

## Shane Wood, B.A. English, Literature, Class of 2011

By Melissa J. Rush

### Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Kansas

*“When I reflect on my experiences at WKU, I always go back to the English classroom environment. For me, that was my greatest learning experience because it shaped and altered how I perceived education. I was originally a business major but switched due to my experiences in the English classroom. The English department had that type of impact on my life.”*



Shane Wood is a Bowling Green native and for him the only university he had interest in attending was Western Kentucky. Though his academic journey has taken him to other states, he still believes WKU is one of the most beautiful campuses around and The Hill will always be home to him.

Wood made the most of his time at WKU by writing for *The Talisman* and *The Herald* and serving as an ambassador for the Dean’s Council of Students for Potter College. He also participated in the English Club and American Sign Language Club. Wood made his first professional conference debut at WKU when he presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Undergraduate Conference on Literature, Language, and Culture.

It was the emphasis on collaboration in the classroom and the communal feeling of sitting in a circle to share ideas that made Wood switch from his business major to English literature. “I felt like my teachers genuinely cared about me as a student. I developed a lot of great friendships in my English classes. Those were special moments that influenced me as a student and teacher.” In his current position as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the University of Kansas, Wood models that same collaborative design with the students he teaches. Wood created and teaches two sophomore-junior level courses called *The Meaning of Life and Death* and teaches two basic composition courses as an adjunct at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas.

In addition to teaching four classes, Wood is the acting Editorial Assistant for [Composition Forum](#), which is a journal of pedagogical theory in rhetoric and composition. He also had the opportunity recently of presenting at the Conference on College Composition and Communication with Dr. Angela Jones. Although he was a presenter, Wood had more to add to the conference than just speaking. “Creativity and critical thinking has been a huge part for how I’ve used my English degree, too. I recently designed the hospitality website for the [2018 Conference on College Composition and Communication](#) in Kansas City. I also created an ‘escape room’ at the conference. The escape room was themed as the ‘writing classroom’ and challenged participants, mostly teachers, to think about accessibility, privilege, power, identity, and labor in their writing classroom.”

Wood has recently accepted a tenure-track position at Southern Mississippi University as an assistant professor. He will be teaching and designing technical writing courses, mentoring graduate students, and continuing to research and seek publication. Dr. Wes Berry is the professor that suggested the Rhetoric and Composition track as something Wood might find rewarding. “Wes Berry has been one of my greatest influences and one of my greatest mentors. I owe a lot to Wes Berry. As an undergraduate, I took a couple of classes from him. I would always go visit him in office hours and mainly talk about life (sometimes course materials). He would always listen to me, and he would always provide terrific direction.” Wood shared that he has stayed in close contact with his mentor and friend over the years and always makes time to visit when he returns home. Dr. Lloyd Davies, Dr. Ted Hovet, and Dr. Tom Hunley were also professors that Wood considered highly influential on his time at WKU.

In making the transition to teaching at USM, Wood could not be happier to be building his career in the field that he loves. “I feel extremely fortunate to have received a tenure-track position at a wonderful university. My whole life has been education and academia, so I’m going to continue laboring, reading, writing, and teaching. I’m excited about being an Assistant Professor. There’s going to be a lot of new responsibilities that come with that position. As a teacher, I’m content, but not too content. I always want to think critically and challenge myself pedagogically. The same can be said for my research agenda. I always want to work hard toward bigger goals and successes.”

Wood had a very fulfilling experience at WKU and shared what he feels made him successful to current and future English students. “I would encourage current undergraduate students to take advantage of the expertise and genuine good-heartedness of the people in the English department. WKU has an incredibly special English department. Take advantage of office hours. Get to know your professors. Be

known by your professors. Pour into the classroom. Collaborate with your peers. Seek out opportunities. Be intentional. Be relational. Share the wisdom and knowledge you have. You can contribute to the success of the classroom, and you can help create a sustainable, effective learning environment. I would encourage undergraduate students to share their voice, contribute daily, and make the most of your experience. I believe that all student voices are needed for the classroom to thrive.”

