

Lissa Cullen

Lecturer in English and Teacher Education
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EDUCATION

- 2027 (Expected) Ed.D. Candidate, Curriculum and Instruction, American College of Education

Dissertation: Exercising Pedagogical Judgment About Generative Artificial Intelligence in Authentic Writing Instruction: A Qualitative Descriptive Phenomenological Study of Secondary English Language Arts Teachers in Colorado (Working Title)
- 2013 Ed.S., University of Colorado, Education Leadership and Policy
Concentration: School Culture and Transformation
- 2002 M.A., Curriculum and Instruction, University of Denver, 2002
Concentration: Aesthetics in Education
- 1996 B.A., English, University of Kansas, 1996
University Honors program

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2025–Present** **Lecturer, English and Education**
Metropolitan State University of Denver
Teach First-Year Composition (in-person and asynchronous formats) and supervise preservice teachers in field experience and student teaching placements.
Design writing-intensive curriculum situated in real-world contexts, emphasizing rigor and workshop-based revision.
Guide preservice educators through observation, lesson design, and reflective feedback cycles.
Engage in ongoing work to strengthen program coherence and vertical alignment across English and English Education coursework, with attention to advising structures and student support.
- 2023–2024** **Visiting Upper School English Instructor (One-Year Appointment)**
Colorado Academy, Denver, CO
Taught Poetry Writing, American Literature, and Senior Seminar in a college preparatory setting emphasizing analytical and creative writing.

SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

My work focuses on the intersection of teacher preparation, writing instruction, and reflective practice, with particular attention to the role of vulnerability in both teaching and writing. I study how teachers develop as writers and how that development sustains their professional growth, shapes their classroom communities, and positions them as learners alongside their students. Central to my research is how AI-supported writing pedagogy can enable greater vulnerability, allowing writers and teachers to take risks, make thinking visible, and experience the satisfaction and sustainability that comes from authentic, reflective practice. I explore how vulnerability strengthens both writing quality and teaching effectiveness, creating conditions where structured reflection becomes a pathway to professional growth.

SECONDARY TEACHING AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

2010–2012

Dean of Instruction and Assistant Principal

North High School, Denver, CO

Stepped into instructional leadership during a period of school turnaround, designing sustained professional learning that contributed to measurable gains in literacy achievement (12% increase in reading proficiency, 9% in writing, 14% increase in AP pass rates).

Coached and evaluated teachers through structured observation and feedback cycles, strengthening writing instruction, disciplinary literacy, and argument-based pedagogy.

Established Professional Learning Communities and data-informed protocols to align curriculum, clarify expectations, and support collaborative instructional improvement across departments.

Mentored new teachers through structured induction focused on reflective practice, classroom culture, and instructional decision-making within a multicultural, restorative school community.

2005–2010

English Teacher, AP Language and Literature/Writing Resource Teacher

Rock Canyon High School, Highlands Ranch, CO

Designed and led Advanced Placement Language and Composition and Advanced Placement Literature courses aligned with first-year college composition standards in rhetorical analysis, argumentation, literary interpretation, and research-based writing.

Developed writing-intensive curriculum grounded in rhetoric and composition scholarship, emphasizing genre study, revision, and seminar-based discussion.

Led AP Language instruction resulting in strong student performance and measurable growth in writing proficiency and exam outcomes.

Served as Building Writing Resource Teacher, receiving release time to observe classrooms, coach teachers in writing instruction, and facilitate professional development on writing across the curriculum.

Analyzed schoolwide writing data to identify instructional gaps, establish shared academic language, and strengthen vertical and horizontal alignment in literacy instruction.

1999–2005

English Teacher/Department Chair

ThunderRidge High School, Highlands Ranch, CO

Taught literature and writing courses across grade levels, centering analytical writing and inquiry-based instruction.

Developed and team-taught an integrated Humanities curriculum in collaboration with History faculty, aligning literary analysis with historical inquiry and argument-based writing.

Created vertically aligned curriculum guides and scope and sequence for grades 9–12 to strengthen coherence and progression in literature and writing instruction.

Directed Senior Project, a capstone assessment integrating research, service learning, and public presentation, mentoring students through extended writing and independent inquiry.

Served as English Department Chair, leading curriculum development, coordinating assessment practices, and supporting instructional alignment within the department.

AWARDS AND GRANTS

2003

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute Fellow

Selected as one of 25 teachers nationwide to study Mozart's German operas in historical and cultural contexts. Developed humanities curriculum informed by research conducted in Vienna.