



THE POINT

Winter 2008

Guest Lecturers



Paul Kei Matsuda:
[Multilingual Writers in the University:
Some Strategies for Teachers](#)
Rebekah Shultz Colby



[Janet Bland](#)
Carol Samson

News

Our DU Writing Program has won the CCCC's Outstanding Writing Program award!

Upcoming Conferences and Events

- [Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association](#),
Submission Deadline: Jan. 4
- [Computers and Writing](#),
Submission Deadline: Jan. 10
- [Who Owns Writing: A Conference on the Future of Rhetoric and Composition](#),
Submission Deadline: Jan. 10
- Michael Palmquist -- Thursday, Jan. 24
- [International Writing Centers Association](#),
Submission Deadline: Feb. 15

Writing Faculty Scholarship



[Blake Sanz Featured in Yellow Pine Reading Series](#)
Linda Tate



[Scott Blackwood](#)

Linda Tate

Writer's Studio Event



[A Conversation with Paul Kei Matsuda](#)

Rebekah Shultz Colby

Faculty Profile



[An Interview with Donald Stedman](#)

Kamila Kinyon

Kamila Kinyon -- "Teaching Environmental Rhetoric and Research in Freshman Composition Courses," *Southwest*

Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Associations

Conference, Albuquerque, NM, February 2008.

Jeff Ludwig -- "Popular Front Cinema and Hemingway's Style in For Whom the Bell Tolls," *American Literature Association*

Conference. Boston, MA, May 2007.

Carol Samson -- "After Tea: Adapting Virginia Woolf's A Writer's Diary for Stage Performance," *Popular Culture*

Conference. San Francisco, CA, March 2008.

[More on Carol's accomplishments . . .](#)

John Tiedemann -- received a grant from DU's Service-Learning Faculty Scholars Program to help start Writing in Action.

[More on John's accomplishments . . .](#)

Kelli Custer -- "The Reality of Steel and Glass: Using Organic Architecture to help Students Rebuild the Tightly Structured House of Writing." *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. New Orleans, LA, April 2008.

Alba Newmann -- "One must have a mind of . . ." *Conference*

on College Composition and Communication.

New Orleans, LA, April 2008.

Jennifer Novak -- "Negotiated Technologies: Eroding

Professional Boundaries During Medical Training." *Sixth*

Biennial Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s)

Conference. Little Rock, AR, October 2005.

-- "Shaping Future Biomedical Practices: Toward Kairotic

Tools." *Conference on College Composition and Communication*. New Orleans, LA, April 2008.

Student Profile



[The Write Stuff: Jessica Lopez](#)
Heather Martin

Students Want to Know

[Does Length Matter?](#)
Heather Martin

Open Mic Night

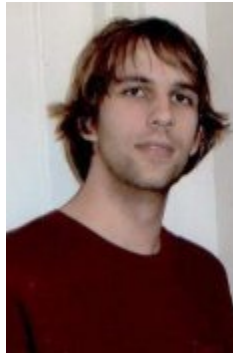


['Twas the Night Before Halloween . . .](#)
Kamila Kinyon

Writing Faculty Profiles



[Mindy Williams](#)
PhD in Literature



[Blake Sanz](#)
MFA in Fiction



[Rebekah Shultz
Colby](#)
*PhD in Rhetoric and
Writing*

Teaching Tips for Writing

[Using Demographic Marketing Strategies
to Teach Audience](#)
Heather Martin

***THE POINT****Winter 2008***Multilingual Writers in the University:
Some Strategies for Teachers***Rebekah Shultz Colby*

Paul Kei Matsuda is an Associate Professor of English at Arizona State University. He writes passionately and cogently about the need for better English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, particularly from first-year writing instructors who often, along with the field of composition in general, have historically tended to disassociate from the linguistically-based Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). In 2006, he received the Richard Ohmann Award for Outstanding Refereed Article published in College English. He has co-edited the book Historical Inquiry on Second Language Writing as well as several other books on teaching ESL students and conducting second language research.

On Thursday, October 18, at a conference room in DU's Driscoll Center, Paul Matsuda began his talk by asking the question, "Why focus on multilingual students?" He then gave several pertinent reasons. These increasingly diverse students bring rich multicultural resources that we can learn from; the global market is growing increasingly multilingual; and finally, focusing on multilingual students encourages teaching excellence. He went on to explain that the definition of multicultural is complex. It can refer to international ESL students but also to resident and refugee ESL students who identify themselves very differently. The term "multilingual" also covers those American students who speak a non-dominant variety of English. Paying attention to multilingual students at DU is particularly important because 17.4% of Denver residents identify as coming from a foreign sociolinguistic background while 27% speak a language other than English in their homes.

A key factor of multilingual students is that their written English proficiency may not be the same as their spoken proficiency. Another key factor is that multilingual students bring a rich, first language literacy background that they can draw from. They often have educational backgrounds that differ significantly from American educational norms. Their attitudes and motivations toward writing may vary. They often come from rhetorical traditions that differ from the Western rhetorical tradition as well. For instance, some students may have a different attitude toward orality than white, middle-class students. They may have come from a culture that values storytelling as important to knowledge construction while written texts may not be deemed as trustworthy. Coming from a different rhetorical background, multilingual students may value different types of argumentative support. Also, multilingual students may not share in the culturally shared knowledge of white, middle-class students. For instance, not all multilingual students have seen *The Simpsons*. Lastly, with a different rhetorical background, attitudes toward plagiarism may differ. They might not readily understand US definitions of and assumptions about plagiarism and might need more overt explanation about what it is.

For international multilingual students, grammar instruction has often been explicit. They usually have more exposure to written forms of English, especially at the sentence level. However, speaking in a casual conversation may be much more difficult for them. They are often unfamiliar with cultural references. They have had little or no experience with US secondary education. However, other than these broad characteristics, it is very difficult to generalize further. Learning styles may vary. There are gender differences, but it is hard to pinpoint exactly which differences affect which culture.

For resident multilingual students, knowledge of English is implicit but still developing. They have much more exposure to colloquial spoken English and more familiarity with US cultural references. They also have some experience with US secondary education. They often are motivated by the desire to integrate into US culture. However, their learning styles still may vary. Since resident multilingual students often do have at least some implicit knowledge of grammar, descriptive methods of grammar instruction are more effective than proscriptive methods. In teaching multilingual students, give them the benefit of the doubt about what English and grammar rules they have already internalized. However, solutions for teaching all multilingual students exist in giving many examples that demonstrate in more concrete ways what is expected of them in their writing.



Regardless of the dominant features of international and resident multilingual students, the bottom line is that it is impossible to absolutely generalize about them. They cannot be stereotyped. Identity is complex. Cultures are equally complex and resist generalization. Nevertheless, some assumptions that can be made about multilingual students are that their language use is often undetectable and unpredictable. Furthermore, they bring a rich linguistic culture to the classroom. Reading and writing usually takes them much longer than native speakers. And finally, for them, learning to write well is a lifelong process.

As teachers, in dealing with the unpredictability and undetectability of multilingual students' language use, always assume that in every class there will always be at least a few multilingual students. Also, reflect about your own assumptions about language backgrounds and then communicate these assumptions to your students. Most importantly, clearly communicate to your students your expectations of what and how to learn. Finally, provide information through multiple modes—visually, orally, etc.

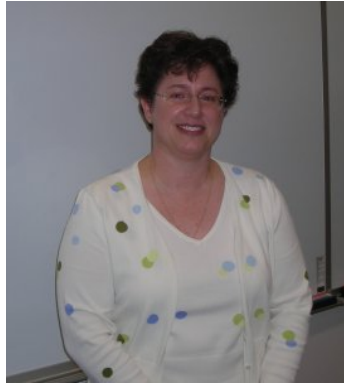
In working with the writing of multilingual students, be encouraging. Tap into the rich linguistic resources that multilingual students bring. Incorporate information from other countries into your class. However, bring information into your class from a variety of different cultures so that you are not just singling out your multilingual students but including them. As Peter Elbow has also argued, encourage them to use multiple languages in planning and drafting their writing. Encourage the use of sources written in other languages as well.

Be patient. Communicate assignments in writing as well as orally. Provide handouts ahead of time, giving multilingual students plenty of time to read and process them. They may not be able to quickly read them in class along with native speakers. Before discussion, consider giving a few minutes for students to gather their thoughts on paper. Finally, give students the option of submitting in-class writing assignments after class.

Be reasonable. Set clear goals and expectations that are reasonable and relevant to the context of the course. Provide multiple examples. Often, multilingual students will think that just imitating one textual example is the answer to good writing. However, offering several different examples of effective writing can complicate their notions of what is "good" writing in productive ways while still giving them something concrete from which to work. Explain what you think is effective and ineffective in these writing examples and explain why. Assess students in terms of course objectives and goals rather than in language proficiency. Lastly, realize that you don't have to be responsible for the student's language proficiency.

Be accessible. Adjustments must be made for multilingual students. Strive for a universal design that imagines the most diverse student population as your target student audience. Keep expanding your repertoire of lesson plans and teaching strategies. Build flexibility into your teaching plans. Be prepared to teach all students. Have contingency plans if your first teaching plan fails. Be respectful of all students.

In other words, teach multilingual students as you would any other student you were teaching well.

***THE POINT****Winter 2008*

A Bland Full of Wisdom
Carol Samson

Janet L. Bland met with the Writing Program faculty on Tuesday, October 16. The Writing Specialist at Marietta College in Marietta, Ohio, Bland received her PhD in English/Creative Writing from the University of Denver in 2001. For one year, 2004-2005, she served as Interim Director of the DU Writing Program. Along with Margaret Earley Whitt of the DU Department of English, she wrote a composition textbook, *The Civil Mind*, published in 2006 by Thomson/Wadsworth. Bland's visit to Denver to talk with the Writing Program faculty coincided with her attendance at the Colorado Book Awards dinner, held at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts' Seawell Ballroom on Wednesday, October 17. Bland's short story collection, *A Fish Full of River*, was a finalist for the Colorado Book Awards.

I was Janet Bland for one day in 2005. She lent me her parking pass when I sprained my ankle one summer so I could be close to the building when I had to hobble to Sturm Hall to a seminar. I can testify that, as Janet Bland for that day, I was funny. I was chatty. I was the DU Writing Program director, and I enjoyed the administrative tasks as much as teaching. I was more gregarious. I tempered my critical mind with humor. I understood the title of her book, *A Fish Full of River*, because I watched the world swell with possibilities. Then in October, when Bland visited with the DU Writing Program faculty, I watched that sort of burgeoning happen again.

Janet Bland is an English professor and a fiction maker. She loves rhetorical play, seeing a "fish full of river" or a "bird full of sky" and wondering at the capacity of a small thing to hold a vast space. In her fiction, she is interested in the Other, in difference, in the obsessive behaviors that define us. Her stories look to a woman who goes off of Niagara Falls in a barrel hoping to find fame, to a couple looking for the Dionne quintuplets so that they can gaze at the oddity, to a teenage girl who brushes elbows with Ted Bundy in a convenience store. In her short story collection, *A Fish Full of River*, Bland looks at the first half of the 20th century in America, turning an eye to the peculiar only to define the complex humanity in the eccentric being, in modern American history itself. Then, too, Bland is an actress of sorts, her most recent credit a speaking part in *Chick Flick: The Miracle Mike Story*, a French filmmaker's 2004 documentary about a summer festival in Fruita, Colorado, that celebrates an historic event wherein a farmer beheaded a chicken, thinking it would be the Sunday dinner, only to have it live for eighteen months. "Mike," the chicken, became an American oddity, a showman that toured the country; and in the film, Bland takes on a professorial role, providing the academic "color" commentary on the meaning of this "folk" event. She invents interpretations for the "Mike" phenomenon, framing Mike as an icon. She refers to the historic period of the Cold War, to belief in extraterrestrial beings, to Flannery O'Connor's use of the grotesque, and ultimately to James Joyce's *Ulysses* as she offers a reading of Mike as a kind of wandering Leopold Bloom. Her performance is a tour de force. She parodies her own field with a self-irony that is witty and broad-minded.

During her visit with the Writing Program faculty, Bland demonstrated both her wit and her discipline as she spoke of writing as an expressive gesture of our humanity. Be it creative writing about our philosophical or personal selves or academic writing that guides us to logical and well-substantiated conclusions, it is all, Bland notes, the same process:



a rendering of our “selves.” As a graduate student, she said, she would tell the instructor in her Rhetoric class, “A short story is an argument, too, for much like an academic treatise, it draws us in, saying, ‘Come with me. Now follow me here.’” In her time with us, she read to the Writing Program faculty from *A Fish Full of River* and from her new project, a novel to be titled *On the Roof*, a story of an Alzheimer patient in the aftermath of Katrina. She offered comments about writing classes and about finding time for her own work. She emphasized the need for writing teachers to commit to their own personal writing time and explained her ritual of setting aside space for her projects from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. each day. She wanted us to know that, as teachers of writing who stretch the day to make space for student conferences and classes, we must remember to privilege our growth as well as that of the students. As Bland phrased it, we are to take time with our own projects, to “value [our] own work so that others will come to value it.”

A native of Washington state, Bland lived in Denver for many years before taking the position as Writing Specialist at Marietta College in Ohio; and now that she and her partner find themselves in a small town, hours from a city center, she says she is learning the kindness of a small-town community. Because she is the only fiction writer with a published book on the staff, she says she sometimes feels like a rock star. They treat her, in her words, “like I am Sheryl Crow.” One of her colleagues placed a sign on her door that read “Do Not Interrupt for Any Reason” so that she could meet her 4 to 6 p.m. writing standards. Her students are kind. They wanted to know why she was coming to Denver. They cheered her in her Colorado Book Awards finalist status. While she misses Denver and DU, she is comfortable and appreciative of the support she gets at Marietta where, even now, she is going through her tenure evaluation.

The day after Janet Bland’s reading at the Writing Program, Margaret Earley Whitt of the DU Department of English and I attended the Colorado Book Awards ceremony with her. It was a formal evening, a black-tie event. The Seawell Ballroom at the Denver Center, with its glass wall that opens up to a panoramic view of the Rocky Mountains, was designed with draperies, gold and white panels. In one corner, photographers took pictures of the finalists, and at the opposite end of the room, Barnes and Noble bookstore, an event sponsor, displayed a large sale table full of the books of each finalist. Somewhere in the room, a voice on a microphone kept announcing the names of writers who were being called to a sale table to sign books. Then as part of the evening’s charity event, the finalists had been asked to create baskets of writing materials and to donate them to a pre-dinner silent auction, the proceeds to go to Colorado literacy programs. Bland’s basket contained her version of a writer’s survival kit: her own fiction book; a book of writing exercises, *3 AM Epiphany*, by Brian Kiteley, head of the DU Creative Writing program; a coffee mug; a bag of peanut M&M’s; and a bag of coffee. Some writers donated wine baskets, others baskets with scented candles and lotions. One box held old, antique board games; another, collectible literary journals; and one, a hatbox full of poetry books. By the end of the evening, the Colorado Book Awards committee announced that the auction had raised \$3,900 for literacy programs. And though we, the supporters who sat at her table, were all disappointed that Bland’s book did not win the fiction prize, everyone there was impressed by the quality of the winning works as each winning writer read for several minutes from the podium. The children’s literature winner was Kathleen Pelley, a Scottish woman who read, her voice rich with Scottish “r” syllables, about an inventor named McGregor. Shari Caudron, the creative nonfiction winner, read from her introduction to a book titled, *Who Are You People?*, about hobbyists who become obsessives. The writer admitted that she herself had tried them all—the knot tying, the veganism, the running through the woods naked wearing only a crystal tied around her neck. Somehow, she said, some people find commitment and years of delight and refreshment in certain hobby activities while others, she herself included, remain fickle dilettantes.



As I sat at the table awaiting the announcement of the fiction winner, I remembered that Bland once told me that her grandmother had told her how to approach life, saying, “Janet, go in there and show them how it’s done.” So there at the ceremony, I saw that while an award might be a good thing, Bland seemed to understand that it is the “going in” to the experience that holds the challenge. On the dining tables at the ceremony, each finalist had a centerpiece photo and commentary sheet, a list of answers to short questions. Bland’s answers were direct and authentic. The virtue she most admires: restraint. An historic character she would like to be: Eleanor Roosevelt. Her favorite characteristic in a woman: courage. Her favorite saying: her grandmother’s admonition about “showing them how it’s done.” And of course, the evening ended in possibilities. As Bland was exiting the room, she saw her editor from Ghost Road Press, and she approached him to congratulate him on the several awards the Press won that night. He told her how much he had enjoyed working with her on *A Fish Full of River* and requested that she send him her next novel. She shook

his hand and thanked him. She said she would.

As we walked into the cool and dark October evening to say our goodbyes, I watched Bland. There was not a fish full of river nor a bird full of sky to be seen. But I could tell that in Janet Bland's world, reality was already filling up, swelling once more with stories yet to be written, with tales and "color" commentary to take back to her students in Ohio, with thoughts of how she must be back at her desk working on her novel from 4 to 6 p.m. on Thursday afternoon, or maybe yet, with questions as to how, the next day in Ohio, she would frame the evening with the kind of lyricism expected of a Sheryl Crow.

***THE POINT****Winter 2008***Award-winning Writer Scott Blackwood Visits DU***Linda Tate*

Fiction writer Scott Blackwood visited the University of Denver on Wednesday, October 3. The author of an award-winning collection of stories and a forthcoming novel, Blackwood serves as the Program Coordinator of the Undergraduate Writing Center at the University of Texas at Austin. His visit was cosponsored by the University Writing Program and the Department of English. Blackwood's forthcoming novel, *We Agreed to Meet Just Here*, received the 2007 Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Award Series in the Novel. It will be published in 2009 by New Issues Press. The novel draws from the same set of characters portrayed in Blackwood's 2001 short story collection, *In the Shadow of Our House*, published by SMU Press. Blackwood's fiction has also been published in the *Gettysburg Review*, *Boston Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Other Voices*, and *Whetstone*.

As part of his visit, Blackwood presented his work in a reading at Evans Chapel. After sharing selections from his forthcoming novel, *We Agreed to Meet Just Here*, Blackwood answered questions from the audience about his fiction and about his writing process.

Both the short story collection and the novel are set in Austin's Deep Eddy neighborhood. The novel is told in what Blackwood calls "plural first-person voice"—the collective voice of the neighborhood. Originally a wilderness area, the Deep Eddy neighborhood has a unique history. Once home to the Tonkawa Indians, it eventually became a camping and carnival site, an "edge-of-civilization" streetcar destination. A huge boulder in the river was a source of fascination for many visitors and residents until it was dynamited. Now, after these many chapters in its past, Deep Eddy is a "close-in urban neighborhood." All of this history, says Blackwood, is "shimmering in the background" of his novel, "a water that runs under that, another kind of reality running underneath the surface."

A longtime resident of Austin, Blackwood says he sets his fiction where "I live and know best." "One of the things



about Austin," says Blackwood, "is that it embodies all the contradictions of Texas. Austin's population has doubled since I've lived there. It's high-tech. There are new ideas of living—people coming in from the West Coast, many Californians." At the same time, says Blackwood, "you have myths of Texas and the history of Texas as a frontier." This creates a kind of "friction between the land and the people."

Blackwood's work on the novel was supported in part by a prestigious Ralph Johnston Memorial Fellowship at the Dobie Paisano Ranch, just west of Austin. The 2004-2005 fellowship allowed Blackwood to spend six months at the 254-acre ranch, formerly owned by author J. Frank Dobie. Blackwood says it was a challenge to get used to having so much time and quiet to

write. "You come in with a lot of furniture in your head," he notes. "You need to unpack this furniture and get down to what you wanted to do." Ultimately, Blackwood found that the ranch's geography forced him to buckle down and write. "When the creek got high enough," he says, "I wasn't going anywhere!"

While at DU, Blackwood also met with the staff of DU's Writing and Research Center (WRC). In conversation with the WRC staff, Blackwood noted that, in his nine years at UT-Austin's very busy Writing Center, he has been successful in changing its image as a place associated with "crisis" to one that promotes positive writing experiences. Writing studios designed to help people submit their writing to publications and writing workshops on a variety of topics are held across the campus. Under Blackwood's leadership, the Writing Center has become a "cool" place to work. Eliana Schonberg, the director of DU's WRC, worked with Blackwood at UT-Austin's Writing Center and was very pleased that he was able to meet with members of her staff.

Though Blackwood's visit was brief, the DU response to his work was enthusiastic. Books were available for sale after the Evans Chapel reading—and they very quickly sold out, disappointing a number of audience members who weren't able to leave with a signed copy. But all left with rich stories ringing in their ears and the certainty that they'll be hearing more from Scott Blackwood in the years to come.

***THE POINT****Winter 2008*

**A Conversation with Paul Kei Matsuda:
A Writer's Studio Event**
Rebekah Shultz Colby

On Thursday, October 18, the Writing Program had the honor of hosting A “Writer’s Studio” Event with Paul Kai Matsuda in Penrose Library’s Chan Family Classroom. Writing Program faculty, Kamila Kinyon and Kelli Custer, initially asked questions but then opened up the discussion for the rest of the writing faculty, including program director Doug Hesse, to ask their own questions and comments.

Kelli Custer: What are the differences and intersections between composition theory and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) theory?

Paul Matsuda: Composition has shifted from the '60s and '70s' focus on textual process to more of a social orientation in the '80s. However, TESL has also undergone shifts. Linguistics in the '60s focused on textual structures of language and how they are used. Now, there is more of a shift toward applied, practical linguistics.

The student population between composition and TESL is also different because of differences in language and cultural understanding. Cultural differences can't be taken for granted. It may be even more difficult for English as a Second Language (ESL) students to make the transition culturally from their home countries to college than for native speakers. However, there are still international students in composition classes, and many students could be considered ESL but don't self-identify as international.

Kamila Kinyon: It seems that, in teaching ESL students, they are often segregated from the rest of the university community. Should they be segregated?

They should not be totally cut out from campus culture. It is a difficult issue in identifying ESL writers—their language use and identity. There is no placement procedure that works perfectly. If you do have a composition course, for instance, that is geared specifically for ESL students, clearly communicate what the differences in the course are. Some students may take a comp class geared for ESL students because they erroneously think that it will be easier than the regular course. So, the course needs to be appropriate for what the students' actual needs are. However, teachers have many different options. Placement happens largely in the classroom. Get to know your students through conferencing and class discussions. Know your students' writing abilities, but also know how they identify themselves. Remain sensitive to students' identity constructions.

Linda Tate: It's challenging to teach some international students. For instance, this past year, I had a student who would come into the classroom five minutes late and leave five minutes early—just late enough and early enough so that I wouldn't have to confront him or interact with him at all. In fact, he seemed to avoid all interactions with me. He would never even make eye contact. Do you have any strategies or suggestions?

Purposefully create interactions with the student. Ask him to talk about the teachers he's had in the past and the relationships he's had with them. However, in engaging in this conversation with him, try to remember that college is a cross-cultural boundary crossing for everyone. College is a new culture for both native and nonnative students. So, don't single ESL students out in class. They may self-identify as international students. Many international students will voluntarily want to tell you that they are international students. However, some ESL students may be residents of the US, or some international students may not necessarily want to self-identify. In these cases, singling them out may create negative peer pressure and peer-identification situations with other students. So, in engaging with multicultural students and getting to know more about them, try to create activities that include everyone as well.

Kelli Custer: What are some key issues in working with ESL writers that comp teachers face?

Grammar. Comp has developed ways to talk about grammar that are based on assumptions that work mainly only for white, middle (or upper-middle-class) students. ESL students have not internalized the structures of grammar that native speakers have. While native speakers (including many comp teachers) may have an intuitive grasp of grammar but may not consciously know the formal terms or rules involved, ESL students usually know the formal grammar rules and their names but not always how to apply them correctly in every case intuitively like native speakers. So, composition teachers need to have a working understanding of pedagogical grammar so that they can work with these students and use their knowledge of grammatical terms. So, teachers need a very pragmatic approach to linguistics, not formal, traditional linguistics or teaching students transformational grammar, which is why composition abandoned overt, formal grammar instruction in the first place. The new idea of teaching rhetorical grammar is useful for nonnative speakers but still they will often need more.



Kamila Kinyon: How do you teach grammar to nonnative speakers?

First, look at places where the meaning is unclear. Through meaning, identify places where the language needs to be further worked on. Ignore minor errors initially. Also, keep in mind that students cannot learn everything that you want them to learn about language in ten weeks. Furthermore, keep in mind that the professional context might not be what you think it is. In our increasingly global economy, companies value multilingual workers. For instance, they will often train job interviewers on how to interview multilingual speakers specifically, teaching them to ignore minor grammar mistakes, etc. Advertisements and labels are increasingly multilingual. Manuals are often written in several languages. So, companies value multiple language use. English teachers have developed their own ideas of what companies expect, but these conceptions might not totally be in sync with the current global reality. While language use does affect business perception of competence and ability, grammar mistakes don't impact people who are perceived to be nonnative speakers as harshly. Also, some professors do ignore mistakes made by nonnative speakers more.

Alba Newmann: But how do you dance between ideas and grammar without creating shock for the student later in other classes and professional situations?

There are people who insist on holding on to traditional standards, so help students understand the sociolinguistic reality. Also, distribute grades proportionally. Establish internal standards for yourself, but then clearly communicate your standards and your rationale for them to your students. Some teachers encourage students to experiment with grammar. However, encouraging students to do whatever they want also does a disservice to them. Give students a clear sense of the university's linguistic standards. Give students strategies for negotiating standards, but also tell them the risks involved in some negotiations, especially if there is a large imbalance of power that puts the student in a much less powerful position.



Casey Rountree: For ESL students, should we assign less reading or apply the same reading standards to everyone?

Reading does take ESL students more time. Often, a lot of challenging reading has the effect of making students intimidated but ultimately proud of themselves in the end if they can persevere through it. However, ESL students may not be capable of processing difficult readings if they are assigned in bulk. However, usually teachers outside of literature assign reading for a specific purpose. So, clearly tell your students what your purpose is in assigning the reading. Tell them what to look for specifically as they read.

Kamila Kinyon: How do you deal with the different conceptions of originality and citation or quotation that many ESL writers have?

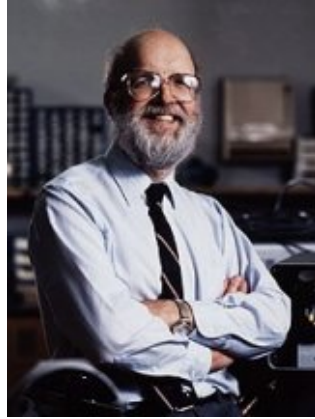
Some students do come from cultures where conceptions of originality and citation differ from ours. However, some students also quote too much because it's easier than paraphrasing, or they don't know how to paraphrase. So, give concrete examples of quotations and paraphrasing. In the US, plagiarism is considered a sin and a crime. It is not only an ethical issue but a legal issue as well. However, in our emphasis on plagiarism, we don't spend enough time explaining how discourse communities appropriate certain terms and ideas or how "new" ideas are actually a synthesis of old ideas. For instance, in composition, one of these appropriated terms is "discourse community." It's so commonly used now that everyone in the field knows what it means, and it circulates without any need for citation. Also, we need to show students the different reasons we quote. For instance, we often quote as a critique. Without quotation, it would seem as if you were critiquing yourself. However, this is a concrete example of quotation that students can easily see and understand.

Jeff Ludwig: What are you currently working on?

I just finished a handbook of writing development. It is a history of how ideas of writing developed. Another project that I am currently writing examines voice and identity in academic writing. In a previous article, I established a definition of voice that can actually be studied. I created a mock case study and constructed an "article" and sent it out to two peer reviewers. It showed that people are fairly conscious of a writer's identity as they review articles. Through the writer's voice, they construct the writer's identity. They can tell if a writer is from the Midwest or if a writer is from an educated family, etc. This perceived identity, in turn, affects how a piece is reviewed. This research also impacts writing instruction as well. For instance, if a student is a good writer but is cocky, teachers are more apt to assign a lower grade. If a student constructs an identity of helplessness but seems willing to learn, teachers are apt to assign a higher grade.

Doug Hesse: Should graduate education within composition have a bigger place for TESL?

There have been many attempts at collaboration between compositionists interested in genre and linguists. Compositionists will try to see where the current linguistic camp is at and see if they can collaborate. However, in the past, conversations have not gotten very far since the two fields have different discursive orientations—comp is concerned with the social while linguistics is concerned with formal language structures. However, the two are coming closer together. For instance, linguistics cannot account for everything by focusing solely on language without looking at the social context. There is a lot that applied linguistics and comp can talk about.

**THE POINT***Winter 2008*

Interview with Donald Stedman
Kamila Kinyon

Donald Stedman obtained his undergraduate degree from Cambridge University in 1964 and his doctorate from the University of East Anglia in 1967. From 1968 to 1971, Stedman worked at Ford Motor Company with researchers Hiromi Niki and Bernie Weinstock. Moving to the University of Michigan in 1971, Stedman continued previous investigations with nitric oxide ozone, nickel carbonyl, sulfur monoxide, phosphorus, and arsenic cherniluminescence. He developed new instruments and applied them to the study of atmospheric photochemistry ranging from photochemical smog to stratospheric ozone. In 1983, Stedman accepted a position at the University of Denver where these studies continued and a collaboration began with Gary Bishop, a research engineer in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. This collaboration resulted in the 1989 development of an on-road remote sensor for automobile exhaust carbon monoxide emissions. Subsequent developments have added the ability to measure hydrocarbons and nitric oxide. Stedman currently occupies the Brainerd F. Phillipson Chair of Chemistry at the University of Denver. He has received the Air & Waste Management Association's Frank A. Chambers Award and the American Chemical Society Award for Creative Advances in Environmental Science and Technology.

Kamila Kinyon: How do you use writing in teaching undergraduates? I noticed that you have a wide variety of assignments in your “I Care About Air” First-Year Seminar class.

Donald Stedman: In my “I Care About Air” seminar, the students do some writing every week. I get to grade writing every Sunday night. Sometimes it's personal writing, like my assignment about a weather experience they had. The two major reports they do involve not only writing but very significant data analysis that they do with spreadsheets because, after all, we are scientists. You get a bunch of data from national parks, and each student has his/her own national park. Ozone levels in national parks vary greatly. The ozone in a national park may be higher or lower in winter or summer. Conceivably, ozone in national parks is different on Mondays and Tuesdays than it is on Saturdays and Sundays, and then students have to write that up as a scientific report.

It seems that this writing assignment about ozone in national parks will give students a good sense of what constitutes research in environmental science. Are they doing original research in these projects?

As far as I know, nobody else is looking at the national park ozone data in the way that we're looking at it, so it's actually original research that they're doing, and because there are fifteen of them, we're getting fifteen national parks that way. They are learning how to use a spreadsheet. That's one of the major things they're learning: how to use their spreadsheet in such a way as to get the type of data that they want to get. Doing a pivot table and an Excel spreadsheet is not something that everyone knows how to do, so it took a great deal of training.

How is the type of writing that you assign to graduate students different from what you assign to undergraduates?

Courses for graduate students are not writing intensive. They involve mathematics and data analysis. I am not looking at writing style on the graduate level until they begin with the thesis, which is a whole different discipline and involves writing with formatting, figures, and tables. These are issues that one works on one on one with graduate students. With undergraduates, I am looking for something that hangs together as a piece of writing.

Could you describe your own writing and research process? With your focus on air quality issues, I imagine that you write for a variety of audiences. What is it like to communicate your research to different types of audiences?

I have written for *EM*, a general interest magazine for environmental professionals, not necessarily scientists in my discipline. A journal article for *Science*, like "On-Road Vehicle Emissions: Regulations, Costs, and Benefits," clearly must be written in a much more precise style. *Science* has tight requirements on page length. This particular magazine, which has an 85% rejection rate, uses a lot of footnotes and supplementary materials because there is a very strict page length. The closest I've gotten to a popular audience was an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* that was actually the most influential thing I ever wrote; it got picked up by a Congressman and ended up putting our equipment in the Clean Air Act because of it. It got subsequently taken out by the EPA, but we got put in by Congress because of a little op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*. I thought it was fascinating because not only was it for me a different style of writing but a different style of reviewing. I think I submitted it on a Tuesday. By Friday or Saturday, the fact checkers were calling me and my colleagues. The thing was published on Monday, and they paid me, whereas for these scientific journal articles that you write, you spend months writing the article. Then you submit it, and within six months, if you're lucky, you get the reviews back, and if you want to publish, you have to change it extensively. Then you spend the next month changing it, and then you submit it again. You're lucky if within a year it appears. And you pay the journal; they don't pay you. So *The Wall Street Journal* was a totally different experience. That was 1990. I don't do much in op-ed because it's not my job.

The other major writing task that professors do is writing proposals. All professors in the sciences at DU spend a lot of time writing proposals. The National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Health have a 10% acceptance rate, which means you spend huge amounts of time writing proposals. In some aspects, they are more important because you get money. I have to argue, for example, that here is this fantastic piece of research I could do which could be done in a short time and wouldn't cost too much, and I already have preliminary data, and you just have to give me \$500,000 over the next five years or whatever it is you intend to ask for.

What are your current research directions?

Improving the on-road remote sensor and using the new tools in on-road remote sensing that we have developed. I just got off the phone a few minutes ago with the National Renewable Energy Lab and the South Coast Air Quality Management District in California. Those are the people in charge of improving the air in Los Angeles, and they want me to come and measure the emissions of the trucks in Los Angeles. They want it to be work that contributes to the historical record, so they want me to measure in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2014 with the same instrumentation with guaranteed calibration measuring the same things. So if the truck fleets change their emissions during that six-year time period, then we will have an independent record that the emissions of those trucks really have changed as predicted. They want us to do an archival historical record of that sort.

Has the remote sensor system been effectively implemented in the Denver metro area?

No. We've always argued that the right way to use remote sensing is to find the few gross emitters, and then you have to have the political will to do something about them, and that has been very difficult. We're too cheap. Your emission test is \$25. If I sit on the exit ramp from north I-25 and West Sixth Avenue, I can measure 10,000 cars, so if I can persuade the drivers to throw me a quarter, I could gross \$2,500 a day. I could pay for my van, my driver, an engineer, a little bit of office space . . . that's 100 times less test cost than we're using in the state right now, which makes me a huge threat to the people who do emission testing in the state.

The mobile source of pollution is terribly important and is dominated by broken cars. We can find them, but we need to have the political will to deal with them. They are not all owned by poor people. We have some revealing pictures which we took of high hydrocarbon vehicles. For example, one car had a collector plate, used on vehicles twenty-five years or older. This old license plate was on an Infiniti which cannot be that old but probably would fail the emissions test. Another car we photographed was a Honda Civic which looked modified to be a high performance car. It showed black smoke and had no license plate. We could pull these over with a police officer, ticketing the drivers for breaking the law with their plates. Nothing is being done about such cars, but if you aren't willing to take action, these cars will be on the road. . . .

Do your students write about on-road remote sensing?

I gave my First-Year Seminar students an article to read that we wrote about on-road remote sensing. You get a very wide range of ability with science, so I gave them the assignment to write what they did or did not understand about this article. Some students will say that they understood the first sentence, that, after that, they didn't understand anything, and that the article was meaningless. Some students will say that they understood everything, but that there was a misprint in the equation on page thirty-two. Those are both equally correct responses from my point of view because what I'm interested in is learning the level of knowledge of this heterogeneous group of students that I'm teaching. I want them to know what they understand when they read a paper like this. I expect that my chemistry majors will understand more than business majors who are working in a foreign language. On the graduate level, we now have two masters students who are working on on-road remote sensing. Just today, I am commenting on their conference abstracts for a poster they will present in April.

***THE POINT****Winter 2008*

The Write Stuff: Jessica López
Heather Martin

It's true what they say about good things coming in small packages. This is certainly the case with Jessica López, a student-athlete and psychology major at DU. Though she stands at an even five feet tall and swims in a size small Pioneers sweatshirt, this gutsy junior looms large in Pioneer athletics and packs a lion's share of pluck and determination.

López began as a first-year student at DU three years ago after moving here from her home in Caracas, Venezuela. In Caracas, López was a member of the Venezuelan National Gymnastics Team, where she was required to practice a grueling eight hours a day. This training schedule made higher education impossible and left little time for much of anything else. López was drawn to DU because of its fine academic reputation and tenth-ranked gymnastics team. She had aspirations of acquiring a college education while also making her mark in the arenas of NCAA and international gymnastics.



Her first year at DU was a challenging one. She spoke very little English and had difficulty connecting with classmates, teammates, and professors. She missed her friends and family back home and felt overwhelmed by the workload at DU. Because she had to translate everything from English to Spanish and then back again, even the shortest assignments took hours to complete. She also struggled with cultural differences in teacher expectations for her writing. For the first time, she was asked to write argumentative essays that asserted her own ideas and perspectives, not just the arguments of others. But López tells me that those struggles have faded into the distant past. Since her enrollment at DU, she has blossomed—becoming fluent in English, finding her niche in the psychology department with hopes of continuing on in graduate school, and breaking record

after record as a Pioneer gymnast.

When I asked about her writing process, López says that she now brainstorms, plans, and drafts in English. In fact, she has actually begun to think in English, no small feat for someone who arrived knowing only a handful of English words a few short years ago. Like many students, López often grapples with the organization and structure of her papers, but she's found it useful to meet with her professors and tutors to work through these issues.

As she hoped, López has scored high marks with the DU gymnastics team. She became DU's first three-time All-American gymnast at the 2007 National Championships this past April. She attended the 2007 Pan American Games and Award Championships, and has qualified for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China. Yet, even with school, practices, and social obligations, she still finds time for community action, volunteering on weekends with her teammates for local food drives and community organizations like the Girl Scouts. "One of the most important things I've learned at DU," she says, "is how to work and be part of a team." These words come from a serious student and competitor who is managing to do it all with a warm smile and truckload of humility, a student who most certainly has the right stuff.



**THE POINT***Winter 2008***Students Want to Know ... Does Length Matter?***Heather Martin*

"Students Want to Know" is a new feature that tackles questions commonly asked by students of their writing teachers. Our first question addresses the dreaded length requirement. We polled the Writing Program faculty, and here are some of their responses. Please email Heather Martin (hmartin1@du.edu) if you have a question for the column.

So does length matter?

Here's what our writing faculty had to say. . . .

I ask for a rough number of words (not pages: too ambiguous) for each piece of writing that I assign. The number reflects what I believe to be about the minimum required to make an argument deep enough to address adequately the question at hand. In my experience, students have found this guideline useful as it brings some clarity to my expectations, though I can certainly see how in some situations it may prove to be an artificial and not particularly useful constraint, insofar as the writer's job, ultimately, is to craft an argument suitable to the audience that they have imagined, and that argument doesn't necessarily include me. So I remain open to being persuaded that a given piece of student writing may be more effective if it contains fewer words than the rough minimum I've stipulated. And I don't penalize anyone for writing more than I've asked.

—John Tiedemann

I am much less concerned with length than I am with development. I want students to work toward developing their ideas to support their points. The page limits I give are more for the students, ironically: it gives them something to hold on to, to shoot for. When I've tried to give lengths such as "as long as it takes," almost immediate mutiny ensues. A long paper is not always a better one. I think page lengths become part of some sort of badge of honor. The complaining is part bragging.

—Kelli Custer

Absolutely, but not in the way students might initially expect. It depends on the situation, and in many ways, I encourage my students to think about length as a rhetorical constraint that will shape how their writing will unfold. For example, when students write letters to the *Denver Post* in my WRIT 1122 course, length matters a great deal, for they have to present their ideas in less than 300 words, a task that many find much more difficult than writing a five-page paper. Conversely, when I want students to develop their ideas more thoroughly by engaging with the ideas of other experts, I expect a level of depth in their writing that often requires lengthier papers. This doesn't mean I want students to pad their writing with extra fluff, but that being thoughtful, curious writers sometimes means taking time and space to elaborate more fully on their thinking.

—Geoffrey Bateman

For my assignments, length does matter. I give quite a bit of thought to the rhetorical task and genre at hand and craft the minimum and maximum number of words accordingly. I provide a minimum number of words to ensure that students develop their ideas fully enough; I provide a maximum number of words to ensure that students learn to focus their ideas and express themselves clearly and concisely.

—Linda Tate

Length does matter, but it's not the most important feature in my assessment. When I assign a piece of writing, I provide an expected page range because that is how long I expect the essay or report will need to be in order to complete the project successfully. If a student runs short but meets all requirements fully, then that's fine. Same goes for if they feel they need a bit more space, but I don't give extra credit for writing extra pages. The only time I really enforce length requirements is when we're working in a genre that has particular space or word-count restraints; in those cases, length becomes an important rhetorical consideration.

—Jennifer Campbell



Does length matter? As a program, we have a twenty-page minimum length requirement for each quarter's writing. For this reason, expanding the length of one's writing is important. But at the same time, we practice writing in short forms where it can be just as challenging to express one's thoughts succinctly. For example, I give a visual rhetoric assignment in which students create an Adbusters parody. An important satiric point must be made in just one page. Beginning writers tend to think that adding length is the hard part of writing, but I am reminded of Oscar Wilde's comment concluding a letter he wrote: "Forgive me for being so lengthy, as I did not have the time to be brief."
—Kamila Kinyon

It depends on the genre, audience, and purpose. Definitely in certain genres like a letter to the editor, length is important. However, for most writing, length is much more flexible, and I think it's more about development of ideas than length. Like Kelli, for most of my assignments, I assign page limits more for the students' benefit than for my own requirement. I also tell students that the page length requirements are meant as a guide. If they are particularly precise writers, I tell them that it is possible to go under the page limit and that the reverse is also true if they need more space to develop their ideas fully. Definitely there are certain genres where lengthier pieces are inevitable. It takes a lot of space, for instance, to fully outline a methodology, describe, and then analyze an ethnography. Just to do all this, students are not going to write everything they need to in two to three pages. However, page length is not really an inherent feature of the genre. It is feasible that some students could write a much shorter ethnography than others, and this is totally fine.
—Rebekah Shultz Colby



THE POINT

Winter 2008



Blake Sanz Featured in Yellow Pine Reading Series

Linda Tate

Blake Sanz, faculty member in the University Writing Program, read from his novel-in-progress on Tuesday, October 16. Sanz was one of five featured readers in the Yellow Pine Reading Series in North Boulder.

Like much of Sanz's fiction, the novel-in-progress focuses on his home state of Louisiana. "The novel," says Sanz, "tells the story of Tommy and Heidi, a New Orleanian couple whose allegiances to each other and their city are tested before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina." Sanz says that he hopes the novel "will be an homage to what old New Orleans was in its last year, a testament to the storm and its aftermath, and a story of how some New Orleanians now see themselves in relation to their city, their loved ones, and the nation at large."

Sanz holds a BA from Loyola University in New Orleans and an MFA in Creative Writing from Notre Dame, where he taught writing before joining the faculty at Louisiana State University. At LSU, Sanz taught Latin American Literature and Literature of the South, as well as fiction and composition. Sanz has published short fiction in *The Bend*, *Xavier Review*, and *RE:AL*.

Organized by Boulder writer Ellen Orleans, the Yellow Pine Reading Series is a "quarterly mix of town, gown, regional, visiting, experienced, and emerging writers. Poets, memoir writers, essayists, fiction writers, and those who blur definitions come together at this growing series."

Writers interested in presenting at Yellow Pine should email a writing sample (five pages of prose or three of poetry) to eorleans@earthlink.net or to Ellen Orleans, P.O. Box 1348, Boulder, CO 80306.





THE POINT

Winter 2008



Carol Samson

In September, I won third place in a national fiction writing contest sponsored by Ghost Road Press for a story entitled "Goose Summer." It will be published in December 2007 in a volume titled *Open Windows 2007*. My story "Even the Stones" was part of an anthology, *Open Windows 2006*, which won the 2007 Colorado Book Award for anthology/collection.

I have had a paper accepted for presentation at the Popular Culture Conference's Literature and Visual Arts section: "After Tea: Adapting Virginia Woolf's A Writer's Diary for Stage Performance." The conference will be held in March 2008 in San Francisco.

As a "public good" project, I presented a workshop on writer's block and invention for the writing club at DU's Women's College. The three-hour workshop, held Saturday, October 20, was based on the group's request to work with the theme of "Re-energizing the Spirit."

I received funding from the Service-Learning Faculty Scholars Program to help start Writing in Action, a public interest writing group open to DU undergraduates, graduate students, and Writing Program faculty who are committed to putting their writing abilities to work for the public good. We'll work with Denver community-based organizations who want help producing the writing they need to fulfill their missions and who would like also to take part in scholarly and creative projects that study and celebrate the city's vibrant public sphere.

The group's work will be oriented toward service, scholarship, and teaching alike. As writers, we'll collaborate with community partners to develop the pamphlets, brochures, booklets, posters, web copy, and other materials that they use to advance and publicize their work. As rhetoric and writing researchers and literary artists, we'll document, study, and commemorate civic and cultural activism in Denver by compiling histories, conducting interviews, case studies, and ethnographies, and composing poetry, creative nonfiction, and other imaginative works. And as teachers of writing, we'll incorporate these collaborative projects into our classes, giving our students the opportunity to learn the craft of writing in a meaningful social context. In the winter quarter, I'll teach a Writing in Action section of WRIT 1133. Titled "Writing the City," the class will give students the opportunity to write for and about one of several community organizations involved in politics, the environment, and the arts.



John Tiedemann





THE POINT

Winter 2008



'Twas the Night Before Halloween . . .
Kamila Kinyon

Fall quarter's second open mic night, cosponsored by the University Writing Program and the Partners in Learning office, took place on Tuesday, October 30, and was on a spooky Halloween theme.

Writing Program faculty member David Daniels began by reading poetry by Anne Sexton. The discontented housewife theme was continued by Heather Martin in her story of a thrifty woman who pulls pasta out of her neck to help feed her family. A ghostly sequel about family legends followed with Linda Tate's narrative, taken from her forthcoming book *Power in the Blood: A Family Narrative*. Poetry slam artist Niche Ward performed with stories of abusive families and an ironic commentary about Cinderella. Dee Galloway, chair of the African American Alumni Association, brought her notebook of writings, and, in an improvisational spirit, asked the audience for any letter of the alphabet. Amazingly, she had poetry or reflective prose beginning with any random letter. Students participated with works from a variety of genres, ranging from poetry and fiction to creative nonfiction. Thanks to Nikole Scribner, Mark Robinson, Russ Takeall, James Krefft, Emelye Neff, Sam Carty, and Christian Seik for their fine contributions to the evening.

And we were all thrilled at Sam's comment: "This makes me feel like there is real life at D.U.!"



Open Mic Presenters



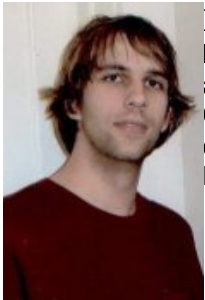
Dee Galloway holds a BA in English from the University of Denver and is currently chair of the University of Denver's African American Alumni Association. She is involved in the preservation and proliferation of Negro spirituals through the Spirituals Project. Galloway is a poet whose works include "They Slice the Air," "The Last Word of Ancient Sunlight," and "Metamorphosis." She is currently working on a poetic recreation of the artwork of schizophrenic patients. In addition to her literary achievements, Galloway is also a skilled accountant, editor, website designer, graphic designer, and choral musician. [Read more . .](#)



Heather Martin completed her doctoral coursework at the University of Denver, and is currently working on her dissertation, *Latimer's Stone*, a novel in the form of a research project. Martin received her BA in English and Humanities from the State University of New York at Stony Brook and her MA in Creative Writing at the City University of New York at Queens. Most recently, Martin served as the Interim Director of the First-Year English Program. She has published both pedagogical work, such as *Aspire!: A Guide to First-Year English*, which she co-authored, and creative works such as "A Cheap and Frugal Fashion" and "Pathway of the Waves." [Read more . . .](#)



Linda Tate received her PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with a concentration in 20th century British and American Literature. Before joining the University of Denver's Writing Program, she was a tenured full professor at Shepherd University in West Virginia. She received her BA and MA from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Tate has published numerous academic articles as well as two books, *A Southern Weave of Women: Fiction of the Contemporary South* and *Conversations with Lee Smith*. Her forthcoming book, to be published next fall by Ohio University Press, is *Power in the Blood: A Family Narrative*. Tate is currently working on *Writing the Self to Wellness*. [Read more . . .](#)



Manuel "Blake" Sanz received his MFA from Notre Dame, where he taught creative writing before joining the faculty at Louisiana State University. There he taught Latin American Literature and Literature of the South, fiction, and composition. His BA is from Loyola University in New Orleans. Sanz has published in *The Bend*, *RE:AL*, and *Xavier Review*, among other places. He has completed a novel, *Airbrushed*, and is currently working on a second novel about Hurricane Katrina. He has also written a collection of stories entitled *In the City of Murals*. [Read more . . .](#)

**THE POINT***Winter 2008*

Mindy Williams
PhD in Literature

Where did you get your undergraduate degree? What was your major? Where did you get your MA and PhD? What were they in? Why did you choose DU?

I got my BA in English and Biblical Studies at a small Christian college in Southern California, Hope International University. The last thing I wanted to do when I graduated was teach, so I worked in marketing at an audio-visual peripheral manufacturer for almost two years; I realized, however, that the business world wasn't for me, so I decided to go to graduate school. I got my Master's in English at California State University, Chico, and did my PhD work in literary studies right here at DU where I've stayed on to work in the Writing Program.

Describe your writing process.

I love planning and brainstorming and researching and reading and revising and polishing, but I HATE actually sitting down and putting words to paper, the actual composing stage. Like many writers, it's a very painful process. To alleviate the pain, I write very detailed outlines so that, when I do compose, it just feels like I'm "filling in" the outline. But that only works for certain kinds of writing.

What do you enjoy most about writing?

If the writing is academic in nature, I enjoy the end result—producing a text I can be proud of that demonstrates what I know and contributes to what others can know. But I also write in my journal a lot, and I use that writing to figure out things that are going on in my life. I enjoy the catharsis there. And if it's something creative, which I don't write as often as I'd like to, I enjoy when I stumble upon a nice turn of phrase or a good metaphor that isn't too cheesy.

What drew you to become a writing teacher?

I think initially I was more drawn to the life of an academic than to teaching itself. I decided to go to graduate school because I wanted to be in a stimulating environment where things changed all the time and where the work I did seemed to mean something. But when I started to teach, I realized it was something that I was good at and that I really enjoyed.

What do you enjoy most about teaching writing?

Even if students don't see it right away, what they learn about writing will serve them very well in the future, so I enjoy the usefulness of what I teach. My favorite moments in teaching are seeing students improve over the course of a quarter and putting what they learn into practice. And I love seeing those students years later and having them tell me about how they've applied what they learned in my class to other projects, whether academic or professional. Basically, I most enjoy seeing my students succeed.

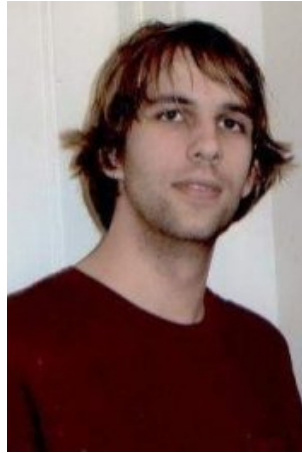
What are your hobbies and outside interests, or guilty pleasures?

I love to travel, play board games and cards, watch movies, watch basketball and college football, and read (of course).

Name an unusual or little-known fact about yourself.

I'm not sure how little known this is at this point, but I'm a big coupon and rebate shopper, and each week I seem to pick up at least one thing at either Walgreens or Rite-Aid that I actually make money from (if it's free after rebate and I use a coupon in addition to the rebate). Just this past week I got a free bottle of nail polish.



***THE POINT****Winter 2008*

Blake Sanz
MFA in Fiction

Where did you get your undergraduate degree? What was your major? Where did you get your MFA? Why did you choose DU?

I went to Loyola New Orleans for undergrad, mainly because it was the only school that offered me both academic and basketball scholarships. The academic part, at least, worked out; we were miserable on the court. I majored in math and history for two years before dropping those to minors and settling on the big E.

Out of Loyola, I applied to Notre Dame's MFA program because my girlfriend at the time was from northern Indiana and was soon to move back there. What made the decision easy: it was the only MFA program I got into, and they offered me a lot of money.

After teaching at LSU for a while, they were set to lay me off in the spring of 2006, so I went on the market. By the time I started applying, Katrina had just hit and the idea of living far from hurricanes seemed like a good one. When the DU position came up on the job lists, it read like a dream job for someone with my qualifications. So, I was excited to get it. The idea of starting anew was important to me then, and so I liked that this Writing Program was new and that I could be a part of its beginnings.

Describe your writing process.

I just do it. I don't really reflect much on my process, or if I do, it's only to have an intelligent-sounding answer to the question. When I was taking basketball seriously, I never used to ask myself, What is the process of playing basketball like? I just practiced a whole lot and played a whole lot, and the more I did, the more attuned I became to the subtleties of the game. The same is true with my writing. The more I write, the more likely I am to notice what works and what doesn't, what matters and what doesn't, what small things I can do to make a story better.

What do you enjoy most about writing?

I like to write late at night, and I enjoy the false sense it gives me that I'm the only one working. I also like putting myself in the mood of my stories. For example, I can remember one night when I was writing a character's arrival to the Virgin Islands. I cooked myself jerk chicken, lit an "Ocean Breeze" candle, surrounded myself with books by Naipaul and Walcott and Shacochis that I'd read, put on CDs by Toots and the Maytals, and bobbed my head while I had my character settle into a random, abandoned trailer by the sea. Which my rundown apartment kind of looked and felt like. It takes a pretty self-centered, vain, audacious person to write fiction, I think, and I'm most comfortable letting out that side of me when I feel like no one would be looking. For someone not used to admitting to those qualities, it's liberating.

Briefly, how would you describe your teaching philosophy?

I like students to learn from each other, but it's not always easy to foster discussions that make that possible. So, the most important thing for me is to create assignments that ask questions that students will (1) care about and want to discuss, (2) have varying answers to, and (3) learn relevant stuff from. Having them write regularly is important, too. As I mentioned earlier about my own process, I feel that the more you write, the more you begin to understand what matters to good writing. So, in coupling that kind of practice with pointed discussions of what matters in writing, I hope that students can begin to understand what it means and what it feels like to have written something they're proud of.

What drew you to become a writing teacher?

I was only drawn to it after I'd started doing it. Being a quiet person, I was terrified at first by the notion that I'd have to be in front of people for a long time. Once I started, though, I realized that the most important part of teaching is listening, and I'm pretty good at that, so I figured I'd found something I could manage.

What do you enjoy most about teaching writing?

I love having conferences with students who care. I learn a lot from them, and those sessions give you such a good sense of what matters to your students and why, what you ought to try to teach them and why. I always feel like I've made the biggest difference in those moments.

What are your hobbies and outside interests, or guilty pleasures?

I play classical guitar, write poetry, play basketball, watch YouTube videos and sports on TV. I have a couple of friends who know everything about music ever, and I enjoy mooching off their tastes. I take ridiculously long road trips by myself. But really, there's nothing better than a summer afternoon at a café with a patio and a happy hour and a small, intimate group of really good, funny, fun people.

Name an unusual or little-known fact about yourself.

If you've gotten an email from me, then you know that my first name is Manuel, but my middle name isn't really Blake. It's Bleakley. I'm named after some random, weird-named great aunt. Since my dad got to pick the first name (his own), my mom got to pick the middle, and why she went with the name of some relative she never knew, I'll never get.

So, when people ask me to initial something, I always put all three letters, because MS makes me think of the disease, and who wants to be known as BS?

**THE POINT***Winter 2008*

Rebekah Shultz Colby
PhD in Rhetoric and Writing

Where did you get your undergraduate degree? What was your major? Where did you get your MA and PhD? What were they in? Why did you choose DU?

I received my undergraduate degree in English (with a concentration in poetry) from California State University, San Bernardino. I got my Master's degree in Rhetoric and Composition at the same place. I completed my PhD in Rhetoric and Writing at Bowling Green State University.

I chose to teach at DU because I was excited about starting a new writing program with Doug Hesse. I wanted to support Doug's efforts to continue to professionalize the teaching of rhet/comp and thought this new writing program was at least a step in the right direction—a step I would like to see other writing programs make but also continue to evolve.

Describe your writing process.

I guess I have a love/hate relationship with writing. When I'm inspired, I love it. When I have a great critical idea, I love unpacking it and playing with its implications. However, I used to think there was something wrong with me because writing was often such a torturous experience. I guess that's why I love composition research and scholarship on the writing process. I found out in graduate school that writing is hard for everyone. Although writing is still difficult for me, I guess knowing that other people struggle with writing helps ease some of the added anxiety that it's supposed to be easy—especially for an English major.

My writing process is punctuated with a lot of procrastination. There's a lot of procrastination involved in getting started. Usually I have to compel myself with guilt or fear to even start writing. I wish I had a better strategy than this, but so far I don't. Then, I start, and the process usually gets easier until I start struggling with a particular idea or the organization doesn't work out like it should or something else messy and unplanned happens with language. Then I stop. I then have to do something fun and removed from academic writing, otherwise I paralyze myself further with anxiety. So, I often end up playing games (*World of Warcraft*, *The Sims 2*, *FreeCell*, *Bejeweled*) until I've figured out what I'm going to do next. Then I start writing again.

What do you enjoy most about writing?

I love that writing has so much potential for creation. Entire worlds can come into existence within the written page. World-changing ideas can be articulated and then widely circulated. Through writing, ideas live and breathe. With this mammoth amount of potential, comes a lot of power and responsibility (not to quote *Spiderman* or anything).

Briefly, how would you describe your teaching philosophy?

I want students to become rhetorically savvy, especially since, because of globalization and rapid technological change, we live in a radically changing textual world. I know jobs will change. I know writing demands will continue to

change. I want students to know how to adapt to this world. And, of course, to help them adapt, I want them to become critical thinkers. I want them to know how to think critically about the ideas they come across in their reading. However, I also want them to think critically about how writing shapes these ideas. I want them to be able to read news reports critically and not think that whatever rhetoric the president spouts must be the absolute truth. I want them to question what gets portrayed in the media and why. I also want them to have this same critical eye as they read scientific scholarship. I want them to realize that, through writing and research methodologies, humans construct scientific knowledge (with flaws and biases)—and that it is not a commandment from God. Lastly, I want them to apply this same critical eye to their own writing. I want them to be able to figure out how to analyze different genres so that they can, through writing, use these different genres to appeal to multiple audiences as needed most effectively.

What drew you to become a writing teacher?

I guess I have this whole writing conversion narrative. I've always loved (and feared) writing. In high school, I had a teacher who basically made me feel like I could never write in college. She was never happy with my drafts. My drafts usually bled red ink. If I saw the dreaded words "See Me" scrawled at the end of my essay, I knew I was in for a particularly torturous one-on-one session with her in which she would make me acutely aware of my many failings as a writer. Although I struggled and fought hard for my A, by the end of the course, I had spent so much time drafting, researching, worrying, crying, and, most of all, revising that I just decided I would stay away from writing in college at all costs. However, after I realized I was an even more miserable dental hygienist who loathed sharp instruments and the mouth in general, I decided to give writing one more shot. Even if I was a terrible writer, I didn't completely loath it. I still love it even as I fear it. And amazingly, I didn't do so poorly in my English classes, and I actually enjoyed writing most of my assignments.

I think tutoring at Cal State San Bernardino really showed me that I could teach writing. I loved helping writers who were often as frustrated with their writing as I had been and easing some of that fear and anxiety. It's great seeing the light bulb go on in students' eyes and seeing them leave with a smile on their faces—or at least look visibly relieved.

As a teacher, I strive for similar goals. I want to challenge students with their writing, but I also don't want them to feel overwhelmed or feel like it's an impossible task they will never be good enough at. My students usually end up revising quite a bit. But I always want them to feel like this is just par for the course—I expect this of everyone and that revision doesn't mean they are failures at writing. I also want to make them feel like they are perfectly capable of revision. If they don't feel this way, I will be there to help them until they do.

What do you enjoy most about teaching writing?

What I enjoy most about teaching writing is when students are struggling with their writing, but they work hard to overcome these obstacles. I always tell my students that I expect them to work hard, but I also expect that from myself as well. I will work just as hard at helping them as they do in drafting and revising. So, I always feel a great sense of victory when I work hard with a student, and the student works just as hard or harder, and, as a result, he/she makes tremendous strides in his/her writing.

What are your hobbies and outside interests, or guilty pleasures?

I've been in love with reading since before I could read. I've been in love with playing computer games ever since my father brought home an Apple IIe in 1983. I was seven. He would play games, fighting pirates in the Caribbean or finding lost Elven cities and slaying dragons along the way, and I would "help."

My favorite computer games usually involve gripping narratives in which, like reading, I actually come to care about the characters. I love *Baldur's Gate*. In the game, you are on a quest basically to find your own identity – as well as to slay the evil elf Irenicus who wants to take over the world. You find characters along the way that can join your adventuring party, and they all have subplots that change the overall narrative of the game depending on who you pick. There's betrayal, intrigue, and, of course, hubris. I also love the Gabriel Knight series—a series of mysteries better (I think) than Dan Brown. You investigate a voodoo cult in New Orleans, solve the mystery of the Knights Templar (of course) in the south of France, and uncover a hidden pack of werewolves in Germany. The game intertwines historical fact and fantasy. In one of the games, the alpha werewolf was complex enough as a character that I was mad I had to kill him at the end. And, of course, *The Longest Journey* series contains the best adventure games ever made. You're a character living in the future, but you find a portal to a fantasy world. It's a great blend of fantasy and science fiction. It's definitely the best science fiction world (and story) I've played in a computer game.

A big reason for my love of *World of Warcraft* comes from the fact that quests often uncover the narrative behind the world's lore.

***THE POINT****Winter 2008***Using Demographic Marketing Strategies to Teach Audience***Heather Martin*

In my writing classes, I often make use of the [Values and Lifestyles System™ \(VALS\)](#) in our discussions of audience. VALS is a marketing tool that uses psychological principles to segment consumers based on their personality traits. It's fun and useful to examine these categories and employ them in different writing projects. For example, many DU students fit into the EXPERIENCER category of VALS. EXPERIENCERS are consumers motivated by self-expression. They are young, impulsive, and seek out things that are new, flashy, and thrilling. Using VALS, I might ask my students to design a brochure for Habitat for Humanity with EXPERIENCERS as their audience. To create an effective brochure, they will need to pay close attention to the needs of this group. What elements of Habitat for Humanity will appeal to EXPERIENCERS? What language? What images? Once students have designed an effective brochure, we complicate the discussion by examining a second group—BELIEVERS, idealists who value tradition and are loyal to common, established US brands. What would appeal to BELIEVERS? What will the new brochure look like? Could we design a Habitat for Humanity brochure that appeals to both EXPERIENCERS and BELIEVERS at the same time? In working through this process, I find that my students learn how to design and implement rhetorical plans that consider the needs of different readers and audiences.

A Few Uses for VALS**1. Marketing Ideas to Different Audiences**

In groups, students selected a product to market and were assigned one of the VALS types as their audience. Together, they worked up an ad campaign for the product. Students were then assigned a different VALS type (usually with a different primary motivation) and repeated the process using the same product. Groups presented the two ads to the class, and we tried to determine which types they addressed in the ads. Groups also discussed the choices they made and why they believed that each ad appealed to the VALS types selected.

2. Different Approaches for Different Audiences

Students were asked to write an editorial with one of the VALS types as their audience. In class, we listed which elements of the debate might concern the different VALS audiences. This helped students choose which elements of the debate to focus on when drafting their editorial.

3. Audience Profiling

Students were asked to research a publication, organization, or group, compose an audience profile (similar to VALS), and discuss what led to their assumptions about the audience.

4. Rhetorical Analysis

Students performed rhetorical analyses of advertisements they chose. Each analysis included a discussion of the VALS type addressed in the advertisement and how the ad appealed to its audience.

Benefits

- Students like it! They enjoy locating their type and engage easily with the different descriptions. I suspect that both their high school and consumer experiences have prepared them amply for this type of framework.
- It provides a concrete set of generalizations about a group of people, about a potential audience that students can latch onto in an assignment or activity designed to emphasize writing for a specific audience.

Drawbacks

- A discussion of how persuasive writing is different than advertising will be necessary.
- Of course, real audiences are not nearly as neat and tidy as those identified in VALS and students should understand this point.