

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH NEWSLETTER

Fall 2026



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH • FALL 2026 • VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 1



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS

Department of English



MEMPHIS

WELCOME BACK!

Welcome back to all of our faculty and staff! There are a lot of exciting events happening this spring, so first and foremost make sure you're following us on Facebook and Instagram ([@uofmenglish](#)) to stay up to date.

This semester, we'll welcome speakers and authors to our campus - just to name a few, *[The Pinch Presents](#)* will host Ryan Teitman for a poetry reading on October 20th, the **Naseeb Shaheen Memorial Lecture Series** will welcome Dr. Zahid R. Chaudhary on October 28th, and the **English Honors Colloquium Series** returns on September 14th, this semester featuring Darryl Domingo, Shiva Mainaly, Lindsay Helms, and Lorinda Cohoon.

We also had a few exciting projects in Patterson Hall over the summer. On the second floor, you'll find our brand new **student lounge in Patterson Hall 225** (connected to the CASA satellite location), and on the second, third, and fourth floors you'll find **newly-installed water bottle filling stations** next to our water fountains. A huge thank you to Drs. Sage Graham and Emily Gillo for their Green Fee Proposal, which led to the English Department being awarded \$13,500 for this amazing upgrade.

In this issue, you'll find additional details about these upcoming events, photos from a few of our **Summer and Spring 2026 events**, shout-outs to our award-winning faculty, and a publication spotlight on **Dr. Verner Mitchell's new book!** We are also excited to welcome three Visiting Assistant Professors to the department this fall: **Dr. Basak Cermikli Ayvaz** for Applied Linguistics, **Jared Lemus** for Creative Writing, and **Dr. Aerial Ellis** for Writing, Rhetoric, & Technical Communication.

This year we're hoping for even more involvement with the marketing and promotion of all of our amazing programs, courses, and events here in the English department. As always, if you have project suggestions or inquiries, don't hesitate to get in touch with **Dr. Tucker** or **Dr. Gillo**.

MEMPHIS

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



When *Forbes* magazine listed English as the “most versatile college major” in its June 2026 publication, many people may have been surprised that more celebrated majors in business or STEM fields did not appear. English Departments across the country, however, celebrated the news on their social media feeds because it confirmed what many of them already knew. **English degrees prepare students for an unlimited number of opportunities after college** and in the long term, English graduates are malleable enough to fit into or forge any number of careers. In the past, this has been considered a hindrance because there was rarely a specific career to which one could point as a landing spot for an English major. Engineering majors become engineers, accounting majors become accountants, and nursing majors become nurses. What becomes of the English major? The answer, that the possibilities are endless, wrongly gets dismissed, but now might be the moment to point out that **its limitlessness makes the major so valuable in this moment**. As current and future generations change jobs and careers multiple times throughout their lives, the versatility and portability of an English degree will help graduates navigate a volatile job market and society.

The English major remains a bulwark against fears about an uncertain future. Its immunity to job loss caused by increasing automation lies in the notion that its mission is not employment, but knowledge. **Knowledge is durable. Knowledge is portable. Knowledge is indispensable.** The major not dependent on a specific job or career becomes useful in any job or career. Even as the dissemination of knowledge goes underappreciated as reading scores nationwide decline, the very skills that employers value - **critical and imaginative thinking and effective communication are embedded in the English major**. They enhance knowledge and encourage discovery in a moment when the common rhetoric necessary for civil discourse has been replaced with hyperbolic, insular, polarizing language. As a result, English majors can apply their knowledge and skills to almost any job and transform their interests into almost any career.

Our students, of course, do consistently land specific jobs, particularly as editors, journalists, teachers, technical writers, and marketing managers. Increasingly, they gain vital experience through our internship program. Our **BA/JD 3+3 program** highlights the fact that English remains a top 5 major for law school students. Yet the major often leads students into careers in the unlikeliest of places. Two years ago, for instance, humanities majors had a 52% acceptance rate into medical schools, higher than any of the science or health studies majors.



MEMPHIS

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

English majors develop into entrepreneurs in a world where communication, innovation, and inclusion across digital and print spaces turns out to be just as important as brick-and-mortar buildings. They shift into content creation and editing in a world where young people increasingly receive their information from podcasts instead of newspapers. The road for the English major diverges, intersects, and **evolves into an exciting, dynamic journey** that the knowledge and skills they receive prepare them to embrace.

We are extremely excited to welcome our new faculty and staff whom you will be meeting in these pages. Some of them are returning to Memphis after having been away while others will get to experience the city for the first time. Yet they all share a passion, commitment, and talent that will continue to move us forward towards an inclusive, public-facing department invested in **quality student mentorship, topnotch research, and student-centered, community-based service.**

We are also excited about the promotion of a member of our teaching faculty, **Dr. Christopher Black**, to Associate Professor of Teaching. Like the other members of our teaching faculty, Dr. Black exemplifies this department's commitment to teaching excellence and steadfast department service. Along with our newly tenured and promoted associate professors **Drs. J. Elliott Casal and Emily Skaja**, our faculty encourage students' creativity, innovation, and community that will lead to fulfilling careers and lives. Our recently promoted full professors, **Dr. Katie Fredlund, Dr. Leah Windsor, and Professor Marcus Wicker** embody the combination of imaginative research, impassioned teaching, and energizing public-facing service that propels our department's evolution and our embrace of innovative approaches to critical inquiry and fact-based interpretation.

In Christopher Nolan's film adaptation of Homer's *The Odyssey* this summer, Odysseus tells Penelope "We lived in a world of palaces and trade and language...blind to its beauty until we broke it." The English major offers us the nuance, critical analysis, and **empathy needed to bridge the divides that confront us**, even when it looks back towards the Bronze Age or early America. Literature and language remain the way forward as we search for a common rhetoric to articulate the meanings and structures of the cultures and societies we want to build and sustain. ”

*-Dr. Terrence Tucker
Chair, Department of English*

MEMPHIS

SPRING & SUMMER 2026 RECAP



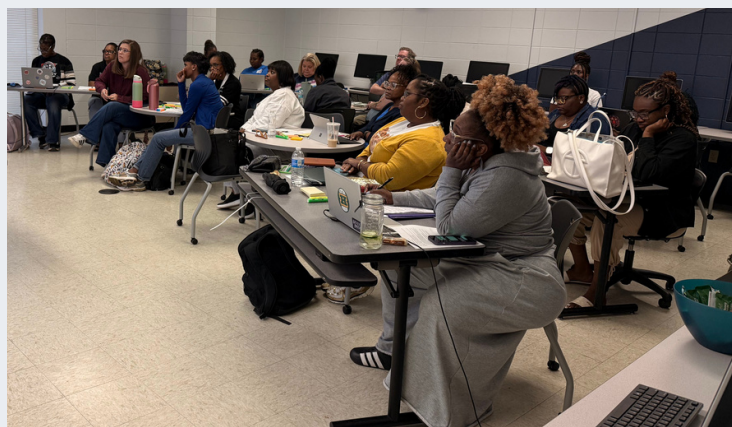
Memphis Writing Workshop

In the spring semester, Prof. Marcus Wicker held a free fiction and poetry writing workshop at Beale Street Landing.



English Awards Ceremony

In April, we held our annual awards ceremony to celebrate all of our amazing undergraduate and graduate students.

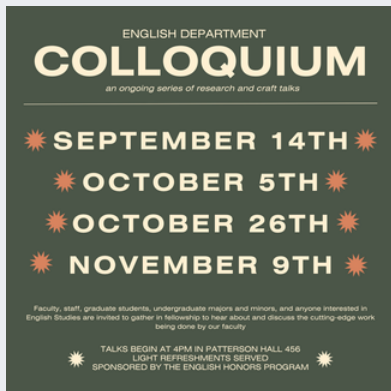


Talbot Summer Institute

In July, we welcomed Memphis-Shelby County Schools teachers for a two-day workshop on multiliteracies and multmodality.

MEMPHIS

FALL 2026 EVENTS



English Honors Colloquium Series

Darryl Domingo, Shiva Mainaly, Lindsay Helms, and
Lorinda Cohoon

4:00pm | Patterson Hall 456



The Pinch Presents Ryan Teitman

Poetry Reading

October 20th

Time & location TBD



Naseeb Shaheen Memorial Lecture Series

Dr. Zahid R. Chaudhary

October 29th-30th

Time & Location TBD

MEMPHIS

FACULTY RECOGNITION

Dr. Rebecca Adams

Distinguished Research in the Humanities, UofM Alumni Association Award

Prof. Courtney Santo

CAS Distinguished Achievement in Creative Arts Award

Dr. Emily Skaja

CAS Early Career Research Award

Drs. Elliott Casal and Lyn Wright

Co-Principal Investigators

Online English for STEM Professionals. (2026-2027). FHI 360 - Online Professional English Network. **\$70,551.**

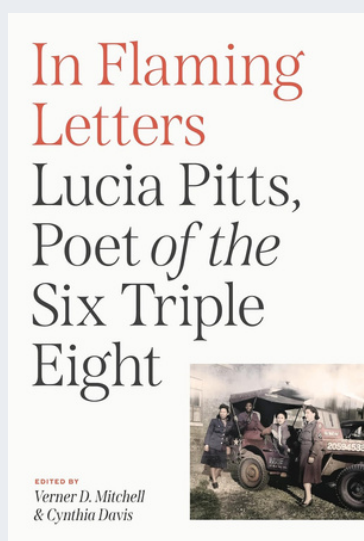
Drs. Sage Graham and Emily Gillo

Read, Write, and Hydrate: Water Bottle Refilling Stations for Patterson Hall. (2026). UofM Green Fee. **\$13,500.**

FACULTY PUBLICATION SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Verner Mitchell

In Flaming Letters: Lucia Pitts, Poet of the Six Triple Eight



Lucia M. Pitts (1904–1973) was an African American writer and Army veteran whose story has never been told. Her poetry, including love lyrics of striking sensuality and honesty, was admired by Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Dorothy West. Her work first appeared during the Harlem Renaissance, influenced by Harriet Monroe’s Poetry magazine and blues singers Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. A native of Chicago’s Bronzeville, Pitts challenged discrimination and segregation throughout her remarkable life, both as a member of President Franklin Roosevelt’s “Black Cabinet” and as the first African American woman employed at the War Department. Then, in 1943, Pitts joined the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the Army’s only all-Black, all-female battalion, which later received the Congressional Gold Medal. Pitts’s own account of her service with the Six Triple Eight, however, has remained unpublished until now. This volume brings together a biography of Pitts, her complete military memoir, and one hundred of her finest poems.

“A signal, pioneering contribution to ongoing efforts to broaden the Black literary canon. Davis and Mitchell’s narrative is well-written and rigorously researched, and opens the door to Pitts’ remarkable life and work.” - Laura Elizabeth Vrana, University of South Alabama

[Read more and order here](#)



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS

Department of English

Teachers, Creators, Innovators



If you are interested in becoming a donor, please contact us at tttucker@memphis.edu

The University of Memphis is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action University. It is committed to the education of a non-racially identifiable student body.



@UOFMENGLISH



MEMPHIS.EDU/ENGLISH