

UofM First-Year Writing Program

CAPster



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Happenings & Accomplishments

Mark your calendars for these and other events happening this month!

- **November 8th at 6:30pm:** The Pinch Issue Release Party @ Playhouse on the Square
- **November 8th at 1pm:** Bibliophile's Show & Tell, Patterson Hall 221
- **November 18th at 4pm:** English Department Colloquium in Patterson Hall 456
 - Katie Fredlund, "Daring Girls: From the Archives to Historical Fiction"
- **November 5, 12, & 19 @ 6pm:** Compose Yourself 2.0: AI Literacy @ Benjamin Hooks Public Library, [register here](#)

We want to celebrate you! Please send your upcoming conference presentations, publications, and defenses to Lindsay Helms (lldailey@memphis.edu).

Student Accomplishments

Obri Richardson will be presenting an original paper titled, “Birthed in Magic and Formed in the Garden: The Birthing and Forming of Me,” at the Ida B. Wells Conference on Friday, November 1, 2024.

Over the weekend, thirteen of the MFA students on Pinch staff traveled to Nashville to attend the Southern Festival of Books hosted by Humanities Tennessee at Bicentennial Mall/the Tennessee State Library.

Attendees: Aether Henry, Bethany Datuin, Gloria Mwaniga, Josh Carlucci, Sabrina Spence, Emily Binkley, Jacob Williams, Victoria Deckard, Lily Kate Anthony, Caleb McKee, Martins Deep, Obby Iloakasia

Panel Hosts:

Aether Henry and **Bethany Datuin** - Wilmoth Foreman and Alana White (Historical CNF)

Gloria Mwaniga - Doan Nguyen and Gennifer Choldenko (Publicists) (Children's Lit)

Josh Carlucci and **Sabrina Spence** - Gaylord Brewer and Ben Groner III (Poetry and CNF)

Emily Binkley - Desiree Evans and Saraciea Fennell (co-authors of a Black Horror Anthology)

Jacob Williams - Johnny Compton and Emma C. Wells (Genre Lit - Horror)

Victoria Deckard - Randy O'Brien and Karen Spears Zacharias (Literary Fiction)

Lessons Learned Post Graduation

Hannah Pitner, hpitner@cbu.edu

I graduated with a PhD in Applied Linguistics in May 2023, after defending my dissertation in February. During the fall before I graduated, I decided to focus on my dissertation research and teaching, rather than pursuing an extensive job search. I realized I couldn't manage everything simultaneously and knew I wouldn't be able to relocate immediately anyways. My goal was to secure a local job in the short term and conduct a broader job search later.

During the fall and spring semesters of my final year in the PhD program, I worked as a GA teaching composition and a linguistics course at the University of Memphis (UofM). I also adjunct-taught three additional courses—composition and Spanish—at Christian Brothers University (CBU). My experience there was invaluable. Although adjunct positions don't often lead to full-time roles, there seemed to be potential, so I expressed my interest to both the department lead and the chair. They were enthusiastic and encouraged me to apply for two available positions: one in English and one in Spanish. Beyond this, I did a very minimal job search and had two interviews for a postdoctoral position in the education department at UM that didn't work out.

Small teaching institutions often follow a later hiring timeline compared to larger research universities. I applied for the CBU positions in January, completed my interviews over the summer, and was hired as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish and English in July. During a meeting with the dean, I was informed that they planned to transition the position to a tenure-track role by the next academic year. I began the job in August, but in late September, the university declared financial exigency, which has unfortunately become more common in recent years due to the changing educational landscape. Significant faculty cuts were announced, and I began a small job search, unsure whether I would be affected.

Interestingly, **applying for jobs while already employed was a much easier and more positive experience than when I was ABD.** I had a much clearer sense of my professional identity and what I wanted. I only applied to six jobs and received one campus visit—much higher success than when I applied as ABD.

Another advantage of being in a faculty position during the job search was the **support from my colleagues.** At 30, I was by far the youngest faculty member, and given the unique situation with the cuts, we were all fairly open about seeking other opportunities. One colleague with more experience offered to review my job materials, and another recommended the book **The Professor Is In** by Karen Kelsky, which I now consider a must-read. In the end, my position was not cut, and I was unexpectedly promoted to Program Director—a surprising opportunity so early in my career, but one for which I am deeply grateful.

Initially, I didn't give much thought to the type of university I wanted to work at, but **now I know that a teaching-focused institution is where I thrive.** While I teach four courses per semester, there is little pressure beyond that. I have had ample time and flexibility to pursue research and get involved in university activities. A further benefit of being at a small university is the ease of building connections. I quickly developed strong relationships with faculty and administrators across departments. We have a very active faculty assembly, and **I've felt that I have a voice in the university as a whole.**

Although I'm still very early in my career, here are some key lessons I've learned that will continue to guide me:

- 1. Stop what you're doing and buy The Professor Is In by Karen Kelsky!** This book is incredibly helpful in navigating the academic job market, and I really wish I would have known about it sooner.

Although I'm still very early in my career, here are some key lessons I've learned that will continue to guide me:

2. You can't prioritize everything. You'll need to choose what matters most—whether it's location, position, or university—and work down from there. For me, I prioritized location first, then the type of university, and finally the position/pay. I figured in the future I would maybe prioritize position, but after this experience I know that, for me, I will prioritize location again. I'm willing to be patient and work a position that isn't exactly what I want while getting connected in a city and jumping on job options as they come up. This isn't the most orthodox approach, but I think it's a good reminder that you can make this process work for you.

3. Pay attention to the type of university you're applying to—whether it's a teaching or research institution. The application process and how you present yourself will vary greatly depending on this. Talking to someone who works or is affiliated with a university before you apply could be very helpful in understanding the culture. For example, no one in my interview process at CBU was very impressed by my research, however they were very interested in hearing how it forged community connections and informed my teaching.

4. Don't be afraid to take a “for the time being” job. Use it as an opportunity to build connections, learn from colleagues, explore your preferences, strengthen your CV, and work on research. The key is to have a plan for what you want to gain from the job, rather than just going with the flow. I also want to emphasize how invaluable your faculty colleagues can be. The dynamic is entirely different from the professor/grad student relationship. You're surrounded by professionals with diverse experiences, and there's so much you can learn from them. In my experience, they are more than willing to help. Many of my colleagues have had various careers both inside and outside academia across the country. This has been one of the most unexpectedly positive aspects of my faculty role.

Resource Spotlight:

Mental Health Resources

The holidays approaching and the stress of finals can take a toll on our students' mental health as well as our own. There are several [resources](#) offered by the UofM that might be beneficial to share with your students or consider for yourself.

► For Students

- An easily accessible on-campus resource is the [University Counseling Center](#). For non-emergency situations, you can set up an appointment over the phone (901.678.2068) or visit in person (Wilder 214).
- For emergency situations, during the business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:00am-4:30pm), you can call the Counseling Center (901.678.2068) or enter the [virtual waiting room](#). If your emergency occurs after hours, you should contact the [Tiger Care Line](#) (901.678.3068, extension 2) to speak to a crisis counselor. Another Crisis Line is the [Alliance Healthcare Services](#) line (901.577.9400).
- Students can also take advantage of the [Relaxation Zone](#) in Brister 302 and UC 227. The Relaxation Zone offers a space to decompress and relax with massage chairs, sand trays, coloring stations, Buddha boards, and much more. You can walk-in or make an appointment either by phone (901.678.2068) or email (relaxationzone@memphis.edu).
- The Counseling Center also offers [resources specifically for graduate students](#) such as webinars about mental health, self-care tips, and information on how to cope with burnout and imposter syndrome.

► For Faculty & Staff

- For faculty, the UofM offers a [Health and Well-Being Committee's Well-Being Quick Reference Guide](#) for info on how to support their students' mental health.

► For Students, Faculty, & Staff

- Free, online, mental health resources are available such as [Safe Space](#), the [Live Wellness Youtube Channel](#), the [How-To-Deal Podcast](#), and even more resources [here](#).

Resource Spotlight:

Students Going on the Academic Job Market

Dr. Joseph Jones and Dr. Donal Harris shared in All CAP on October 22nd about the realities of the academic job market today and the types of positions available: post docs, adjunct, visiting professor, non-tenure teaching professor (under different names depending on the university), and tenure-track positions.

You can search open positions on the [MLA Job List](#) site. For linguistics positions, you can subscribe to [Linguist List](#) for a daily or weekly email with current openings in linguistics and related fields. [HigherEdJobs](#) is another site to browse available positions. While you should begin your job searches on the MLA Job List and HigherEdJobs, in WRTC you can also check out the [RhetComp Job Wiki](#) (this updates when candidates are contacted for more materials or interviews, so beware), and if you are doing a location-specific search, you can check out the [RhetMap](#). For more information on the job market for Creative Writing academic positions, you can contact Courtney Miller-Santo, cmsanto@memphis.edu.

Some additional resources for students going on the job market:

- Inside Higher Ed which includes articles on [Career Advice](#).
- Tara Fickle's [You On the Market](#): a site that is a really specific, step-by-step overview of the various stages of academic job seeking.
- [The Professor Is In](#): A comprehensive guide to many aspects of grad life and job seeking.

For information on the realities of the academic job market as well as experiences and testimonials of recent graduates, Dr. Harris and Dr. Jones mentioned [Andrew Goldsmith's blog](#). You can also read about the experiences of recent graduates from the UofM on the job market in [back issues](#) of the CAPster.

You can reach out to the presenters via email: Dr. Harris at dfhrris1@memphis.edu and Dr. Jones at jgjones@memphis.edu.

Internship Opportunities for Graduate Students

If you are considering a position outside of academia, there is the possibility for internships.

The [internship program](#) in the English Department provides exciting, practical opportunities for graduate students to translate their English skills into professional experience—AKA, jobs! Internships can provide invaluable career exploration and personal writing growth, mentoring, and networking opportunities.

The English Department has partnered with many excellent local (and national) organizations to provide a wide range of internship positions for our students, with places such as the National Civil Rights Museum, St. Jude, Literacy Mid-South, the Memphis Flyer, the City of Memphis government, and many more. Some of these community partners have created intern positions specifically for our UofM English students, and most are PAID! We currently have at least sixteen featured internships available to students in areas such as technical writing, editing, marketing and media relations, curriculum development and education, research collections, tutoring, and non-profit work, to fit the needs and interests of our diverse English student population.

All up-to-date internship information can be found on our [website](#). Please reach out to the Internships Coordinator, Rachel Kaplowitz Cantrell, for assistance at any time (rachel.kaplowitz.cantrell@memphis.edu).

The English internship program is committed to supporting our students beyond the classroom to achieve academic, personal, and professional development and success – AKA, we're here for you!



CAP Calendar

November 5:

NO CAP - Election Day

November 12:

All CAP meets in PT 456

November 19

First Year CAP meets in PT 456

Teaching CAP meets in Cadres

Professional CAP meets in PT 315

November 26

NO CAP - Thanksgiving Break

