Developing and Using the Art of Writing

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The ABCs of the UWP

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Voices

Publish or Perish: The Challenges of Faculty Writing

Profiles in Writing

The Poem as Discipline and Experience

letter from the director

Well, change is supposed to be a good thing, yes? Madonna says so, and whatever your opinion about her as a thinker, she pulls down a lot more money than I do. Thus, in the Fall/Winter issue of lessons, we incorporated faculty development information into our writing. In the Spring/Summer issue, we continue with that change and because the issue is about writing, we try some new things. Some of our articles are creative writing pieces, some of the pedagogical sidebars are humorous (to me, anyway), and the Director’s Corner is a review of the many ways writing serves us as a teaching/learning tool. The piece on plagiarism was particularly difficult to write from the many fine articles that ultimately served as reference materials. After all, so many had written so well before me.

With change, particularly the changes that come with spring, comes the chance for new beginnings. When you read this, the tulips will be blooming, baby birds will be born, and we will be ready for the renewal that comes with summer term. Inspired by this issue, I hope you are able to write about your own progress and changes, and put more writing into the courses you teach. You are invited to write to me about the changes you see in lessons, and how we might serve your teaching.

Stephani
Writing A Life

EDITORIAL BY LISA FRASIER

I am a writing genius—at least that’s what I’ve always been told. Upon reflection, though, a good deal of that praise may have stemmed from my childhood among gifted siblings, and my resulting overdeveloped need to be good at something.

In the second grade, I carried around a little red notebook, and fancied myself some type of journalist, or spy. I kept detailed notes of other students in the class, and would work on them when the classroom lessons failed to hold my attention.

In the fourth grade, I was transferred to a school for gifted children, where I not only had the opportunity to write and publish short articles and poems in the school’s literary magazine, but I also learned to use desktop publishing software, a skill I brought home with me to help create detailed family newsletters ("...and for dinner tonight, Mom’s making..."

In junior high school, I expanded my growing literary repertoire to include longer works of fiction (one about a haunted golden fork that seemingly stalked the owner of a diner was particularly compelling), and also worked on the school’s newspaper (the Charger Chapter, available to students during lunch hour for one thin dime). I started watching Murphy Brown, and developed a rather skewed desire to become a journalist.

The driving force of that hit television series carried me into high school, where I continued working on the school newspaper, eventually winning an award for feature writing from the Utah Press Women. Gathering steam as a burgeoning journalist, I decided to test the limits of free speech as it’s defined for public school students, and a stint of bitter columns printed in the Viewmont High School Danegeld gained me a fair amount of fame among fellow popularity underdogs. At the close of my senior year, I somehow managed to be selected to attend the prestigious (and highly coveted among 11th and 12th grade students in Mrs. Bean’s creative writing classes) Young Writers@Work Creative Writing Conference.

Continuing on my wave of success as a writer, I majored in English at Weber State University, and was invited to enroll in an advanced fiction writing course, where a personal revelation transformed into a short story somehow ended up as a piece selected for presentation in the National Undergraduate Literature Conference.

That’s me, in second grade. I’m the curly-haired blonde looking slyly off to the right, sitting next to the girl in black pigtails.
And just when my ego couldn’t take any more inflating, the ride ended. I was hired as a tutor for the university’s writing center and as a copy editor for the student-run campus newspaper, and I soon realized that my enjoyment of the writing process wasn’t directly related to my ability to teach it. The delicate balance between peer-tutor and student-writer was lost on me, and my efforts as copy editor of the student-run campus newspaper were really more of a dictatorship than an attempt to teach proper spelling, punctuation and AP style. It took me a while, but I eventually figured out that writing is an intensely personal process, one of self-expression and individual exploration, and no matter how good I was at writing, or how good people told me I was, “natural talent” didn’t equip me with the tools I needed to help others learn what it seemed, at least on the surface, that I already knew.

In reflecting on my life in writing, I’ve realized that it hasn’t all been easy, or fun. The lessons I’ve learned I’ve come by the hard way. My little red notebook was confiscated by a well-intentioned but smothering second-grade teacher, who was convinced I wasn’t learning properly by writing anything that she didn’t assign. The columns in my high school newspaper that earned me such popularity also gleaned a fair amount of threats and moderate personal violence. My award-winning piece of fiction in college, the creation of which had wrangled such personal turmoil from my heart and hand, was met with lukewarm reviews from my family and some rather misdirected concern from my professor. These hard lessons are the ones I took with me into graduate school here at the University of Utah, where I had the distinct pleasure of teaching mass communication writing and editing for two years while working on my master’s degree. After that first awful semester, I seemed to fall into a rhythm of give-and-take with my students, learning as much from them about teaching as I hoped they were learning from me about writing.

In editing my final edition of lessons, before turning over the helm to younger and more capable hands, I’m honored to share with our readers some of what I’ve learned through writing and teaching writing, in an effort to keep teaching techniques incorporating writing fresh, and in the forefront of learning at the U.

Through these events, this life, I’ve learned that writing can be a painful process. The road to self-discovery through writing isn’t always clear, and some of what’s learned through that journey is often unexpected and difficult. Criticism of writing should reflect tenderness.

I’ve learned that there is always something else to learn, whether through introspection and persistent personal discovery through writing, or by the study of another’s writing. No one can possibly know it all, no matter how charmed one’s life may seem to be.

Most importantly, I’ve learned that maybe I wasn’t as great of a writer as everybody always told me I was, and that if I wanted to continue my life as a journey in words, I had better find reasons to do it for myself—outside of Murphy Brown reruns.
People Don’t Change, But They Can Learn

Why do you bother? He’s never going to change. People don’t change.” On some level, I believe that to be true. There are some things about me that I was born with and will die with. On occasion, I wonder if they’ll cause my death. For example, I speak up. And that won’t be changing.

Yet, I see people changing all the time. As a nurse, I see enormous personal transformation as a result of experiencing pain, loss or parenthood. As faculty, we hope that our teaching, painful or not, changes students. If not now, perhaps later, even years after graduation.

No matter which side of this debate you are on, we know that one of the more potent ways to initiate change is through the use of writing. But what, exactly, is learned through writing, and when is writing an appropriate pedagogical method? How can it be used in the sciences, and in content-driven courses? And what about all that reading and grading?

Content Mastery. Content mastery is the most defensible and, some would say, sensible use of writing as a learning tool. Writing can change the speed, depth, and ease of content mastery. Usually, we ask students to write formal papers or critiques. Yet you also can use reflective writing to promote concept mastery, even in the sciences. Reflective writing requires some informal self-disclosure or self-application, and can help students put a concept, a theory or an application into their own words. Examples of reflective writing assignments in the sciences include relating the tenets of probability learned today to their chances of winning the lottery, applying a physical law to their own driving or skiing abilities, or comparing pain theory to their injury experience.

Learning Writing. Intentional or not, writing results in another change, beyond content mastery: learning how to write. Learning to write, always a laudable goal for a writing exercise, includes such basics as the mechanics of constructing a readable sentence or a cogent argument. It is best achieved through guided writing, in some quantity, and multiple drafts with instructor feedback. Yet learning to write, even if the writing is of poor quality, also includes some increased development or awareness of one’s relationship with writing.

Self-Learning. Learning about one’s self is a happy outcome of writing as a learning activity. I certainly have known students who were not ready to explore a relationship with themselves through writing, particularly if I were privy to the content. Incorporate reflective writing into your course, and I guarantee you’ll have some whine with your dinner. For these few students, learning about one’s self may consist only of the awareness that writing for self-knowledge does not work for them (no small victory). Other students can experience self-awareness ranging from small “ah-ha” to true paradigm shifts. The best exercises for self-learning through writing are journals, critical incident papers where one reflects informally on a recent incident relevant to course material, thought/response papers, or writing where opposing views must be explicated.
What kind of writing to assign? Many of us created or inherited courses that fulfill the upper division communication/writing course requirement, necessary for completion of a bachelor’s degree. Whether enthusiastic about using writing as a learning tool, or as conscript, a brief and practical review of options and uses for writing may be helpful.

First, consider the goal. If you want to teach the disciplinary norms for writing, assign the type of writing respected by the discipline (e.g., abstracts in the sciences, short plays in theater, articles in journalism, arguments in political science). Expect students to require a fair amount of coaching from you, as discipline-specific writing can be quite formulaic, so plan lots of drafts and rewrites. Students may need examples, and will need detailed criteria as guides to a successful product. These exercises tend to be graded, and lead to lots of student anxiety. Not that any of that’s a bad thing, if you plan ahead.

If you want the student to focus on the material, apply it, and make connections between new and old material. You might consider the use of less formal assignments. Examples that cross disciplines:

- Thought papers, where students cogitate about the assigned reading
- Guided journal entries, where students informally address ideas or questions you have provided
- Free writing in class, where you stop the lecture or discussion or lab long enough for students to put in their own words what they have just seen or heard or done
- Table construction, useful for comparing and contrasting

I recommend that these exercises be graded very loosely, in the sense that they are given a points value for completion, and lots of evaluative feedback from you, but are not given a graduated number of points. The idea is to go for maximum independent thought and minimum self-consciousness, and no attempts to write what they think you’ll like to read.

If the goal is to learn about one’s values and philosophy, as in some of our ethics and leadership courses, and in all of our diversity requirement courses, you have many options. They include:

- Unconstructed journals, which may or may not be shared for a grade
- Written debate, contrasting two opposing positions
- Letter-writing to a real or imagined recipient
- Speech-writing to a real or imagined audience
- Creative writing, including free verse
- The ever-popular thought paper

Again, be aware that you may meet resistance from some students not ready or willing to engage in introspection. We all handle these students differently; for me, it works to have another option ready. Sometimes, just formalizing the assignment into the familiar three-page formal paper with five references in APA format is sufficient. At other times, they wish to focus on others’ thoughts, and a write-up of a series of interviews will work.

Enough about them, what about me? It’s only fair to consider your abilities and your workload. Specifically:

- How much time do you have? This will influence the length of the assignment, the number of drafts you assign, and the promises you make regarding when you’ll return papers.
- How bored are you with reading a certain type of writing assignment? If you think you cannot possibly read another abstract, or another formal treatment, consider trying something different, or at least less structured.
- What level is the course? The closer to graduation, the more practice students need in formal writing to their disciplines.
- How comfortable are you with risk-taking and uncertainty? Trying a new thing can be very rewarding, particularly if you’ve based the change on a solid assessment of a pedagogical need. Go ahead. You’ll know soon enough if the risk was successful, and if it was not, you will have learned something.

The hassle and rewards of grading writing. The first tenet of assessment in writing is to assign enough drafts so you can give formative feedback. That way, no one, especially you, is surprised by a bad paper during finals week. Also, drafts minimize plagiarism. Second, provide very clear criteria for both content (depth and level of argument or analysis) and process (due dates, margins, references, length) from the very first day of class. Third, make the grade weight of the assignment worth the effort the students will give it. And finally, consider having another instructor assess the assignment, but only for those papers where you and the student are very divergent on assessing its worth.

There are many instructors on campus who like to use writing as a learning tool, who enjoy reading what students have to write, and who have pretty much mastered the whole grading thing. These instructors cross disciplines and are, by and large, eager to share their enthusiasm for writing. I count myself among these happy individuals. I urge you to consult with us if you are contemplating incorporating some or more writing into your teaching portfolio. After all, we may not be able to change, but we can learn.

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The ABCs of the UWP

BY SOMYR MCLEAN

The University Writing Program (UWP) was established in 1984 as a professional operation designed for students to fulfill their writing requirement course. University writing courses, originally taught under the English department, have become much more specialized in content and curriculum. These specialized courses are designed to ensure that students acquire and develop the necessary rhetorical skills needed to succeed in their college writing assignments, and to prepare students for the writing demands they will find in the workforce. Professor Thomas Huckin, director of the program, said that the UWP is an essential asset for students who plan on having successful academic and professional careers.

"Unfortunately, there are a lot of students who have not had the benefit of high school teachers paying close attention to their writing skills," Huckin said. If U students leave with mediocre writing skills, he said, they will find it difficult to write simple e-mails or memos in the workforce. Two lower-division courses give students the opportunity to develop their writing skills. Students are placed in one of two courses according to their admissions index. Those with a lower index are placed in Writing 1010 and those with a higher index are placed in Writing 2010.

Rory Brunner, a senior in mass communication, agrees with Huckin. "There have been many times in my life, other than school, where I was glad that I had excellent writing instruction. My writing courses have especially helped me communicate more efficiently in my job," he said.

This past year, the University has raised admission standards for incoming students and perhaps, Huckin said, that will relieve some of the stress the Writing Program feels, with over 2,000 students taking lower division courses per year.

"We can’t offer as many class sections that are needed for students to complete their writing classes. We turn students away every year," Huckin said. Writing course enrollment is capped at 23 students. Huckin said that adding more students per class isn’t an option.

"Research clearly shows that ballooning class enrollment has a negative effect on how students learn and how professors teach," Huckin said. Quality and excellence are not something the UWP is willing to compromise. Whether students study English or engineering, they must have proficient writing skills in order to excel in their academic careers.

"The general goal for having writing requirements is that students understand how rhetoric fits into a particular purpose, and to sensitize students to rhetorical demands," Huckin said.

Sometimes students need assistance refining their writing skills outside of the classroom. Sylvia Newman has been the coordinator of the Writing Center at Weber State University for over five years. She said that the Writing Center offers students specialized tutoring to help them become better writers.

"Sometimes students come to us thinking that we are going to help them get through just one paper, but that’s not what we do. Our goal is to help students become better writers by focusing on specific skills that will help them through all their papers," she said. WSU’s Writing Center was established 20 years ago and every year has several thousand students seek help.

"We feel that our program has been very successful in terms of the numbers of students who come to us for help. In the 2001-2002 school year, 2,800 students participated in tutoring sessions," Newman said.

The University of Utah has never had a writing center, and Huckin said that gathering funding to create one is a top priority. The University Tutoring Center or the Center for Ethnic Student Affairs (CESA) both offer general tutoring, including writing, for students who need it.

"Writing skills are extremely important for a student’s success at the University. They are a necessary complement to other technical or verbal skills students may develop," Huckin said.
FROM THE DIRECTOR: DEMYSTIFYING THE WRITING REQUIREMENT

According to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, the University of Utah's lower-division writing requirement helps to ensure that students develop the rhetorical skills that will be needed later on in a variety of university courses.

Students may bypass the lower-division writing requirement by:
- Having an Advanced Placement (AP) level in English of 3, 4 or 5
- Scoring 500 on the CLEP English test
- Meeting comparable lower-division writing requirements from other colleges or universities
- Having an Associates Degree from a two-year college

Students may fulfill the lower-division writing requirement by:
- Passing Writing 2010 (placement for new freshmen determined by admissions index) with a C- or better (students placed in Writing 1010 must pass with a C- or better before enrollment in Writing 2010 is permitted).
- Completing the following sequence of courses (for students who speak English as a second language), offered by the linguistics program, with a C- or better:
  ESL 1040, 1050, 1060
- Note: Students without admissions index, those who want to appeal their placement, and those taking ESL may complete a writing placement essay administered by the University Writing Program.

Courses meeting the lower-division writing requirement:
- ESL 1060 (3) Adv Writing for ESL speakers
- HONOR 2211 (3) Writing in Honors
- WRTG 2010 (3) Intermediate Writing

The upper-division communication/writing requirement provides University students with more advanced instruction in speaking and writing, often directly related to their specific area of study. Courses filling this requirement must be completed with a minimum grade of C- (or higher if required by the department). Individual majors sometimes require specific courses to satisfy this requirement—students may contact their major departments for more information.

Sample courses meeting the upper-division communication/writing requirement:
- ARCH 3110 (3) Environment & Behavior
- BALLE 5780 (3) Teaching Essentials
- BIOL 5215 (2) Advanced Cell Lab
- CHEM 5700 (2) Adv Analytical Chem Lab
- COMM 3600 (4) Editing Process
- COMM 4670 (4) Specialty Reporting
- COMM 4690 (3) Interpretive Writing

To be designated as a new upper-division communication/writing (C/W) course, the C/W committee requires a syllabus, a proposal explaining how the course meets criteria, and a letter of support from the department chair or director. Every three years, previously approved courses are reviewed to determine if the course still meets C/W criteria. To be reviewed, the committee needs all same materials as for a new course, plus the numerical data from student evaluations of the course for the last three years.

The committee meets once each semester, excluding summer, and department chairs receive notice of the due dates for submission of new and reviewed courses about one month prior to the due date. Results of the committee's decisions are communicated by mail to department chairs and submitting instructors, and are posted on the Web in the Undergraduate Bulletin.

Some students have taken writing intensive courses on this or another campus that they believe fulfill the C/W requirement. Undergraduate College can assist these students in preparing an appeal of such a course, and these appeals are accepted at any time. The appeals are then submitted to the chair of the committee for review, and are handled by the chair on an individual basis (of course the chair consults other committee members for assistance when the case for appeal is not clear).

The criteria and procedures for submitting a course for approval as an upper-division communication/writing course are currently being revised, though not extensively, in time for the spring review. Current procedures and criteria can be found at http://www.ugs.utah.edu/ctle/committees/cw.htm.

For more information or for a complete listing of classes meeting the upper-division writing requirement, visit www.ugs.utah.edu.
Why You Can't Steal This Article

BY KRISTOPHER MOORE & STEPHANIE RICHARDSON
PHOTO BY JULIA THOMAS

In order to have success both in and out of the classroom it is essential that students and professors have a clear understanding of what plagiarism is and how it can be avoided. According to Webster's Dictionary, plagiarism is defined as, "the appropriation or limitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Webster, 1992).

Many students don't know what constitutes plagiarism. Some think that if they just re-phrase the author's work they're in the clear. Students need to understand that written, spoken, statistics, lab results and artwork, if used in their papers, need to have the correct citation. Students often overlook the plagiarism warning in the course syllabus and then end up plagiarizing documents in their assignments.

There are also students who have a hard time composing their thoughts on paper. Many students are unprepared for detailed research papers, or lengthy essays where they have to make proper citations. Some students

Many University of Utah students are unaware of the penalties awaiting them if they are found guilty of plagiarism.
are not aware that there are multiple ways and different styles to make the correct citations to their work.

"I think that I know what constitutes plagiarism and what doesn't. I don’t worry about it too much because the professors don’t seem to care," said Molly Valdez, a political science major.

Time also plays an important role. The scenario is all too familiar to most students: two essay papers, two research papers and a midterm, all due at the same time. How do busy students keep up? Perhaps by stealing or plagiarizing another's work. But procrastination is no excuse for plagiarism; students need to comprehend the penalties that are involved with academic misconduct.

Plagiarism is a growing problem, particularly with the Internet providing easy access to others' work. Some students think cutting and pasting is an easy way to finish a paper. Whether the student plagiarizes on purpose, forgets, or doesn’t know how to cite sources correctly, it is the professor's responsibility to explain the correct and proper way to cite sources.

"The majority of my classes don’t even ask for a citations page, and if they do, the instructor does not make clear what form the citations are to be in," said Rob Morris, a business major.

Many students don’t understand that there are different ways to add proper attribution to their papers. Many students can easily write an essay or research paper, but some have no idea how to cite each source.

"I only knew how give proper attribution to the books I used in my reports. It wasn’t until I had a history professor explain to the class how to cite a variety of sources. She gave the entire class a handout with numerous ways to cite each source. It was so helpful," said student Julie Smoot.

David Chapman, senior vice president for academic affairs, offered advice for professors.

"Help students during their first assignment," Chapman said. "Explain what plagiarism is and what constitutes plagiarism. Make sure that they know how to make the correct citations, and ask the students for examples."

FROM THE DIRECTOR: PREVENTING PLAGIARISM

I recommend a three-part approach to preventing plagiarism. First, role-model ethical writing behavior. This can be done when you don’t know the answer to a question in class. In that case, you can admit you don’t know, go find the information, and display the answer in the next class period in writing, including the references. Take that moment to show them how you took the original material and paraphrased it for them, and properly referenced the material. This also can be done by appropriately referencing your syllabus, when you cite a University document or begin with an interesting quotation. Define plagiarism for students; many are unclear about its many meanings.

Second, set up the writing in your class so that it is impossible to cut and paste sections or even the whole paper from another source, or to submit one paper for several classes. Require sequential development of a paper, beginning with an outline, followed by a rough draft, followed by a more refined draft, etc., so that the student cannot simply steal a paper in its entirety from another source. Then, give written feedback and suggestions for improvement, as this can steer a paper away from an online version that they were planning to use and prevent the use of one paper for multiple classes. You can ask them to rephrase cited material, to prevent lifting a passage. Finally, require that they hand in previous outlines and drafts with each subsequent iteration of the paper, and compare drafts, to prevent an entire rewrite at the last minute that disguises stealing a whole paper.

Third, make it clear what the consequences will be for anyone who is caught. I recommend placing the following statement right in your syllabus and reading it the first day:

"The Student Code contains student rights in the classroom. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. It is my responsibility to enforce the Code, and it is the student’s responsibility to read the Code carefully because you are responsible for the content, and will receive sanctions including receiving a failing grade for the course for violating one or more of these proscriptions." And you can attribute that to me.

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It is the professor’s responsibility to make sure each that every student understands what plagiarism is. Professors should discuss plagiarism with their students and give examples of plagiarism.

Professors and students should also be aware of how to combat cut-and-paste plagiarism from the Internet. Students need to be informed that the Internet does not have

"Repeat offenses are more serious, and need to be handled properly. I have had to take away some students' degrees because of repeated plagiarism."

gatekeepers, and 40 percent of information obtained from the Internet will change within a year. Students must realize that the Internet is not always accurate. Instructors should give detailed examples of using the Internet as a source for their papers. Students need not only to be thorough in their Internet research, they must also know how to make the correct citations when using Internet sources.

Those who are found guilty of plagiarism should be dealt with immediately and punished according to the Student Code. Every department and every instructor feels differently about the punishment for academic dishonesty, but punishment and consequences should be consistent across all colleges. Part V: Student Academic Conduct Section B clarifies what punishment should be enforced: "A student who engages in academic misconduct may be subject to academic sanctions including but not limited to a grade reduction, failing grade, probation, suspension or dismissal from the program or the University."

(Student Code available at http://www.sa.utah.edu)

Each college should report plagiarizing students so that the correct disciplinary actions can be taken. Students who plagiarize repeatedly need to know that the appropriate actions will be taken for their academic misconduct.

"Repeat offenses are more serious, and need to be handled properly. I have had to take away some students' degrees because of repeated plagiarism," Chapman said.

The classroom should be a place where students engage in the free pursuit of ideas and learning. It should also be a place where students should esteem and acknowledge other professional and student work. Professors succeed, and learning ideas are applied when professors encourage best practice in their classrooms.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR: DETECTING PLAGIARISM

While the availability of papers on the Internet makes plagiarism exquisitely easy, it also is making it easier to catch the thief. I offer www.plagiarism.org as a Web site that scans Internet sites and papers for evidence of plagiarism, though it will cost you $20 for the first 30 papers and 50 cents for each additional paper.

A less efficient way is to go directly to such sites as www.cheathouse.com, or www.schoolsucks.com, and determine if any papers you've received match up with those available to students.

If you have made your assignment very specific to the literature with which you are familiar, you may recognize certain well-crafted paragraphs, or even ideas. Finally, follow your instincts if your intuition tells you that the quality of a paper does not match the quality of previous work or class participation by a student.

Once the student is caught, please be consistent in the consequences each student receives from you, and from colleagues in your department. I urge all department chairs to engage in an open discussion with faculty regarding plagiarism and what shall be the departmental norm for severity of punishment. Harsh as this may seem, if you make the consequences severe enough to matter (i.e., flunking the course) and enforce them the first time, we are all less likely to receive plagiarized work in the next course the student takes.

And when informing the student that their theft has been detected, don't make a hasty judgment regarding the consequence, particularly if the student is pleading for a second chance. You can tell them you need 48 hours to think about what the penalty shall be and to consult your department chair. That gives you plenty of time to think and consult and craft your statement to the student so it is firm and supported by your department. I offer you my full moral and practical support in this distasteful faculty activity.

stephanie.richardson@nurs.utah.edu
Voices

"Professional writing helped me a lot because it was practical and the writing assignments were realistic."

LISA AXELROD, Public Relations

"The writing requirement is fundamental and is the basis for success in college."

SARAH BROOKS, Behavioral Science and Health

"It ensures a minimum level of competency in writing for all students who complete the writing requirement."

MATT BURGERMEISTER, President, Resident Halls Association

"There needs to be more flexibility in filling the upper division writing requirement."

JULIE ANZELMO, Academic Programs Specialist, Anthropology

"Our goal is to help students become better writers by focusing on specific skills that will help them through all their papers."

SYLVIA NEWMAN, Coordinator, Weber State University Writing Center

"You must not come lightly to the blank page."

STEPHEN KING, "On Writing"

"Proper writing and good writing skills should be a requirement for educated people."

BRIAN McENEANY, graduate student, Anthropology

"There have been many times in my life, other than school, where I was glad that I had excellent writing instruction."

RORY BRUNNER, Communication

"Writing is a wonderful way to communicate."

JENNIFER TUCKER, Executive Secretary, Communication

"Writing well is a 'good thing.'"

ANDREW UGAN, graduate student, Anthropology

"Good writing is always a pleasure to read."

KAY KENDALL, Graduate Secretary, Communication

"Everybody has to learn how to write. I've always been glad that I was able to learn that."

JENNIFER GRAVES, Computer Technician, Archaeology Center

"I have noticed some serious weaknesses in my students' writing. I am shocked at the quality."

TINA HATCH, graduate student, Communication

"I think that I know what constitutes plagiarism and what doesn't. I don't worry about it too much because the professors don't seem to care."

MOLLY VALDEZ, Political Science

"I wish I could write more like Rufus Wainwright."

KATIE REGISTER, Office Assistant, Communication

"Knowing how to write is extremely important in the academic arena. It's one of the most important things you could know."

STEVE MASTRANUNZIL, graduate student, Anthropology
Publish or Perish: Challenges of Faculty Writing

BY KARL MENSSEN
PHOTOS BY JULIA THOMAS

For anyone who teaches at the University of Utah, writing is an important part of one’s job. However, the types, styles, and challenges of writing vary from one department, and one person, to another.

In describing his writing, Craig Denton, a professor of communication said that his research and writing could be considered outside the norm.

“My work would fall into an area that’s called creative scholarship, so that my research wouldn’t be the traditional kind of research that, let’s say, an engineer would do, or a medical researcher, and publish in an academic journal,” he said. Denton works mostly on documentaries. “Right now I’m working on a documentary on the Bear River, a photographic documentary, and so I was on leave last year to do a lot of the field work,” he said.

Lynn Jorde, a professor of human genetics, has done two types of writing.

“I’ve published about 150 articles in various areas of genetic research,” Jorde said. “I’ve also published a textbook of medical genetics.” Jorde said that research articles are the main focus in his department. “Writing books is not that important,” he said.

Bob Goldberg, a professor of history, has written six books. He’s written about the Ku Klux Klan, Jewish agrarians, American social movements, and Barry Goldwater. His most current book is about conspiracy thinking in America since World War II.

Kathy McCance, a professor of nursing, has written research articles, clinical articles and textbooks. She currently has two pathophysiology textbooks in print. One is for upper division and graduate students. The other is for lower division and associate degree students. The one for upper division students is in its fourth edition. She is currently working on the third edition of the other one.

“So it’s like every year we’re writing major revisions on one or the other of these textbooks,” McCance said.

As for the expectations of his writing, Jorde said the demands are numerous.

“I suppose the expectations are that it would be understandable and be accurate,” he said. “For the research papers, of course, it should be original and should advance the field in some way. For something like a textbook it should be clear enough, and I guess authoritative enough so that students will learn easily by it.”

Goldberg said he doesn’t know what expectations people have of his writing. The challenges of research and writing vary from one person, and one project, to another. Denton has found that many times published research isn’t very up-to-date.

Therefore, he has to find and talk to specialists.

Photography presents some other challenges for Denton. He has to take the weather and other factors into consideration.

“I have to determine when the light would be best to render the particular situation. I have to make sure I get there at the right time,” Denton said. He also has the challenge of finding people to interview. “You have to find the right people who can tell their story in an effective way and act as a good representative for other people who share those same interests,” Denton said. Time is another difficulty he faces. “These sorts of things take a lot of time. They’re very time-intensive. Most of my work has maybe
three- to five-year timelines on it,” Denton said. Jorde said the two types of writing he does present very different challenges.

“When you’re writing for other scientists, in many ways it’s easier because you know the language and they know the language. You can pretty much assume that they’ve got appropriate background,” Jorde said. “Of course the challenge in writing your research results is to be really certain that you haven’t made some really silly mistakes, or you’re going to get criticized publicly.”

According to Jorde, textbook writing holds a whole other set of demands.

“With the textbook, the challenges are really very different because there you’re writing for audiences that don’t necessarily have much background,” Jorde said. “You should always be thinking about how to make this as accessible as possible to the audience for whom it’s intended.” He said one of the biggest challenges is trying to simplify the material without sacrificing too much accuracy.

“It’s just like teaching,” Jorde said. “You’re always glossing over some details. If you don’t, you’ll be there forever.” He also said it took a lot of time to write the book.

“The key in research is to formulate conceptual questions that shape the research task and give meaning to your findings,” Goldberg said. “Equally important is writing so that you communicate what you find to the broadest audience possible.”

One of the challenges for McCance is that developments in her field are progressing rapidly.

“It’s extremely challenging now because there’s so much information,” she said. In writing the textbooks, she faces an additional challenge. “The information has become so technical and complex that it’s not easy to sit down and write a chapter and put in everything relevant and make it understandable,” she said.

As for why he writes, Denton said it’s been a lifelong vocation.

“I started off as a writer. Like most people, we start off as writers in school because that’s where the gold stars are given, when we learn to read and write, and so I’ve developed some facility doing it over the years,” he said. “I really enjoy writing. None of what I do would I do if I didn’t enjoy it. I simply love to take photographs and I love to write.”

As for the type of writing he prefers, Denton said he enjoys writing to wider groups of readers.

“I prefer writing more toward larger audiences because it provides you the opportunity to use different kinds of writing styles,” he said. “I can use a more personal approach. I can use a more journalistic style should I want to, whereas the traditional researcher who’s writing for a scientific journal has to write in a certain style. And more typically they’re writing to a much smaller audience, too, an audience of specialists.”

There are various reasons why Jorde writes.

“When it comes to publishing our research, if I didn’t write I wouldn’t have a job,” he said. “Most of our salary actually comes from research grants, so it’s very much a bread-and-butter issue. If you don’t publish, you don’t get grants. If you don’t get grants, you don’t have a job.”

As for the textbook, Jorde said, “That was more a labor of love, I guess. It’s something I hadn’t really intended to do, but then a publisher kind of got me interested in it and I finally thought I would give it a try because I do enjoy teaching, and writing a book is just another way of teaching,” Jorde said.

“I very much enjoy researching and writing,” Goldberg said. “I write to learn. Research enables me to learn things I do not know or only know superficially. In doing my research I am able to explore issues and events that have shaped my life and our world. Also, my teaching role is premised on my research. As a teacher, I must go beyond what others have discovered to share my knowledge and enthusiasm with my students. Testing new ideas in the classroom is key to the relationship I have with my students.”

McCance agrees, and says she wrote her first textbook because she felt there was a need for it.

“I prefer doing the textbooks. I’m more challenged by them,” she said. “I like writing. Since I was a kid my mother always worked with me on writing, and we had fun.” She also discovered that she had the ability, “to condense a large amount of information into a succinct analysis.”
For those who teach at a university, it's essential to get one’s writing published.

"That's part of my 'publish or perish' responsibilities, that I've got to get the stuff published somewhere or another," Denton said. He went on to say that there are several different options for packaging and publishing his work. He wants the Bear River project to be a book with photos and text. The book might also be accompanied by an exhibit.

"Some of the material could work its way into a Web site," Denton added.

Denton went on to say that there are some unique difficulties in getting his work published.

"My work has to be published as photographs along with text, and publishing photographs, especially color photographs, is very, very expensive," he said. "Most publishers can't take on that risk unless they've got awfully deep pockets." Sometimes he has to seek a publishing subvention, which is a financial grant to him or his publisher that usually comes from a foundation with an interest in the work.

Jorde, on the other hand, hasn't had much difficulty in getting his work published. "I actually had three publishers competing for the contract for our textbook, so it was just a question of which publisher to go with," he said. "For scientific articles, it's a little bit different. With the peer-review process, occasionally you’ll get a review that is just off the wall." He added that this doesn’t happen very often.

"I've certainly had critical reviews, reviews where I think, 'Wow, this guy was really hard on us.' If they know what they're talking about I don’t mind that. It means a lot of extra work because you then have to go back and do a lot of revision, but if they know what they're talking about, often a very critical review, even a harshly critical review, can end up really improving your paper because then you go back and you improve it," Jorde said.

Goldberg said he really hasn’t had too much trouble getting his work published.

"I have not had problems publishing my work, and have published with a variety of presses: Yale University Press, University of Illinois Press, and commercial publishers."

McCance was able to turn a request for a chapter contribution into her first published textbook.

"They were actually looking for people to contribute to a new textbook, and asked me if I was interested in contributing a chapter," she said. "And I said no, that we had already developed a very large syllabus for our students because we didn’t find the things we wanted in a book. And I said, just kind of off the cuff, 'I'd probably do my own book,' and so that’s what happened."

It took six years to develop the first edition.

"Right as we were going to publication, the publishers were being purchased by an international publishing company out of England," McCance said, and the publishers wanted to sell their contract. "So we contacted their leading competitors and said, 'Would you like our book,' because we had copyright then and they kind of jumped for it," she said.

Denton said that his writing was part of what he needed to do to achieve tenure.

"The route or track of creative scholarship is what my department asked me to do when it first hired me," he said. "That was my charge, and so I guess I was successful doing it because I'm tenured and a full professor."

As for how his writing relates to tenure, Jorde said, "If you don't publish you don't get tenure." Jorde had received tenure before he wrote the textbook, and has since been on the tenure committee for the school of medicine.

He said that when deciding whether someone should get tenure, "It's really a combination of the number of papers, but also the quality of the journals in which they're published." He added that the quality and importance of the papers is more important than the quantity.

Goldberg received tenure after he had written his first two books, and was promoted to full professor after he had written his third.

Lynn Jorde
"While publication is necessary to achieve tenure, research and writing have deeper sources," he said. "It is the love of learning, the desire to advance knowledge, and the desire to share what you have discovered with students that presses you to research and write."

As for how her writing relates to tenure, McCance said she hasn't had much trouble.

"I've had no problems there. I had research articles and research grants earlier in my career, and also doing the beginning writing on these textbooks," she said. "And now, over time, it's because of the two of them requiring so much time that I believe I'm getting credit for that kind of writing. I'm tenured. I've been tenured for quite a long time and I don't feel the pressure that I used to feel to always have to write grants."

Denton said that when he was hired, others told him that the requirements for tenure were tougher than when they had started.

"Generally at every institution there's kind of like a steadily upward slope in the difficulty in getting tenured and promoted," he said.

Jorde notes an important change in tenure decisions taking place in his department.

"One of the things that we've kind of tried to do in the School of Medicine is to assign more importance to teaching in making the tenure decision," he said. "I think a while ago, teaching was virtually irrelevant to whether you got tenure or not. It was basically how much have you published, how much grant money are you bringing in." He added that determining the quality of teaching is difficult, and that's probably why it wasn't a factor in the tenure decision in the past.

"The requirements for tenure in my department have changed little in the nearly 25 years I have been at the U," Goldberg said. But, like Jorde, he notes that the role of teaching has been increasingly emphasized in tenure decisions.

"I am pleased to see that a candidate's teaching profile has gained in importance in the last several years," Goldberg said. "Our desire in the history department is not only to tenure and promote those who are good researchers, but those who can communicate their knowledge effectively in the classroom."

McCance adds that teaching is an integral part of tenure decisions in her department as well.

"In this college, tenure review is really important, so we do tenure review every five years and the expectation is that you're still publishing and doing research, that your teaching is of excellent quality, and you're providing service," she said. McCance went on to say that there hasn't been much change in tenure requirements for a long time, but that attitudes are becoming a little more relaxed.

"I think really pretty much the University is becoming more accepting of large projects like this," she said. "I would say 10 years ago that if you were not publishing in research journals, your publishing really didn't matter that much, and I didn't feel at the time that other people really understood what it takes to write material that you're using for teaching."

For professors, teaching classes is usually not enough. They are expected to conduct a good deal of research and compile it meaningfully in writing, and then get that writing published. In spite of these challenges, University students will continue to reap the rewards of the blood, sweat and tears put forth by their instructors, and the school itself will be able continue to uphold the standards of excellence that many have come to expect from the U.
Enter Writing, Cross to Center

DAVID DYNAK, CHAIR
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

It is an old joke in academia that the difference between studying Shakespeare with a professor of English and a professor of theatre can be captured in the way the two professors treat the witches in Macbeth. Whereas the English professor might launch into a carefully wrought exegesis of the social, political, and cultural backgrounds of witchcraft in Elizabethan and Jacobean England and go on to explore how the “weird sisters” function structurally and symbolically in the play, the theatre professor might start by deciding where the witches enter from, where they cross to, and where they exit.

Although there is a bit of truth in this characterization, there are far more similarities between these two professors—and their disciplines—than is often acknowledged. Texts—dramatic, fictional, expository, theoretical—are clearly at the center of both disciplines, and so is writing about texts.

For example, in our gateway course in the department of theatre, majors grapple with the texts of leading contemporary theorists and produce papers that examine the essence of their chosen field of study. The questions “What makes theatre theatre?” and “What could you not do away with without doing away with theatre?” are vitally important to actors, designers, directors, teachers, playwrights, producers and researchers.

Actors need to write about their process as their characters take shape in the rehearsal room. They create back stories that help frame their character work. They journal, reflect on research, and take notes from directors and stage managers to guide their work during rehearsals. And they continue to track—in writing—what happens to them as actors during the run of the show, how they continue to find new choices to ground their characters, how they master the communicative power of performance texts.

Beginning in their first year of study, designers build portfolios in which they write about images and motifs that later are transformed into 2D and 3D sets, costumes, lighting and sound scores. Directors develop extensively researched notebooks (which are often months in the making) with production concepts, performance histories, and literal and metaphorical musings that might prove useful to the production team as the play moves from the page to the stage. Press releases are written and publicity campaigns are conceived and executed. At every turn, professionalism in written presentation is the target and expected outcome.

One of the unique aspects of the discipline of theatre is the arsenal of strategies available to teachers to transform texts into performance experiences. Our theatre education majors have a rich opportunity to use these strategies in schools and as part of interdisciplinary partnerships with other departments on campus. One such partnership takes theatre education majors into education classes where they use expository texts as the springboard to stand on the shoulders—literally—of reading, writing, speaking and listening. To animate case studies that emerge from research into the issues of gender bias, sexism, discrimination and racism, theatre education majors craft tightly structured process dramas to help students embody those issues. If they are done well, these process dramas have the “feel” of a highly charged theatrical event, without the requisite six weeks or more of rehearsals. Each episode of the case study becomes a scene played out by the students in the class. Students go into role as teachers, administrators, community members. They write in role, create sound collages and sound scapes, and use their bodies in tableau work that is collectively examined for meaning.

In schools, theatre education majors have guided elementary school learners in animations of children’s books (e.g., Where the Wild Things Are, The Very Hungry Caterpillar). They have collaborated with a host of area teachers on interdisciplinary inquiries that have led to the creation of dance/dramas (e.g., a presentation on the life and work of Shel Silverstein by fourth graders, an ensemble created by second graders that deconstructed the role of Christopher Columbus in discovering America). They have helped elementary school students write dramatic adaptations of literary texts. And they have
participated in projects that have led to original dramatic work (e.g., a sixth grade fantasy in the genre of The Lord of the Rings).

At the center of each of these projects is writing. It may be a different sort of writing than is typical of a university assignment. But it is powerful stuff.

Currently, theatre education majors are completing a one-hour process drama on Macbeth. This piece will be taken to some 30 area elementary and secondary schools that will be coming to matinee performances of Pioneer Theatre Company’s February/March production. The “script” has been through numerous drafts to make it evocative and comprehensive. During the process drama, K-12 students will take on the roles of Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Banquo, MacDuff, and the witches. They will move through exposition, to the rising action of the murders and madness, to the climax—from inside the work. From past experience, this sort of pre-show preparation pays large dividends for young audiences. And for our university students.

Also, writing benefits the students by providing exposure to the valuable resources and staff at the Marriott Library. My teaching essentials class meets with one of the librarians in the beautiful, new fine arts area of the library before they begin work on their research papers. They become more familiar with what art and dance holdings exist, where they are located, and how to better search for information.

Student writing also helps me understand my students better. What they see or don’t see and what they think about what they observe are often disclosed better through their writing than through asking questions in the classroom. Many dancers are shy and it takes a lot of nudging to get them to open up verbally. Many express themselves better through written communication than spoken word.

With observation papers, it is interesting for me to see how students respond to my assigned questions and how they explain beliefs about a certain topic. Some focus only on what I ask them to write about, but others are more perceptive and have pertinent observations of their own to include. Students share their ideas and observations with each other after their papers have been graded and returned, and because each paper is unique, they get a lot of insights from listening to each other. I use these papers as a base for beginning a discussion, and I find that more students are willing to share ideas this way.

When assigning research papers, I encourage students to enrich their knowledge and writing by searching for a broad, interdisciplinary topic rather than a narrow one, such as the biography of a dancer. As long as it has a connection to dance, it’s fine. One engineering major I had in my history class a few years ago chose to combine his interest in architecture with dance and wrote a paper on the construction and development of the old 16th and 17th century theatres built in Denmark, France and Russia where ballets were performed and are still performed to this day. It is fascinating to see when students combine what they are learning in one class with studies in another class.
The Poem as Discipline and Experience

BY KATHARINE COLES, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Poetry writing, as it is taught at the university level, requires that most students change their perceptions about poetry. Many, especially those who are coming to the university directly out of high school, think of the writing of poetry as being primarily about self-expression, with a focus on the author, on her emotions, her meanings, her methods of interpretation. This has partly to do, I think, with poetry’s intimacy, with the sense it gives that we are overhearing a speaker addressing us directly about some urgent and private matter. It also has to do with the way poetry writing may be viewed by primary and secondary school teachers, and therefore by their students, as providing a break from the usual rigor of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The teachers, who may have between 30 and 40 students in a class, are released by this view of poetry from the need to pay close attention to their students’ poems on the technical level. If the point is self-expression, these more technical details don’t matter.

Not that there is no value in writing exclusively for oneself. But signing up for a creative writing course implies that the student wants somebody to read what she has written, if only the teacher and other students in the class. It is my job, and the job of the other students, to give any student poem our best, fullest, and most generous attention. But the point of this attention is to help the writer learn to engage strangers, who don’t have to read the poem unless they want to. If a poet wants strangers to read her work, she must learn to please them, to provide them with rewards for their efforts. And strangers, I tell my students, must be wooed. They don’t care how the writer feels; they care only about how the writer makes them feel. So, though of course I care about my students and their emotions on the human level, a student’s own emotional engagement with her poem is at once a given—after all, she bothered to write it—and at the same time largely irrelevant. The process of writing the poem, then, is not the process of self-expression but the process of the making of a work of art, something that might elicit a response—emotional and intellectual—in somebody else.

This requires the poet to find a language that operates at once with absolute precision and with enormous complexity. Unlike the scientist, who works to achieve a linguistic exactitude that allows for only one possible interpretation, the poet seeks to deploy numerous possibilities at once, and at the same time to contain the range of possible interpretations within a particular sphere or set of spheres. The poet does this by using syntax, figures, form, and word choice to create and control ambiguity. An example of this occurs in the following stanza from Thom Gunn’s poem, “Tamer and Hawk” (Selected Poems 1950-1975, Strauss Giroux, 1979):

Pleasure, not to communicate some urgent message to the world, is the primary reason most of us write, and the expression of this pleasure in the poem becomes, after all, a kind of self-expression.”
Even in flight above  
I am no longer free.  
You’ve sealed me with your love.  
I’m blind to other birds.  
The habit of your words  
Has hooded me.

In this love poem, Gunn plays with the common vocabularies of falconry, the monastery and love (even its slang, as in “I’m blind to other birds”) to express how tightly the speaker is bound to his beloved—a tightness also reflected in the poem’s closely circling form. Though the stanza’s meaning is multiple and complex, it is also beautifully within the poet’s control, and this control allows both poet and reader to engage in linguistic play. Such deftness occurs not in the abandonment of rules but in their mastery.

This is the difficulty of poetry—and, as in so may disciplines, difficulty and value arise from the same source. Through discipline, the poet learns to deploy and manage complexity, to tolerate and then to use ambiguity, and to shift her attention away from her own troubles and joys so she can begin to imagine what might create an experience—of trouble, of joy—for someone else to enter, learn from, participate in, play with.

“So, what’s in it for me?” the student may ask. As I’ve suggested in talking about Gunn’s stanza, the poet’s rewards are not so different from those she creates for her reader: surprise, emotion, not so much expressed as achieved in the poem, pleasure. Pleasure, not to communicate some urgent message to the world, is the primary reason most of us write, and the expression of this pleasure in the poem becomes, after all, a kind of self-expression. But it turns out that the pleasure and its expression do not reside where most new poets think it will—in the reader’s recognition of the poet’s sensitivity. Rather, it resides in the more rigorous delights available to anyone attempting to perfect a disciplined work, whether that person is an artist, a scientist, a philosopher, or an athlete. In this case, the delights involve the exploration of the ability of language to chart that place where the human mind meets the world, to create from that meeting a new intuition about reality, and to open that intuition to readers, to restore them to themselves by offering them the chance to examine their own experiences within the poem.

KATHARINE COLES,
Associate Professor in the Department of English, has won several awards in recognition of her outstanding work in the field of creative writing. Her recent published works of poetry include The Golden Years of the Fourth Dimension (University of Nevada Press, 2001) and A History of the Garden (University of Nevada Press, 1997).

Photo courtesy Francois Camain.
GINO DEAN is a mass communication major. Outside of school, he is a guitarist, songwriter and an avid skier. He currently works part time at the department of undergraduate studies and works weekend shifts at a local radio station.

LISA FRASIER recently earned her master's degree in communication from the University of Utah. A lifelong resident of the beehive state, her next project is to relocate.

DOUG HAGEMAN is the administrative assistant for CTLE. He is about to start his MA in international relations, which helps him better understand his mania with all things Star Wars. He and his wife had their first baby boy in February.

LAURA HANCOCK is completing her degree in mass communication at the University of Utah. A previous contributor to the Chronicle, she is currently a police reporter for the Deseret News.

DEB JENSEN is a senior majoring in anthropology. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in archaeology. Because of her outside interests in photography and writing, Deb became involved with lessons, which gave her the opportunity she needed to wet her feet in the world of publishing.

SOMYR MCLEAN graduated in December with a bachelor's degree in mass communication with an emphasis in journalism. In addition to writing for lessons, she is on the editorial board for the Chronicle. She lives in Salt Lake City and shares her life with her partner, Brandon, her dog, two cats and a tortoise.

KARL MENSSEN is a junior majoring in mass communication with an emphasis in news/editorial. After graduation, he hopes to find a real job.

KRISTOPHER MOORE is a communication major with an emphasis in public relations. After graduation, he hopes to go on to graduate school in broadcast journalism or maybe law school. His favorite color is green or blue, he likes Chinese food and can run extremely fast if scared.

ROBIN MOORE is a graduate of the department of communication. She currently works as a freelance graphic designer.

STEPHANIE RICHARDSON continues her career as a professor in nursing and as the director of CTLE. She enjoys the challenge of blending these roles.

JULIA THOMAS is a senior with a double major in communication and Spanish. She would like to teach English as a second language, as well as work more with photography and layout design.

OUR THANKS to the faculty and staff of the Department of Communication.
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