

Research Focus Areas

The English Department's strategically important research focus areas run parallel to our M.F.A. and Ph.D. concentrations, and strongly support our university-wide service and undergraduate teaching missions. These areas are listed in alphabetical order.

*Applied Linguistics, with an emphasis on English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The teaching of English as a Second Language is a growth area, especially in the K-12 setting. A large U.S. government grant supports the concentration's goal of preparing teachers to work with Tennessee's fast-growing population of non-native speakers in the Memphis city and county schools. Our programs in China, Mexico and the Czech Republic as well as the university's Intensive English Institute, are supported by our research and in their turn support it.

Bernstein, Cynthia; Full Professor and Coordinator (linguistic theory; Southern dialects)
Dalle, Teresa; Associate Professor (ESL methodology; ESL in the schools)
Hall, Charles; Associate Professor (applied linguistics; legal English)
Song, Grace; Assistant Professor and Director of IEI (applied linguistics; ESL methodology)
Thrush, Emily; Associate Professor (ESL methodology; international contexts)

*Composition Studies, with an emphasis on rhetorical theory. Recognizing that writing skills are foundational to success in almost every career and academic discipline, our faculty focuses on research that will enhance our freshman composition program and the specific writing skills needed in a variety of professions. We also emphasize the development of writing skills in K-12 students through the Memphis Urban Writing Institute's research with and training of public school teachers.

Battle, Mary; Associate Professor (use of statistics in composition research)
Kim, Loel; Assistant Professor (technological applications in composition)
MacNealy, Mary Sue; Full Professor (composition studies; Memphis Urban Writing Institute; grant for National Writing Project site)
McAdon, Brad; Assistant Professor (classical rhetoric)
Popham, Susan; Assistant Professor (modern composition theories)

*Creative Writing, with an emphasis on contemporary American poetry and prose as living arts. Our journal *River City* publishes national writers and provides training in editing for our students. Our River City Writers series brings nationally-known writers to campus.

Bensko, John; Associate Professor (poetry)
Holladay, Cary; Assistant Professor (fiction; director of River City Writers series)
Iversen, Kristen; Assistant Professor (literary non-fiction)
Leader, Mary; Assistant Professor (poetry; editor of *River City*)
Osing, Gordon; Full Professor (poetry; founder of River City Writers series)
Russell, Thomas; Full Professor and Coordinator (fiction)

*Professional Writing, with an emphasis on healthcare writing. This research emphasis responds to the needs of the medical community in Memphis, and includes outreach to St. Jude and the University of Tennessee Health Sciences program. Recent courses in scientific writing for medical researchers and internships in the patient education division of St. Jude are applications of our research. The Professional Writing program also prepares students for careers in writing for emerging technology for major corporations such as FedEx and AutoZone. Our research into the principles of effective screen design in technological equipment is one important contribution made by our faculty.

Albers, Michael; Assistant Professor (document design, especially for electronic media)
Kim, Loel; Assistant Professor (electronic media displays)
MacNealy, Mary Sue; Full Professor and Coordinator (publication strategies; designing information gathering forms)
Martin, Reginald; Full Professor (business writing and editing)

Plunka, Gene; Full Professor (technical writing and editing)
Popham, Susan; Assistant Professor (doctor/patient communication)

*Textual Studies, with an emphasis on modern American literature in its cultural contexts. Our research directly influences our lower and upper division literature program and, through our former students, the literature teaching in the Memphis city schools. We are currently planning a series of on-campus workshops in African-American literature for Memphis high school students and teachers.

Britt, Theron; Associate Professor and Graduate Director (contemporary American fiction)
Carpenter, Jack; Full Professor (American crime fiction)
Ching, Barbara; Associate Professor (modern American cultural studies)
Duck, Leigh Ann; Assistant Professor (Southern literature)
Fulton, DoVeanna, Assistant Professor (modern African-American oral literary tradition)
Martin, Catherine; Full Professor (Transatlantic studies)
Menson-Furr, Ladrica; Assistant Professor (modern African-American drama)
Mitchell, Verner; Assistant Professor (modern African-American literature)
Newcomb, Jim; Associate Professor (modern American cultural studies)
Plunka, Gene; Full Professor and Coordinator (modern American drama)
Ronan, John; Assistant Professor (modern American fiction)
Tabachnick, Stephen; Full Professor and Chair (American comic book novel)
Tucker, Cynthia; Full Professor (modern American women's biographical writing)
Wagner-Lawlor, Jennifer; Full Professor (Transatlantic Utopian fiction)

Our concentrations continue to review their focus statements on an ongoing basis, so changes should be expected.

1. Identify those areas that fit within the University's areas of focus and within your College's areas of focus.

The University's focus:

a. Healthcare Programs:

*Our interdisciplinary medical communications program, a joint project of our Professional Writing concentration and the Department of Communications.

b. Teacher Education:

*All areas of our Literature program, including foundational literature areas, and our proposed African-American B.A. literature concentration. We teach seven sections per semester of Children's Literature and eight sections of Practical English Grammar each semester for Education majors.

*Our Applied Linguistics program offers: 1) an add-on endorsement or licensure program for ESL; 2) courses for mainstream teachers in ESL via the "On Track" grant program; and 3) a proposed ESL certificate program for teachers.

*Creative writing faculty have presented readings at local schools.

c. Performing Arts:

*Our Creative Writing program faculty and students engage in many public readings each year.

d. Urban Initiatives:

*Our Professional Writing concentration's Urban Writing Institute

*Our Applied Linguistic concentration's "On Track" teacher education grant courses for mainstream teachers with ESL students.

*Our Literature concentration's planned Ida B. Wells Institute for Literacy and Social Change.

The College's focus:

The same as above, with the additional note that our proposed African-American B.A. literature concentration will serve the goals of teacher education, social change and community-based research.