FACULTY POSITION IN ENGLISH EDUCATION
(ASSISTANT OR ASSOCIATE)
POSTING 8567
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

The College of Arts and Letters (CAL) at Michigan State University is seeking a tenure-system faculty member at the rank of assistant or associate professor to contribute to a transdisciplinary effort in English Education. Candidates specializing in linguistic, textual, cultural, or digital studies/analyses across fields of African American & African Studies, reading, and English, and with commitments to issues of equity, urban and multicultural education, community outreach, and disciplinary innovation are of particular interest. We also seek scholars with a strong potential for, or record of, leadership at the university and nationally in English Education.

Major Responsibilities & Position Description. The successful candidate will work with a committed team of English Education faculty in CAL, helping to coordinate, re-envision, and maintain an English Education “program” poised to serve urban communities surrounding MSU. The successful candidate will also produce rigorous scholarship significant to teaching and learning in English language arts and humanities, help prepare future ELA teachers, and take leadership roles in English Studies and beyond. As part of her or his 9-month academic year appointment, to be jointly housed across three units: the Departments of English and WRAC, and in the AAAS program, the successful candidate will be responsible for teaching four courses (2-2) in English Education (in addition to other possible course offerings) at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Our expectation is that the successful candidate will work effectively to help build a powerful cross-disciplinary community of scholars and teachers dedicated to the development of inclusive, integrative, active, and socially just teaching and research for diverse learners in English language arts.

Qualifications. Applicants are expected to hold a PhD or equivalent qualifications in a field relevant to the expected job duties outlined above. Applicants who have experience teaching in K-12 settings, who have significant experience conducting research in English education and/or who have experience working with state level departments of education are preferred. Preference will also be given to applicants with a successful record of/potential for grant writing, collaboration, and scholarship in the critical teaching of English. Successful applicants will possess expertise in one or more of the following areas:
• Research in urban arts and humanities, digital media, and/or linguistically diverse ELA environments
• Critical approaches to language and literacy (with emphases on reading)
• Interdisciplinary/multicultural studies in urban English education
• Scholarship on adolescent and adult literacies
• K through U teacher development

Salary. Salary for this position will be competitive and commensurate with qualifications.

Special instructions to applicants. Review of applications will begin on December 1, 2013 and continue until the position has been filled. Applications for this position must be submitted electronically at the Michigan State Human Resources web site (https://jobs.msu.edu). Applications should include letter expressing interest in this position and describing qualifications and experience, a current curriculum vitae, and the names of three potential referees.

Dr. David E. Kirkland, search committee chair, is available to answer questions related to this search. He can be reached by email at: kirklan4@msu.edu.

MSU is committed to achieving excellence through cultural diversity. The University actively encourages applications and/or nominations of women, persons of color, veterans and persons with disabilities.
In his “Extending the Conversation” article, “Authentic Teacher Evaluation: A Two-Tiered Proposal for Formative and Summative Assessment,” Peter Smagorinsky presents a perspective on teacher evaluation that differs from those we hear much about lately, such as value-added measures and using student achievement scores as a percentage of teachers’ evaluations. In addition, he provides descriptions of teachers who are making a difference in the schools where they teach. Smagorinsky’s article, which is based on a keynote talk that he gave at the Conference on English Education (CEE) meeting in Colorado during July 2013, pushed both of us to think about and to write about our own experiences with teacher evaluation, both as classroom teachers and as teacher educators.

Leslie’s experiences with teacher evaluation range from the sublime to the ridiculous. While teaching high school English, she received occasional evaluations from her building principal, with what seemed superfluous suggestions. For example, after one such 50-minute observation, this principal’s only suggestion for improvement was that she should “Write an objective on the chalkboard.” As a teacher educator at the university level, her teaching evaluations were much more thorough, including student evaluations on every course taught and frequent peer reviews from tenured colleagues. However, because student evaluations of instruction can be influenced by myriad issues, and because peer evaluations often seemed to lack coherent suggestions for improvement, Leslie found that neither of these techniques was particularly conducive to improvements in her teaching.

Lisa’s experience with evaluation has been interesting. While a novice classroom teacher in the late 1990s, she was formally observed by building administrators using a one-page checklist. Long before the current high-stakes climate, such observations were friendly and supportive.

Later, as a teacher educator, she was the one now observing and evaluating those in their field experiences and internships. At the University of Tennessee students in the English education program earned their
bachelor’s degrees in English before applying to the master’s only program. Thus, teacher candidates were taking classes in the fall while they took over one class from their cooperating teacher; in the spring, the candidates added a second course while working on action research projects—projects whose inquiry emerged from their classroom teaching experience. The synergy between the university classroom and the 6–12 classroom experience provided a well-rounded evaluation. (As a teacher educator, unlike Leslie, Lisa never had a peer evaluation; maybe she should have, but her semester course evaluations were always very high, so she did not go that route.)

Seventeen years after she began her teaching career, Lisa is back in the high school classroom. So far this year, she has had three visits from administrators, and as we write this she is preparing for walkthroughs in her reading classes by district-level administrators. Considered a new teacher again, she will have several formal evaluations this year. Gone is the one-page checklist. Now there are pages and pages of “domains” that will be looked for (objectives written on the board is one of them!).

One way to think about using evaluations and observation to improve the quality of student teaching might be modeled on the process a Wyoming junior high school has been implementing, which is a “laboratory classroom” approach. In this system, teachers volunteer to open their classrooms to colleagues for observation. In a carefully structured and guided process, the teacher who is being observed helps his or her colleagues to understand what particular question or problem he or she is working on. The observing colleagues then provide feedback to the teacher who is being observed on that particular question or problem. Meanwhile, the observing teachers have their own questions or problems that they are looking for; they use the lens of these questions or problems to gain insight from their observation of a colleague’s classroom. Careful pre-observation and post-observation conferences are facilitated by an instructional leader or instructional coach to ensure that the feedback and interaction are critical and positive. This kind of professional development would be an insightful opportunity to implement instructional improvement, as well as an opportunity to develop positive and collegial relationships with teaching colleagues.

In this issue, we are delighted to present two research articles and two “Extending the Conversation” articles. In her article, “To Witness and to Testify: Preservice Teachers Examine Literary Aesthetics to Better Understand Diverse Literature,” Wendy J. Glenn presents a study designed to assist preservice English teachers in their exploration of ethnically unfamiliar literature. Her findings indicate that the students involved in the process of learning about ethnically unfamiliar literature became “increasingly conscious of the assumptions they bring to a text and how they hold subject...
Emily R. Smith, Betsy A. Bowen, and Faith A. Dohm address the contradictions among the voices involved in English teacher education and identify ways of bringing English faculty, in particular, into the conversation and work of preparing English teachers in their article, “Contradictory and Missing Voices in English Education: An Invitation to English Faculty.” In this article, the authors highlight the differences between English and English education faculty members’ assumptions about literature and those that seem to be embedded in the Praxis II examinations that many of our students are required to take. Noting that English faculty members “are virtually absent from all discussions and decisions about English teacher preparation and assessment” (p. 135), Smith, Bowen, and Dohm provide suggestions for concrete ways in which English faculty members can be more involved in teacher preparation.

Our two “Extending the Conversation” articles in this issue provide unique perspectives on the experiences of both preservice and inservice teachers. In “Learning from Our Youngest Writers: Preservice Teachers in Primary Classes,” authors Roark Mulligan and Kay Dawson describe a project in which preservice teachers worked in primary grade classrooms, focusing on mentoring young children in writing. In spite of the authors’ initial fears that preservice teachers would find these experiences irrelevant, the authors found that the preservice teachers “witnessed a rapidity of development that could not be observed on any other grade level” (p. 158). The description of their project should provide helpful information for those English teacher educators who would like to facilitate a similar classroom experience for their own students.

Finally, Peter Smagorinsky, as noted above, presents a new proposal for teacher evaluation in his article, “Authentic Teacher Evaluation: A Two-Tiered Proposal for Formative and Summative Assessment.” Smagorinsky’s suggestion is quite appropriate for our times: “Assessing teachers according to what effective teachers do, rather than according to which assessment means are most cost-effective and most amenable to reduction to single scores, seems appropriate” (p. 168).

All of the articles in this issue present unique perspectives on age-old problems in education, including teacher evaluation, connecting preservice and inservice instruction, connecting English and English Education faculty members, and helping students to understand and to be enthusiastic about literatures from cultures other than their own. We hope that the articles in this issue will bring our readers some fresh perspectives on these problems, as we continue to work together to bring about improvements in English and literacy instruction.