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- Martin Luther King Jr. Day -- Monday, Jan. 15
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- Assign multiple drafts and allow revision
- Encourage students to thoughtfully reflect on their writing and writing process
- Schedule student-teacher conferences
- Give specific source requirements
- Openly discuss definitions of plagiarism with students

Writing Tips

The Rhetorical Situation

Jennifer Campbell

It can be tricky to begin writing, especially since every new writing task always needs to meet different challenges and expectations. To begin to thinking of what these new challenges and expectations might be, it is often helpful to clearly define for yourself what your rhetorical situation for your new writing task is before you even begin writing. Simply put, the rhetorical situation is:

- The Author
- The Audience
- The Topic and Purpose

If any of the elements of the rhetorical situation change, the resulting text must change accordingly.



Student Open House
Kelli Custer

DU students helped the new Writing and Research Center kick off its grand opening on November 2 with games, pizza, and an opportunity to meet potential future faculty. While munching on pizza, groups of students were challenged to rounds of “speed haiku,” writing as many of the three-line Japanese poetry forms as possible in five minutes. Under the appropriate topic of “pizza,” students wrote elegant poems about the evils of pizza overtaking their very beings, with the staff-picked best entries winning prizes. More prizes were awarded to mad lib stories as students remembered what it was like to play with the parts of speech for surprise results. The highlight for many students seemed to be the chance to “speed greet” the new writing instructors. Students moved in small groups around a large circle of pairs of instructors, asking questions about their classes, teaching styles, or themselves. The instructors enjoyed the time just as much, getting to know their possible future students. The day ended up being an overall balance of fun with language and a time for students to get to know the newest resources in writing: The Writing and Research Center and the lecturers of the new Writing Program.

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Photo Caption Contest

Man with Cello

- A. Bunsen's Fifth Symphony.
- B. Not rocket science, it's "musical chemistry"
- C. You'd think for how much textbooks cost, they would at least edit them for typos. "Acid-bass reaction indeed."
- D. Why would playing a G# cause the catalyst to activate?



Three with Meat

- A. Make it look like an accident.
- B. "Hacksaw Ribs": A new item on TGI Friday's menu
- C. "After DU's volleyball team defeated CU this fall, the Boulder Chancellor regretted his decision to wager the school's mascot on the game."





A DU Serenade

A. "A New Sitcom: Two guys, a school, and a girl who thinks she's Beethoven"

B. You know, Frankie Lane's version of *Rawhide* is better even without gestures.

C. Tommy Pucklechurch and Ken Maggotsfield drop to the ground in pain after Sally Swartout uses her superpowers to silence their incessant singing of the Pioneer fighting song.

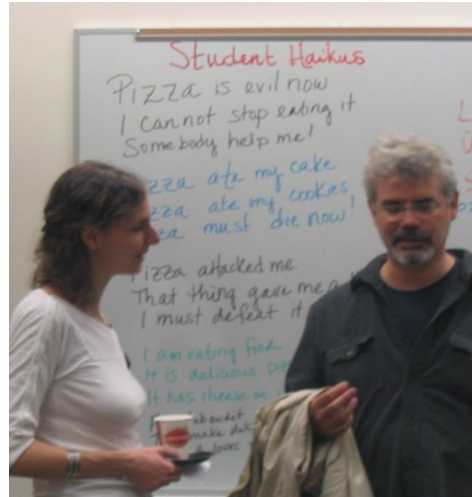
D. School officials locate the cause of the "Great Window Shattering of 1964."

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Faculty Open House
Rebekah Shultz Colby

The Writing Center was packed Friday, Nov. 3 as faculty members from all over campus, including the provost and the chancellor, took part in the festivities for the Marisco Writing Program's grand opening open house. The highlight of the event included informal remarks from both the provost, Gregg Kvistad, and the chancellor, Robert Coombe, in which they welcomed the Marisco writing program to the university and briefly told about the many challenges and eventual breakthroughs which faced the Marisco writing initiative. They both offered great optimism and encouragement about the current and future efforts of the program.

The opening festivities included a mad lib contest about a beleaguered superhero. At the door, participants could request a word – a noun or an adjective – which they then pinned to their nametags. So, various faculty members walked around with “baroque,” “tulip,” or, the best by far, “scintillate” next to their names. On a dry-erase board, Marisco lecturers added best/worst FYS titles such as “Blocked Again: Colon Use in Academe” and “‘You’re Fired’: A History of the Toupee from Whigs to Trump.” Meanwhile faculty and lecturers alike gleefully penned 5/7/5 haikus which included a German haiku, along with several comical attempts to translate it, and this gem: “Hey Calliope, I need a haiku now. This pen awaits you.” For those not so poetically inclined, participants could add to a collage and visually depict with pictures what made them write. Pictures included a spider web, with the word “context” written inside, a dog, a rainbow and clouds, and a satirical political cartoon of the GOP.



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Student Speed Haikus

Pizza is evil now
I can not stop eating it
Somebody help me!

Pizza ate my cake
Pizza ate all my cookies
Pizza must die now!

Pizza attacked me
That thing gave me a black-eye
I must defeat it.
--- Francis Gonzales

I am eating food
It is delicious pizza
It has cheese on it.

Mitchell is hungry
I am happy there is food
I love cheese pizza.

Fuhgitabowdit
They make delicious pizza
Mitchell loves pizza.

Pizza is yummy
Especially delivered
It is very good.

I like pizza...yum
I am satisfied with it
It is so so good.
--- Anonymous

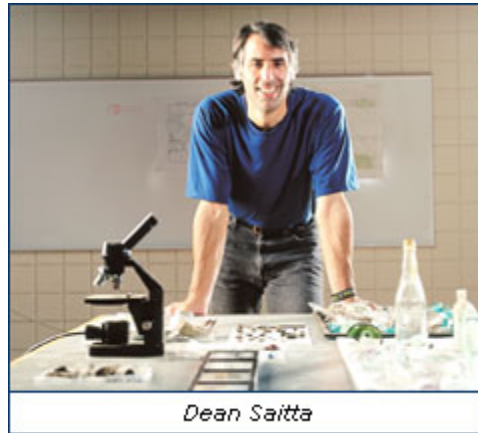
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Dr. Neal Lerner's Inaugural Lecture
"Science Labs, Writing Centers: Provocative Parallels"
Rebekah Shultz Colby

Neal Lerner, a highly published writing center scholar at MIT, gave a fascinating inaugural lecture entitled "Science Labs, Writing Centers: Provocative Parallels" on Thursday, Nov. 4 at 4:00 in Mary Reed in honor of the Marisco Writing Program's grand opening. In the talk, he discussed how the educational philosophies of progressive educators such as John Dewey, Helen Parkhurst, and John Kenedy actually foreshadow much current writing center theory and practice, even though much of this educational philosophy was rejected or banished to relative anonymity in its time. These practices included treating the writing center as a sort of laboratory or studio in which students drafted and experimented with language, learning about language and writing from the firsthand experience of writing, in much the same way that laboratories give students firsthand experience with science and scientific phenomena. Often, students were encouraged to actively collaborate and teach each other, while the teacher took the more sideline role of guide or mentor. These practices mirror the peer tutoring structure of the writing center since, even though tutors usually have more experience and education in writing than the peers they tutor, they too are often students. Also, in tutoring sessions, tutors encourage writers to experiment with and learn from their own writing, often giving them helpful suggestions, but also giving writers enough time and space to come up with their own ideas for revision and further drafting. Lerner's talk inspired the audience to think about these points further, especially as writing program continues to grow and develop in the future.

Refreshments, which included an open bar, vegetable and chicken kabobs, and various cookies, and lively conversation followed, as well as some interesting historical tidbits about DU's own writing center past.



***THE POINT****Winter Quarter 2007***Dean Saitta Interview**
Rebekah Shultz Colby

Dean Saitta, a DU professor in the Department of Anthropology and president of the faculty senate, recently made David Horowitz's list of 101 Dangerous Professors, along with such illustrious scholars as Frederic Jameson, bell hooks, Stanley Aronowitz, and Noam Chomsky.

Interviewer: So, how do you think this David Horowitz list relates to writing?

[David Horowitz's researchers] clearly didn't read my stuff before they put me on the list. I mean, they read the titles of my published work. His researchers just looked at titles of articles and assumed from those titles that I was a communist because I write about ancient "community". So, the Horowitz thing relates to writing in the sense that critics who are going after professors aren't reading our work. We're being selectively prosecuted, or persecuted, based on superficial engagements with our work.

Interviewer: How would describe your own writing process?

Dean Saitta: Writing used to be like pulling teeth, with much procrastination until the pressure came around. Now it's gotten easier. I've learned to sit down and dump stuff out instead of agonizing right from the beginning. I've learned to love editing what I write, so I try to get to that stage as fast as possible.

[Being on the list] has involved me in a lot of blogging, where I'm writing off the top of my head so as to sustain a conversation. The blogging has actually been very useful. When you go online and discover that somebody's taken a shot at you, you have to respond quickly in order to stay in the game. They're asking you for your evidence for this that and the other, and you gotta deliver. You don't have time to navel-gaze for too long if you want to stay in the thread and, hopefully, win some hearts and minds. . . . I've had to think on my feet and respond quickly and try to put together maximally coherent arguments in just a short amount of space. This teaches you to be really efficient [in trying] to encapsulate long arguments in short forms, and I think that's been useful.

Interviewer: How do you use writing in your own teaching? In what ways do you use it?

D: I think I'm pretty conventional. . . . I don't know where I would fall on a continuum from basic writing to writing intensive courses, but I think I require a lot of it. I usually don't require in-class exams. I assign students short take-home essay papers, like maybe four or five through the course of a term, and then a research paper. That's a pretty standard requirement for department courses, with all-graduate student courses requiring a bit more. For the

undergraduate foundations and core courses I tend to require three or four short analytical essays through the course of the term. . . I also try to give [students] practice writing Op Ed columns and letters to the editor. I like the letter to the editor thing, especially in the big foundations classes . . . My course with Greg Robbins on science and religion is useful for having students write letters to the editor and position papers because the topics are so emotional and yet you have to be concise. So, I try to mix things up and give students practice with different kinds of writing.

I wish I could require more rewrites of work. That's always something I've wanted to do. You know, have [students] submit a paper, then give them feedback, and have them turn in a re-write before they get a grade. But I've discovered that ten weeks is pretty short, and depending on the class size and content it's not always feasible to do that. But that's always something that I've wanted to do. . . I think students would learn better from correcting their mistakes and they would cultivate a better writing discipline.

I understand that some students have inquired about the university establishing individual blogs for them. [Blogging] with the students would be a good idea...it would be a great way, I think, of improving their written work. They can submit short pieces to you electronically and then you can immediately provide feedback in the "comments" section. Such a format would allow the kind of rewriting and discipline cultivation that would serve us all pretty well.

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How to Avoid Plagiarism

Jennifer Campbell, Richard Colby, and Heather Martin

The University of Denver has defined and outlined various degrees of plagiarism and its potential consequences (cf. DU's Faculty Senate approved "[Guidelines for Faculty on Student Plagiarism](#)"). As a teacher, there are many ways to address issues of plagiarism in the classroom including in-class writing, specific and unique assignments, and most importantly, discussions of writing including research and source attribution in professions or the discipline. What follows are examples and strategies that might be helpful in helping students avoid mistakes.

- Provide detailed and unique writing assignments every term. Too general an assignment or a recycled assignment creates the potential for a student to accidentally or purposefully plagiarize. Similarly, recycling the same assignment year in and year out may allow the opportunity to provide students with examples of past student work but it can also prevent them from thinking in unique ways about an assignment.
- Include community-specific or current events questions in writing prompts. Assignments that ask class, community, or university specific questions ask students to actively create and synthesize connections with their own situations and a topic. Similarly, design writing assignments that include discussion of current events. Students will have a harder time finding an essay on a pay site that deals with something that happened last week. Even in a history class or classical literature class, assignments can ask how recent events or publications compare to the topic at hand.
- Assign pre-writing. Plagiarists often cite poor time management as an excuse for their behavior. A pre-writing assignment can compel the less organized or less motivated student to begin the process sooner, consider the assignment more thoroughly, seek help when needed, and, ultimately, complete the work on their own. For instance, shortly after giving an assignment, have students write a paragraph in class telling you what they will write about and how they plan to start the assignment, and then ask them occasionally how their research/writing is progressing, possibly even asking for drafts that are still in the process of being completed.
- Assign in-class writing. In-class writing, even a paragraph of observation or response to a reading, can offer insight into the writing abilities of students as well as their use of sources. These in-class writings can be read quickly and holistically to gain a sense of whether particular students need help citing and working with sources, their understanding of the discourse, and their ability to articulate ideas about topics in the discipline. Thus, throughout the term, an instructor may write a comment or two on these paragraphs that help the student better learn the expectations of writing in the discipline.
- Assign multiple drafts and allow revision. When time and space allow, ask students to turn in their writing in multiple stages or drafts. You don't necessarily need to grade or comment on these attempts — just a quick glance and a check mark will ensure that the writing isn't coming fully-formed from another source.
- Encourage students to thoughtfully reflect on their writing and writing process. Students who know that they will be asked to discuss their work in a public forum (like the classroom) are less likely to submit work that is not their own. For instance, have students complete a cover sheet for each writing assignment and then have them discuss it in class. In the cover sheet, they can explain how they chose their topic, describe their writing process, explain what they like most about their paper, or what they would work on if they had more time. Not only will this reflective process help students think about what worked or didn't work, but it would be very difficult for students to complete this requirement if they didn't write the paper themselves.
- Schedule student-teacher conferences. Meeting with students about a writing assignment will allow them to work out their ideas with you and can inspire confidence in their abilities to complete the task, as well as clarify your expectations for the end product. These meetings will also give you a sense of the direction that student

papers are taking.

- Give specific source requirements. For example, if a paper must include references from your course textbook and a journal article/web site, etc., students will be less likely to find a paper online that uses those sources. This approach can also encourage students to make use of a variety of resources types.
- Openly discuss definitions of plagiarism with students. Before assigning writing projects, discuss definitions of plagiarism. Make it very clear what counts as plagiarism and what documentation conventions you expect students to follow. Students might not realize what is inappropriate, especially given the popularity of sampling and sharing in digital environments. Also, blanket statements about plagiarism are difficult because certain disciplines, cultures, and discourse communities may have different definitions of research, source attribution and citation. Rather than a simple example works cited or reference page, students might also benefit from discussions about why sources are given attribution, how and why past research is built upon and or critiqued, and what role the student has in entering this conversation.

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Writing for a World That Won't Keep Still

*Doug Hesse
Director, Writing Program*

Our world drips writing. Never, and I mean since the first pictographs and cuneiform, have so many people been producing so much text. Never have so many words circulated so widely and so quickly.

Recently a newspaper reporter asked me to comment on the implications of all this, the effects of MySpace, IM, and text-messaging on students' writing abilities. I think she expected me to bemoan an insidious assault on literate civilization. I imagine I disappointed her by offering that these media actually bode well for writing, which finds new forms in blogs, wikis, and the whole range of multimodal texts that commingle words, images, and sounds.

In celebrating these new media, I'm hardly naïve that the skills and strategies they require tidily transfer to other kinds of writing, especially traditional academic discourses and the essayistic tradition. There are different skills and standards for success in creating an effective PowerPoint slide vs. an effective research report for a sociology course, and a deft blogger isn't necessarily and adroit essayist. Perhaps the biggest favor that the new media have provided is to make starkly clear that good writing varies according to situation and circumstance, something we've always known but rarely foregrounded. What exemplary chemistry lab reports, history term papers, popular magazine articles, and business memos have in common is familiar enough: clarity, organization, evidence for claims, and so on. But these qualities look quite different in each instance, and a writer's facility with one kind of writing doesn't automatically transfer to others.

The proliferation of new media dramatically reminds us that successful writers adapt, using the strategies expected in different readerships and discourse communities. The consequence is additive. On top of traditional skills that continue to be important (I could wax at length on how crucial the ability is to write extended prose essays, crucial both to individuals and society), student writers need to develop others.

Perhaps this moving literacy target is “unfair.” But unless we acknowledge the multiplicity of writing, those of us who teach it risk marginalization. Students are most cynical about writing when they encounter universal admonitions that clearly conflict with the texts they regularly encounter: never use first person; always “tell them what you’re going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you told them;” always use active voice; avoid emotional appeals; and so on. The challenge is showing students that we understand the relationships—and the differences—between writing as it exists in the academy and writing as it exists in various spheres beyond.

A writing education must, then, build a deep and flexible repertory of skills. A 2005 report from the National Commission on Writing shows that writing is an integral part of professional life for two-thirds of American salaried workers. We ignore those needs at our students’ peril. But writing serves needs beyond the instrumental and vocational.

Consider, for example, DU’s vision to be great private university dedicated to the public good. Our society’s health depends on individual’s abilities to articulate and deliberate ideas, to impart information, and to understand when others are being sloppy or narrowly self-interested. Writing is crucial for those purposes, and that’s why writing is also crucial to education. After all, writing is more than transcribing information. It is the very act of bringing ideas into existence, a mode of learning. We often think we know something until the sharp discipline of writing reminds us otherwise and drives us to think better and more clearly.

As a result, learning how to write is not like getting vaccinated against measles. It doesn’t happen once and for all. Instead, we encounter increasingly complex writing situations, and the static forms of childhood or high school no longer suffice. We draw on previous experience but have to stretch in new ways.

Fortunately, we don’t have to go it alone. There are teachers and mentors and good examples. At DU, students can expect a challenging first-year experience, followed by more writing intensive courses that develop the kinds of academic, professional, and civic writing important in the contemporary university and life beyond. Through all of this, they can count on a professional writing faculty and a writing center that provides careful one-to-one teaching.

This fall I’ve enjoyed one of the most exhilarating experiences of my career. For thirteen weeks, every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoon from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. I met with the 19 new writing program lecturers. We debated teaching ideas, planned courses, and analyzed student papers. We devised research projects that will tell us how we’re doing as teachers, and we critiqued each other’s own writings in progress. We simultaneously wrestled with the writing needs of academic departments across campus and with the demands of new media writing for publics beyond the academy. I came away from those discussions even more invigorated about the future of writing at the University of Denver.

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Why Every Great University Needs a Writing Center

Eliana Schonberg, PhD

Director, University Writing and Research Center

In response to the question of why a great university needs a writing center, the best and briefest answer was from one of the students who used our services this fall. He or she (our exit surveys are anonymous) said, "I came in with many jumbled ideas. After this meeting I feel more prepared and organized for my essay writing. Discussion is a very important part in writing." This process of discussion with an engaged, non-evaluative reader gives writers the opportunity to incorporate a sense of audience into their writing by testing their ideas and receiving feedback. It also gives them the opportunity to talk through their writing process — what's working for them and what isn't — and to get ideas for new writing strategies they might try. The Writing and Research Center is the place where students can put into practice the strategies of experienced successful writers.

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***THE POINT****Winter Quarter 2007***Annie Greenfield Interview***Writing Center Consultant and DU Literature PhD Candidate*

Where did you get your undergraduate degree? Where did you get your Masters and/or PhD? What are your hobbies or outside interests?

I attended the University of Wisconsin – Madison as an undergraduate and got my B.A. degree there in Philosophy. I then went to Western Washington University, where I obtained my Master’s degree in English. I’m currently working on my Ph.D. in English (Literary Studies) here at DU. As for hobbies, reading, bicycling, and lava-tag are at the top of my list. I also play a mean game of foosball.

What do you plan to do with your degree once you are done?

After completing my Ph.D., my plan is to become a professor of English in a university. This especially appeals to me because (ideally) this job would allow for a balance between working on my own research and teaching. Both of these pursuits are important to me professionally.

Describe what your writing process is like:

Once I have some idea of what I’d like to write about, I try to start writing as soon as possible. The process of articulating my ideas on the page (as undeveloped as they may be at first) helps me to think through them most effectively. That is, my ideas become most interesting and complex once I’ve adapted them into language. Quite often, this process of inquiry changes my line of analysis, which is fine by me, because it will invariably be better for it.

I used to relate to Dorothy Parker’s words: “I hate writing, I love having written.” But now, I feel the opposite is true. I take pleasure in the act of writing, which is just what I need in order to say something that is, hopefully, valuable and smart.

How would you describe your philosophy as a writing consultant?

I believe that students should maintain control of their writing during consultations. This is one of the most challenging aspects of my job. Often, I find that it would be easy for me to instruct a writer as to how I think their paper should

be. But it is always better if a writer can make those decisions on his/her own. I try to facilitate these conscious choices through conversation rather than lecture.

I also find that one of the most helpful things I can do for a writer is to fully engage with his/her writing and thinking. By taking a writer's ideas seriously, he/she is given a space to extend his/her intellectual conversation in a way that is not confined to the page.

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THE POINT*Winter Quarter 2007***The Rhetorical Situation***Jennifer Campbell*

Every text (written, spoken, or visual) is the product of a specific rhetorical situation. This is the context in which the text is written. The most basic elements of the rhetorical situation are:

The Author – Who is communicating? What is the author's persona?

The Audience – Who will be receiving the text? What does the author know about them, their position, their values, etc. that will influence how the text is written?

The Topic and Purpose – What will the communication be about? What does the author hope to accomplish with the communication?

If any of the elements of the rhetorical situation change, the resulting text must change accordingly. Consider a few basic examples:

A history professor is teaching two courses — one is a core freshman course and the other is a senior honors course. Both courses cover World War II and the professor assigns an essay in each class asking students to discuss the causes of the war. The audience and the topic/purpose are the same for all essays, but because the authors are different, the professor will expect different texts and evaluate them accordingly. The senior honors texts will be expected to be more thorough in their research, more subtle in their analysis, and more skillfully written. An essay that would get a B in the freshman course might not get a passing grade in the senior course.

If you are writing up a grocery list: you are the author, and you have little concern for your persona. You are writing to your future self, who will need to remember what to get at the store. The content is a list of items and the purpose is to remind. Now, if you are making a list so your friend can go to the store for you, the author and topic/purpose are the same, but the audience changes. You will thus need to change the text and be more specific. For example, you know what variety and brand and size of things you would get for a pasta dish, but your friend might not, so you would add more detail to make sure he gets the 16 oz. Classico sauce instead of the 32 oz. Ragu.

There is a good chance that in your academic life and career you will develop friendships with mentors and superiors. In any conversation you have with these friends, the author and audience are essentially the same, but your personas will shift and your discourse will change based on our topic and purpose. If you are discussing a concert and eating cheesecake, your voice, tone, style, etc. will be very casual and friendly with both of you on equal footing. If you meet in the office to discuss an important project, the conversation will be more formal and, while still friendly, it will be clear that one person has more authority to give advice and directions.

In your writing and in analyzing other texts it is important that you always consider the rhetorical situation; keep these factors in mind and adjust your writing or evaluation accordingly.

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