

UofM First-Year Writing Program

# CAPster

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# Happenings & Accomplishments

## Memphis Writing Workshop

A free writing workshop series led by our very own Marcus Wicker, poet and UofM creative writing professor. All adult community members interested in writing poetry or short fiction are invited to participate. This series will be hosted at Beale Street Landing on the Memphis Riverfront from 2pm-3:30pm every Saturday from February 21st-March 28th. Come turn your story into art! [RSVP](#).

## English Honors Colloquium

The English Honors Colloquium is a series that began in 2024 and invites faculty, staff, graduate students, undergraduate majors and minors, and anyone interested in English Studies to gather in fellowship to hear about and discuss the cutting-edge work being done by our faculty.

- On March 23rd, Scott Sundvall will discuss his work, "Post-Truth: Rhetorical Invention in Precarious Times" at 4pm in PT 456.

## Book Launch: Mark Mayer, *About Above Around: 50 Prepositions*

Join us as we welcome Mark Mayer on Monday, March 23rd at 6:00pm at Novel Bookstore to celebrate the release of his new book *About Above Around: 50 Prepositions*. More info and RSVP [here](#).

## Pinch Release Party

Join us at Novel bookstore on March 28th at 6pm as we celebrate the release of [The Pinch Issue 46.1](#)! All are welcome!

We would love to celebrate your accomplishments or spread the word about your events! Please send your upcoming conference presentations, publications, and defenses to Lindsay Helms ([lldailey@memphis.edu](mailto:lldailey@memphis.edu)).

# ReCAP: The Search Committee's Perspective

At All-CAP on Tuesday, February 10th, a panel moderated by Dr. Andy Donnelly discussed job applications, cover letters, focused documents, writing samples, interviews, and campus visits.

## Panel Members:

- Prof. Shelby Crosby, African American Literature, [scrosby1@memphis.edu](mailto:scrosby1@memphis.edu)
- Prof. Darryl Domingo, Literary and Cultural Studies, [dphnrhnd@memphis.edu](mailto:dphnrhnd@memphis.edu)
- Prof. Will Duffy, WRTC, [weduffy@memphis.edu](mailto:weduffy@memphis.edu)
- Prof. Courtney Santo, Creative Writing, [cmsanto@memphis.edu](mailto:cmsanto@memphis.edu)
- Prof. Lyn Wright, Applied Linguistics, [ewfogle@memphis.edu](mailto:ewfogle@memphis.edu)

## Topic 1: Job Applications

- Search committees are usually comprised of representatives of multiple concentrations in order to “signal the diversity of the department” (Domingo). **Pay attention to who is on the committee** as it can tell you how the department sees itself and what they may be looking for in a candidate.
- Keep in mind that you may be **speaking to both experts and non-experts** in your concentration on the committee (Donnelly).
- **Tailor your job materials to the job ad.** If a job posting is very specific, the committee may have someone specific in mind (Wright).

## Topic 2: Cover Letters

- Some committee members don't even look at the cover letters first (ex: Santo). However, one aspect that the committee looks for is **how the candidate is positioning themselves.**
- Don't forget formatting and design. **Consistency, clarity, and accessibility matter.**
- **Have an online presence** that you can link in your cover letter (Duffy).
- Don't be afraid to **name drop** (Domingo). Do your research about the department, and mention specifics (how you want to contribute, who you want to work with, the work you are impressed by, etc.) in your cover letter.
- Mention **courses that you might be teaching** (Donnelly). You can usually find these courses in the catalog.
- Research the **location of the institution** (Crosby) and explain how you can see yourself living there.

## Topic 3: Focused Documents

- First, determine if the institution you are applying for is a teaching school or research (R1 university) (Crosby). **This distinction will inform the trajectory** of your job materials.
- If you are applying for a tenure-track position, showcase your research (what have you published, does your research fill a gap, and will your research be a good fit for the department?) **Frame your research in terms of how it can be applied at the institution** (Wright). Don't forget to include your methods (Duffy).
- Teaching-track positions are great options too. You will want to highlight your teaching experience, and **how you envision yourself and your specific teaching philosophy playing out** at that institution.
- For a tenure-track position in creative writing you should have a book published. **Show how you're moving up** (Santo).
- Ask your mentors for help (Domingo)! It can be invaluable to have another set of eyes on your job materials.
- Length matters. CVs are substantial whereas cover letters are no more than 2 pages.
- Don't worry about what you haven't done. **Own the stage of your career you are currently in**, and search committees can assess you where you are at. Think of your cover letter and CV as aspirational, and propose a trajectory for your career (Domingo).

## Topic 4: Writing Samples

- The writing sample is very important. For example, Dr. Crosby says "if I don't like your writing sample, for whatever reason, I won't vote for you to visit." **Give your writing sample the time it deserves.**
- Creative writing positions heavily rely on writing samples. Clearly show voice, style, and consistency to show **the story of who you are as a writer** (Santo).
- Pay attention to the audience! Send something more generalized to liberal arts colleges (Domingo).
- **Create an online presence** (Duffy). Most committees will Google you. You can link a personal website in your cover letter with more writing samples (teacher effectiveness, reflections on courses you have taught, student writing samples, assessments, etc.)

## Topic 5: Interviews

- Be prepared for your interview by researching the department, the classes you will be teaching, etc. (Wright). **Jot down three things you want to get across** somehow (Donnelly).
- Expect the first interview to be over Zoom or Teams (Donnelly).
- Expect to be asked around 8-15 questions (Santo).
- Be enthusiastic and energetic. Use a “smile voice” (Wright). Think of the interview as a conversation (Crosby) since the committee is thinking about whether or not you are a good fit for the department on a personal level as well.
- Don't rely too heavily on your notes (Domingo). It can be distracting if you aren't making eye contact, and may even come across as unprepared.
- Practice the interview with your mentor, faculty, and/or your cohort. Try to practice on Teams, so that you know what you look like on camera. (Consider recording yourself).
- Don't position yourself as a student, but, rather, a colleague (Wright).

## Topic 6: Campus visit

- Every hour will be planned. You will give a research presentation and a teaching demonstration (Wright).
- Bring protein bars since you may be talking at lunch instead of eating (Crosby).
- Campus visits can be a lot of fun (Domingo)! Even if you don't get the job, you can make valuable connections (Santo).
- Your first job may not be your dream job, but it can make it easier to land a job you like better in the future (Duffy). In academia, you'll probably end up somewhere unexpected (Wright).

# Teaching Hack: Exit Tickets by Lindsay Helms

One tried and true assignment I've used in nearly every classroom I've taught in, is the exit ticket. It seems simple, but this type of formative assessment **improves students' metacognition skills** and retention of concepts covered in class. Best of all, it helps me determine what I need to focus on in subsequent classes and guides my lesson planning. There are many ways to use exit tickets, but one of my favorites is the **3-2-1 exit ticket**.

## Instructions:

At the end of class, set a timer for 3–5 minutes and ask students to respond to a short prompt on a half sheet of paper or notecard. Collect as students leave.

- 3 things you learned today
- 2 questions you still have
- 1 connection (to real life, another class, or prior knowledge)

The key is consistency. When students know this is part of the routine, they take it more seriously, and you get better data. Exit tickets are also super adaptable. For 1020, I have used this prompt:

- One claim I'm exploring
- One type of source that would help
- One keyword I would search

After class, I quickly skim the responses (you don't have to grade them, but I have used these exit tickets to take attendance or as daily participation points). Use the information gathered from the exit tickets in the first few minutes of the next class. You can even read some of them aloud (anonymously of course), and then go over that topic/idea/etc.

Here are some additional resources:

- [more exit ticket ideas](#)
- [using exit tickets in online learning environments](#)
- [sample exit tickets](#)

If you have a teaching hack that you would like to share, please email Lindsay ([lldailey@memphis.edu](mailto:lldailey@memphis.edu))!

# TA Spotlight: Spencer Horner

To be quite honest, I have always had a bit of a rough relationship with ENGL 1020. I usually much prefer teaching either ENGL 1010 or 2201, as guilty as I feel admitting that, since I have always found those much easier to become passionate and excited about while teaching, a kind of kinetic energy that I can harness and enthusiastically pass to my students. In ENGL 1010, I can nudge students toward self-reflection and self-discovery through their own literacy, and in 2201, we revel in the art of literary masters and discover new intricacies within their craft together. But ENGL 1020, for whatever reason, has always felt to me a bit less... lively? Electric? I can't quite put my finger on it, but it lacks the same spark, the same pizzazz, as the gen eds before and after it.

It's easy getting students to remember how much they used to love Percy Jackson and the Scholastic Book Fair, it's easy showing students the awe-inspiring language of Louise Erdrich and Walt Whitman, but reciting the rules of MLA format? Discussing audience? Defining "Kairos"? I can only watch helplessly as my students' eyes glaze over and wander the classroom perimeter. Why does it feel so much easier for me to convince a room full of students that reading Shakespeare is genuinely exciting than it is to convince them that Memphis, Elvis, and Purdue OWL are all important and relevant to their lives?

I sought to answer that question this semester, and all it took was a quick glance at the front page of my 1020 syllabus to point me in the direction of an answer. **"Everyone can become an effective writer, but effective writing requires hard work. Effective writing requires grit and grind."** Similarly to crafting a researched argument for my students, teaching 1020 for me is not easy; it requires a kind of grit and grind as well, one which demands me to draft, rethink, and revise my methods and mindset in the classroom.

Once I finally sat down to practice what I preach this semester, I quickly noticed one huge difference in the way I taught 1020 versus other classes, which was that it was mostly one-sided; I was almost always talking, and my students were almost always silent. It seemed as though I had become too rigid, too anxious and worried that students would not learn everything they should unless I meticulously laid it out for them. Resultingly, I realized my class somewhat resembled the banking model that Paulo Freire warns against in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in that I treated my students like empty receptacles that needed to be filled by my personal knowledge; **it was draining for me, boring for students, and halted any learning on either side.**

Therefore, I have had to face not only my anxieties about covering everything for my students, but also the negativity that spawns from the repeating frustrations of things not quite clicking into place. **Adopting a much more collaborative approach to my classroom** by getting students to speak more than listen has not only helped captivate students, but it has also liberated me from the tiring, repetitive cycles of talking at students rather than with them. Although I still have difficulty making that happen each and every day (e.g., finding the strength to withstand the piercing silence of the Gen-Z stare for any prolonged amount of time), I am so happy to have rekindled my excitement for teaching 1020, as well as **the ultimate reminder that teaching is so much fun!** After all, why should I expect my students to be interested in learning before I feel excited about teaching?

If you are interested in being the next TA Spotlight, contact [lidailey@memphis.edu](mailto:lidailey@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](#).

## March 3rd:

-All CAP in PT 456, "Mind Patterns and the Writing Process"

## March 10th:

-NO CAP, Spring Break

## March 17th:

-First-Year CAP in PT 456

## March 24th:

-First-Year CAP in Cadres  
-Professional CAP in PT 315

## March 31st:

-First-Year CAP in PT 456  
-Teaching CAP in Cadres

