

ERIN C. SINGER

F. J. TAYLOR UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING AWARD 2024 NOMINATION PACKET

I am honored to be nominated by the College of Liberal Arts for the F.J. Taylor Undergraduate Teaching Award, and humbled to find myself among the company of the other nominees from across Louisiana Tech University. Thank you for your consideration for this award.

LIST OF UNDERGRADUATE COURSES TAUGHT

Overall retention mean: 90%

Overall evaluation mean: 3.67 out of 4.0

Quarter	Class	Beginning Enrollment (9th Day)	Ending Enrollment	Retention Rate Percentage	Overall Evaluation Score (Mean by Quarter)
Winter 24	ENGL 475: Plath and Sexton	9	8	88%	Not yet available
Winter 24	ENGL 102: Freshman Composition II	22	20	91%	Not yet available
Winter 24	ENGL 102: Freshman Composition II	23	19	83%	Not yet available
Fall 23	ENGL 408: American Poetry	11	11	100%	3.78
Spring 22	ENGL 402: Women Writers	20	20	100%	3.61
Spring 22	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	22	19	86%	3.61
Spring 22	ENGL 101: Freshman Composition I	25	24	96%	3.61
Winter 22	ENGL 475: Modern American Epic	11	9	82%	3.75
Winter 22	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	10	10	100%	3.75
Winter 22	ENGL 101: Freshman Composition I	26	24	92%	3.75
Fall 21	ENGL 101:	24	19	79%	3.75

	Freshman Composition I				
Fall 21	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	32	26	81%	3.75
Fall 21	ENGL 408: American Poetry	15	14	93%	3.75
Spring 21	ENGL 101: Freshman Composition I	25	22	88%	3.60
Spring 21	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	34	28	82%	3.60
Spring 21	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	18	17	94%	3.60
Winter 21	ENGL 101: Freshman Composition I	25	18	72%	3.50
Winter 21	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	32	30	94%	3.50
Fall 20	ENGL 101: Freshman Composition I	26	23	88%	3.62
Fall 20	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	35	33	94%	3.62
Fall 20	ENGL 409: 19th-Century American Novel	15	15	100%	3.62
Spring 20	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	35	33	94%	3.74
Spring 20	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	31	25	81%	3.74
Winter 20	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	31	29	94%	3.67
Winter 20	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	32	29	91%	3.67
Fall 19	ENGL 212: Intro. To American	34	33	97%	3.82

	Literature				
Fall 19	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	32	23	72%	3.82
Fall 19	ENGL 408: American Poetry	22	20	91%	3.82
Winter 19	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	34	33	97%	3.78
Winter 19	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	33	26	79%	3.78
Winter 19	ENGL 101: Freshman Composition I	25	22	88%	3.78
Fall 18	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	29	27	93%	3.60
Fall 18	ENGL 212: Intro. To American Literature	28	27	96%	3.60

PERSONAL STATEMENT OF BELIEFS CONCERNING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING WITHIN THE OVERALL MISSION OF LOUISIANA TECH

In putting together these materials, I have been reflecting on the university's mission and top priority, which is "the education and development of its students in a challenging, yet safe and supportive, diverse community of learners." Since 2017, undergraduate teaching has been at the center of my job here at Louisiana Tech, and I have worked both to meet students where they are, and also help them take productive intellectual risks to grow as scholars.

Over the past seven academic years as first an Assistant Professor, then an Associate Professor of American Literature, I have taught 46 undergraduate class sections, and designed and prepared ten different undergraduate courses. The majority of my teaching has consisted of courses that fulfill GER requirements, which means I am fortunate to be able to teach students from every major and degree program at Tech. These lower-division courses such as "Introduction to American Literature" allow me to contribute to the mission of the university in that I can challenge and also support diverse perspectives in my course reading lists and class discussions.

My evaluation metrics tell part of the story of my teaching: my student evaluations (3.67 out of 4.0), retention rate (90%), and enrollment numbers (consistently fully enrolled) are all excellent. Before I arrived at Louisiana Tech, I was an instructor at University of Houston for four years, where I was awarded the prestigious University Teaching Award (2016), which was given to only a dozen professors and graduate students out of a faculty of over one thousand. My time at Tech has allowed me to continue

to develop my pedagogy, guided by my own reflection, and by learning from my colleagues. Last year, I was awarded the Virgil Orr Junior Faculty Award, in large part for my contributions to undergraduate teaching. Beyond the numbers, I evaluate my own teaching practice with the goal of creating a space for productive intellectual growth for both myself and my students. There are three ways that I work towards that growth: (1) centering diversity, (2) engaging with research, and (3) developing innovative assignments.

My first teaching philosophy is that American literature has always been a diverse field, even though sometimes the reading lists of the past have not reflected, as Whitman put it, the “multitudes” it “contain[s].” This principle guides my teaching on a curricular level, where I make efforts to include indigenous, Latinx, Black, and Asian voices alongside more canonical white writers. This class offers students the chance to consider the ways in which America’s diversity is reflected in its literature. We read authors who come from different backgrounds: in terms of religion, language, national origin, region, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, citizenship, and ability). I emphasize the social constructions of the literary canon by assigning a research essay, which is called the “Blank Syllabus Essay” in which students have the opportunity to argue for the addition of one new text to our course curriculum, or the removal of another. Students thus also have a way to contribute to future iterations of the course.

My second teaching philosophy is to engage undergraduate students with research in a way that enriches their learning. I have advised three different students on their university-wide Undergraduate Research and Service Learning projects, two of which have been competitively selected for the ULS-system-wide symposium. The most recent student success was an interdisciplinary research collaboration between English and neuroscience, situated at the intersection of modernist American poetry and visual language processing in the brain. This kind of multidisciplinary collaboration allows students to forge connections across the university as well as among academic disciplines in a way that I hope will become a pattern in their future professional contributions.

I also mentor and advise students in my upper-division courses to engage in original research. One example is a student whose work on poet Anne Sexton (on whom I have published research) has continued to develop; as she has engaged with questions of Sexton’s experimental pedagogy, I have helped this student navigate her first literary archival research project at the University of Austin’s Harry Ransom Center (an internationally renowned humanities research center). With my guidance, this student is the first to analyze Sexton’s 1967 journals from Sexton’s time as a high school teacher. This is work that will undoubtedly be published, and help the student prepare for graduate education.

INNOVATIONS IN UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

Teaching innovation is my third teaching philosophy, and warrants its own section in this packet. I create innovative assignments across the English curriculum in order to encourage students to take intellectual risks. In freshman composition, one of my assignments is to emphasize multimodal communication using zines (short for “magazines,” small-circulation pamphlets). As students worked through creating their zines and writing an explanatory essay about them, they commented on decisions they made about editing (what to include, what to leave out), visual rhetoric (which images to include, layout, background, font choices), and audience. I have incorporated more visual, artistic, and performance options into my literature courses as well. One particularly excellent example is an original French horn composition

inspired by Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself,” along with accompanying research about both musicality in Whitman’s poems, and the history of brass instrument music in the nineteenth century. Another recent innovative assignment for a senior seminar for English majors was podcasting. Students worked in teams to create podcast episodes about nineteenth-century American novels. Though it was not a media production class, students were able to focus on how uses of sound, pacing, and oral presentation could enliven discussion about a certain text. This came through perhaps most strongly when considering the character of Carwin the bilquist from Charles Brockden Brown’s *Wieland* (1798). One final teaching innovation I use in my classes is opportunities for metacognition, in which students reflect on and assess their own learning.

Another area of teaching innovation is course development and curricular development. Within the department, I have strengthened the course offerings in the area for which I was hired: nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature and poetry/poetics. I have seen tremendous growth in students’ ability to analyze the formal and thematic qualities of poetry, which has filled a gap in department teaching needs. I also served for two years on a committee that revised the current English curriculum. This work involved peer-institution benchmarking, as well as an assessment of departmental strengths and opportunities for growth.

In conclusion, my teaching practice helps students rethink literary studies and their own ways of learning, both of which I hope will stay with them long after they leave my classroom.

TEACHING-RELATED PUBLICATIONS

“There is where my heart still is’: Frost in a Hemispheric Context.” *Approaches to Teaching the Poetry of Robert Frost*, Ed. Sean Heuston. MLA. In press [editorial stage].

ADDITIONAL PERTINENT INFORMATION

TEACHING AWARDS: Virgil Orr Junior Faculty Award for Excellence in Research, Teaching, and Service, Louisiana Tech University (2022)

DEPARTMENT, COLLEGE, AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Graduate Faculty, English (2017–present)

Composition Faculty, English (2017–present)

Curriculum Revision Committee, English (2021–23)

Faculty Advisory Board, The Quatrain Student Literary Magazine (2019–21)

Faculty Advisor, Louisiana Tech Poetry Society (2017–22, 2023–present)

Faculty Advisor, Omicron Delta Kappa (Leadership Honor Society) (2023–present)

Faculty Advisor, Women’s Book Club (2019–20)

Poetry Reading Series Selection Committee (2017–19)

Student Writing Contest Committee (2017–19)

College of Liberal Arts Representative, University Senate (2018–21)

University Affairs: Faculty Committee, University Senate (2019–20)

Academic Affairs Committee, University Senate (2018–19)