UofM First-Year Writing Program

CAPster



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Happenings & Accomplishments

*Keep up to date with the going-ons of the English department by visiting the News and Events page!

Writing Group

Faculty and graduate students are invited to join a pomodoro-based writing group that meets **every Wednesday from 12:30 - 3:00pm in PT 227**. The goal of the group is not to work with faculty but alongside faculty as a means of accountability. Refreshments will be provided in the form of tea and coffee. Bring your own mug! For further information, email Dr. Robertson at: crbrtsn9@memphis.edu.

Honors Colloquium: Dr. Lorinda Cohoon

The final talk in the series takes place on **Monday, November 9th at 4pm** in PT 456. "Merry's Museum, Cousins, L. M. Alcott, and Affiliation and Association in Nineteenth-Century Children's Periodicals" explores the children's magazine Merry's Museum, which was published in the United States from 1841-1872. It focuses on L.M. Alcott's creation of an editorial persona named "Cousin Tribulation" and themes of affiliation and association that emerged with Alcott's editorship of the magazine from 1868-1870. Come out and support our faculty and learn something new along the way!

Creative Writing Harvest Reading & Food Drive

Put this event on your calendars for **Saturday, November 11th**. Time and Location still TBD. More info to come soon.

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).

Survey for Revised Writing Memphis Textbook

The First-Year Writing Program is beginning work on the fourth edition of Writing Memphis, and we want your input. Whether you've taught from the book for years or just a semester, your perspective on what's working, what feels dated, and what's missing will directly shape the next edition. The survey takes approximately 5 minutes, and your responses will be used only for planning the revision.

ReCAP: Pedagogies, Scholarship, and Practice

On Tuesday, September 9th, Professor Rhonda Powers shared with All-CAP about teaching pedagogies and gave examples of them in practice. Below is a recap of the presentation.

We as instructors may mistakenly believe certain myths about learning simply because we have heard them over and over again. It is our job as educators to understand how learning takes place and what we believe is essential in the learning process. Here are some tried-and-true strategies that you can use in the classroom to optimize learning:

- **Concrete Examples** - use specific examples to teach abstract ideas
- **Dual Coding** - combine words and visuals
- **Elaboration** - explain and describe ideas with details
- **Interleaving** - switch between ideas when studying
- **Retrieval Practice** - practice bringing information to mind
- **Spaced Practice** - space out study over time.

When thinking about the learning process and the pedagogies that guide our practice, it is important to keep in mind that most educators ascribe to multiple pedagogies and hold overlapping beliefs about how learning takes place. The most foundational educational theories are:

- **Behaviorism** - learning occurs through conditioning, repetition, and reinforcement of behaviors
- **Humanism** - learning focuses on the whole person, including individual needs and emotions

ReCAP: Reading Strategies for the Writing Classroom

- **Critical Pedagogy** - learning encourages students to question power structures, challenge inequality, and critically examine society.
- **Progressivism** - learning is student-centered and emphasizes hands-on experiences and real-world application
- **Connectivism and Digital Learning** - learning occurs through connections among people and digital information
- **Social Reconstructionism** - learning helps students address social problems
- **Cognitivism and Constructivism** - learning focuses on mental processes and prior understanding
- **Perennialism** - learning emphasizes classical works and ideas that are valuable across generations
- **Essentialism** - learning focuses on teaching essential knowledge and skills through a structured curriculum and teacher-directed instruction (Open Oregon Educational Resources)

If these terms seem daunting, take heart; you don't need to draw a hard and fast line. "Teaching, like writing, is a recursive practice. Reflection and revision are necessary across a career as technologies, standards, and students are constantly changing. However, we do not need to reinvent the wheel. Effective practices often stay stable...terminologies may change, but reading, writing, and communication practices are adaptive. Happy Teaching!" (Rhonda Powers)

Teaching Philosophies

To continue the discussion on pedagogies and practice, we thought it would be a good idea to address the teaching philosophy.

A “teaching philosophy is a written description of your values, goals, and beliefs regarding both teaching and learning.” The term is used almost interchangeably with “teaching statement” which “develops from your teaching philosophy and uses evidence from your teaching to make the case that you have excelled as a teacher.” (IUI Center for Teaching and Learning)

An academic job posting will require applicants to write either a teaching philosophy and/or teaching statement. It doesn’t hurt to get a headstart, especially as you are already thinking about how you want to position yourself as an educator.

To help, check out these sample teaching philosophies from our very own faculty members.

For more help on writing teaching philosophies see below:

- “Writing a Teaching Philosophy Statement” Concordia University Center for Teaching and Learning
- “Teaching Philosophy Statement” Cornell University

Conference Masterlist

Attending conferences is a great way to meet other researchers, writers, educators, and scholars in your field as well as learn about cutting-edge work. Many conferences offer professional development opportunities and early access to resources.

Furthermore, presenting at a conference is a fantastic experience if you are pursuing a career in academia or research. Conference presentations are also a huge asset on your CV.

Please note that membership to the host organization and conference registration are often required to attend and/or present; however, there is often a discounted rate for graduate students, and you can apply for funds from the department or the Travel Enrichment Fund from the College of Arts and Sciences. Most funds are reserved for presenters of conferences rather than those just attending, though there are exceptions.

We have categorized the following conferences by concentration. This is not an exhaustive list, but the list includes the most well-known conferences that accept graduate student proposals. Be sure to do your research on other conferences that most closely align with your specific research interests!

Applied Linguistics & TESOL

The American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) hosts an in-person and virtual conference every Spring. Typically, the call for proposals opens in June and closes in July. A wide variety of topics in linguistics are accepted. Presentation formats are individual paper, roundtable discussion, poster, colloquia, and group presentation.

The TESOL International Convention and Expo takes place every Spring. The convention offers a wide range of engaging professional development opportunities to English language teaching (ELT) professionals. During the expo, you can connect with English language teaching companies and organizations to learn about the latest products, publications, services, and resources in the field. There is a virtual option for the conference as well. The 2028 conference and expo will be in Charlotte, NC in April.

The ACTFL Annual Convention and World Languages Expo is a professional development event for language educators in the U.S. Proposals for practice-oriented & research-oriented papers, roundtable discussions, and electronic posters are accepted. The convention and expo typically takes place in November and the call for proposals closes in January. Registration includes access to more than 600 educational sessions, entry to an interactive exhibit hall featuring more than 200 companies, and featured learning experiences.

The annual conference of the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium (CALICO) occurs anywhere from March to July and lasts around five days. It consists of hands-on workshops, plenary speakers, regular paper sessions, poster sessions and tech demonstrations, and special interest group meetings. There are options for online participation as well. Note that this conference is dedicated to research on the intersection between language teaching and technology. There is a special interest group just for graduate students that would be worth joining if you are planning on presenting at or attending the conference.

The International Symposium for Languages for Specific Purposes (ISLSP) and Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) conference takes place every other Spring. Proposals of both theory and practice in LSP are encouraged from both educators and scholars in the field. A list of past conferences and announcements about upcoming conferences can be found on the ISLSP/CIBER blog.

Creative Writing

The Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) hosts an annual conference and book fair. Typically, the call for proposals opens in the Spring and closes the following summer. Notifications of acceptance go out in the Fall for the conference that Spring. The proposal process is highly competitive. Some events of the conference will be made virtual.

The Community of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP) is a fantastic resource for creative writers with information about awards, jobs, publication opportunities, and book fairs. They also offer several events for creative writers such as the Indie Lit Fair.

Writing, Rhetoric & Technical Communication

Rhetoric Society of America (RSA) alternates its major national events to offer different ways to engage with the field. In even-numbered years, RSA hosts its flagship Biennial Conference, providing an opportunity to present your original research, receive feedback, and learn from top scholars worldwide. In odd-numbered years, they shift to the Summer Institute, which trades traditional panel presentations for week-long intensive seminars and collaborative workshops designed for deep networking and professional development. Whether you want to share a paper or dive into a focused seminar, keeping this rotation in mind can help you plan your academic submissions and funding requests ahead of time. Check out the RSA Events Calendar to see what's on the horizon! For the upcoming 2027 RSA Summer Institute in Louisville, Kentucky, no pre-application is required, and registration is strictly first-come, first-served.

If you are interested in the administrative side of academia—such as running a first-year writing program, directing a writing center, or developing curriculum—the CWPA Annual Conference is an invaluable resource. Typically held in July, it is specifically designed to help new and future WPAs navigate the material conditions, ethical considerations, and institutional politics of writing program leadership.

Hosted by the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition (CFSHRC), Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference ("Fem Rhet") biennial conference is a vital space for anyone working at the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, and rhetorical theory. "Fem Rhet" is widely celebrated for its uniquely supportive, collaborative, and inclusive atmosphere, making it an ideal venue for graduate students to pitch emerging ideas and build lifelong professional coalitions. The 15th Biennial Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference will take place August 5–7, 2027, at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, centering on the powerful theme "Feminist Rhetorics of Resistance." (Take note if you plan to submit: the proposal deadline is November 1, 2026).

The Computers and Writing Conference is the annual gathering for researchers, educators, and practitioners exploring the intersection of digital technologies, networks, and writing instruction. For over 40 years, this welcoming community has convened scholars from around the globe to share innovative pedagogies, tackle technical and ethical challenges, and examine how digital tools shape rhetoric, literacy, and society. Whether you are a seasoned administrator, a writing center director, or an emerging graduate student, C&W offers a collaborative space to rethink the future of text, technology, and teaching. The upcoming conference—themed "Resilience – Adaptive Persistence in Computers and Writing"—will be hosted by the University of Arizona in Tucson from June 3–5, 2027. You can track any scheduling updates or access the portal directly through the official Computers & Writing Conference Website.

Literary and Cultural Studies

The Modern Language Association (MLA) Convention takes place annually, typically in January, and sessions are both in-person and online. The convention brings together scholars presenting research in literature, linguistics, language learning, writing, cultural studies, digital humanities, and pedagogy. Professional development workshops, networking opportunities, and publisher exhibitions are also available for attendees. Deadlines for proposals vary by session and calls are posted throughout the year. For some convention years “just-in-time sessions” are offered for topics after the regular session deadline.

The South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference is a regional MLA conference that usually takes place in November. General call for abstracts opens in July. Graduate students can submit an abstract to an existing panel that fits their topic or submit to the general call, where organizers place accepted papers into suitable panels.

The College Language Association (CLA) Convention is a local conference that invites papers, panels, roundtables, posters, society meetings, and workshops that focus on African American, African diaspora, and Caribbean studies, language, literature, and pedagogy. Typically, the call for proposals closes in October and the event takes place in April.

TA Spotlight: Shahadur Rahman

Shahadur is a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics and a part of the CAP program since August 2025. We asked Shahadur what he has learned about teaching in his time here:

“Students will tell you more than you think, just usually not when you throw a question out to the whole class. I’ve learned that students are more willing to share their thoughts when they find something meaningful in what they’re learning, and it took me a while to figure that out.

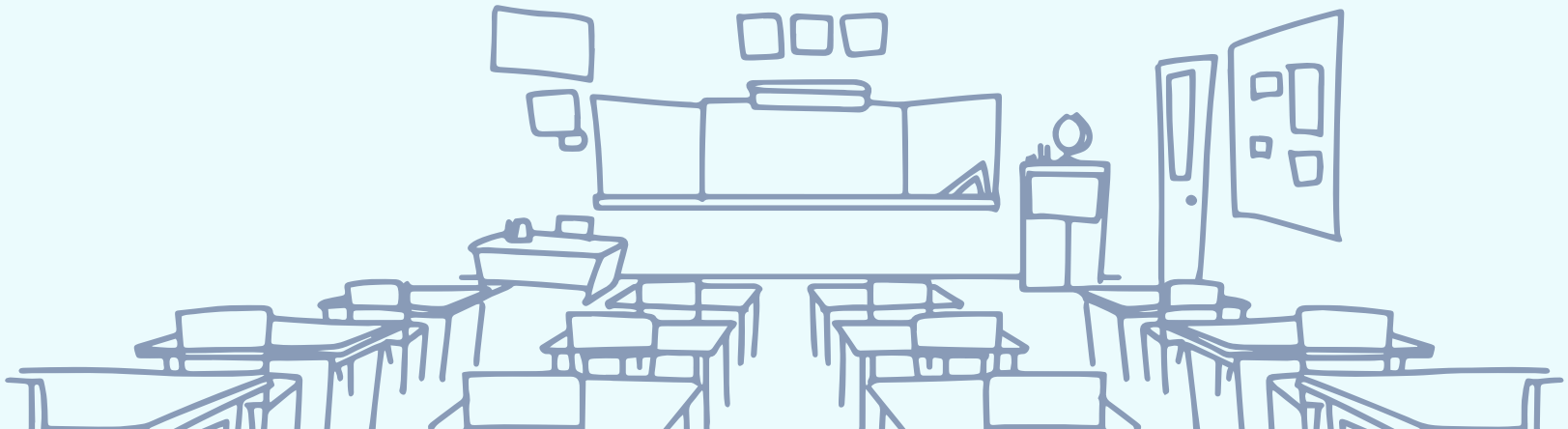
When I first started teaching composition in the FYW program at the University of Memphis, I thought it would be wise to cover the same material in both sections I taught, whether ENGL 1010 or ENGL 1020. I had gone through mandatory TA training and had some hands-on preparation, but being responsible for my own classroom was different. In my first semester, I often stuck to my lesson plan even when I could feel the room wasn’t with me. Deviating from the plan felt like admitting I didn’t know what I was doing. Gradually, though, I realized that getting through everything I’d planned didn’t necessarily mean students were getting much out of the lesson.

I began paying closer attention to how students responded to different activities. Some students who rarely spoke during whole-class discussions became much more talkative in pairs or small groups. They would work through a passage together, disagree about what it meant, or connect an idea from the reading to their own experiences. I started to see that students sometimes needed time to develop their thoughts before they were ready to share them with everyone. These conversations also made me think about how to get students to engage with the readings in the first place.

Getting students to do the readings has been a challenge for me. Questions and small graded checks didn't always encourage the kind of engagement I wanted to see. After our first CAP meeting this semester, I started setting aside five to seven minutes at the beginning of class for annotation, either directly on the text or in a notebook or laptop. Some weeks, I also ask small groups to come to the front of the class and talk through a section of the reading, explaining what they noticed, what they think the section is doing, and what questions they have. I want students to have something to say about the text before we discuss it together, and to see how the readings connect to the work we're doing in class and the assignments they complete.

The annotation activity is one example of how conversations in CAP have influenced my teaching. In our meetings, we can talk about what's happening in our classrooms, hear how other TAs approach similar situations, and share ideas we might want to try. I appreciate being able to bring those questions to colleagues who are figuring things out themselves. Their experiences have encouraged me to try new approaches and to be less afraid of changing something when it isn't working.

I still make lesson plans, of course, but I no longer see following them exactly as the goal. I'd rather leave room for students to work through an idea, ask questions, or make a connection I hadn't anticipated. That's something I've learned from teaching, from my students, and from the conversations I've had through CAP. Wherever I teach next, I hope to keep that openness and eventually offer the same kind of support to newer instructors."



1010 Resources: Revision Assignment

Are you teaching 1010 this semester? Check out some of our favorite resources for the Revision Assignment.

- Real-World Revision Example
- Revision Highlighting Activity
- Revision Pros and Cons Sheet
- Reverse Outline How-To
- Revision Powerpoints

Be sure to also revisit the Teaching Resources in the Canvas Shell for more resources.



CAP Calendar

All CAP events are held on Tuesdays from 4:15-5:15. All events can be found in the Fall 2026 CAP Schedule.

November 3rd:

-NO CAP - Election Day

November 10th:

-First-Year CAP in Cadres

-Teaching CAP in Cadres

November 17th:

-First-Year CAP in PT 456

-Professional CAP in PT 215

November 24th:

-NO CAP - Thanksgiving break

December 1st:

-All CAP in PT 456

