

UofM First-Year Writing Program

CAPster



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Happenings & Accomplishments

Happenings

Reading & Craft Interview – Eric Barnes, Author & CEO of The Daily Memphian

Reading: Tuesday, March 18th at 5:30pm in the UC River Room

Craft Interview: Wednesday, March 19th at 11am in Patterson Hall 456

Conversation: “Celebrating Women’s History Month: A Conversation with Comic Creator Liana Kangas,” moderated by Prof. Tammy Jones.

Tuesday, March 18th at 5:00pm in McWherter Library’s 2nd Floor Commons

Honors Colloquium: Dr. Sage Graham

“Infant Mortality, Health Literacy, and Breastfeeding Among African American Mothers in Memphis” in Patterson Hall 456, March 24th at 4pm

Accomplishments

Matt Farmer will present his work, "Empowering Student Writers: The Role of Generative AI in Marginalized Communities," at the Northeastern Modern Language Association National Convention in Philadelphia on March 6th as a part of a roundtable discussion called "New Directions in AI Criticism."

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 (lidailey@memphis.edu).

Teaching Multilingual Learners in the Classroom

For the All CAP meeting on February 25th, we invited a panel of applied linguists from the UofM (Dr. Emily Thrush, Dr. Lyn Wright, Dr. Rebecca Adams, and Dr. Elliott Casal) to share their expertise on teaching multilingual learners in the FYW program. Here are some of the highlights:

1. **Multilingual learners are not a monolith.** They all come from unique backgrounds and cultures and differ within these backgrounds and cultures as individuals. Avoid putting students in boxes!
2. **All students in our classroom are legitimate students.** Every student that has been admitted to UofM has passed the same requirements. Multilingual students often get recategorized as ESL students entering college, but instructors must avoid using the term “ESL” as this is no longer the case.
3. **Linguistic diversity is an asset.** The United States is a linguistically diverse country. We must shift our perspectives as instructors to view multilingualism as the norm rather than monolingualism. Instructors should try to understand learner perspectives and backgrounds. One way to do this is by asking all students in the classroom what languages they speak and celebrating these experiences and expertise.
4. **Students come from unique educational cultures.** The educational culture includes how students perceive the role of the student and the teacher in the classroom. For example, in some cultures, asking questions during class is considered rude. It is essential that instructors navigate these differences in expectations and assumptions in order to avoid misunderstandings. The first step is to understand the educational cultures of your students. Second, teachers should analyze their own perceptions and expectations and challenge them when necessary.

5. **Academic discourse is not native to anyone.** We all have to learn to write academically. We approach new tasks, like academic writing, by starting with what we know; multilingual students may be starting from a different place because of their lived experiences in different contexts. As teachers, we need to help students articulate how they are making decisions when they go about academic writing and what knowledge/experiences they are drawing from.
6. **Big ideas first, grammar later.** Teaching genre is more important than focusing on surface-level grammatical corrections. However, at times, grammar mistakes can obscure meaning and need to be addressed. Second language speakers of English may need more tools in their linguistic toolbox, like vocabulary or grammar concepts, to accomplish a task.
7. **“Common knowledge” can differ from culture to culture.** Citing information can be a challenge for students from countries that have different frameworks for how to present information that is “not their own.” Instructors should be considerate of these differences and explicit in how they want their students to approach citations, framing quotations, etc.
8. **Some students may have never experienced working with peers in the classroom.** Instructors might need to “sell” collaboration to their students by explaining the reasoning behind the activity and why it is beneficial. Structure will be important in these interactions. Instructors should also look out for a common phenomenon in which native speakers of English dominate the conversation and nonnative speakers are left out. This problem can be mitigated by being intentional in the way that groups are formed and balancing personality types of the students.

For more information, you can contact the presenters via email:

- Dr. Emily Thrush | ethrush@memphis.edu
- Dr. Rebecca Adams | radams4@memphis.edu
- Dr. Lyn Wright | ewfogle@memphis.edu
- Dr. Elliott Casal | jecasal@memphis.edu

Is Industry an Option?

As a grad student, you may have wondered, what other options are there besides academia? Are there jobs in industry that I might qualify for? How do I go about searching for industry positions?

In response to these questions, we invited some guest speakers to Professional CAP for a panel to discuss English grads' potential for employment in industry positions. The presenters all had advanced degrees in English and now work in research, library sciences, and/or government. Here is a summary of what they had to say:

- ▶ There are plenty of jobs available to be explored! Fields such as media, publishing, marketing, advertising, public relations, legal and/or technical writing, and social media management are just some of the popular choices. A good first step is making a [LinkedIn](#) profile where you can research jobs and make connections.
- ▶ You should search for a job that aligns with your skills. You might want to think outside of the box. What kind of skills does a degree in English give you? Think critical thinking, good communication, cultural literacy, etc. [Read](#) more about the desirable skills an English degree affords you.
- ▶ Update your job materials to fit the industry that you are applying for. For example, job experiences and skills should be at the top of your resume and your education (while still mentioned) should not be emphasized as heavily as in an academic CV. The University of Memphis [Career Services](#) offers help with finding jobs, writing resumes, and practicing for interviews.

- Consider working in a government position. There are many positions that involve teaching English around the world. One program to consider is the [English Language Specialist Program](#) which assists U.S. Embassies in delivering and maintaining quality English language programs.
- Speaking a second or even third language is an asset for industry positions. In fact, in some cases, it is a requirement. Use this skill to your advantage and highlight it in your resume!

If you would like to reach out to the presenters, please reach out to Gabrielle Alston (gralston@memphis.edu) for their contact info.



Teaching Resources We are Loving

Who doesn't love free teaching resources? We hope these help!

For free resources, textbooks, and materials, check out these open resource sites:

- ▶▶ [OER Commons](#) – library of free, openly licensed textbooks, materials, etc.
- ▶▶ [Pearson](#) – free textbooks for instructors
- ▶▶ [OpenStax](#) – an open resource site with college textbooks
- ▶▶ [Writing Commons](#) – an open access textbook for college-level writing instruction
- ▶▶ [Project Gutenberg](#) – free public domain literature

For help with lesson planning and honing your teaching strategies, check these out:

- ▶▶ [NCTE \(National Council of Teachers of English\)](#) (some resources are not free!) – teaching strategies and lesson plans
- ▶▶ [ReadWriteThink](#) – free lesson plans and student interactive tools for teaching English
- ▶▶ [Teaching Literature](#) – teaching strategies for literature professors
- ▶▶ [British Council](#) – Teaching English – ESL-focused resources

To help engage your students in the classroom, check out these interactive software options:

- ▶▶ [Kahoot!](#) – Free game-based learning platform for quizzes and interactive lessons
- ▶▶ [Poll Everywhere](#) – live polling tool for class engagement
- ▶▶ [Google Classroom](#) – free learning management system for organizing classes and assignments.

If professional development is something you are interested in, these resources are great for increasing your knowledge about pedagogy and “best teaching practices.”

- ▶▶ [The Chronicle of Higher Education's Teaching Newsletter](#) – articles and insights on higher ed teaching
- ▶▶ [Faculty Focus](#) – articles, podcasts, and strategies for university teaching

Finally, here are some miscellaneous writing and study tools you can offer your students:

- ▶▶ [Mark-Up Hero](#) – screenshot and annotation tool
- ▶▶ [Google Keep](#) – note taking and organizational tool
- ▶▶ [Glasp](#) – web page highlighter
- ▶▶ [Marinara Timer](#) – study session scheduler/timer
- ▶▶ [Study Blue](#) – crowd-sourced study app for Chrome



CAP Calendar

All CAP events are held on Tuesdays from 4:15–5:15. Here is the detailed [Spring 2025 schedule](#).

March 4:

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

March 11:

- NO CAP, SPRING BREAK!

March 18:

- All CAP in PT 456

March 25:

- First Year CAP in PT 456
- Professional CAP in PT 315
- Teaching CAP in Cadres

