

New Faculty Spotlight: Emily Pifer

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Emily Pifer, who started as a lecturer with the English Department in 2025, fell in love with northern Utah when she moved with her family in 2023. The transition from Wyoming was hard, especially with Emily having their first child and finishing her PhD in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric dissertation, which analyzed how stories about rural communities are reproduced and revised across popular culture. She started teaching part-time as an adjunct with the department shortly after finishing her doctorate in 2024, and when she entered the job market, she hoped she would be able to continue teaching at USU.

“I found — and still find — my students here to be uniquely curious, enthusiastic, and hard-working. I feel so fortunate that I was hired, and I am excited to continue learning from my colleagues and students,” Emily reflects.

In both her creative and academic writing courses, Emily focuses on approaching the writing process as “holistic, recursive, often messy, and always imperfect.” Students in her classes spend a lot of time freewriting, reflecting, revising, and engaging in workshoping or peer review processes. Emily also focuses on enabling students to create a learning community within their course where every student feels comfortable and confident to harness and hone their unique skills and voices.

“More recently, I have been fascinated by the relationship between writing and play, and I want to learn more

about how my students and I might integrate play-based pedagogies into our work together,” Emily comments.

Before arriving at USU, Emily’s memoir *The Running Body* was published by Autumn House Press in 2022. She also received teaching awards at both the University of Wyoming, where she received her MFA, and Syracuse University, where she earned her PhD.

“These awards are so meaningful to me because teaching is the reason I pursued academia,” Emily notes. “And though it’s not on my CV, I am really proud of the way my partner and I have navigated our role as parents alongside our roles here at USU. These last few years have been a challenging but rewarding juggling act.”