



## Dr. Christopher Lewis

By Collin Massie and Bailey Cooke

Dr. Christopher Lewis teaches such classes in the WKU English department as **African American Literature, U.S. Ethnic Literature, LGBTQ Literature, and African American Film**. His research focuses primarily on “issues of queer gender and sexuality in nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century African American literature.” He has published

a number of articles on these subjects, including “Queering Personhood in the Neo-Slave Narrative: Jewelle Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories*,” and “**Cultivating Black Lesbian Shamelessness: Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*.**”

Dr. Lewis mentions that he sometimes likes to follow his articles after they’ve been published to get an idea of what the impact is. The latter article mentioned above, he says, makes him particularly happy because it “seems to have been assigned in a few classes across the country and, what’s more, that some students have presented on the article.” He says, “I even tracked down their Power Point presentation about the article online and was blown away. **It’s gratifying to know people are actually reading and engaging your work.**”

He is also very proud of his forthcoming article on Paul Laurence Dunbar, expounding on what Dr. Lewis coins “deviant masculinities” in Dunbar’s fiction. The article is set to be published in the journal *College Literature*. He says that the idea for the article grew “out of a National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute on Dunbar that I attended in 2015.”

Dr. Lewis’s motivation inside and outside of the classroom largely stems from a love for aesthetic appeal; he has an intense love of visual art. He says, “I love bringing visual art into the literature classroom because I think images can help us clarify complicated

ideas. Outside of teaching, I often make collages out of paper, fabric, sequins, and other materials. I find it therapeutic and exciting to create images that don't yet exist in the world." With a **love for the visual nature of things combined with a drive for creativity**, it's not hard to see why his classes are often so engaging for students.

One thing in the English department that Dr. Lewis says he particularly enjoys is co-organizing and attending the Undergraduate Conference on Literature, Language, and Culture. This is largely coupled with his love for being part of the team involved in the *Ashen Egg*, the department's magazine that publishes acutely impressive works of research by students. Both of these revolve around analysis and research done by students. Where the *Ashen Egg* is strictly a magazine, the Undergraduate Conference is a forum for vocally sharing a finished product.

It's easy to see that Dr. Lewis's desire for students greatly stems from not only motivating students to think and analyze for themselves, but he is **sincerely interested in their points of view**—bringing new and perceptive ideas to the table on any number of issues, many of which don't necessarily need to be isolated to the English classroom. He says, "I encourage English students to reflect on how portable the skills they learn in English classes are. **Students in English classes get to develop skills in talking and writing about complicated social and political issues that are much needed in the world.**"