

TIME TO WRITE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Supporting faculty, staff, and teaching assistants as they teach with writing

A GRADUATE STUDENT-SPONSORED WRITING RETREAT IN PSYCHOLOGY

Kathleen Daly

Writing Across the Curriculum

Faculty in every department want to help graduate students become the best scholarly writers they can be. But how? For Psychology doctoral students Emily Clarke and Martin Zettersten one approach was obvious: get faculty and graduate students together to talk about writing in their discipline.

Motivated by a shared desire for more writing instruction, Clarke and Zettersten voluntarily organized an extended writing workshop for the graduate students in their program. Zettersten explained, "I've always been really interested in writing, but since coming to grad school, I've been confronted with writing in a totally different way than ever before. Despite the high stakes of research writing as a graduate student, though, I felt like there was a real gap in how we talk about writing and how we train to write in the discipline. No one had talked me through how to write in advanced research genres."

However, Clarke explained, they weren't looking for individual writing instruction: "We knew that it would be useful to come together as a community to talk to other writers, to hear about different writing processes, and to get some concrete tips from a range of writers."

“ Despite the high stakes of research writing as a graduate student, though, I felt like there was a real gap in how we talk about writing and how we train to write in the discipline. ”

With these goals in mind, Clarke and Zettersten proposed, planned, and facilitated a two-day writing retreat, which was held in Union South in June 2016. The events, which drew about 30 graduate students, included a faculty panel, a workshop on writing introductions to research

articles in psychology led by the Director of the Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum, Brad Hughes, and a roundtable discussion, as well as plenty of dedicated writing time.



Emily Clarke
Psychology Department



Martin Zettersten
Psychology Department

During the faculty panel, graduate students had the opportunity to talk with three faculty members and one research scientist about advanced publication, general writing practices, and common challenges faced by developing writers in the field.

For Clarke, the panel discussion was one of the most productive parts of the event. "The idea was to have a representative group of faculty from different specialties and at different stages in their career. During the question-and-answer segment, we managed to create an open environment for people to admit that writing is hard and then to actually get useful feedback on it without it feeling like a lecture."

Clarke and Zettersten said the department's response was key to the success of event: "The department was very supportive and people were really excited to talk about writing.

After the retreat, we heard from alumni of the program who said that they wished they had had a similar event while they were in the program." And the success of the writing workshop didn't stop when the two-day event came to a

close: a few of the small graduate student writing groups that were formed during the retreat have continued to meet for dedicated writing time and to share their writing with each other.

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writing.wisc.edu/wac

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MANY PERSPECTIVES ON THE ANTHROPOCENE: WRITING FOR A PUBLIC AUDIENCE, ONLINE

From the Writing Across the Curriculum Program:

Faculty often ask those of us working in Writing Across the Curriculum to share new ideas for writing assignments and to offer advice about what makes for an effective writing assignment. We are always on the lookout for innovative assignments that illustrate best principles in assignment design.

Although there are many successful types of assignments, the following assignment, which was generously shared by Professor Elizabeth Hennessy, is a particularly exciting example of a writing project that blends traditional academic writing which has a visual component with web publication. Designed for a course about a proposed new geologic period, this assignment presents students with an intriguing challenge: to select a historical object of relative importance and write an analysis of that object for a public audience.

We'd like to highlight a few features of this assignment that make it particularly successful:

Explanation of purpose: In the initial description of the assignment, Professor Hennessy explains the assignment's rhetorical purpose: using knowledge gained from course and individual research, students educate a public audience on "what the Anthropocene is and why it matters."

Articulation of learning goals: By providing students with a few specific learning goals, Hennessy emphasizes the value of the assignment while reinforcing key elements of the assignment (e.g., "Translating the significance of historical scholarship to public audiences").

Step-by-step research and writing process guidelines: Breaking the assignment down into manageable sections is particularly helpful when students are working with unfamiliar genres (a curated website, in this case). These guidelines clarify expectations, add structure to the writing process, and preview evaluation criteria.

Opportunities for feedback and revision: In the "Timeline and Due Dates" section of the assignment, Hennessy includes an in-class peer review session for students to give and receive feedback on the first draft of their projects. Not only does this foster collaborative engagement with each others' ideas, but it also motivates students to look more critically at their own work and rhetorical choices.

If you would like to chat about ways to incorporate these and other features into your own assignments, Brad Hughes (bthughes@wisc.edu) would be happy to meet with you!

Visit anthropoceneobjects.net to see students' final projects!

From Professor Elizabeth Hennessy, History and Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies:



Elizabeth Hennessy
History and Nelson Institute
for Environmental Studies

In Spring 2016, I taught a Global Environmental History course on the history of the Anthropocene—a proposed new geological epoch defined by human imprint on the earth's geophysical and biochemical processes. The course was cross-listed in History and Environmental Studies and thus attracted students from a variety of disciplines—from chemical engineering to literature. We asked how scientific pronouncements of a human-centered age might change how we understand human history—and how a nuanced understanding of

humans' history in relation to our environments might help us to make sense of the Anthropocene and its environmental consequences. This final assignment is based on a Center for Culture, History, and Environment (<http://nelson.wisc.edu/che/>) workshop held on campus in 2014 in which environmental humanities scholars pitched objects that would represent the Anthropocene in a contemporary cabinet of curiosities. I asked my students to select their own Anthropocene object and submit a high-resolution image of it along with a 1,500-word essay based on primary and secondary sources. This was a summative writing assignment that asked majors and nonmajors to apply analytical tools learned in class to do original research and historical writing. Once the students had finished their final drafts, I hired an undergraduate to build a website to display the objects, which I plan to add to in future editions of this class.

The Assignment: The Anthropocene in Objects

What is the Anthropocene? How can we identify it in the world around us? What do you think is important for the general public to know about the Anthropocene? What insights from this course would you like to share with your peers? The goal of this project is to create a website to educate a public audience about what the Anthropocene is and why it matters. To do this, you will work together as a class to curate a website displaying historical objects that represent the Anthropocene. Broadly based on the objects and essays in Neil MacGregor's *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, the objects should showcase the diversity of ways in which people have shaped the natural world. Each of you will select a different object to represent the Anthropocene and write a 1,500 word historical essay explaining (a) how this object reflects human-environment relationships in a particular place and time and (b) why this object is illustrative of the Anthropocene. I've discussed several such objects in class—such as the peso de ocho [Spanish piece of eight] and the steam engine—although you should choose something we have not discussed directly. The objects should come from a variety of times and places to represent the geographical and temporal breadth of the Anthropocene, as we have discussed in class. As curators of this public art exhibit, you will pitch potential objects and discuss their relevance in discussion sections. Ultimately, you will write individual essays about your selected object, but you will peer review and edit these essays as a team.

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MANY PERSPECTIVES ON THE ANTHROPOCENE: WRITING FOR A PUBLIC AUDIENCE, ONLINE, CONTINUED.

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Through this project, you will gain experience:

- Developing curatorial skills by applying knowledge gained in class to select an object that represents the Anthropocene;
- Using historical methods to analyze how a material object illustrates a particular interpretation of the Anthropocene;
- Translating the significance of historical scholarship to public audiences;
- Writing effectively for web audiences.

Timeline and Due Dates			
Assignment	Due Date	Submission Format	Grade %
Library research visits	3/30, 3/31	In person	
Object image & abstract	4/6	Word doc & high-resolution jpeg to Dropbox; bring print out	3%
Essay draft & peer review; image with caption and license info	4/20	Word doc to Dropbox; bring print out to discussion	7%
Final essay & image	5/4	Word doc & high-resolution jpeg to Dropbox	10%

Research Elements

1) **Select an object and obtain a high-resolution image.** Either take an original photograph or find an image online in the public domain or with a Creative Commons license. Because this will be a public website, we need to be very careful to be sure we are only using images for which we have proper permission and include all the relevant license information. (We will have a mandatory library information session about how to find and attribute these images.) Fill out the attached form with caption and license information to submit on April 20 with your draft essay.

2) **Find sources.** You will need a total of (at least) five sources other than readings we've done in class. Two of these five should be primary sources. Of the remaining three, one or more needs to be a scholarly source (i.e., peer reviewed) and the remaining two (or fewer) can be a credible popular source (newspapers, magazines, not Aunt Martha's blog). Be sure to include a References Cited List, following the Chicago Manual style. (We'll go over this in class.)

a) **Find 2 primary sources about your object.** Primary sources are historical documents created during the period you are researching. Analyzing primary sources is at the core of the historian's craft. We'll have a second library session dedicated to helping you find primary sources and will discuss in class how to analyze them.

b) **Find 1 or 2 academic secondary source(s) and 1 or 2 credible popular source(s).** (Total of at least 3). Academic secondary sources are analyses written by trained experts that have been peer-reviewed for academic journals or books—for example, most of the readings you've done for class. Credible popular sources can include media—newspapers, magazines, articles and books that have not been peer reviewed—or other sources, whether print or digital.

Guidelines: Selecting an Object

The objective of the website is twofold. First, we want to showcase the diversity of the Anthropocene—the myriad ways of life and historical events that are part of this proposed new geological epoch. Second, we want to explain how and why these diverse elements should shape our thinking about how we live in the Anthropocene today. We've covered 50,000 years of history in class—even more, if you stretch back to the earth's geological history—so the range of objects and historical time periods you could choose from is broad, to say the least. You should pick an object that will allow you to say something interesting about the Anthropocene. The point is critical analysis, rather than your opinion about when the Anthropocene started. The only things off limits are the objects I've highlighted in class (that does not mean the entire topics I've covered are off limits, just that you would need to choose a different object as your entry point).

Guidelines: Writing Your Essay

Your 1,500-word essay should be a scholarly analysis of the object that explains what it is, when and where it is from, how it was made, and its significance to the Anthropocene. Think about what your object implies about when the Anthropocene began, and how the start date matters. What does your object tell us about who the anthropos of the Anthropocene is? What does it teach us about how to live in the Anthropocene today? You should choose at least two class concepts to help you analyze your object. Some possibilities include Anthropocene narratives, Eurocentrism vs. polycentrism, geologic time, catastrophism vs. gradualism, species thinking, etc.

Grading Rubric

This assignment is worth 20% of your final grade. If you get an A or a B on this assignment, Prof. Hennessy will include your object and essay on the public website.

"A" Papers	"B" Papers	"C" Papers
Object selected offers fresh, creative link to Anthropocene	Object selected is insightful, clearly linked to Anthropocene	Object selected shows satisfactory relation to Anthropocene
Essay argument is nuanced, insightful, clearly related to Anthropocene	Essay argument is insightful, related to Anthropocene	Essay argument is vague, shows unclear link to Anthropocene debates
Clearly articulated analytical thesis statement	Straightforward thesis statement, shows some analytical depth	Thesis statement lacks analytical depth
Well-chosen concepts and evidence support thesis	Examples adequately illustrate thesis	Examples related to thesis but do not strongly support
Effectively uses historical detail to make point	Uses some detail to support main point	Uses little detail to illustrate main point
Primary and secondary sources highly relevant to analysis	Primary and secondary sources support thesis	Primary and secondary sources missing or only vaguely relate to thesis
Image properly attributed	Image attribution missing information	Image attribution missing information
Free of grammatical and punctuation errors	Few grammatical and/or punctuation errors	Multiple errors that distract from message
Correctly formatted bibliography and citations	Few formatting errors in bibliography and citations	Multiple formatting errors in bibliography and citations

A GRADUATE STUDENT-SPONSORED WRITING RETREAT IN PSYCHOLOGY, CONTINUED

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Advice from the Writing Across the Curriculum Program for Developing Custom Workshops and Writing Retreats

The Writing Across the Curriculum program is eager to help departments create these kinds of writing workshops. Even if you don't have the time or energy to organize a full two-day workshop, there are ways to have effective writing workshops in a shorter amount of time. For instance, you might be interested in doing a standalone panel discussion or a writing workshop co-led by a Writing Across the Curriculum staff member, or you might want to plan a one-day or half-day writing retreat. In any case, the WAC staff is here to help you plan and facilitate your event to best meet the needs of the graduate students in your department.

Another possibility for fostering conversation about graduate student writing is through the development of structured writing groups. Writing groups, like those that came out of the Psychology department's writing retreat, can be a great way for graduate students to build community, set and meet specific writing goals, and get regular feedback on in-progress writing projects. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss possibilities for organizing and structuring writing groups for graduate students in your department.

Some of your graduate students might be interested in the various writing group opportunities offered through the Writing Center. Students who would like to meet regularly with a writing group might benefit from the Writing Center's semester-long graduate student writing groups, which are open to writers from all disciplines. These weekly three-hour meetings begin with a brief group goal-setting session, during which group members have the opportunity to discuss progress, writing blocks, and time management strategies. At least two hours of each meeting are devoted to structured writing time, during which students make substantial progress on writing projects, such as dissertations, articles, or other long documents.

Students looking for a more intensive, short-term writing group might be interested in applying for one of the Mellon-Wisconsin Dissertation Writing Camps. The five-day camp, which is offered once in the winter and once in the summer, helps dissertators develop effective and sustainable writing practices, while producing large amounts of writing—typically around 5000 words. If you would like additional information about the Mellon-Wisconsin Dissertation Writing Camps, please contact Nancy Linh Karls of the UW-Madison Writing Center at nkarls@wisc.edu.

To learn more about these and other writing groups, be sure to check out the UW-Madison Writing Center's blog, *Another Word* (writing.wisc.edu/blog). Titles from recent blog posts about writing groups include:

"Something Magical in Meeting with a Group of Like-Minded People": Graduate Writing Groups in the Writing Center

"A Life-Changing Experience": Some Reflections on the Mellon-Wisconsin Dissertation Camp

The Happy Dissertator: Sustaining Graduate Writing Groups

If you would like to chat about possibilities for fostering conversation about writing within your discipline, the WAC team is eager to help! Please contact Brad Hughes at bthughes@wisc.edu.

Psychology Department Writing Retreat: The Faculty Panel

Panelists:

Craig Berridge, Morton-Ann Gernsbacher, Janet Hyde, and Courtney Venker

Sample Questions from Graduate Students:

- What are efficient strategies to deal with complex writing projects (e.g., multiple manuscripts, specialized writing)?
- How does a successful science writer balance style and convention?
- Should we develop (and how might we develop) sensitivity when writing for different audiences and for different ends in academia (whether we are talking about different journals, different types of submissions, different societies, etc.)?
- What are some of the most important habits to develop early in our career as writers (and readers)?
- Do you ever plagiarize your own writing? How do you rewrite similar text for multiple papers without plagiarizing yourself (there are only so many ways to summarize the theory or body of research that most of your research is based on)?
- How do you determine authorship?
- How did you learn what type of paper should be submitted to which journal within your subfield?
- What tools or technologies have been helpful for planning, organizing, and encouraging your writing projects?
- Some mentors tend to rewrite everything their students are sending out for publication, but this practice can 1) limit the student's incentive to produce high-quality drafts, 2) limit learning opportunities for improving writing skills and 3) hinder the student's pathway to independence. Do you have any advice for navigating this relationship?

WRITING FELLOWS PROGRAM AT UW-MADISON

Writing Fellows are talented, carefully selected, and extensively trained undergraduates who serve as peer writing tutors in classes across the College of Letters & Science. The Fellows make thoughtful comments on drafts of assigned papers and hold conferences with students to help them make smart, significant revisions to their papers before the papers are turned in for a grade. Building on the special trust that peers can share, Fellows help students not only to write better papers but also to take themselves more seriously as writers and thinkers.

Fellows are equipped to tutor writing across the L&S curriculum. In the past, they have worked with students in astronomy, Afro-American studies, history, philosophy, political science, chemistry, classics, English, women's studies, sociology, zoology, mathematics, psychology, geography, and more.

Professor Katherine Cramer, who has worked with Writing Fellows multiple times in her political science courses, says:

"The Writing Fellows are outstanding in their ability to motivate students to adhere to the assignment. In particular, they make sure the students state and develop arguments in their papers and push them to address the readings and important themes from the course."

You are eligible to apply to work with a Writing Fellow if you:

- are a faculty or academic staff member teaching a course with at least two writing assignments, with between 12 and 40 students enrolled in the course
- are willing to adjust your syllabus to allow time for revision and to require that all enrolled students work with the assigned Fellow(s)
- are willing to meet regularly with the assigned Fellow(s) to discuss assignments.

The number of Writing Fellows is limited, so the sooner you let us know of your interest, the better!

To learn more about Writing Fellows or apply to work with a Fellow in a course you are teaching in Spring 2017, please contact us.

Emily Hall,
Director of the Writing
Fellows Program
ebhall@wisc.edu
263-3754

- or -

**Brad Hughes, Director of
the Writing Center and
the Program in Writing
Across the Curriculum**
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Spring 2017 WAC/Delta Expeditions in Learning: Exploring How Students Learn with Writing Across the Curriculum!

Wednesdays, 3:00-4:30 (starting on 1/25) • Writing Center Commons • 6162 Helen C. White Hall

Join us this next semester for the 2017 WAC/Delta seminar! Engage in lively discussions and exciting expeditions (or mini field trips) across campus to discover strategies for:

- designing assignments that improve students' learning,
- saving time responding to and evaluating student writing,
- making the most of conferences with students about their papers,
- and more!

Research shows that when students write, they actually learn course content more effectively. But this only works when assignments are well designed and engaging. Join the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program to learn how to use writing to improve student learning—while maximizing your own time! Through course observations across campus, practical readings, and lively discussion, you'll deepen your theoretical and practical foundation for helping students learn with writing in a range of disciplines.

You'll learn first hand by observing 1) writing workshops in biology, sociology, and other disciplines that interest you; 2) Writing Center tutoring sessions or workshops with student writers; 3) and student-instructor conferences about writing in progress across multiple disciplines. WAC program staff will share successful sample teaching materials to help you design more effective, innovative writing assignments; make the most of your time responding to and evaluating student writing; refine methods for conferencing with students on their papers and running peer reviews—and much more! Together, we'll share diverse, interdisciplinary teaching experiences as we explore how to use writing to promote student learning.

**Go to delta.wisc.edu and click "Courses and Programs" to learn more and register!
Or contact Kathleen Daly, Assistant Director of Writing Across the Curriculum, by email at kadaly@wisc.edu.**

Counts toward the Learning Community requirement for a Delta Certificate in Teaching and Learning

THANKS TO OUR COMMUNICATION-B TA FELLOWS!



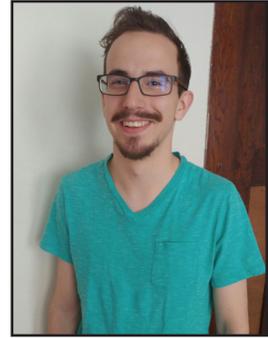
Alexis Dennis
Sociology



Marissa Fernholz
Communication
Arts



Marissa Kraynak
Biology



Nathan Rieger
Psychology

Honored for their outstanding teaching in Communication-B courses, these four TAs helped plan and lead the August 2016 training in Writing Across the Curriculum for over 75 new Communication-B TAs from across campus.

Thanks for your incredible work!

Our mailing labels reflect current personnel listings, and therefore we cannot make changes or deletions. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE L&S
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