

Dr. Wes Berry currently teaches courses such as Introduction to Literature, Kentucky and Southern Literature, and Introduction to Graduate Studies. About his **Southern Literature** course, Dr. Berry offers, “For enthusiastic readers, my Southern Literature course promises lots of fine writing from writers with distinctive voices & plenty of good-humored grotesqueries.”

Dr. Berry is a distinctive voice himself here in the department. He mentions that his writing has “**sometimes steered away from the conventional,**” including *The Kentucky Barbeque Book*, a guide to the best barbeque in Kentucky. Dr. Berry’s work led to invitations to speak around the state and even to judge barbeque competitions.

This love of food extends to Dr. Berry’s home life: at home he and his wife Elisa raise animals and a garden in order to lead the rewarding lifestyle of “feeding [themselves] as much as possible.” This **interest in self-sustainability** gave Dr. Berry the chance to host a local TV show, and he is eager to have a similar chance to “work-play” again.

Other goals for Dr. Berry are to “secure funding to do a series of interviews and video documentaries on living Kentucky writers” and to revisit a few novels-in-progress. He explains, “I find plotting the toughest of the elements. I care more about interesting characters, voice, vision, well-drawn settings, and wisdom. The best literature accomplishes all of this, including plot, artfully.”

Dr. Berry’s **path toward academia** began as early as elementary school where he won awards and spelling bees and characterizes himself as “always an earnest studier” and says, “that discipline

surely helped me do the work needed to get the PhD, tenure and promotion.”

Dr. Berry decided to pursue English as a college sophomore. Nobody can speak of Dr. Berry’s first brush with English better than he:

“As a college sophomore I took Introduction to Literature with Professor John Spurlock, and he brought a lot of fun into the classroom—a good sense of humor and a native passion for certain literary works ... I thought, ‘I can do what he does when I’m a grown up!’ I withdrew from a summer accounting course and spent fall semester 1990 riding motorcycles around Japan with my cousin. When I returned in spring 1991, I switched my major to English.”

We are certainly glad Dr. Berry took an interest in English and can now inspire WKU students with his **enthusiasm for introducing students to literature, especially regional literature, and graduate studies**. For these same students, Dr. Berry is helping to revise the MA in English curriculum.

His advice to English students is to “**read smart books,**” including, “literary classics—poetry, long and short fiction, drama, creative nonfiction—... well-written history, economics, cultural studies ... and listen carefully for an extended time to thoughtful news and analysis of news, and scrutinize—something close readers get good at—the biases of the news sources.” Dr. Berry advocates that smart books will form “well-read, informed, reasonable citizens” who will help “shape a world that’s desirable to live in.”