



Program in Rhetoric and Composition  
Department of English



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

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## **A Welcome Message from the Director**

First, let me say: welcome to the University of Arkansas! We're really glad you're here.

I still remember my first semester as a graduate teaching assistant: it was the fall of 2007, and I was over the moon to be starting my MA program in English literature. I couldn't wait for my classes, for all the new things I was going to read and all the smart and creative folks I was going to work with. But I was absolutely terrified to be in front of a class of first-year students! Luckily, that first year of teaching taught me something incredibly important about myself: I actually love to teach. And working with first-year students, even when it's difficult or challenging, is one of my favorite things. Still, I know that transitions are incredibly difficult, especially ones like starting graduate school. There are two pieces of good news, though: first, we're in this together. The Program in Rhetoric and Composition (which includes me, LewEllyn Hallett, Kat Gray, and Olivia Cash) is here to support you as you begin your career teaching college writing.

The other piece of good news is that your own transition mirrors the one your first-year students are experiencing. Like you, they're arriving on campus and trying to figure out how to navigate all the new spaces, people, and expectations. And having that shared experience, I've found, makes it easier to be compassionate to your students and yourself this semester.

We'll spend Orientation giving you some tools and strategies for the coming semester, but we'll also have time together each week throughout the fall. All that to say: it's going to be okay. You can absolutely do this. And we're here to help, whatever you need.

– Megan McIntyre

## **A Welcome Message from the Assistant Directors**

I'm excited, as I am every Fall, to welcome you to our program as a new cohort of TAs. I anticipate your teaching experience in grad school will be a rewarding and exciting one. Probably challenging as well. We're here to support and help you through. And at the end, you will have acquired skills and built a valuable credential, no matter what your future plans.

This is my 10th year at the University of Arkansas and with the Program in Rhetoric and Composition, so by now I know most of the practical nuts and bolts of our teaching assignments and processes of the college and university. I'm eager to pass these on, just not too much at one time! Our doors are open for questions, issues, conversations, and suggestions. Do not hesitate to stop by. I look forward to getting to know you all.

– LewEllyn Hallett

Welcome to U of A English! I'm so excited to meet each of you as you start your grad school journey. I am also new to Fayetteville (I just moved here in June!), so we will be learning many things about the department, the program, and teaching together. I just completed my Ph.D in Rhetoric and Writing at Virginia Tech, although I have been teaching rhetoric and composition courses since 2007. Like y'all, I started teaching when I started a graduate program.

Although many of you have not taught before, please know that you don't have to know everything in your first semester! As you teach, you will learn about and refine your methods, particularly as you discover *who you want to be* in the classroom. Teaching is a learning process, and we learn from both our successes and failures. We are here to help you take that journey, and we hope you'll think of our office as a valuable resource to enhance your skills and support your needs while you are here.



## About the Program in Rhetoric and Composition

The Program in Rhetoric and Composition (PRC) develops and manages writing courses that help students become better writers, thinkers, researchers, and rhetoricians. These courses emphasize the development of the reading, writing, thinking, and research skills and processes necessary for student success in the University and beyond. In addition to first-year writing, the Program offers undergraduate courses in developmental writing, advanced composition, essay writing, and technical writing. A Focused Study in Rhetoric and Composition is also available as a secondary emphasis for students working towards the Ph.D. in English or the M.F.A. in Creative Writing.

In addition, the PRC is responsible for the scheduling of all Composition and World Literature I & II courses, the evaluation of Transfer Credit Petitions for Composition courses, the approval of credit by examination petitions, the managing of the Jessie O’Kelly Freshman Essay Annual Award, the periodic assessment of courses taught in the program, and the regular updating of the curricula for the courses under our purview.

The Program currently boasts the largest teaching staff at the University of Arkansas, regularly employing over 100 teachers at the various ranks of Instructor and Graduate Assistant. As part of our commitment to providing pedagogical support for graduate teaching assistants, we train our teaching staff in pedagogy through courses, workshops, and peer and faculty mentoring programs.

## First-Year Writing Curriculum

The main purpose of the curriculum in first-year composition is to help students with the reading, thinking, and writing processes associated with academic discourses and to explore the resources the campus offers to help them develop as writers. As students receive instruction in critical reading, writing, and research, they learn and practice intellectual and rhetorical strategies (such as analyzing complex issues for an audience). Our curriculum (including our grading contract) de-emphasizes sentence-level issues, including editing for Standard American English.

First, most students take one of the following Composition I options:

- Composition I: A course designed to teach students how to conduct primary and secondary research, and to teach them to draft, revise, and edit their researched texts to demonstrate sound argumentation, development of ideas, clear organization, effective analysis, and an awareness of writing conventions. (We do offer some sections of honors Composition I, ENGL 10103H, which serves students also enrolled in the Honors College.)
- Composition I + Writing Lab: A pair of linked courses that cover the material for ENGL 10103 as described above with an additional 1-hour per week writing lab that allows students to receive additional support and feedback.

Some first-year students arrive with credit or an exemption for Composition I; for those students, they’ll enroll only in Composition II.

After completing one of the Comp I options above, students take one of the following:

- Composition II: A course designed to continue to teach students the research and writing strategies and processes emphasized in Composition I but with an emphasis on writing

in specific genres. (We do offer some sections of honors Composition II, ENGL 10203H, which serves students also enrolled in the Honors College.)

- Technical Composition II: A course designed to teach students the process of planning, drafting and revising basic technical documents, such as extended definitions, business correspondence, technical reports, process descriptions, end-user instructions, and proposals. Any student who completes ENGL 10103 is eligible to take ENGL 10303.

### **One Book, One Community**

The One Book, One Community project at the University of Arkansas brings together faculty, staff, and students to share a common reading experience. As part of the initiative, this year, Composition I courses will include the 2024 selection, *Rising Class*, as part of inclusive access.

The PRC will provide materials to support the integration of this text into Composition I classes, and all Composition I instructors will receive a copy of the book.

### **Courses Beyond First-Year Writing**

Teaching Assistants funded by the English Department are required to teach ENGL 10103 and ENGL10203 before they may teach any of the other courses under the purview of the Program in Rhetoric and Composition. TAs should expect to teach ENGL 10103 and ENGL 10203 for at least their first two years; TAs may subsequently be eligible to teach additional courses like those listed below:

- Advanced Composition: A course designed to teach students additional research and writing strategies and processes by focusing on a variety of document genres, media, and discursive conventions. Students engage in rhetorical analysis, stylistic analysis, and adapting their rhetorical and stylistic choices to suit differing rhetorical situations.
- Essay Writing: A course designed to teach students strategies for analyzing and writing creative nonfiction. Special attention will be given to certain forms, such as memoir and personal reportage.
- Technical and Report Writing: A course designed to teach students the content and formatting of technical documents including formal proposals, researched reports, and revised researched reports.

If you are interested in teaching World Literature, please reach out to the Director of Graduate Studies. If you are interested in teaching Creative Writing courses, please reach out to the Director of the Program in Creative Writing and Translation. Please note: TAs must first teach Composition I and Composition II before they are eligible to teach World Literature or Creative Writing Courses.

### **Thinking Rhetorically about Audiences, Cultures, and Experiences**

The goal of our writing courses is to help students develop processes and strategies for composing in a variety of writing situations and for a variety of audiences. To best support that goal, we believe it is vitally important that students read and think about a wide range of experiences and cultures. We include the statement below on all Comp I and Comp II syllabi to help students understand our curriculum and course goals.

### **Syllabus Statement**

Writers write for audiences, and those audiences are almost never made up of people who think in the exact same ways that they do. Part of being an effective writer is understanding who your audience is and what their expectations are. As the semester progresses, you will write in a range of genres and for a number of different audiences. To help you learn how to do so

effectively, we will read and engage with texts written by authors with a variety of backgrounds, cultures, and experiences.

We will begin each major assignment with a reading that allows us to practice one or more of the skills we focus on in this course while also learning about the cultures and experiences of the author. For each of these texts, we'll consider how the writer's own experiences and their audiences' expectations shape the decisions they make as writers. These texts will center cultural perspectives that help us better understand how all writing is grounded in lived experiences of the cultures we all come from and how those things impact our ability to communicate with our readers.

## AI and Writing Courses

The purpose of our first-year writing classes is to support students as they develop writing processes and skills that will help them become better critical thinkers, more thoughtful readers, and more rhetorically aware communicators. To achieve those goals, students need to engage in all the parts of the writing process using their own skills, ideas, and approaches. ChatGPT can't help them with that. It can't think for them. It can't practice the process for them. It can't reflect on their choices for them. That's all work that we need students to do.

However, we should not turn to additional forms of surveillance or create punitive policies about ChatGPT and other tools like it. Universities (including ours) will soon invest or have already invested in detection tools that claim they can identify AI-generated texts. In general, though, I (Megan) am suspicious of detection software because

1. It contributes to a sense of mistrust between students and teachers.
2. It exploits the intellectual property of users – particularly student users – without any sort of real consent process or any compensation; if students are required to use detection software like SafeAssign or a Turnitin, we are also requiring them to give up rights and control over their intellectual property without consent.
3. It doesn't work nearly as well as it promises to. (In the case of ChatGPT, for example, Turnitin has claimed that it has a 98% confidence rate in detecting AI-generated writing. However OpenAI, which created ChatGPT, has noted that their own detection software is [only about 26% accurate, with a 9% false positive rate](#). In fact, as of July 2023, OpenAI removed their AI classifier from the market “due to its low rate of accuracy.”) And, even more importantly for our purposes as writing teachers, AI text detectors are often [biased against](#) multilingual writers.

For these reasons, we do not use detection software (including SafeAssign) programmatically.

Instead of turning to additional surveillance, I want us to talk to students about the goals of our classes (the development of processes and skills to help them become better readers, writers, and thinkers) and how the use of ChatGPT and similar software doesn't help them achieve those goals. We can talk to students about the fact that ChatGPT [isn't trustworthy](#); in fact, it is often [casually \(or blatantly!\) racist and sexist](#). That's because a chatbot [can't think critically](#); it functions based on correlations it finds in its huge corpus of web-scraped material. Based on the examples of racist and sexist outputs, the inputs include materials that are also racist and sexist. As Anna Mills and Lauren M. E. Goodlad [argue](#), “large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT are sophisticated statistical models that predict probable word sequences in response to a prompt even though they do not 'understand' language in any human-like sense.” Students should know that relying



on a system that is built the way ChatGPT was built may mean unintentionally relying on sources they would never trust if they weren't using ChatGPT.

Given all this, **you may not require** students to use ChatGPT in the classroom even if you leave it open to them as a possible tool at certain points during the semester. **You also may not use ChatGPT to generate feedback** on your students' writing, and you should never paste student work into ChatGPT/another chatbot or any ChatGPT/AI detector for any reason without first consulting with the PRC.

### **Addressing Suspected ChatGPT/AI Use in Writing Courses**

If you suspect a student may have used ChatGPT or another chatbot to complete work for which its use is not permitted, please contact the PRC.

### **Syllabus Statements**

#### *Using ChatGPT for Your Work in This Class (USE PROHIBITED)*

This is a course that asks you to work through the writing process and develop your own strategies for how to tackle each step of the process, from idea generation to drafting to revision to reflection. For this reason, I ask that you do not use artificial chatbots like ChatGPT to complete assignments for this class.

#### *Using ChatGPT for Your Work in This Class (USE PERMITTED WITH CITATION)*

This is a course that asks you to work through the writing process and develop your own strategies for how to tackle each step of the process, from idea generation to drafting to revision to reflection. However, writing and technology are inextricably connected to one another. For this reason, I ask that if you use ChatGPT or other artificial chatbots at any point in the process you identify the ways it was used and cite any chatbot-written content that you quote, paraphrase, or summarize.

#### *Providing Course Materials to Course Hero, ChatGPT, and Other Sites*

Please do not provide my course materials or your peers' work to ChatGPT, Course Hero, Chegg, or similar sites. I also strongly recommend that you not provide your own work to any of these sites.

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**

As an employee of the University of Arkansas, you will most likely encounter confidential student information in the course of your everyday work. You have a responsibility to protect educational records in your possession even if you don't directly work with this information on a regular basis as part of your job duties.

This listing of confidential information is protected by FERPA and includes, but is not limited to:

- Transcripts
- Applications
- Personnel files
- Personal information
- Financial information
- Records or other forms of individually identifiable information
- Conversations about personal matters pertaining to a student

## **FERPA at a Glance**

A federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records. It also provides guidelines for appropriately using and releasing student educational records. It is intended that the student's rights be broadly defined and applied. Therefore, consider the student as the "owner" of the information in his or her academic record and the University as the "custodian" of that record.

## **Special Exceptions**

Generally, schools must have written permission from the student to release information from a student's record. However, FERPA allows schools to release them without consent to the following parties:

- School officials with a legitimate educational interest
- Other schools to which a student is transferring
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
- Accrediting organizations
- Compliance with judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies
- State and local authorities within a juvenile justice system pursuant to specific state law

## **FERPA FAQ for Faculty and Instructors**

### *Posting Grades*

Since grades can never be directory information, it is inappropriate to post grades in a public setting. An instructor may, however, post grades if the grades are posted in such a manner that only the instructor and the individual student can identify the individual and his/her grade. Grades should never be posted by any portion of the SSN. Additionally, it is recommended that such a posted list should not be in the same order as the class roster or in alphabetical order.

### *Web-Based Tools to Support Classes*

Courses supported by class websites and/or discussion groups must take extra precautions to not inadvertently release non-directory student information. Only directory information can be available to the general public and other class members, so it is recommended that Web-based tools employ a security layer so that only class members and instructors can access appropriate information. If you use UArk email and Blackboard, this security layer is built-in through login and verification procedures.

### *Students Opting for No Release in the Classroom Setting*

Students cannot choose to be anonymous in the classroom setting. If a student has chosen "no release" for his or her directory information, that does not mean that an instructor cannot call on him or her by name in class or that the student's e-mail address cannot be displayed on an electronic classroom support tool such as a discussion board, blog or chat feature.

### *Return of Assignments*

Personally identifiable information about a student may not be disclosed without the student's express written permission. Extreme care should be used to protect such information when returning assignments to students.

### *Letters of Recommendation*

Writing a letter of recommendation may require express, written permission from the student to allow you to (1) access the student's educational records and (2) disclose confidential information about the student to a third party. A faculty member may access a student's

educational records without the student's written permission only if specific job duties, such as the duties of an academic advisor, require access to these records. However, a faculty member, or any other appropriate university official, may not disclose confidential information from a student's educational records to a third party without express written permission from the student. Personal observations about a student may be disclosed without the student's consent.

### ***Disposal of Confidential Information***

Dispose of all material containing confidential information, such as tests, papers or class rosters by shredding or placing them in a receptacle intended for the collection of material to be disposed of in a secure manner. We recommend you keep physical records for a full academic year prior to destroying and disposing of them.

### ***Accessing Confidential Student Information***

Access to personally identifiable information contained in educational records may be given to appropriate University administrators, faculty members or staff members who require this access to perform their legitimate educational duties. Faculty members do not have access to student academic records unless their normal job duties specifically require access. This type of access is termed "legitimate educational interest."

## **Title IX**

Title IX protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Title IX states that:

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

The Title IX Coordinator oversees the university's compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The Title IX Coordinator works with university administration, departments, students, faculty, staff, campus police and other support services to ensure that university policies and programs foster a campus community free of illegal gender discrimination and sexual violence.

For incidents of abuse or neglect of minors, Arkansas law requires reporting of abuse or neglect to the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-482-5964) established by the Department of Human Services. University employees and volunteers must also report such instances to the University of Arkansas Police Department at 479-575-2222.

When you learn information that a student or employee was involved in any incident that may have included acts of sexual misconduct, you should contact the Title IX Coordinator immediately. If you are unsure if an incident falls into these categories, please contact the Title IX Coordinator immediately.

### **Duty to Report**

To enable the University to respond effectively and proactively stop instances of sexual harassment, employees must, within 24 hours of receiving information regarding a *potential* violation of this policy, report information to the Title IX Coordinator using the form available here: [https://uarkf-gme-advocate.symlicity.com/titleix\\_report/index.php/pid049921](https://uarkf-gme-advocate.symlicity.com/titleix_report/index.php/pid049921). Any employee who fails to promptly report a matter to the Title IX Coordinator may be subjected to disciplinary action for failing to do so. There are two categories of employees who are exempt from this requirement:

1. Licensed health-care professionals and other employees who are statutorily prohibited from reporting such information, and
2. Persons designated by the campus as victim advocates

### *Other reasons to report*

- Reporting the incident to the Title IX Coordinator ensures the victim has access to all available resources, including supportive measures.
- You may be helping to identify those in the campus community who are displaying prohibited patterns of conduct.
- Reporting allows campus officials to identify trends and systemic problems.
- Reporting keeps the University campus community safe.

### *What to do if someone reports they have been sexually harassed or assaulted*

- Always consider the person's health and safety above all else. Individuals requiring medical care should be escorted to the nearest emergency room. If you believe the person is in immediate danger or may pose a threat to themselves or others, contact the UAPD at or dial 911.
- If you have been told that someone has been harmed by or has experienced sexual harassment:
  - Be attentive, supportive and listen carefully.
  - Explain the limits of confidentiality and your reporting responsibilities. Be direct about your obligation to submit a report to the Title IX Coordinator.
  - Express interest, care, and concern. Keep in mind that although what is being shared may not seem like a crisis to you, it may feel like it to that person.
  - Avoid asking questions such as "why haven't you reported this before now?" or "why didn't you call the police?"
  - Inform the individual that resources and supportive measures are available from the Title IX Office, regardless of their decision to file a formal complaint.
  - Report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator or submit a report using the form available here:  
[https://uarkf-gme-advocate.symplicity.com/titleix\\_report/index.php/pid049921](https://uarkf-gme-advocate.symplicity.com/titleix_report/index.php/pid049921).

If you have questions regarding your obligation to report under the Title IX Policy, consult with the Title IX Coordinator at (479) 575-7111 or email [titleix@uark.edu](mailto:titleix@uark.edu).

### **Examples of when to report**

- A student tells you in "confidence" that he believes he was sexually assaulted by a fellow student.
- You ask about a staff member's bruised eye and he informs you that his partner struck him.
- A faculty member tells you a former student is stalking her and leaving her threatening voice messages.
- A student complains that a classmate often makes "sexist" comments about women.
- A student-employee tells you she is uncomfortable with an external contractor because he tells crude sexual jokes and offers to rub her shoulders.
- An employee tells you she is missing work to avoid a co-worker who had sex with her after she blacked out at a party.
- A student is concerned because a faculty member will not allow her to make up an exam after she was on bed rest for a pregnancy-related condition.

For more information, please visit the [University of Arkansas Responsible Employee Guide](#) or the [UArk Title IX website](#).

### **Teaching Assistant Responsibilities**

The following are the responsibilities of all Teaching Assistants under the supervision of the PRC. While mainly related to teaching, your responsibilities also include participation in training programs and activities, and submitting information and materials to the PRC when requested. Please familiarize yourself with these responsibilities and take them seriously. Failure to uphold them could result in disciplinary action, including the loss of your assistantship. If you have any questions, please ask us for assistance.

#### **Follow the curriculum for the course(s) you are assigned.**

The PRC uses a shared curriculum designed by experts in the field of rhetoric, composition, and technical writing. You are expected to teach the major assignments, as written, for the courses you are assigned. You may not make changes to major assignments without the permission of the Director of the Program in Rhetoric and Composition.

#### **Use Blackboard to post course documents and grades and give feedback.**

All teaching assistants are expected to use Blackboard to post course documents (including syllabi, major assignments, and grading and assessment policies/information). In addition, **you must give assignment grades and formative feedback via Blackboard**. Feedback and grades should be posted in a timely manner, within one to two weeks for major assignments.

#### **Give timely and thoughtful feedback to student work.**

Giving substantive feedback on drafts and assignments is your primary responsibility as a writing teacher. For drafts of major assignments, students should receive substantive, formative feedback on their work via Blackboard within one to two weeks (in most cases). Failure to give feedback may lead to an instructor's termination.

#### **Meet with your class at the time and in the location assigned.**

All teaching assistants are expected to teach their classes in the designated room at the designated time, as it appears in UAConnect. In cases where a teaching assistant is unable to teach for various reasons, the Dean of Fulbright College requests that any instructor of record report and record their absence within one week of that absence. Please consult the PRC for this form; completed forms should be returned to the PRC via email or in person. Failure to hold class regularly can lead to a teaching assistant's termination.

#### **Hold office hours.**

You must announce to your students the **three hours per week** when you will be in your office, and you must keep the announced schedule. If possible, do not use only the MWF or the TTh sequence for your office schedule. Try to vary the days and the hours.

You will also have to make special appointments for some students, but urge them to see you during regular office hours. Don't collect too many appointments; your graduate work may suffer. If a student doesn't appear on time, don't wait. Because we expect you to be a conscientious teacher and student, you must allot only a reasonable amount of time for personal conferences with students. Try to have at least two conferences with each student during the semester.

#### **Maintain professionalism in office spaces.**

As soon as office assignments are made, the English Department office staff will inform you of the office you will occupy. (For the issuance of your office key see the Key Policy page in this



handbook.) If your office assignment is changed or if you leave the department, please be sure to remove all of your belongings and return your key to the Key Office.

All staff members must help create an atmosphere of courtesy in the office. Many TAs will be sharing desks and office space, so it is imperative that TAs respect each other's belongings, demonstrate professional behavior, and coordinate their use of the shared space. Professional courtesy and decorum must be observed particularly when undergraduates engage in required conferencing with instructors or otherwise make use of the latter's office hours. Grievances regarding inappropriate TA behavior may be brought to the attention of PRC administrators.

When your office is empty, please make it a habit to close and lock your office door to protect your belongings and those of office mates.

Please do not use nails, glue, etc. to put up pictures and posters or otherwise deface the walls of your office.

You will be asked to remove your belongings from office spaces at the end of each academic year.

### **ADA Accommodations at the University**

As noted in Policy 203.1, the University of Arkansas takes the accommodation of students and employees seriously: "It is the policy of the University of Arkansas (University) to provide equal access and opportunity to qualified persons with disabilities in compliance with Section 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990; and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. The University prohibits discrimination based on disability in all services, programs and activities, aspects of the application process and employment relationship. The University will make good faith efforts to provide reasonable accommodations to applicants, employees, students, visitors, and participants in programs and services." Employees may access these accommodations through two routes: the Center for Educational Access and the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance. See below for specifics on contacting each office.

### **Center for Educational Access Student Accommodations related to ADA**

University of Arkansas Academic Policy Series 1520.10 requires that students with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If a student has a documented disability and requires accommodations, please have them contact you privately to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, students must first verify their eligibility for these through the Center for Educational Access (contact 479-575-3104 or visit <http://cea.uark.edu> for more information on registration procedures).

### **Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance Policy Related to ADA**

The OEOC website states the following regarding accommodations for employees: "To request a reasonable accommodation for a disability, including pregnancy related disabilities, to perform the essential functions of the job, to gain access to the workplace, or to enjoy equal access to benefits and privileges of employment (e.g., trainings, office-sponsored events, travel, etc.), an employee should submit a reasonable accommodation request. Note that, in order to assess any request for a reasonable accommodation, the University may require a written document from a licensed physician or other health care provider certifying the nature and type of physical or mental disability of the employee prior to making any decision regarding the request for reasonable accommodation."

## **Religion and Faith Based Accommodations at the University of Arkansas**

The University of Arkansas takes faith-based accommodations seriously, based on Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The OEOC website states the following on the matter: "Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination based on religion. This includes refusing to accommodate an employee's sincerely held religious beliefs or practices unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship (more than a minimal burden on operation of the business). A religious practice may be sincerely held by an individual even if newly adopted, not consistently observed, or different from the commonly followed tenets of the individual's religion. A religious accommodation is any adjustment to the work environment that will allow an employee or applicant to practice his or her religion. The need for religious accommodation may arise where an individual's religious beliefs, observances or practices conflict with a specific task or requirement of the position or an application process. Accommodation requests often relate to work schedules, dress and grooming, or religious expression in the workplace. If it would not pose an undue hardship, the employer must grant the accommodation."

## **PRC Policy Regarding Instructor Absences**

In the PRC, we realize that instructors may have various reasons they are unable to teach on any given day. To respond to such instances, we have the following policies that teaching assistants and instructors of record must follow:

### *Conferences, University Events, and Religious Observances*

In cases where a teaching assistant will be attending a conference, attending a University-sponsored event, or will need to observe a particular facet of their religion, the PRC asks that impacted assistants furnish the Office with a list of the dates that will be covered within the first two weeks of the semester. On such days, unless there are specific reasons to avoid the following, teaching assistants are expected to create alternative instruction for their classes online. These do not have to be synchronous classes. Students should simply be given an appropriate amount of work for the day and some method of assessing student work for those days should be implemented.

### *Sickness and Unexpected Emergencies*

In cases where a teaching assistant suddenly falls ill or is unable to hold classes due to an emergency in their life, the assistant should reach out to the PRC to request a substitute. The PRC will either substitute the class when possible, depending on availability, or coordinate cancellation of that class session.

## **Circumstances for Suspension or Termination of Teaching Assistants**

Teaching Assistants serve at the pleasure of the Graduate School and the Program in Rhetoric and Composition. An assistantship is a privilege and not a right. The role of the teaching assistant is one that comes with great responsibility, and the continuation of any teaching assistant's contract falls under Board Policy 500.1, quoted in its entirety below:

### **Termination of Appointments**

Graduate assistants, graduate associates, and teaching assistants (hereinafter collectively referred to as "graduate assistants") assist with University programs and research but are first and foremost students. Subject to the procedures set out below, their appointments may be terminated at any time for convenience or for cause, or due to abandonment of the assistantship, or may be terminated following notice for unsatisfactory performance.

Termination for convenience shall be effected by giving written notice, at least sixty (60) days in advance of the end of the appointment.

With respect to dismissal for cause, excluding unsatisfactory work performance, dismissal shall be effective immediately upon notification, and no advance notice shall be required, although the graduate assistant may seek post-termination review of the action pursuant to the campus grievance procedures for graduate students.

Termination due to abandonment of the assistantship shall be effective immediately upon notification.

With respect to unsatisfactory work performance, graduate assistants shall be given written notice of the possibility of termination, with a statement of actions pertaining to the duties of the assistantship to be taken within a specific time period to achieve satisfactory performance. These expectations must be appropriate to the nature of the appointment. If a graduate assistant so notified does not meet the requirements of satisfactory performance within the time frame specified, the student may be terminated from his or her appointment immediately.

In the case of grant termination or loss of appropriated funds, termination may be immediate or with reduced notice.

For purposes of this policy, expiration of appointment, or non-reappointment, is not a termination. Further, "graduate assistant" refers to all of those graduate students who are receiving a stipend and/or tuition benefits in exchange for duties associated with a University department or unit. These positions may be referred to as graduate associates, graduate assistants, senior graduate assistants, teaching assistants, fellows, or the like.

For purposes of this policy, grounds to terminate the appointment of a graduate assistant for cause include, but are not limited to those examples set out in Board Policy 405.1, which applies to faculty.

Regarding terminations for cause, teaching assistants are governed by [Board Policy 405.1](#), quoted partially below:

### **Cause**

Cause is defined as conduct that demonstrates the faculty member lacks the willingness or ability to perform duties or responsibilities to the University, or that otherwise serves as a basis for disciplinary action. Pursuant to procedures set out herein or in other University or campus policies, a faculty member may be disciplined or dismissed for cause on grounds including, but not limited to, (1) unsatisfactory performance, consistent with the requirements of section V.A.9 below, concerning annual reviews; (2) professional dishonesty or plagiarism; (3) discrimination, including harassment or retaliation, prohibited by law or university policy; (4) unethical conduct related to fitness to engage in teaching, research, service/outreach and/or administration, or otherwise related to the faculty member's employment or public employment; (5) misuse of appointment or authority to exploit others; (6) theft or intentional misuse of property; (7) incompetence or a mental incapacity that prevents a faculty member from fulfilling his or her job responsibilities; (8) job abandonment; (9) a pattern of conduct that is detrimental to the productive and efficient operation of the instructional or work environment; (10) refusal to perform reasonable duties; (11) threats or acts of violence or retaliatory conduct; or (12) violation of University policy, or state or federal law, substantially related to performance

of faculty responsibilities or fitness to serve the University. Nothing in this provision is intended to inhibit expression that is protected under principles of academic freedom, or state or federal law.

### **Code of Student Life and Teaching Assistants**

As teaching assistants are concurrently members of the study body, in some cases their continued employment as assistants may be threatened by a violation of the Code of Student Life. If a student is expelled or censured due to a Code violation, the student's assistantship may be impacted as well. The Student Code of Life can be found at <http://handbook.uark.edu>. A general overview of the Code and its purpose from that website reads as follows:

“Students share the responsibility for maintaining an environment in which the rights of each member of the academic community are respected. All students and their guests shall be responsible for conducting themselves in a manner that helps to enhance an environment of learning in which the rights, dignity, worth, and freedom of each member of the academic community are respected. When asked to report to any University office in conjunction with a disciplinary matter, a student is expected to appear at the time specified or to arrange another appointment. Any student found responsible for a violation outlined in the Code of Student Life is subject to disciplinary sanctions, and they may expect more significant sanctions relative to the severity of the offense and/or if found responsible on multiple occasions.”

Teaching assistants are encouraged to become familiar with the Code of Student Life as it relates to their own status as students as well as the conduct of the students under their supervision.

### **A Note on Doctoral Academy Fellowships and Assistantships**

Students with Doctoral Academy Fellowships hold their fellowship concurrent with their teaching assistant position. In the case where a graduate student loses their assistantship, they will also lose their fellowship.

### **Student Absences**

You must have a clear attendance policy. The University expects students to attend class regularly; if possible, students should report to you if they are to be absent. Please tell your students to email you personally.

The University has not spelled out its policy on the number of absences permitted each student, but every instructor is required to have an attendance policy. This policy must be clearly detailed in the written Policies and Procedures portion of your syllabus. For TAs teaching 10103 or 10203, the attendance policy is spelled out on the syllabus in the Grading Contract. Here are reasons for excused absences as stated in the Faculty Handbook: “Examples of absences that should be considered excusable include those resulting from the following: 1) illness of the student, 2) serious illness or death of a member of the student's immediate family or other family crisis, 3) University-sponsored activities for which the student's attendance is required by virtue of scholarship or leadership/participation responsibilities, 4) religious observances (see Students' Religious Observances policy above), 5) jury duty or subpoena for court appearance, and 6) military duty. The instructor has the right to require that the student provide appropriate documentation for any absence for which the student wishes to be excused.”

Although students who have missed class will sometimes bring you medical slips from a doctor or the Health Center, and although you will sometimes be notified by coaches or band directors that students were absent because they participated in a University activity, there is no University policy requiring an instructor to permit students to make up work except for religious

holidays. You will have to use common sense and **compassion** in designing your attendance policy.

Furthermore, you must have an inclement weather policy. If the university remains open while the roads are somewhat hazardous, your students need to know your expectations. Some instructors have a set of back-up assignments for students to complete from home on inclement weather days. More and more students live off-campus and even outside Fayetteville, so consider how you will deal with this in your policy. The policy should be clearly spelled out in your syllabus.

### **Office Hours**

You must announce to your students the **three hours per week** when you will be in your office, and you must keep the announced schedule. If possible, do not use only the MWF or the TTh sequence for your office schedule. Try to vary the days and the hours.

You will also have to make special appointments for some students, but urge them to see you during regular office hours. Don't collect too many appointments; your graduate work may suffer. If a student doesn't appear on time, don't wait. Because we expect you to be a conscientious teacher and student, you must allot only a reasonable amount of time for personal conferences with students. Try to have at least two conferences with each student during the semester.

### **Offices**

As soon as office assignments are made, the English Department office staff will inform you of the office you will occupy. (For the issuance of your office key see the Key Policy page in this handbook.) If your office assignment is changed or if you leave the department, please be sure to remove all of your belongings and return your key to the Key Office.

All staff members must help create an atmosphere of courtesy in the office. Many TAs will be sharing desks and office space, so it is imperative that TAs respect each other's belongings, demonstrate professional behavior, and coordinate their use of the shared space. Professional courtesy and decorum must be observed particularly when undergraduates engage in required conferencing with instructors or otherwise make use of the latter's office hours. Grievances regarding inappropriate TA behavior may be brought to the attention of PRC administrators.

When your office is empty, please make it a habit to close and lock your office door to protect your belongings and those of office mates.

Please do not use nails, glue, etc. to put up pictures and posters or otherwise deface the walls of your office.

### **Teaching Materials**

Desk copies of required texts and syllabi, policy, and assignment templates will be provided for all the courses you teach. Course materials can be found online at the AER Wiki:

<http://aer.uark.edu/doku.php?id=pedagogy>.

At the beginning of the semester, submit an electronic copy of the complete syllabus for the course or courses you're teaching to the PRC office, at [rhetcomp@uark.edu](mailto:rhetcomp@uark.edu).



At the end of the semester, you will be required to submit an electronic copy of your gradebooks as well. We keep these on file to more easily deal with disputes students might raise after they are out of your class, or even after you have left the program.

**Failure to follow curricular guidelines can result in the suspension or termination of a teaching assistant's contract.**

### **Library and Research Assistance**

According to a [2018 survey](#), only 28% of students begin college with adequate preparation to do research.

The University Libraries has created comprehensive asynchronous information literacy tutorials to help students with their research at every step in the process. The five tutorials, which span choosing a topic, using the library, searching for and evaluating information, to citations are all available to embed directly into your blackboard course for convenience, and can be assigned at the relevant stages in the research process to help contextualize lessons for students.

Still need additional help or have questions? Kim Larsen, the Undergraduate Engagement Librarian, can be reached at [kiml@uark.edu](mailto:kiml@uark.edu) to answer questions and troubleshoot issues with you. She also provides office hours every week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10-12 in MULN 418 for any instructors or students that need help. For other English, Communication, and Journalism classes, contact Molly Boyd at [mdboyd@uark.edu](mailto:mdboyd@uark.edu). For more information on library resources for your classes, you can also reference the [ENGL 10103](#) and [ENGL 10203](#) Library Research Guides.

### **Writing Studio Support**

Looking for a sub for class? Interested in guided peer-review sessions? Could your students use a second set of eyes on their drafts before turning them in? With a plethora of resources available to help both students and instructors, The Writing Studio is your new best friend!

For students, The Writing Studio offers:

- [Online and in-person writing consultations](#) for individual students or groups
- Walk-in sessions (no advance scheduling required)
- In-Studio spaces where students can write individually or in groups
- [Online writing guides on a plethora of topics](#)

For instructors, The Writing Studio also offers:

- [Class presentations and workshops \(a good option if you are looking for a sub\).](#)
- [Online writing guides instructors can utilize while teaching](#)
- [Guided class tours](#)
- [In-Studio class write-ins with on-site writing support](#)

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Writing Studio Coordinator Dr. Chris Borntrager ([clborntr@uark.edu](mailto:clborntr@uark.edu)).

### **Classrooms**

Unless instructed to do so, please do not change the room in which your class meets.

Do your best to leave your classroom in a neat condition: ask students to arrange chairs in a row, deposit garbage in wastebaskets, and place recyclables in recycling containers. Be sure to

erase the chalkboard/whiteboard, turn off the projector if you used it, and log out of SMART electronic equipment.

## **Keys**

### **Key Issuance**

You will be issued keys to KIMP 331, your office, and Kimpel Hall. To get these keys, pick up key authorization cards from the English Department office staff and take them to the Key Office in the Facilities Management Building (Service Center entrance on Mitchell Street and Razorback Road), where you will need to present your UA ID.

### **Key Return**

Upon termination, graduation, or transfer, keys must be promptly returned to the Key Office, **not the department**. Keys are not transferable.

### **Lost or Stolen Keys**

If a key is lost or stolen, you should notify your dean or department head immediately. The individual losing the key and the department who authorized the issuance of the key will be assessed a five-dollar charge as well as any necessary building re-keying charges.

### **Re-keying/Lock Repairs**

All lock repairs, re-keying, and duplication of keys will be performed by Physical Plant personnel. The use of non-University locksmiths or the attempted repair or relocation of locks by faculty, staff, or students is expressly prohibited. Requests to re-key facilities, rooms, etc., must be submitted to Physical Plant for review and approval.

## **The English Department Office**

### **Mail & Mailboxes**

Your campus mail, United States mail, and various announcements will be placed in a mailbox provided for you in KIMP 331. Please check it regularly, especially at the beginning of the semester, and do not have personal mail delivered to it.

You also need to activate your UARK email account as soon as possible and to check it at least once per day for important notices.

### **Maintenance Problems**

Please report such things as leaks, broken window shades, missing office furniture or personal belongings, and temperature aberrations to the office staff in KIMP 331.

### **Office Staff**

Office personnel are here to assist you, but they may not always be able to attend to your requests immediately or provide the answers you would prefer. You are to be as courteous to them as you would be to any other University official. The abuse of support staff and of the material resources they provide to you is intolerable and will result in suspension of privileges and possibly the rescinding of your assistantship.

## **Teaching Assistants: Term Limits and Finances**

### **Term Limits**

Assuming that satisfactory progress toward a degree and teaching duties are being met, the following are the maximum number of semesters that Teaching Assistants may expect to have their assistantships renewed: four semesters for an M.A.; eight semesters for an M.F.A.; eight

semesters—beyond the M.A.—for a Ph.D. Should a graduate student receive a summer assistantship at any point, the summer assistantship will not deduct from the assistantship covering the fall-spring academic year; for example an M.A. student who has taught two semesters may teach one course during the summer, and still expect to receive an assistantship for two semesters more.

Teaching Assistants may petition for an extension of their assistantship beyond these limits. Such petitions are subject to the approval of the Director of Composition and the Dean of the Graduate School. The petitions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and extensions will be granted only on the basis of extenuating circumstances having impacted the petitioner's progress toward completion of the degree.

### **Financial Matters and Health Insurance**

The annual stipend awarded to each TA is indicated in the contract issued by the Director of the Program in Rhetoric and Composition.

TA stipends are figured on a nine-month appointment and disbursements occur twice per month, August through April. The August check will be for half of the normal amount, and TAs will receive a final half check mid-May. Stipends are not paid during the summer except to recipients of summer assistantships or fellowships requiring the stipend to be placed on a twelve-month disbursement schedule.

Stipends are subject to state and federal income tax. For more information visit: <http://hr.uark.edu>.

In addition to an annual stipend, Teaching Assistantships carry a tuition waiver for the semester—and the intersession that precedes it—during which the assistantship is held. Teaching Assistantship holders with a 50% appointment (those teaching two sections or the equivalent 20 hours per week) are classified as in-state students for tuition purposes. Miscellaneous fees (activity fees, college fees, etc.), books, housing and other expenses are not covered by the assistantship. More information regarding fees can be found here: <http://catalog.uark.edu/graduatecatalog/feeandgeneralinformation>.

Graduate assistants on 50% appointment (20 hours per week) or more are offered the benefit of health insurance, with approximately 66% of the cost of the Student Health Insurance plan paid by the University and 34% paid by the individual. While spouses and children may also enroll in the plan, the 66% of the cost benefit applies to the graduate assistant only. More information about the student health insurance policy is available on the [Pat Walker Health Center website](#). (This information is [here](#), on the Graduate School's discussion of "Graduate Student Benefits.")

### **Teaching Assignments**

Each semester, you will be asked for information to help determine your teaching assignment for the following semester. Scheduling is determined well ahead of the target semester, so when the call for scheduling preferences goes out, be mindful that your reply is needed by the deadline. Please note that you will be asked for preferences regarding the courses and times you would like to teach—while the PRC's administrative staff does its best to accommodate these preferences, there are no guarantees that you will get your choices in either scheduled times or courses. Assignments are tentative and dependent on adequate enrollment in each section, and changes may happen up until the semester begins. You will be notified of your teaching assignments as soon as possible. Typically, you will know your tentative assignment

for the spring semester before the end of fall, and your fall and/or summer assignment by the end of spring.

This is the information required:

- Name:
- Any updated contact info:
- Courses you're taking:
- Course releases:
- Course preferences\*\*:
- Previously taught courses:
- Teaching time preferences\*\*:
- Unavailable times (and why):

After you've taught ENGL 10103 and 10203 at least once, possible courses include:

- ENGL 00001, Writing Lab
- ENGL 10103, Composition I
- ENGL 101H3, Honors Composition I
- ENGL 10203, Composition II
- ENGL 102H3, Honors Composition II (1 section)
- ENGL 10303, Technical Composition II
- ENGL 20003, Advanced Composition
- ENGL 20133, Essay Writing
- ENGL 30503, Technical and Professional Writing
- ENGL 11103, World Literature I
- ENGL 111H3, Honors World Literature I (1 section)
- ENGL 11203, World Literature II
- ENGL 112H3, Honors World Literature II (1 section)

\*\*Again, though, please note that we may not be able to honor preferences for courses beyond ENGL 10103 and ENGL 10203.

**You must provide us with scheduling options on both M/W/F and T/TH, and include an early morning time (M/W/F 7:30, 8:35, or T/ TH 8:00) or a late afternoon/evening time (M/W/F 3:05, T/TH 3:30 or 4:30, or M/W 3:05 or 4:35, or later).** Those who are assigned an early morning time will have priority of assignment times in the subsequent semester. If you taught an early schedule in the current semester and prefer not to do it again, please note that in your preferences. (Some people prefer these times so we don't want to automatically disqualify you from teaching early again.) Do let us know if you have conflicts with certain days and times, like childcare, commuting distances, or other jobs, and we will take these into consideration. But your teaching responsibility is also a priority, and we have to cover all sections in the schedule, even those offered M/W/F 7:30. Also, please note that we have fewer T/Th sections during prime time because of room availability.

Please list the required number of course preferences in case your first few choices are not available. Otherwise, we will place you wherever there is need.

### **A Note on Creative Writing Courses**

The Creative Writing Program chooses TAs who will teach one section of either Creative Writing I or Creative Writing II, each semester. We then assign those TAs to a specific section of creative writing and an additional course if their load is 2 sections. We still need all information requested

from those who expect to be teaching Creative Writing. Please do not list creative writing courses in your preferences since we do not make those decisions.

**A Note on Technical Writing Courses**

You must first teach ENGL 10303 Technical Comp II before you are qualified to teach ENGL 30503 Technical and Professional Writing. We encourage you to gain experience in this type of writing course, and we think you'll enjoy it. In addition, some of these courses must be taught in order to complete the Focused Study in Rhetoric and Composition. Request them in the order described here—10303 first in order to qualify to teach 30503.

**A Note on Summer Teaching**

Enrollment is so low during the summer that we have very few assistantships to offer. Priority may be given to international students who must remain employed on campus, and to TAs still completing coursework for their degrees who need tuition waivers to take courses during the summer. Only one section is assigned to each TA teaching in Summer; all summer courses are offered during the Summer 8-week session. TAs who teach over the summer must be enrolled in at least 3 hours of coursework.

**A Note on Online Teaching**

After you have taught for us for at least two semesters, you may apply to teach one of the online versions of the PRC courses. Before doing so, you must first complete the online teaching training workshops; please inquire with the PRC if you'd like to complete this training. More and more colleges and universities are seeking candidates with online teaching experience, so Ph.D. and M.F.A. students should seriously consider attending these workshops and applying to teach online for at least one semester.

You must have taught a course in the classroom before you teach that course online.

**The Focused Study in Rhetoric and Composition**

Students earning the PhD in English or the MFA in Creative Writing may choose Rhetoric and Composition as a field of secondary emphasis. Students who choose this option are required to do the following:

Take the Following Courses

- Take ENGL 5003 Composition Pedagogy.
- ENGL 5973 Topics in Rhetoric and Composition or ENGL 6973 Seminar in Rhetoric and Composition.
- An additional graduate-level course in Rhetoric and Composition approved by the Director of Composition.

Teach five of the following writing courses offered by the English Department:

- Any 2 from column A, and
- Any 1 from column B, and
- Any two additional courses from A, B or C

A	B	C
ENGL 00001	ENGL 10303	ENGL 20003
ENGL 10103	ENGL 30503	ENGL 20133



ENGL 101H3		ENGL 40003
ENGL 10203		
ENGL 102H3		

Earn 10 professional development points from engaging in any combination of the following activities:

- Presenting research at any Rhetoric and Composition conference (3 points per presentation)
- Participating in a PRC workshop (1 point per workshop)
- Developing and sharing a resource for a PRC course via <https://forms.office.com/r/MdYSM74U1K> (1 point per resource)
- Submitting and having a chapter accepted for inclusion in a textbook for one of the PRC courses listed above (3 points per chapter)