want to miss if they realize their grade will drop, and it takes more effort for them to do a make-up assignment.
- Students are more satisfied with their grades because it’s on them to earn an A or a B. They can’t really argue with their grades because they agreed to what was negotiated.
- Grading contracts have allowed students to focus on their writing and on activities that are designed to help them improve their writing (like revision and additional peer editing), rather than on their grades. Overwhelmingly, students report increased confidence in their writing, spurred by instructors’ comments on their ideas rather than their “mistakes.”

The panel also shared some possible pitfalls of using a grading contract as well as some ways to mitigate these pitfalls:

- Making the default grade anything other than a “B,” can lead to the students not taking the professor or the course seriously.
- Students may become anxious if they don’t see their grade posted. Some ways to mitigate this is to have regular check-ins with students about their progress and success in the course or self-reflections/reviews where students evaluate their own progress.
- It can be difficult for students to catch up if they start behind. Professors will need to decide whether they allow exceptions for students, or they will need to encourage the student to reach out to their advisor about their options (withdrawing, for example).
- Students with disabilities will need to be considered when using a labor-based grading contract. The professor will need to evaluate different options for labor. When designing your contract, always think: Who is negatively being impacted by my policies?

For your reference, here are some grading contracts you can view:

- Jennifer Byrd has shared a [ENGL 1010 contract](#) and [ENGL 1020 contract](#).
- Kayla Lutes has also shared her [ENGL 1020 contract](#).
- You can also check out the [ENGL 1020 contract](#) created by Katie and other graduate students.
- View Asao Inoue’s [Anti-Racist Labor-Based Grading Contract](#).
- View [an appendix of grading contracts](#) from Danielwicz and Elbow.

Want to read more about how to implement grading contracts? Check out some [resources in this folder](#):

- “A Unilateral Grading Contract” by Jane Danielewicz and Peter Elbow
- “Contract Grading and Peer Review” by Katopodis and Davidson
- “How to Ungrade” by Jesse Stommel
- “Anti Racist Writing Assessment Ecologies” by Asao B. Inoue

The panelists can be reached via email: Jennifer Byrd (jbyrd9@memphis.edu), Kayla Lutes (kmlutes@memphis.edu), and Spencer Horner (shorner1@memphis.edu)

TA Spotlight: Matt Farmer

Fall 2025 marks my sixth semester serving as a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Memphis. This semester, I am co-teaching two Literary Heritage courses with Professor Tammy Jones. While I appreciate the opportunity to teach online courses alongside a more experienced instructor, I miss the in-person interaction and community building that happen in English classrooms. It is our responsibility as English educators to do more than facilitate activities and assignments that inspire improvements in how our students communicate. **We are ambassadors for the humanities**, tasked with using our classrooms to demonstrate that effective writing, close reading, and critical thinking are essential for creating a prosperous and more empathetic society. Through deliberately curated activities, I invite my students to recognize the unique value that humanity attributes to writing and how, in turn, **writing empowers them**.

Our Composition II course's excellent text, *Writing Memphis*, is filled with narratives that offer our students fantastic opportunities to learn about the history of the place they inhabit while building their critical thinking and rhetorical skills. As students prepare to begin writing their Researched Argument assignment, we read "Memphis Burning" by Preston Lauterbach. Lauterbach's article details the events leading up to and following the planned city-mandated destruction of the home of Robert Reed Church, "the South's first black millionaire." The article invites students to consider critical issues such as urban renewal, redlining, and segregation. Working in groups, students create three research questions, sans AI, regarding the topics I have listed and any others they identify in the article. At the conclusion of the activity, each group shares its questions with the rest of the class. The resulting conversations encourage students to consider their own research questions and provide an opportunity for them to begin practicing this form of inquiry.

Students continue to investigate the article, working together to verify its claims. Twenty-first-century students must be able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources and claims, both within and outside the academic realm. This second activity invites each group to investigate two claims from Lauterbach's article, offering them the opportunity to discover information that supports or contradicts the account presented in the article. After completing their research, each group shares its efforts with the rest of the class. Students finish this class period more capable of confidently discerning between reliable and unreliable sources. **More importantly, students feel empowered to question** their instructor's account, which equips them with the skills and confidence to begin inquiring into other narratives.

These activities provide our students with opportunities not only to become better writers and researchers **but also to become better citizens**. Coupling articles like "Memphis Burning," which demonstrate how rhetoric can be used to bring attention to injustice, with inquiry-based learning provides students with the opportunity to **consider their position within society**. As students reflect on how injustice and inequality have impacted and continue to impact Memphis, they become more aware of what local issue they would like to investigate for their Research Argument project.



If you are interested in being the next TA Spotlight, contact ldailey@memphis.edu.

CAP Calendar

All CAP events are held on Tuesdays from 4:15pm–5:15pm. All events can be found in the [Spring 2026 CAP Schedule](#).

December 2nd:

- All CAP, end of semester celebration

