

Editors' Note

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We are excited to offer our first issue of 2026, a collection of five essays addressing writing assignments in contexts including undergraduate accounting, first-year composition, intermediate technical communication, graduate-level linguistics, and a course on African American rhetorical traditions. As described below, tax memos, aphorisms, game- and case-based learning, and analyses grounded in Afrocentric rhetorical traditions take center stage in the essays and assignments featured in this issue.

First up, in Michal Horton and Betty Bin Xing's "Teaching the Tax Memo Genre with a Writing about Writing (WAW) Approach," we get an inside look at an undergraduate tax course designed for accounting majors. Students in the course not only learn the ins and outs of the tax memo genre—an emphasis that the authors argue is much needed in accounting education—but also use WAW heuristics popularized by Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle to reflect on the genre's important emphasis on paragraphing, a key aspect in successful tax memo writing and something highly valued by CPAs and across the accounting fields.

Then, in "Saying More with Less: Using Aphorisms to Promote Critical Reading and Authority in the First-Year Writing Classroom," Sean Barnette and James Anderson, Jr., compellingly write for the value of asking students to critically analyze aphorisms about writing. Such a task, they argue, can contribute to students' academic reading success while also encouraging students to better understand their own beliefs about and experiences with writing. We appreciate the way this assignment—through exploration of peer-created aphorisms—can help students move beyond generalized notions of writing to gain an authoritative and more nuanced contextual understanding of composing processes and products.

In the issue's third essay, Justin Cook's "A Murder Most Technical: Gamification, AI, and Rhetorical Genre Studies in the Technical Writing Classroom" offers a valuable illustration of how AI can be used to generate technical documents for student interrogation. By providing instructor-facing guides, Cook enables less-experienced users of AI to see the work that contributed to his assignment design. For students, Cook argues, the prompt helps them understand the flexible, rhetorical nature of technical genres. Throughout the essay, Cook also shows how recognized technical communication concerns of collaboration, co-production, and distributed authorship must be reviewed considering AI's text-generating capabilities.

Next up is "Building Relevancy and Engagement through Case-Based Learning in English Studies," where author Joanne Addison describes her response to the declining number of English students nationally and at her home institution, University of Colorado Denver. Her prompt seeks to increase her graduate students' ability to apply tools of linguistics to answer real-world questions asked during her department's program review, including ones related to curriculum relevancy and other issues the discipline faces. We especially appreciated Addison's appraisal of complexities of this approach, even as she argues compellingly for its potential to help students recognize applicable skills and knowledge gained through humanities and English Studies coursework.

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Finally, “Expanding Graduate Student Rhetorical Knowledge: African American Rhetorical Analysis,” by Jamila Kareem, takes us into another graduate rhetoric and writing curriculum and offers an innovative assignment that emphasizes the ancient Egyptian Kemetic rhetorical tradition. Expanding students’ knowledge of African American traditions and what Kareem explains is the relationship between rhetoric, society, culture, and community, students theorize communication practices that are deeply rooted in Black communities but that many of us schooled in Western rhetoric do not recognize. By working toward helping writers demonstrate the practices and frameworks within the Kemetic tradition, students leave the course with an expanded understanding of practices in wide circulation in U.S. culture today.

Looking forward, we close this note by forecasting our Summer 2026 issue, which will be our second special issue focused on a range of assignments from a single writing program. The set of articles taking shape from the University of Arizona are wide-ranging but united by a common focus on the transformative potential of writing within and across disciplines. Therein, editors and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program directors Aimee Mapes and Emily Jo Schwaller will illustrate U of A’s commitment to WAC principles in tandem with linguistic social justice. Given our journal’s commitment to these same principles, we can think of no better way to share important pedagogical trends in an age when institutional allegiances to diversity, equity, and inclusion are under threat.