

Caleb Ernst
M.A. Literature, 2018
B.A. English & Allied Language
Arts, 2010

By Kiersten Richards & Madelyn Chambers

English Teacher,
Elizabethtown High School

“Encountering professors and classmates on their own cultural and intellectual ground opened my mind to the true diversity of the world.”



Caleb Ernst graduated from Western Kentucky University with a bachelor’s degree in English & Allied Language Arts in 2010. He returned to WKU to obtain his master’s degree in Literature in 2018. Since 2011, Ernst has taught AP Literature and Composition and American Literature at Elizabethtown High School.

Although he always wanted to be a teacher, Ernst originally chose to major in Journalism when he arrived at WKU. Once he realized how much he loved literature, he knew that the Department of English was the right place for him. “Teaching someone else about a subject that you love is an immensely satisfying experience, and one that is as transformative for the teacher as it is for the student—perhaps more so,” said Ernst. He hopes that all students consider themselves teachers whether or not they have a certificate. “We owe it to those who taught us to give some of our time in a similar way,” said Ernst.

At WKU, Ernst learned to keep an open mind, have a better understanding of the *world* that is literature, and cherish a mind full of memories. “Encountering professors and classmates on their own cultural and intellectual ground opened my mind to the true diversity of the world,” said Ernst. He says that this attitude transitioned him from a small-town student into a cultured adult. Ernst also believes that understanding the worldwide depths of literature taught him to approach life humbly yet confidently. Cherishing the memories that he made going to poetry readings, football games, and everything in between keeps him stable in the “rush and hubbub of adult life.”

Ernst lives in rural Larue County with his wife Kayla, who also teaches English. He enjoys playing with his two dogs, Daisy and Charley, walking in the woods, re-reading books he loves, and birdwatching. Ernst also says that he is “a firm believer in the value of art of all kinds, and I believe that creating, experiencing, and thinking about art makes us better human beings.”

To current students, Ernst advised, “Your career will happen faster than you can even imagine, so be proactive. Set achievable but challenging goals, begin establishing professional contacts, and make the most of your time in school so that you will be well prepared when you begin the transition into your chosen field.”

