



THE POINT

Spring 2008

Guest Lecturer



Michael Palmquist:
[reload/reset/reboot: Rethinking the Role of Computers in Writing Instruction](#)
Rebekah Shultz Colby

Writer's Studio Event



[A Conversation with Michael Palmquist](#)
Rebekah Shultz Colby

Upcoming Conferences and Events

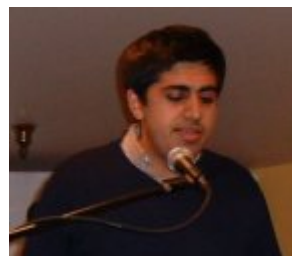
- [Conference on College Composition and Communication](#) -- April 2-5
- Open Mic -- April 15
- [Rhetoric Society of America Conference](#) - May 23-26
- [Writing Across the Curriculum Conference](#) -- May 29-31

News



[The 72-Hour Fiction Writing Contest](#)
Carol Samson

Open Mic Nights



[Open Mic Nights](#)

Faculty Profiles



[Joan Winn](#)
Kamila Kinyon



[Margaret Whitt](#)
Carol Samson

Program Profiles



[Geoffrey Bateman](#)

Writing Program
Instructor,
Literature PhD



[Carol Samson](#)

Writing Program
Instructor,
*English/Creative Writing
PhD*



[Kelli Custer](#)

Writing Program
Instructor,
Composition PhD

Student Writing

Geoffrey Bateman's Project Angel Heart [Class Blog](#):
[Class Blog Link](#)

Heather Martin's Subvertisements:
[Lauren Barnwell](#)
[Viki Eagle](#)

Jennifer Novak's Rhetorical Analysis:
[Cameron Bowen](#)
[Mike Engler](#)

Carol Samson's Familial Gaze Narratives:
[Alisha Gucker](#)

Writing Faculty Scholarship



[Heather Martin Featured in
Yellow Pine Reading Series](#)

Linda Tate

Students Want to Know

[Can We Have Class Outside?](#)

Heather Martin

Writing Pedagogy Tips

[Ethnography Assignment](#)

April Chapman-Ludwig

[Finding Stuff in the Library](#)

Geoff Stacks

[Geoffrey Bateman, Eliana Schonberg, and John Tiedemann](#)

-- Received a DU Public Good grant to pilot community-based writing center sites at The Gathering Place and the Saint Francis Center.

Jennifer Campbell -- "Remixes and Editor's Cuts: Exploring Connections between Genre, Audience, and Revision,"

Movies, Music, and More: Popular Culture in the Classroom, Fountainhead Press, 2008.

Jennifer Campbell, Richard Colby, Blake Sanz, Rebekah

Shultz Colby, and Eliana Schonberg -- "Bridging Communities through Collaboration: Synthesizing Multiple

Approaches to Studying and Communicating Across the

Disciplines." *Writing Across the Curriculum Conference*,

Austin, TX, May 29-31

***THE POINT****Spring 2008*

**reload/reset/reboot:
Rethinking the Role of Computers in Writing Instruction**
Rebekah Shultz Colby

On Thursday, January 24, Michael Palmquist, a professor of English at Colorado State University, gave a talk entitled “reload/reset/reboot: Rethinking the Role of Computers in Writing Instruction,” in which he discussed the computer’s role in writing instruction. Dedicated to improving how teachers use computers in the writing classroom, he directs the University’s Institute for Learning and Teaching and co-directs the Center for Research on Writing and Communication Technologies. He has also co-authored Writing with a Computer and Transitions: Teaching Writing in Computer Supported and Traditional Classrooms, a study that examines just how writing teachers use the computer within their classrooms. Finally, he is the developer of Writing@CSU, Colorado State University’s Online Writing Center, founding editor of the journal Academic Writing, and edits the WAC Clearinghouse, a major online resource for research on writing across the curriculum.

Michael Palmquist opened up his talk by introducing a common pedagogical truism in composition: never let technology drive teaching. Only use technology if it supports the teaching goals already in place. However, Palmquist argued that teachers should not just think of technology in this way – as an add-on tool. As a writing community, composition has long since stopped thinking of language as a purely transparent medium and should stop thinking of technology in the same way. Instead, as a community, we need to be open to the ways technology changes thinking, writing, and, inevitably, pedagogy. Technology is transformative, and we need to rethink pedagogy as technological changes occur. We need to think of the new possibilities that technologies open up instead of just thinking of technology as an add-on (and often not a very good add-on) for existing teaching practices.



Palmquist explained that at first he, too, had followed the axiom of not allowing technology to drive teaching practice. In fact, when he first began developing Writing@CSU, writing software and applications for students and teachers which is online at <http://writing.colostate.edu/>, he had followed this motto. On the site, he and his writing faculty developed writing guides, writing activities, and video-based speaking guides. On the site, they uploaded annotated model drafts and included email and chat

with the writing center. In 1999, though, he came to the realization that he was really just reinventing the writing instruction wheel. While the writing advice and software was helpful to students, it really didn't offer students anything new that could not have been offered without the technology. He was not utilizing the technology to its fullest extent to teach writing.

So, he embarked on *Transitions*, a study of how exactly teachers use computers in the writing classroom and how exactly computers benefit the writing process. For the study, four teachers were interviewed and four classrooms were observed. In addition, students responded to surveys and gave samples of their writing. In the study, he found that teachers and students interact three times more in a classroom with computers than in a traditional classroom. He also found that in a computer classroom, students were more likely to talk about their writing, revise more frequently and extensively, and show a much greater increase in their confidence as writers. He discovered that in a computer classroom teachers took on more of a facilitator role, giving students more control over their own writing. Finally, he learned that while writing was most often an object of study in a traditional classroom, in a computer classroom, writing became something that was actively done. In other words, he discovered that computers fostered more of a hands-on writing studio approach to teaching.

These results from the *Transitions* study inspired him to revamp the Writing@CSU website and software in a way that used technology to transform writing pedagogy in more dynamic ways. He added collaboration tools, composing tools, communication tools, and tools for facilitating better peer-to-peer and instructor feedback. He created a classmates page, which is similar to Facebook. He created wikis, added an eportfolio, and developed a bibliography tool. He also created a writing co-op, a web page in which students who want to network with other writers outside of a formal class can better collaborate.

As his course management tools became more developed, he began to wonder how writing teachers were actually using them in their classrooms. So, he embarked on a second *Transitions* study. This time it included 16 teachers and 60 classrooms and covered the span of four years. During the first year, he examined the teacher's experience. In the second year, he looked at the impact of classroom settings, specifically how computers impact this setting. The third year he studied the impact professional development on teacher's attitudes toward computers and how this impacts how they use technology in their classrooms.

With this new *Transitions* study, he has discovered that students' use of writing technology reflects the way that teachers integrate this technology into their classrooms. However, students' attitudes toward technology vary. Some see the computer as a way to just easily disseminate information, while others see it as much more than that -- a more sophisticated writing tool. Unfortunately, most teachers see technology as an add-on to their classes; however, professional development does change attitudes toward technology and, therefore, how it is used.

Conducting both of these studies taught him that teachers should think carefully about the relationships between technology and teaching goals. As a teaching community, we should also interrogate metaphors that inform the design of learning tools and environments so that we are not constrained in thinking about technology or teaching in only the same old ways but, instead, try to find metaphors that productively innovate teaching as well as technology. We also need to continue to study interactions between curricula, technology, students, and writers.

**THE POINT***Spring 2008*

A Conversation with Michael Palmquist
Rebekah Shultz Colby

A professional writer who owned his own business, Michael Palmquist never planned on becoming an academic. However, when his wife decided to get her Masters of Fine Arts at Carnegie Mellon, Palmquist decided to join her and went straight into a PhD program in Composition and Rhetoric. He said that at first he felt a bit like Nate Huckin, a famous composition graduate student who struggled with the different writing conventions expected in graduate school, especially in a graduate school as famous for its focus in cognitive psychology as Carnegie Mellon. Palmquist explained that, as a professional writer, he had become adept at deciphering professional genres simply by looking at a few examples. Academic writing, however, was far too complex for this approach, and he struggled with mastering it. He was also amazed that the scholars who were often published the most were also not necessarily the best writers. They were just the most knowledgeable.

On a sunny afternoon on Thursday, January 24, Richard Colby, Kamilla Kinyon, Eliana Schonberg, and Doug Hesse asked Michael Palmquist a few questions about writing, teaching, and publishing for the web.

Richard Colby: What affordances does sustained textual argument shaped with familiar print influences have over layered visual, hypertextual, and audio arguments?

Michael Palmquist explained that on the web, it is easy to stage things; however, it's difficult to sustain argument in the same way as print text, especially since readers quickly become annoyed with too much text on the screen. Whatever we do online, the power of narrative can't be replaced. However, online journals in composition rarely take full advantage of the medium and how, as Jay Bolter and Richard Gruesin argue, the web remediates writing. The web is all about pacing and framing, but most articles are usually strictly linear. With print texts, writers can make assumptions about readers and how readers will read a text that they can't make with web text. However, there is hope for web texts as a more fully realized academic genre. The web is such a completely new technology that it is little wonder that academics have not figured out how to fully utilize it yet. In fact, the printing press created the same problem. Early print texts were awful because scholars were still working out the conventions. In fact, print arguments didn't get good until at least 50 years after the invention of the printing press.

Genres are still being worked out on the web. For instance, MySpace has a genre more based for web writing, but is it an essayist argument or is it something else? Does the web suit the argument being made or not? There's still lots of experimentation going on, but experimentation is not celebrated as much as it was in the '90s. For instance, one year at CCCCs, he had what could be termed as a happening occur during a presentation where the audience spontaneously added on to a hypertext. Then someone suggested that he should put it up online. So, he added a story about a study, and it turned into an online article. Now he'd probably be using java script, etc.



Kamilla Kinyon: In “Writing in Emerging Genres,” you conduct case studies of student’s writing for the web. There was a particular student who was writing on Emily Dickinson. She wanted to write in a circular pattern that was more evocative of Dickenson’s work, but ended up designing a more linear web text. Were there other examples of this sort? Were they more experimental or did they all go traditional?

Palmquist said that in a course he was teaching on writing hypertext, he discovered that poets usually create the most interesting web texts. For instance, sometimes students compose poetry in flash. Words explode and rearrange themselves. He had another student who wanted the reader to be forced into a strictly linear path. One student composed a thesis which was sort of a personal narrative collage, containing

snippets from her life -- political insights interwoven with personal tidbits. Upon entering her first page, readers could then click on any link to start and choose their own path, interweaving parts of her life as they selected links to read. However, this brought up interesting problems and considerations. How do readers find their way out? Readers have to have some control in a web text. The writer can’t have total control.

Doug Hesse: How much of a foothold does this type of hypertext have beyond our discipline of English?

Palmquist explained that he hadn’t seen that much. Most disciplines are aligned with preparing students for the professions. Professors will assign PowerPoint presentations but not hypertext. However, he also explained that there is new software that encourages other disciplines to experiment in other ways. For instance, virtual labs can allow students to explore the simulated production of textiles. Online portfolios that use a template allow people to experiment with layouts, and other aspects of the tool have potential. Wikis have potential for creating experimentation as well, although he explained that he has yet to find a wiki that he really likes.

Richard Colby: Current trends in web-based technologies (Web 2.0, etc.) have begun to alter how data is displayed and read from an author-defined view to a reader-defined view. How does such a change affect the importance of teaching author-defined design in both web and writing courses? And, as more of these technologies such as CSS and XML become standards, do you think they will have a standardizing effect on just how varied and experimental the web can become?

Blogger or Facebook have specific designs. You purchase a template and can easily use them, but the templates limit too. So, technology has a tendency to constrain genre. However, as the technology matures, users can more easily do more with it. Designers decide how much freedom to give users. He explained that he took a 3-week sabbatical to learn xml because he was interested in embedding comments in documents in a way that made more sense for students. XML allows users to set things up in multiple ways allowing for a more flexible display. He also said that database stuff is exciting; it divorces content from presentation.

Doug Hesse: With increased visual/textual relationships, what are the skills required to be a writing teacher today?

Palmquist explained that as a comp director at CSU, he was interested in visual issues. As a professional writer, he was always intrigued with images and text as well. He even wrote a textbook in which he included a chapter on design. While writing this chapter, he realized that the language for design wasn’t friendly, especially for students. Although it is better, he still doesn’t think Robin Williams’ design terms work out. So, for his chapter on design, he reframed his design terms from a rhetorical perspective – designing writing. He wanted students to think about writing in as design as they repurpose a research paper for a popular magazine, analyze conventions, and figure out who their readers are. When students do this, they suddenly realize, “I have to cite differently. Use shorter sentences.” When he has taught writing in this way in the past, students have turned out some beautiful stuff with different fonts, colors, and pictures. In fact, students could do a lot just using Word. What wasn’t gratifying to him in using this approach though were instructors’ reactions, especially from those who hadn’t taught long. They would say things like, “Well, I’m teaching writing,” mostly because they weren’t comfortable with the tools. Nowadays though, most people are comfortable. In fact, many people have what Palmquist terms the Mac disease in which they might use 16 different fonts in one document, etc. However, he still thinks that assigning essays with nothing but visual images is too extreme in a first year writing class. Students still need to write.

Richard Colby: How do you get academic credit for software development?

Palmquist stated that it depends on the institution. However, it's hard to get credit by just programming without doing any writing. It's important to publish in order to share work. Academics are only doing half of their job if they aren't.

However, this makes doing technical, online projects difficult. For instance, even though the WAC Clearing House is successful today, it almost fell apart when it first started. Although many people were initially very excited about it and willing to work on it, Palmquist quickly became the only person working on it because academics do not usually get credit for working on a website. To solve this, he and his collaborators turned the WAC Clearing House into a journal; then they started publishing books and put out another journal.

Eliana Schonberg: How did you get funded for the Writer's Studio?

Palmquist laughed and said that he didn't ask for permission. In early 1990, he got a grant to start a research center. It generated 15-20 million in grants, some of which were in pedagogy. After that success, he built an online writing center. When that, too, became successful, he was able to turn the writing center director's position into a tenure track line. After that, he got more funding from the provost and just kept going with it. He was able to keep it going because of all the big grants that were generated, which the university did not want to lose. After awhile, he said that he didn't like what they were doing with the online writing center. He wanted to change it to take better advantage of technology. Now they have five servers, which do load balancing, to minimize crashing. If one server gets overloaded, the other servers automatically take up some of that load.

***THE POINT****Spring 2008*

Joan Winn
Kamila Kinyon

Joan Winn is Professor of Management in the Daniels College of Business. She has published extensively in Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice and the Case Research Journal. Her teaching includes courses in strategic management, human resources management, and leadership and organizational dynamics.

Kamila Kinyon: I'd like to start by asking you about your teaching of writing to business students. For example, I am interested in the ethnography assignment that you assign. Could you discuss the nature of this writing assignment?

Joan Winn: For the organizational dynamics course, my students do a culture audit of a company, which requires that they study an organization as an anthropologist would do, observing the informal rules of human interaction. They study the use of language, humor, and ritual, and how people conduct business in this organization, which might be very different from how those individuals would behave in a different context. Students in my human resources management class are required to examine the human resource management policies of an organization. Their research is focused on the congruence between official policies and how they are implemented, and how they contribute to the strategy — and success — of the organization. On the undergrad level, I have had students do strategic analyses of companies by going to a local company to look at formal strategies, at plans and documents and mission statements, and at how people implement them. There is a lot of work that different classes do that includes hanging around a real organization to see what is going on to grasp how companies put into practice those concepts that we talk about.

Are students familiar with how to write qualitative research papers when they come into your class, or do you need to teach students how to compose this type of research?

I don't teach writing so much as I teach critical thinking. Writing is a reflection of a thought process. I try to teach students to organize their thinking into cohesive parts. It's this logical thought process that directs students to pick things apart to do an analysis, to synthesize and put things together, that leads to rational conclusions: "and now this suggests X"... So it really is more a thought process rather than a writing process. This is an issue for all of us in education: How do you teach people to think? Students want directions about how to structure a paper, and sometimes lose sight of the goal of the project. I don't want to impose my style of writing, but I want each student to assess who he or she is writing for. If I am your audience, how will you write your text? Can I see your inferences and your logical links? You need to convey to the receiver what it is that you know and write in a way that effectively shares this knowledge. I try to convey to them that any piece of writing is about this. Who you are writing for is always central, even if you write a personal journal or online blog.

What relationship do you see between the types of ethnographic studies that you assign to students and your own ethnographic research?

Certainly that's a love of mine, going into organizations and talking to people and observing things, looking at consistencies and inconsistencies, how individuals interact and create a collective whole. So, yes, perhaps this is how this fits in with the type of research that I like to do. The research I was doing as a graduate student used archival data, mostly quantitative information, and it was only when I delved into the inner workings of what was going on that research became truly interesting to me. Maybe it's because I have a social science background that I really like that interface with the on-the-ground of implement[ing] things that are conceptualized and put on paper. I don't really know which came first, doing the projects and seeing what students came up with, or my understanding and knowing the joy of investigating things myself and having these "aha" experiences — "now I understand how that model fits." So I can't say where that comes from, but certainly it fits with what I like to do.

Could you talk about your writing process? What is the process of collecting ethnographic data and then transforming this data into a publishable article?

I actually do workshops on that, so I don't think I can consolidate this into a short sound bite. I will tell you that my daughter is a writer, a journalist, and was a good writer from a young age. But she taught me when she was probably eleven or twelve to waste paper. You can make perfect sentences, sometimes you can even construct good paragraphs, but you need to read hard copy to actually absorb it and figure out where you are going. And I tell this to my students, because they so love doing things on a computer. I went to a presentation by a man who wrote his fifth book. He said, "I'm a writer and I understand the process. My editor was not happy with this second edition (of a successful book), and I realized it was because I was trying to do it on the computer. I needed to see the totality. I needed to see the concept from start to finish." Whatever we write, whatever data we report, we need to view it in a larger context. Is it important to know if this person had a family? Is it important to know what town he grew up in? Sometimes "yes," sometimes "no." What details do you need to know? Do they influence your assumptions? Are they important to your conclusion? I need to see the flow of words as it actually fits together. Whenever we write, we have to think of the level of detail needed to convey our intended meaning. Mark Twain once told a friend, "I wanted to write a short letter, but I didn't have time, so I wrote you a long letter." When we write, we need to ask, "Why am I telling you this?" What is it that I need to tell you, so when you get to the end you say "aha" instead of "huh?" It's not that practice makes perfect, revision makes perfect. It's very tough. Try on new styles, new methods of information collection and analysis, new ways of seeing and saying things. Really, I don't teach content; I teach how to analyze information... I don't know, for the current batch of twenty-somethings, if they'll be able to revise effectively on a screen. It may just be a learned skill, something that is a matter of different generations growing up with different toys, or it may be inherent in how the mind works. I don't have any answer for that. I do know for myself that every time I print out something I thought was perfect, I notice errors or inconsistencies.

Do you ever repurpose your writing for different audiences? What is that process like?

A good writer (or speaker) thinks about what someone wants to hear, what they expect. As you know, in academia, research colleagues want to know your methodology. Community people or business people may be more interested in what you found rather than how you found it. They want to know how it relates to them and how they can put it into practice. You have to do an audience analysis: Who am I talking to? What do they need to learn?

What are some of your other areas of research?

I'm interested in individual and group differences, cultural differences, and the impact on culture and environment on organizations and organizational processes. Most of my research is focused on business start ups and business development: how people form, grow, and sustain organizations. Right now I'm looking at external constraints on entrepreneurship. How do people navigate unfriendly territories? There are countries that don't support entrepreneurial activities, and yet these activities exist. How do you sustain entrepreneurial endeavors in a hostile environment? In the United States, people are very accepting of new products and new enterprises. How do people conceive, plan, envision, and execute new business ideas? Is the creative process different with different external pressures? Does a competitive and supportive arena require different behaviors and mindsets than a controlled or hostile arena?

I've noticed you do some of your research with collaborators. What is it like to work with collaborators?

I certainly prefer to work collaboratively. If you find someone who shares your world view and work style but contributes a different perspective, skill set, or experiences, then you have a match made in heaven because you are looking at diversity of thought and skills and finding some way to bring this all together. Even stuff I've done solo, it's really nice to bounce off colleagues. When you exchange ideas and do wordsmithing together, and reframe each other's thoughts and restructure each other's writing, that is a joy. We go into academia because we love to learn. We really are perpetual students. We can learn from students and colleagues and from each other. What a wonderful job we have!

The problem student-collaborators often face is how to allocate percentages and tasks in a way that that feels equitable, since too often pieces of the project are disjointed and diverse. When you work with a collaborator, you need to build on each other so that it is “our” work, and that can take a long time. Too often, student projects become separate sections, with one person designated to glue it all together. You need to set realistic milestones and deadlines, so that you have feedback from each other along the way. If you can take time to step back and look at the project as a whole, true learning can take place.

***THE POINT****Spring 2008***A Conversation with Margaret Whitt**
Carol Samson

Dr. Margaret Whitt served as Director of the University of Denver Writing Program from 1986 until 2004. On January 31, she spoke to Carol Samson and Casey Rountree about her tenure as Director as part of a series of interviews that Samson and Rountree are preparing on the History of the Writing Program at the University of Denver.

We started with the Now, with Dr. Margaret Whitt's decision to retire this spring and to move to Gerton, North Carolina, twenty-some miles from Asheville down a mountain with thirty-three hairpin curves. Gerton, she tells us, has one general store-community center building, one post office, and one postcard-reality white-paneled church so perfectly rural as to be on the cover of travel books. There is also, Margaret told us, a grand meadow in Gerton. She took a pen and drew the meadow on her paper napkin. In the center of the meadow she drew a big circle. "I will live on Pond Street," she said, with her southern-by-way-of Florida accent, drawing parallel lines next to the circle. "Because there is a pond." We saw that she was mapping her life in the woods, a life to be lived in a forest with trees so thick in summer as to make the neighbor's house disappear. Like Thoreau, Margaret said she has many lives to live, and she feels she has spent enough time in Denver. She believes that she is retiring after 40 years of teaching, including 17 years directing the writing program, in order to slow down and that she will not teach any more. After our conversation in January, however, Casey and I might counter that thought. As Casey was a graduate student who taught in Margaret's program and as I was a Ph.D. candidate and graduate student colleague of Margaret's, we know she is as energetic as ever. There she was, pen and paper napkin in hand, teaching us the landscape of Gerton, demonstrating that she is an inveterate teacher -- what someone in North Carolina might call "dyed in the wool."

Responding to our questions about her Writing Program experience, Margaret contextualized her work in the DU English Department. Having earned her Ph.D. in English at the University of Denver, she served as an Assistant Director of Writing under the aegis of Dr. Lee Chambers in 1985-6 and as Interim Director, when Dr. Chambers returned to his duties in comparative literature, in 1987-88. When the English Department made a national search that year, Margaret was selected to be the Director of a newly-styled program that would not be merely a part of an English professor's teaching assignment, but would be a full-time appointment focused on directing student writing and, under the English Department mandate at this point in time, would require that freshmen essays be based on three aspects of writing: expository writing, critical research and analysis, and close reading of literary works and humanities research. Needless to say, Margaret had her own fresh vision for her program. In her interview for the position, she rephrased one of the committee members' questions about what she would do if she had all the money in the world to run the program. Margaret changed the question to, "What would you do if you had all the time in the world?" And she spoke to her commitment to make the Writing Program a campus "presence," to visit all of the graduate students' classes, to have time to teach course content, and to assist graduate students with teaching strategies.



Throughout her tenure as Director, Margaret kept the careers of the graduate students in mind, offering them a variety of opportunities. She selected two graduate students to serve as assistants who would work with book orders and handle the reception desk. She sent summer correspondence to new graduate students, and taught a Teaching Forum course with all of her graduate teachers from 2-4 p.m. on Fridays throughout the year. "I don't believe you teach people to teach," she told us. "It is better to create a forum and to let them each find an 'authentic teacher self.' I wanted them to reach inside their beings, to be themselves." In her Teaching Forum they spoke about problems, examined assignments, shared writing exercises, and even worked out their class assignments and exercises before giving them to students. At the end of every year, Margaret put out a selection of textbooks that she had evaluated as potential texts for the next year. The graduate students perused the books and voted on the one they would all use in the coming year. "That way," Margaret said, "in the four years or so they were with us, the graduate students would know at least four texts extremely well." She always wanted them to see their jobs at two levels: rhetorical theory and everyday reality. The group worked with a sample syllabus which each instructor could adapt, but Margaret required that each class enforce a "20 pages of formal written" work rule and that the types of essay assignments focus, in general, on a selected group of essay types each quarter. Graduate students were asked to visit each other's classes looking for the "great idea" or for the moment when one might say, "God, I would never do it that way!" Everything worked for the good of the order. She told the students to imagine a broom as it worked to sweep scattered bits of matter into a cohesive order. She said the quarter system demanded that sort of orderly vigilance.

Outside of her work with graduate students, Margaret organized meetings with the other Colorado colleges wherein Writing Directors would meet and discuss programs. In the late 1980s, up to 30 schools sent delegates to DU on a Saturday. They developed a sense of community. The engineering school, the Colorado School of Mines, explained its focus on the classics and on epic poetry. Representing DU, Margaret spoke of her work to set up Service Learning instruction in conjunction with First-year Writing. She taught the Colorado group her concept of the "Casebook," a word she chose to temper "Research Paper," wherein the student includes drafts and Xerox copies of source material along with a documented paper — all of it bound in a report book with spiral binding.

Then, too, Margaret worked to streamline her program and to focus the assessment projects. Using her experience as an AP Grader and Table Leader, she instituted Placement and Exit exams. She wrote two versions of the exam because of the MW and TTH line-up of the classes. The teaching assistants all met together to grade them; and at the end of each year, Margaret reported to the Chair in English to explain the statistical results. As technology made its way into the lives of students, Margaret spoke to the Provost, Bill Zaranka, and arranged for computers for her graduate students. Hers was the first program on the DU Campus to set up the Portfolio system wherein students posted their papers online — with, of course, the ominous threat that, "If you don't post the essay, we will fail you." And, to facilitate logistical problems of classroom space, she met with the administrator in charge of classrooms and, as she promised 95% guaranteed student occupancy, she claimed three classrooms in STURM for First-year Writing and only First-year Writing. She set one classroom up as a computer room, STURM 411, with side tables and designer chairs. Then, too, Margaret experimented with curriculum. She developed a "Sentences and Paragraphs," later dubbed "Developing the Essay," for students who lacked fundamental skills in writing before they took the standard three-quarter curriculum included: Expository Writing; Persuasive Voice (Critical Argument and Research); and Writing about Literature. For a time, she selected several of the Teaching Assistants to serve as "on duty" writing consultants for students with writing problems. As part of the writing program, she set up evenings wherein students, selected from each writing section, read from their work. The event, called "In My Own Voice," was held over four nights with 12 readers each night. The Teaching Assistant Instructor and students attended; and sometimes students felt that being selected to read was such an honor that they invited their parents to attend the program which filled the STURM auditorium. Other universities heard of the success of these evenings, and Utah State University borrowed the idea, setting up its own version of the readings. While the "Voice" evenings were created for the main sections of the course, the Advanced Standing Seminars held their own version called "A Literary Evening" wherein students selected favorite texts and, crowding into the English Department's "Skylight Room," held salon-styled panels with presentations and open-ended discussions. Over and above all this, Margaret published guidebooks for the courses: *The Bellwether Handbook* and editions of *Aspire*. The preface to these classroom supplemental texts included background information on the teaching assistants, and each instructor was asked to write a teaching philosophy. The guidebooks also included a grammar/mechanics section and a chapter filled with successful essays written by DU freshmen, some of which were picked up by national publications and reprinted. Because this was a required class text, it generated income which was shared by the student writers. Students whose essays were selected for publication received cash prizes, usually between \$25-\$40, for their efforts.

Looking back at her Writing Program career, Margaret said that many times it took on the flavor of that act on the Ted Mack Amateur Hour where a man begins to spin plates on long sticks. He gets the first one going, then the second; and he must go back to set the first one spinning again before it falls to the floor and breaks -- that dizzying kind of flavor. But Margaret also speaks with deep affection for the graduate students she worked with, students who have gone on to win literary awards and publish books and even head up writing programs. She remembers their

stories of joy and progress; and she recalls their pain, the tales broken marriages, the discussions of their not having the money to take their children to the dentist, their tears. Clearly, she cared deeply about each one. She wrote recommendations. She attended weddings. She receives e-mails with pictures of their new babies. And, so, she says that she is ready now to go to North Carolina. She says she knew when the Marsico committee decided to create a new program and to hire writing instructors rather than training graduate students, she understood that she had taken her place on a long and historic continuum of programs. "For awhile, the change was hard for me," she said. "But I saw that it was time for DU to move along to something else."

Casey said, "I don't think you're finished with teaching."

I said, "Margaret, I see you on Pond Street with people in your living room discussing books. I see you mentoring students."

Margaret smiled. "Remember those plates? Eventually, they fall. I'm spinning right now, but I am tired."

She picked up her jacket. It was January cold, the streets slick with new ice.

"And, besides," Margaret told us, "you'll both have to come to Gerton to meet my friend Nita who runs the General Store. She tells me stories I love to hear." Then Margaret laughed her Margaret laugh, filled with deep affection for whatever she is thinking about.

The point is this: Margaret Whitt loved being Director of the Freshman English Program. She gave all of her energy to it. She became a campus presence. "One of your people did X or Y," the other professors would say, and she would respond with her mind and heart to the moment, defending what had to be defended, correcting what she could, or celebrating the compliment. At her "Retirement-from-the-Freshman-Writing-Program-Directorship" several years ago, the graduate students from years past collected monies and presented her with a check so that she could buy a handmade wooden rocking chair for her North Carolina home. She then bought another one. Two chairs for company, she will tell you, just as Thoreau intended.

Engaged Rhetoric

This blog represents the collaborative efforts of a writing professor and his students at the University of Denver, as they reflect on their experiences reading, thinking, and writing about illness, service-learning, and the public good.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2008

Final Blog Posting from Sarai Glass

The blog is a great reflection of how our class has been so good at thinking outside the box. Both the blog postings and blog comments just show how creative our class is. I think that this form of writing, what I would consider authentic writing, provides great insight to how our class thinks, and even I would go as far to say, insight to the success of the class. What is significant about the blog is the fact that we are writing to prompts directed by our class, and responding in a fashion that is uninhibited by a grade scale. This setting is what causes it to be authentic writing. I think the post about authentic writing was one of the most important posts because to know what authentic writing is, and to know when you are reading authentic writing, can be both very compelling, for the former, and comforting, for the latter. Overall the blog was a great way for our class to take the classroom out of the classroom setting. I really enjoyed the blog and hope that next year 's class has even more interaction with it. The blog was a perfect venue for writing for honors students.

Posted by [Geoffrey Bateman](#) at [10:42 PM](#) [No comments:](#)

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2008

Our Little Blog

Although my affinity for the blog hit highs and lows, overall I'm thankful for it. Because our classes could not always cover the materials as extensively as we hope, the blog provided a separate outlet. In the beginning, we really had no need for the blog, except to say that we looked forward to doing something that we could blog about. Then, as the class progressed, our opinions, beliefs, and general outlooks on situations came forth. It said everything that we did not say or were thinking.

I could remember thinking that I had nothing to say about the subject, what would I do? And the necessity to blog sort of made me think about something that I had put on the

back burner at the moment. In the search to post something new and original, I really had to think about it. What were my opinions? What were the facts I was basing my beliefs off of?

Also, reading what everyone else impressed me so much. It helped me communicate with my classmates, without directly communicating with them. We all talked about read the same materials, made comments on the same topics, and discussed the same issues...all on our own (well, with a little encouragement from Professor Bateman).

Posted by [Cristina](#) at [2:57 PM](#) [No comments:](#)

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2008

To Stop and Reflect

Just like almost everyone else in our class, I was a little hesitant about participating in this blog for the first few weeks. In fact, I probably had a few choice words to share with anyone who was unfortunate enough to be in the room with me while I was blogging...but then I actually started to like it. I would go back and read comments posted after mine to see if anyone would respond to what I said, and I even started pouring a little bit of myself into my comments instead of writing dry, boring responses. I think that the idea of being able to say whatever I wanted without having to worry about offending anyone or watching someone roll his/her eyes at me allowed me to, well, really be me. I really just wish that we could have spent more time discussing the blog posts in class, because I found that some of the most interesting commentaries and ideas were presented here, and then they simply died without living. Bad analogy - I apologize.

This blog, at least in my opinion, has allowed our class to experience a different level of intimacy; so many people were so much more open with their thoughts on this blog that I think it (in a very strange way) made us closer as a class. Please continue to use it as a teaching device - it is incredibly effective and really brings another facet to a discussion-based course.

Posted by [Cortney Duritsa](#) at [8:16 PM](#) [No comments:](#)

Reflection -- All's Well that Ends Well

I feel that this blog gives a very honest, "right down to it" impression of our class. It is not riddled with our "scholarly personas" and really allowed us to evaluate the aspects of the class

that were most meaningful to us on an individual level. I have never had to blog for a class before but seeing and hearing everyone's interpretations put a whole new face on the writing process. Instead of sitting with only my thoughts before writing a paper, I had the thoughts of fifteen other students to help inspire me. Our real-life, unfiltered experiences with Project Angel Heart and the material are extremely significant. Again, we got "right down to it." Our blog is completely unique to our course and a lasting reminder of what sixteen freshmen at the University of Denver learned about illness, service, and the public good one winter back in 2008...

Posted by [kcangilla](#) at [3:28 PM](#) [No comments:](#)

Bloggng Reflection

I'll admit that this blogging assignment was initially a bit of a stretch for me: the idea of writing "publicly" was a little hard to swallow. However, I think that throughout the past few weeks, this blog has provided a wonderful opportunity for us to learn more about each other as a class. I enjoyed reading about the various events that have impacted other students' lives and understanding of illness (the very first post); it certainly provided new insights that added depth to our in-class discussions.

Overall, I think that this blog does an excellent job at reflecting the dynamic and passionate nature of our class: no one hesitated to speak freely in their posts, and the online discussions often paralleled the arguments and discussions we had in class. Moreover, this blog could be a great way for students in future service-learning to gain insight into what lies ahead in the quarter. Perhaps this blog would also be helpful to Project Angel Heart staff if they are interested in learning more about the mindset with which volunteers approach their organization and the experiences that they take away from volunteer shifts. Although there are many different ways in which the blog could be used, I think it should, above all, be used as a resource for other people to use and apply in their own lives, teaching, or service opportunities.

Posted by [Alyssa](#) at [2:49 PM](#) [No comments:](#)

New Perspectives

Posted by [Travis](#) at [2:47 PM](#) [1 comment:](#)

[A Final Blog Post](#)

Considering the blog assignment, I really appreciated the opportunity it gave the class to be more candid about our thoughts. I personally believe that I express myself better in writing than in speech (though I am attempting to find a balance here). Overall, I think this blog serves as an archive of our thoughts as the course progressed, for it is not very realistic to think that we can preserve what we talked about during lectures and discussions. Looking back, this blog is able to preserve the topics of discussion, points of contention, etc. that arose during class time, especially because its timeline followed so closely to our reading and writing assignments. I am personally grateful for the opportunity to have a class-related blog, not only because it allowed us to expand upon our thoughts, but also to go off on tangents that were not necessarily discussed in class. Overall, I think it was an effective teaching tool, and while we did tend to get hung up on some topics, I believe the class had very well-developed responses, especially those that were student-led. It gave us the opportunity to direct our discussions, which I especially enjoyed. I believe this blog assignment portrays us as a mature, open-minded audience, and though most of us are very opinionated, we did enjoy discussion (and at times, contentions) with our peers.

Posted by [Lauren Egelston](#) at [2:43 PM](#) [No comments:](#)

[Older Posts](#) [Home](#)

Subscribe to: [Posts \(Atom\)](#)

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2008 (31)
 - ▼ March (17)
 - [Final Blog Posting from Sarai Glass](#)
 - [Our Little Blog](#)
 - [To Stop and Reflect](#)
 - [Reflection -- All's Well that Ends Well](#)
 - [Blogging Reflection](#)
 - [New Perspectives](#)
 - [A Final Blog Post](#)
 - [This blog was a little different for me. I don't ...](#)



THE POINT

Spring 2008

Heather Martin's WRIT 1122 Subvertisement

Students picked an ad or ad campaign to target and thought about: 1) What interests them about this ad or campaign? 2) How does it work rhetorically? 3) What argument does it use to attract the consumer? 4) What is the negative impact of the ad or ad campaign? 5) What is problematic about the ad? Then students designed their subvertisement, using whatever means they wanted, from Photoshop to a paper copy of the ad using collage, to create their subvertisement. In designing the subvertisement, students needed to consider every element of the advertisement, from the text and the slogans to the graphics and layouts used.

Jose Cuervo Subvertisement Lauren Barnwell





THE POINT

Spring 2008

Heather Martin's WRIT 1122 Subvertisement

Students picked an ad or ad campaign to target and thought about: 1) What interests them about this ad or campaign? 2) How does it work rhetorically? 3) What argument does it use to attract the consumer? 3) What is the negative impact of the ad or ad campaign? 4) What is problematic about the ad? Then students designed their subvertisement, using whatever means they wanted, from Photoshop to a paper copy of the ad using collage, to create their subvertisement. In designing the subvertisement, students needed to consider every element of the advertisement, from the text and the slogans, to the graphics and layouts used.

Dolce and Gabana Subvertisement Viki Eagle




THE POINT*Spring 2008***Jennifer Novak's WRIT 1122 Rhetorical Analysis**

Cameron Bowen

In the rhetorical analysis assignment, students were asked to write a rhetorical analysis of a travel essay, choosing either an essay the class had previously read or an essay that students had found on their own. Students were to imagine their audience to be a writing teacher at the college level. Specifically students were to analyze the essay they chose in terms of its audience, writer, text, and argument, as well as how the essay employed ethos, pathos, and logos. In addition, they were to discuss how the travel writing essay they chose used both identification and difference to persuade or make a point.

It has been said that travel – and it really never matters to where – ignites a flame of change within people, making them assess their values, beliefs and thoughts differently. Kristin Van Tassel, in “The Places we Find Ourselves,” utters a slightly philosophical commentary about the nature of people amidst chaotic, confusing circumstances, such as the aftermath of hurricane Katrina and the devastation it brought to New Orleans, and how by traveling to new places and seeing and experiencing things you never have before, you can come to see yourself in a different light. Throughout her article, Van Tassel thoroughly employs the use of ethos, her ethical values which establish credibility via her own naivety and contemplation; pathos, her emotional appeals to her audience through the anecdotes about the people and the destruction she witnesses; and logos, her physical examples and logical reasoning, to effectively convey her message – that even though you may occupy your place in life, you really never know who you are until your masks are unveiled, forcing you to reassess your role, accept your uncertainties and try to expand your limitations when you find yourself in a place unfamiliar.

Ethos is generally found in this article in the beginning, when Van Tassel is trying to make the reader identify with her and her pre-epiphany values. In the second paragraph she felt like she “took a wrong turn” when she, obviously bewildered at the scenario, led her students to a gay bar and felt rather lost. Most readers would probably be able to identify well with this, putting themselves in the same situation and feeling uncomfortable at such a venue. What’s more, this example could potentially be viewed as a lack of, or violation of, ethos in which this teacher, “in [a] technical sense,” was able to take her students to a place that is obviously quite contrary to her own ethical values. Another example of ethos appears in paragraph five, in which Van Tassel is relating her naivety and ignorance of mixed drinks and how her students henceforth “cheerfully took it upon themselves to teach me.” This somehow innocent school teacher captivates the audience here and allows them to trust her through her sheer openness to relate her personal choices and the audience’s subsequent identification with her plight. They, like her students, want her to have fun and are beginning to understand how crucial travel is to opening up new values and experiences. Van Tassel here, through her demonstration of ethics (and lack thereof), not only asserts credibility but also gives the reader the understanding that she doubts her role as a teacher and needs to come to accept it as well as surpass her limitations.

Pathos is perhaps the rhetorical strategy found most commonly throughout Van Tassel’s essay. The anecdote about her encounter with the disoriented Lee certainly evokes emotion in the audience; he is displaced and lost in his own, changed city and, above all, he cannot read. The audience, although most likely not illiterate, can empathize with Lee and his plight as evidence of the destruction caused by Katrina and the personal growth and confusion accompanied by it. Upon discovering Lee’s illiteracy, she offers him encouragement, “It’s not too late... You can still learn, just like she [Lee’s granddaughter] can.” This emotional comment by the author suggests to the audience that even though she may offer him advice to overcome his disability and restraint, she herself is struggling to overcome her restrictions and find her niche, even coming to ask herself, “What was my role, exactly, in this new territory?” This rhetorical question asked by the author implies that, once she has found herself in this uncertain, distorted place, she no longer knows who she is or what her responsibilities are. By reflecting on the worst scenario of Lee via pathos, Van Tassel is able to communicate her message that one must try to overcome his or her challenges and discover what his or her role is, and, subsequently, who he or she is as a person once the signs have been translated and the masks come off. Van Tassel’s own personal journey, in an emotional parallel to Lee’s bewilderment and struggle, has been confusing, and, only when she finds herself in a place also filled with debris, confusion, and reflection, can she comprehend her true self – her values, beliefs, and role within society.



Kristin Van Tassel uses logos mostly in references to the physical destruction of New Orleans after the hurricane. She craftily contrasts the scenario to her quiet hometown in the Midwest and claims that the city is "disorienting". Again, these physical descriptions help the audience identify with her and accept her credibility, while provoking the overwhelming sense of loss, confusion and uncertainty in a place so foreign that it might as well be on the other side of the world. Like with ethos, occasionally, Van Tassel will employ a violation of logic altogether: Although she is the instructor, Van Tassel often remarks "But the truth is, they were taking care of me." Just as she logically could not picture herself at a Drag-King show on New Orleans' Bourbon Street, yet somehow ended up there anyway, she seems to find herself in a situation of role-reversal with her students, when technically, she is the teacher. The author's plays with logic stress the fact that she should know what she is doing and the role she is to play, yet, when thrown into an unknown world where all sense of judgment is skewed, she experiences ambivalence about her job and whether she is capable enough to be leading these students into vast, unknown territory with which even she herself is unfamiliar. Another potent example of logos is the section at the end of the essay when Van Tassel is in the mask store. She admires the uniqueness of each mask and, when trying one on, comes to the logical conclusion that she felt "familiar but strange." This example she gives strengthens her argument that travel experiences can throw one out of one's comfort zone and into a strange uncertainty of emotion, just as she is in charge of these students and yet sometimes feels so helpless and out of control. She notes that the masks are merely a cover, a label, a mark – that the person underneath is still dazed and confused, meandering through experience after experience and "wandering aimlessly among signs that don't always make sense."

Van Tassel, as she leaves the mask store, realizes that "travel has a way of showing us how close we all live to the boundaries of what we know." This argument is essentially saying that every day we live our lives under the cover and protection of a mask, but as soon as an "unexpected storm" hits and we find ourselves in a new place, everything that we know is turned upside-down. Often, we are unsure of what to do and come to test our limitations in adapting to the new surroundings. In this essay, author Kristin Van Tassel argues this point through the establishment of ethical values (or lack thereof), the emotional appeals to the audience, and the logical (or illogical) conclusions that she draws, all through her own personal journey in discovering how to lead her students through the battered New Orleans, test her limitations in her encounter with Lee and takes off her own concealing mask as she left the Mardi Gras mask store. Van Tassel comments subtly in this essay that people should all take journeys similar to this, and it doesn't matter to where, in order to truly discover who they are as people, what their values and beliefs are, and how they can challenges their restraints. This is communicated effectively by the author through the audience's identification with her, her system of judgment, her empathy with Lee, and her eventual realization of what her role, as forced upon her by travel and experience, is. Yet of course, Van Tassel ultimately says that no matter how you go about traveling, you will never be able to fully understand yourself or the places in which you find yourself because this world is a place we are still merely "learning to recognize."

***THE POINT****Spring 2008***Jennifer Novak's WRIT 1133 Foucauldian Analysis of an Everyday Text**

For this assignment, students were asked to make an argument through critical analysis of a text. They were to use an argument from either Judy Segal's "A Kairology of Biomedicine" or Michel Foucault's "Enunciative Modalities" as a framework for interpreting an object or text: an article from any magazine (ranging from the New York Times to JAMA), a journal article, a blog, an ad, an image, a commercial, or a medical object (ranging from a stethoscope to the packaging for a Powerbar). The audience for the paper was located within the humanities academic research tradition. The essay needed to: 1) forward an argument, 2) address potential counterarguments, 3) offer a style and tone appropriate for an academic audience, and 4) select the best possible evidence for the chosen audience.

The PCS and its Uses:***The Discourse of Aid, Physicians and Corporations Exist in Documentation****Mike Engler*

The idea of taking care of the sick and disabled has a utopian stigma gating the reach of its effectiveness — we are willing to help but perhaps only under certain conditions. The certain conditions which govern the United States' disbursement of aid are mitigated through government health programs like Medicare and Medicaid, where qualifications for government help are decided by a combination of private and public departments. In subsidizing public aid through Medicare and Medicaid departments that have authority to contract with private healthcare, the government is making healthcare profitable, and thus subject to pressures of maintaining profits and not that of improving standards of healthcare. While it is difficult to determine, microscopically, the shortcomings of contracting healthcare through private companies, it is less difficult when done on a smaller scale (e.g. the documentation that legitimizes the public-private transaction). The reasons for this interaction of private and public institutions through their documentation can be analyzed through Foucaultian considerations from Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault's dissenting consideration for the role of the patient questions whether public aid is truly for the patients' benefit, and how that patient's role is fragmented between different institutions of power (the physician, the skilled nursing facility the Colorado Medical Services department (CMS)). The discourse inherent to the PCS form can be separated into different modalities: the parties contributing to the PCS forms use, the institutions that use the PCS form and legitimize it, and the context in which the PCS form is used. Through analyzing the PCS in terms of these modalities, we can appreciate the meticulous construction of disability and worth of medical treatment; it can also be speculated what effects this power has on the patient and those providing treatment. Careful analysis of the PCS form through these modalities suggests that the main consideration in designing the PCS form is to influence the physician's decision to certify the transport, and in some cases, to shape the rejection of authorization for transport for questionable patients. Thus this authorization process supports the existing discourse of power of the physician caring for the patient, of capitalism through the pursuits of corporations, and finally of the ultimate authority to the government, which oversees and approves the former.

There are many members interacting through a PCS form: the government department paying for the transport, the physician who is medically responsible for the patients treatment under the guidelines of the aforementioned department, the ambulance company that takes temporary responsibility and receives compensation for treatment, and finally the patient, as a subject in need that must justify his or her need through this piece of paper. The CMS has general guidelines for Medicare and Medicaid that appear in several categories on the PCS form. For example, on the PCS form found on the Tri-med Ambulance website, the PCS defined Medical Necessity using Medicare guidelines, "The Medicare definition of Medical Necessity for non-emergency ambulance transportation is: The inability to get from bed without assistance and the inability to ambulate and the inability to sit in a chair or wheelchair" (Tri-Med). Not only does this PCS form from Tri-Med show that Medicare and Medicaid have the power to define the guidelines of a private company's transport, but it also shows the discourse of the Medicare department is being imposed upon the patient, who is only in Medical Necessity of medical transport at the approval of Medicare. Also working under an agreement with CMS, and therefore with Medicare or Medicaid, the physician delegates CMS's requirements by signing the form: this signature requirement validates and reinforces the status of the

physician and that of the Medicare Department by making the physician's signature more important than the nurses'. For example, in the 42 CFR§410.40 guidelines, the official guidelines for PCS forms from the HHS, the physician is required to "[certify] that the medical necessity requirements of [the HHS] are met," and if the physician is not available, "either the physician assistant...or nurse" must sign (HHS 42 CFR§410.40 (c) 3 111). The guidelines in 42 CFR§410.40 serve as official policy that private ambulance companies, physicians and even nurses must obey; in the way in which the voice of the nurse is under that of the physician, the HHS guidelines are maintaining a hierarchy that begins with the government and ends with the patient. This is consistent with Foucault's discussion of speaking individuals' discourse in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: "The status of the doctor involves... institutions, systems, pedagogical norms; legal conditions that give the right — though not without laying down certain limitations..." (Foucault 50). The limitations that are present in this case are implications in which the patient is defined as not in Medical Necessity as a means to make money for a private company or to aid in the HHS budget. Thus, there is the inclusion of a private business into this hierarchy, the ambulance company supplying the PCS form according to HHS guidelines, to a physician to legitimize their transaction with the medical staff and the government. The ambulance company is also responsible for procuring the PCS form at the risk of not being compensated; however the ambulance company stands to profit more in some instances by treating Medicare or Medicaid patients. Finally, the patient participates but only as a subject from which the status of aid worthiness is defined and promoted, and thus the patient as a subject is dispersed between the merit and incentives of different voices involved with the patient's care. The structural effect of wiping out the patient's voice serves the interest of profit for a private ambulance company, and, through the power of shaping a physician to reject Medicare or Medicaid approval, to minimize the number of patients on Medicare or Medicaid who actually are authorized to use their coverage. This has an effect of all parties dehumanizing the patient and treating healthcare as a subsidized product rather than a right.

The authorization of power from institutional sites to the physician and the worth of that power are also observed in the use of the PCS form. Considering the hospital as an institution, the patient's condition in needing an ambulance to be transported is only available inside the hospital to or from which the patient is being transported. For example, the HHS guidelines say, "the individual [signing the PCS] must be employed by the beneficiary's physician or by the hospital or facility" (HHS 42 CFR§410.40 (c) 3 111). This condition that is imposed upon the patient is from the government and cedes power to the hospital as an institution Foucault described as being "a place of constant, coded, systematic observation" (Foucault 51). That is that the patient's condition and clearance for receiving aid from the government is mitigated only to a hospital containing the patient's physician — the fact that the hospital comes secondary to the necessary condition that the physician of the patient is part of that hospital shows that the government is acknowledging the hospital as a capable institution only as an extension of the physician. The documentary institution plays an important role in the PCS as being used to mitigate power over the patient to the government's liking. Consider the process of the production of the PCS form: the PCS form is not a certified document itself but can be any document adhering to the conditions of the HHS guidelines. The fact that the form of the PCS is unimportant while the status of the individual signing the document is considered important reveals that the power of the physician is being characterized through widespread use of the PCS form. But more importantly, this process reveals the ultimate power of Medicare and Medicaid, which create the specific guidelines for the physicians to follow; therefore, the physicians are offered an illusion of control, while their decisions are still being factored by the HHS algorithm.

The implications of creating a legal document that is legitimized by a physician to serve the transaction of business between the government and corporations suggest that the government is not truly operating in favor of the patient but instead in appeal to the physician, who requires a marginal amount of power to the government, who tries to cut expenses from the bottom up and who maintains its absolute power, and to the corporation, who has a de facto right to make money off of a patient's misfortune and who stands to make even more money if the Medicare or Medicaid authorizations are rejected. The modalities discussed in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* were used to show that the power of the patient exists in a hierarchy that the PCS form supports and that various institutions benefit from using and serve to legitimize the PCS form. Finally, this suggests that the PCS is being used to maintain profits of a private corporation, to alleviate government budget, and to appease the ego of the physician — all of these at the patient's expense, as they are now being treated as any other trade and enter the rules and logic of economics.

Works Cited

42 CFR§410.40 Date Unknown. The US Department of Health and Human Services. 1 Feb. 2008.
[http://www.cms.hhs.gov/AmbulanceFeeSchedule/downloads/cfr410_40.pdf]

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language*. Publisher Unknown: City Unknown: Date Unknown

Tri-Med Ambulance. Date Unknown. Tri-Med Ambulance & Transportation, LLC. 1 Feb. 2008.
<<http://www.trimedambulance.com/pages/pcsform.pdf>>.

**THE POINT**

Spring 2008

Carol Samson's WRIT 1122 Familial Gaze Narratives

Students began this essay through invention and free writing, requiring them to find a quiet time and write for 10-15 minutes without stopping. Freewriting questions included:

- 1. Write for 10-15 minutes on Memories. Try to explore all that you remember about this photograph.*
- 2. Write for another 10-15 minutes explaining what is going on outside the photograph: who or outside, who is absent, why is the person/object not in the picture?*
- 3. Write for another 10-15 minutes on the people in the photograph and why they are having their picture taken. Are there complications? Tensions?*
- 4. Write for another 10-15 minutes on paradox and contradiction in the photograph.*
- 5. Write one or two 10-15 minute sessions on other aspects of the photograph not listed here.*
- 6. When you have finished all of the 10-minute inventions, consider your argument. How will you control and focus the writing? What will the purpose of your essay be? How will you help the reader find the focus and the purpose?*

Students then arranged the paragraphs so that their most provocative memory came last and the essay deepened philosophically to some sort of point or surprise or poetic epiphany. Finally, students drafted a 4-5 page essay on the familial gaze in the photograph.



Familial Gaze -- A Narrative
Alisha Gucker

Here is one big, happy family. In Bali, Indonesia they say we have a perfect family, two boys and two girls, their equivalent to a nuclear family. Even though my parents have lived in Indonesia for over twenty years now, some American traditions are still grafted into our family culture. Christmas dinner is one such tradition. We often joke that everything is about food. We all love food, although it shows more on some than on others. Food, for us, is a way to touch and be a part of any culture. So whether it is the normal *sate ayam* and *nasi kuning* (chicken with peanut sauce and yellow rice) or the rare turkey and mashed potatoes, meal time has always been significant to our family culture. Christmas dinner is no exception. Even in Indonesia, as we sit down to both a ham and a turkey, we are reminded of our roots.

Our American roots, as seen in the photo however, are twisted and modified, as is our Christmas tradition in

accordance with our environment. We are all wearing comfortable, cool clothes over wet swimming suits. After all, Indonesia lies on the equator and Christmas Day usually brings about 90 degree weather and 90% humidity. On the table there is *salak* sauce, my dad's experiment that melts an American dish with a local fruit. In the background is plate from Egypt that my dad bought on a business trip. If I could scan the room, I know I would see a miniature Eiffel tower, an embroidery from China, several masks, and *kain* (traditionally weaved cloth) from various parts of Indonesia. When I left Indonesia at the age of 16 to live with my grandparents, my mother gave me a box of relics my dad had collected on his many trips to take with me. I brought my own *kain*, a few carvings, a bottle of Egyptian oil, and coins from more countries than I can remember. This was my way of remembering where I came from, where I have been, and the way each step has shaped who I am.

As seen in the photograph, I'm very different from my siblings, yet they are more my base than my nationality. Each of us has a different hair color and I am the only one without blue eyes. My sister looks just like my mother, and my brothers share different parts of my father. And then there is me. But those who know us best can see the resemblance in our faces, in our manner. I know how my siblings and my parents have shaped me. We are close. Christmas dinner has gained another level of meaning as life pulls our family in different directions. Now that my older brother, Dennis, and I live in the US, our family only spends a few weeks a year complete. I set the table that evening. Counting out six plates, six goblets, and six sets of silverware almost put a lump in my throat. Every meal we spent apart over the last year has been condensed into Christmas dinner; we have both turkey and ham because Mom wanted it to be perfect. The photograph was taken to preserve that sense of completeness.

This photograph also portrays the personalities of my brothers in a single, frozen second. My younger brother, Justin, is a clown. As the baby of the family he is required to assert himself lest he slips through the cracks. In this picture his silly pose invokes Dennis' need, as the wise older brother, to control the situation. In Dennis' mind, Justin is about to ruin the picture. Ironically, Dennis' expression is what turns this photograph into something uncomfortable. Justin's expression would have drawn laughs and perhaps mockery. But the look on Dennis' face stirs up something deeper, prompting the dirty word "dysfunctional." I recognize that look and know the meaning behind it because I have seen it myself so many times, in what now feels like a previous life. One condescending glance from my brother can still make me feel like the awkward eleven-year-old trying to get attention. His approval as an older sibling is what each of us younger ones have strived for. Some, like my sister, attain it more easily than others. She thinks like Dennis and shares his sense of humor. She never struggled with her weight the way my younger brother and I have. Dennis accepted her quickly while here I am, after nineteen years, still stepping on eggshells. The snap of a shutter has confined all these feelings, all of the past into another piece of my personal history. This focal point of the picture cannot be glazed over by the surrounding, smiling faces, or the plethora of food on the table, or the notion of Christmas spirit. For all my mother's hard work, her preconceived desires for a perfect family gathering, one look from my brother pulls it all apart.

My mother is not in the photograph. Her desire to preserve us in time, to collect us all together on this special occasion, overrides her need to be a part of the memory. Yet she is, and always will be, the greatest aspect of the photograph. All eyes are on her. Some are filled with enthusiasm, wanting the photograph to show their personality or perhaps convey that this is a wonderful meal full of festive love. (Do you see my open grin?) Others are less thrilled, half smiling only because Mom requires it. Her fingerprints litter the table. The food she spent hours preparing. The centerpiece she arranged for atmosphere. Her favorite dishes she bought just to use on Christmas Day. My mother is more present in the photograph than those smiling back at her.

Like the paradox of my mother's presence despite her physical absence, photographs only convey half truth. The whole truth depends on the audience. Each member's personality, for example, can be interpreted from this photograph. Yet it would only be a fragment and may not be accurate. My dad appears to be sullen and serious. It would be difficult to imagine him laughing if I were not so accustomed to the way his eyes crinkle and shine with a bad joke. His dull appearance masks his true, animated personality. Similarly, the side of my sister you see in this photograph is reserved and quiet. She can be these things, depending on her audience. Perhaps, like a picture, that's what personality is: a presentation of oneself that changes according to the viewer. Then there is the presentation of a family: a unit that works together, celebrates together, spends time together. There is the outer face the family displays to the world, whether through a carefully crafted photo album or through the perception given by well-dressed group of people sitting together at church. Whatever mask a family wears, it is designed to cover the dysfunction, just as an individual personality will adapt into whatever the audience may find most appealing.

Therein lays the beauty of photographs. While an album can be crafted to show certain memories or emotions and leave out those less pleasant, a raw picture captures the moment, proudly displaying whatever is there. While this photograph may not accurately depict my family in the same way I would describe them to you, it has captured a piece of my family I would rather leave out. Dysfunction. As a single moment frozen on paper, it should not offer up the complexity of my sister's personality, or my mother's warmth, or my father's sense of humor. It should, and it did, capture the moment for what it was, bittersweet.



THE POINT

Spring 2008

Can We Have Class Outside?

Heather Martin

I love warm weather as much as the next person, but I've never found it to be productive to hold classes outside. I generally feel like we get so much more done if we stay inside and focus on the tasks at hand. Yes, I sometimes feel like a curmudgeon when I say that, but then when class is dismissed and we're all headed out to enjoy the day, we can leave knowing we got lots of work done!

–Linda Tate

If the stars align so that the beautiful, sunny day coincides with peer reading or a group discussion, I take them out, with the stern admonition that we have to be serious about our work as well. I love the vibe of a class actually working and thinking hard under the sunshine. I think it also strengthens the rapport of the class past the time when the outside class was held. But if I decide the day's lesson wouldn't work outside, I apologize, agree with them about how beautiful it is, and tell them that as much as I, too, would love to be in the sun, their education is my first concern.

–Kelli Custer

Honestly, my usual answer is simply "No." But I'll include two specific reasons. First, technologies can't be used outside, so no work using Web-based materials and no ability to use projector for discussions. Two, outside classes offer too many visual and aural distractions, for both me and for students.

–Matt Hill

I don't think I've been asked yet at DU (but I tend to teach in the mornings). Hmm ... What would I say? I would say no, an answer that evolved after a student of mine at CU Boulder fainted when her classmate pulled out a syringe. (Needle-wielding student was diabetic and fainting-student was deathly afraid of needles.) We were sitting outside in a stone amphitheater, and the student who fainted fell over and bonked her head rather severely. We worried she had a concussion, but thankfully, she was okay. Afterwards, I thought carpeting and linoleum tiles much safer surfaces, so I tend to stay indoors.

–Geoffrey Bateman

***THE POINT****Spring 2008***Ethnography Assignment***April Chapman-Ludwig***How will I be doing an Ethnography in this class?**

Your assignment is to identify something -- some problem or social issue -- that you can: 1) create a hypothesis about, 2) research through observation, 3) test your hypotheses against your data, 4) and analyze what you've discovered in an 8 page paper.

You might approach this one of three ways: **First**, pick a group of people to observe in order to gather research about your hypotheses. For example, you might observe a random sampling of couples to determine how gender roles work in public versus in private. **OR**, you might simply pick a place that seems to be the location of a kind of sub-culture. (A quick word on this second option: Choose a setting that is safe — don't choose anything that will put you in harm's way.)

Parts and Pieces to the Ethnography Assignment:

1. **Pre-Observation Hypothesis:** Before doing observations, write down what your topic is, what questions you wish to inquire about concerning your topic, and what your preliminary answers to these questions are. In other words, what are you planning to look for and what do you expect to see?

2. **Raw Data:** When it comes time for observation, write your observations (about an hour's worth, depending on the subject matter) with as much detail as you can. Tell us about everything -- ordinary things can have large meanings. Collect as much data as you can, and make sure to be conscious of things like your objectivity in the situation, whether or not you are deceiving your observation subjects, and how your presence might have influenced the outcome of the data. Then once you've completed your data recovery, analyze what you've discovered. Compare your observations to your initial hypotheses. Draw conclusions about what or who you studied. What did you learn? What can we learn? What is important to understand about this problem or people? Make sure to take notes on what you learned and discovered. All this together will be your "raw data."

3. **Ethnographic Essay:** A common format for such essays (as well as many others in the social sciences) is as follows:

First, introduce your subject matter by giving your readers some background on the project, i.e. what you're trying to accomplish (or problem statement) and what others have already done or said about the issue. (This is commonly called a literature review, and will require some library research.) **Second**, identify your method of study as well as what you discovered. Here is the place you would include a narrative of your observations. **Third**, identify what results you discovered in comparison with your data. What happened that you expected? What didn't? **Lastly**, provide your readers with a discussion -- or analysis -- of your project. This is where you interpret the data you've collected in comparison to your hypotheses, and provide your readers with some conclusions. Your essay does not necessarily have to take this form. You might, for example, choose to analyze or interpret your data as you describe the events or observations themselves.

This might mean that you have actual subject heading where you discuss and explain the various aspects of your ethnography. Such as:

• **Introduction:** This is where you might introduce the issue you're examining, making sure that your issue is appropriate for your audience and that you identify early on what you're trying to argue about the issue. The introduction might also include the relevant literature, discussions, or studies that have already been made about the issue you've chosen. Here is the place where you also identify your purpose: Are you arguing that someone's concept is wrong or doesn't work in a certain situation? Are you trying to prove something? Are you asking for more research in this area? The introduction quite often works in conjunction with the conclusion (see below).

• **Methodology and Research Questions:** Here is where you identify for your readers what questions you had before engaging in the research, and how you went about compiling the data you did. This is also the place where you identify what your role is as an observer.

• **Data or Compilation of Research:** Here is where, particularly as it applies to an ethnography, that you provide your readers with a narrative of the things you observed and the data you compiled. If you simply observed, what did you see? (Be detailed!) If you compiled surveys, what numbers did you come up with? If you conducted an interview, what did the interviewee say?

• **Analysis:** This is where you compare your research questions with the data you compiled, and come up with some explanations as to why differences or similarities exist. This is probably the most important section of the ethnography, since this is the place where you, as the researcher and author, come to some conclusions about your research project.

• **Conclusion:** This is where, for lack of better words, you wrap things up. What did you prove? Why is this important for your field? Based on what you've found, what are you trying to tell others in your audience about what you've researched?

Some Guidelines for Observation

1. Pick a place in which you can observe without being obtrusive and/or invading anyone's privacy.
2. If you do decide to talk with someone in the group you study (this person is called a "collaborator"), make sure you have their consent to conduct your observation.
3. Make it apparent to your collaborator that you will keep him/her anonymous, unless they tell you it is okay to use their name



THE POINT

Spring 2008

Finding Stuff in the Library: A Cheat Sheet for 1133 Students

Geoff Stacks

To find a book:

1. Go to <http://library.du.edu>.
2. Click on "PEAK: The Library Catalog."
3. Search for your book. You can search by author, title, keyword, etc.
4. If you find a book you want, go on to the next step. If you do not find the book you need, skip down to #7.
5. If you see a book that looks interesting, click on the title. You'll get the following information:
 - a. A table of contents: That'll help you decide if this is a book you really need.
 - b. Status: Look under "status." If it says "available," you're in luck. You can check it out. If it has a due date, then someone else has checked out that book. Skip down to #7 to find out how to get that book.
 - c. Call number: This will help you find it in the library. If you don't understand how it works, ask a librarian. They're friendly and helpful.
 - d. Location: Where in the library? And which library? Most books are in Penrose, but some books are in other parts of the campus.
6. Get the call number, find the book in the library, and check it out.
7. If you don't find the book you're looking for, that means that DU does not have that book. You now have two options:
 - a. Prospector: If DU doesn't have a book you need, you can sometimes get it from nearby libraries. There should be a "Search Prospector" button on the right hand side of the screen. Or you can go to library.du.edu and click on Prospector. Find a local library that has it and request it.
 - b. Interlibrary Loan: If our library and Prospector don't have the book you need, go library.du.edu and click on "Interlibrary Loan" under "Services." Log in, fill out the form, and the DU library will look for your book in libraries across the US and, if they find it, send it to you.

To find a periodical (journal, magazine, newspaper):

1. Go to the library's main website: <http://library.du.edu>.
2. Click on "Database and Article Search."
3. Pick a database to search. (I recommend Academic Search Premier.)
 - a. If you know the name of the of database you want to use, go to "Alphabetical List of Databases" and click on the first letter. (For example, click on "A" for Academic Search Premier.)
 - b. You can also search for databases within a certain field (e.g., psychology, astronomy, literature, etc.). Just go to "Search by Category" and select your choice. The website will then list the databases in that field.
 - c. Do not limit your search to Full Text only.
4. Once you have chosen a database, you can start searching.

Tips:

- a. Don't forget about Boolean operators (and, or, near) and truncation symbols.
 - b. When you get your results, you can look next to "See: All Results" and click on "Journals" or "Magazines" or "Newspapers."
 - c. Look at "Narrow Results by Subjects" on the left. You can select results based on a certain subject.
5. If you find an article that looks interesting, click on the title and read the abstract.

6. If you want that article, scroll down to "Check Article Linker." Click on that link to see if you can electronically download the full text.

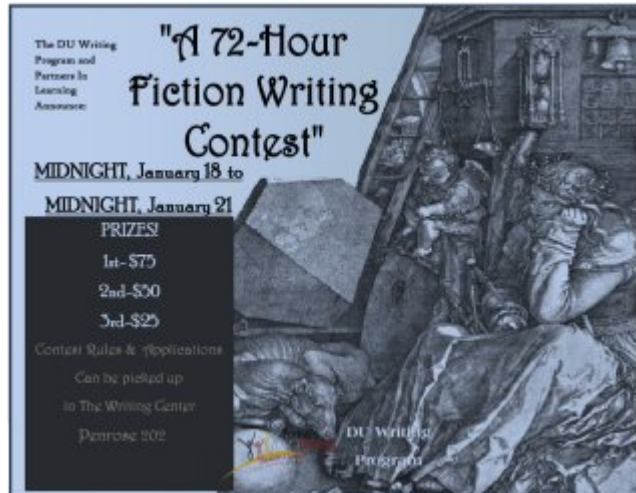
7. If full text is not available, you still have two options:

a. Find the article here in the library.

- i. Write down the name of the journal, the volume, issue, date, and page numbers of the article you want.
- ii. Go back to the library's main page (library.du.edu) and click on PEAK: The Library Catalog.
- iii. Instead of "Keyword," scroll down to "Periodical Title" and select that option.
- iv. Type in the name of the journal or magazine or newspaper you're looking for.
- v. If our library has that periodical, write down the call number for the periodical and find where it is in the library. Ask a librarian for help if you need it.
- vi. Once you find the periodical, look for the volume and issue you need.
- vii. You can't check out periodicals from the library, but you can photocopy the article you need.

b. Request article through Interlibrary Loan.

- i. If our library doesn't have that periodical, you can order a copy through interlibrary loan. Go to library.du.edu.
- ii. Click on "Interlibrary Loan" under "Services."
- iii. Log in, fill out the form, and the DU library will look for your article in libraries across the US and, if they find it, send it to you.

***THE POINT****Spring 2008***On the DU Writing Program's "[First Annual 72 Hour Writing Contest](#)"***Carol Samson*

A few years ago, I learned of the "3-Day Novel Contest" which happens over the Labor Day weekend. In that contest, sponsored by a Canadian company, writers have 72 hours to produce a novel, and the winning novel is published. Contestants are told to drink lots of water, do exercises, and breathe deeply to maintain sanity. A friend of mine tried it every year, renting a room at a hotel downtown and locking herself away from family and responsibility for three days. Though she never won, she always told me that it was a great stretch of imagination kind of project. Last year, as a faculty member in the Writing Program, I was doing my writing consultant tasks in the Writing Research Center, and, in an off moment, I spoke with an English Department PhD candidate named Shannon Mullaly. She told me that she had won the 2004 Canadian contest by writing an epistolary novel with a friend (collaboration is allowed). So, this year when the Co-Curricular Writing committee was brainstorming for ideas to create more writing situations on campus, I suggested that we try the same sort of contest. The Committee agreed and volunteered to judge. This being the first year of the contest, we were happy to receive six (6) entries. The judges read the works knowing that [the rules](#) of a 72-Hour writing trek would mean that we would receive stories that would need editing, but that we would read for the quality of the prose, the character development, the dialogue — even as the writers wrestled with Time and sleeplessness.

The entries ranged from robot/computer science fiction, to fantasy, to languid meditations, to humor and to tragedy. The winners are as follows:

- 1st Place: Eric Peterson, "[Salt Water](#)" [PDF]
- 2nd Place: Nate Knife, "Night Clerks"
- 3rd Place: Kevin Bell, "A Place Under the Stars"

The judges liked "Salt Water" because of its attention to language which one judge found "textured and unpredictably rich at times." We found it a fine narrative intent on exploring meta-fictional spaces. The second place winner, "Night Clerks," is quirky and "deadpan funny," a sort of spin-off, as one judge saw it, of "Clerks." In the 3rd place winner, we saw a young writer trying to reconcile two moments in the life of a young couple: a proposal and honeymoon set against an automobile accident.

The prize-winning story, "[Salt Water](#)," [PDF] is a frame story. Central to its meaning is the transcription of a diary, part dream, part philosophy, all surreal. The diary is a prose poem, the written text of a man afloat in signs and symbols, a searcher self sorting out memory and loss.

Here is a sampling from Eric Peterson's work:

"Nevertheless, I am here, and I am moving. The sea is calm. No winds blow upon it, and no waves rock me back and forth. It is as flat and as calm as a resting glass of wine but as reflective as a mirror. It is uniformly a lighter blue, much like the color of the sea one sees in tourist ads. The air is neither bitter nor pure, though the sea is so salted that I fear taking a drink. The sun burns me not, though it keeps me warm. No storm passes me. Land rarely makes its appearance on the horizon, and even if it did, I have no means of paddling to it. There are no artificial sources of light, and so the night is filled with stars, nodding.

"You must be thinking my time spent here is a bore, but you are incorrect, for I am not alone. Yes, I am alone, on my raft, but I am not alone on the sea. It would be ignorant to think that I am the only one lost at sea.

"I am unsure of when I first became cognizant, when I became self-aware. My realization developed much like the memory of a child. It's entirely possible that I was floating for some time before I became aware of it. And although I cannot pinpoint the exact moment in time of the beginning of my journey, I am able to recall one event which took me from floating to floating with direction.

"I saw, coming toward me, another raft. Because there is no point of reference other than my raft and his raft, I cannot be sure of whether I was moving toward him, or he was moving toward me, or if either of us were stationary, but from my frame of reference, he was sailing toward me. He arrived lazily, neither rushing, nor dragging, though I suppose he had no control over it. When we were within shouting distance, I saw that he glanced at me briefly and looked at me with curious eyes but did not speak.

"It should be expected that I was anxious. I did not know what to do. Was I to talk to him? Was I to throw myself overboard and swim to him? Was he to do either? Was it proper for me to return the glance? How many manners I must have ignored in this strange world.

"Before I could react, I noticed that the man had looked back down at his raft. He began whistling a song. The melody was familiar, nothing special about it, but surely memorable. It had a haunting quality to it — it would never leave me. The vastness and openness of the sea allowed for the sound to be carried to me unaltered. There was no sound to mix with it, and there was no object impeding its movement toward me. It was pure, it rang True to me. I had lost awareness, and all that was left was the sound. And although his whistling produced only higher pitches which my ear could pick up, I somehow felt it within me, like one feels the lowest basses at an orchestral performance, or when one feels a strong emotion. The melody echoed through me.

"When I regained awareness, the man's raft had already passed behind me, but the melody remained within me. I had it committed to a form of memory, not quite memory itself, but something similar to instinct. Muscle memory of sorts. This was the beginning.

"Looking back on it, it was actually pretty surreal. I wouldn't consider myself a musician, nor would I consider myself an avid fan of music, especially of just a melody being whistled, and yet something about it struck me. I cannot recall any other details about the man or his raft.

"I cannot even begin to describe for you the melody. I could perhaps show you a chart of how it would look written out, or perhaps I could describe for you the pitches it cycles through, however doing so would not bring it justice. You would not be able to recognize the beauty of it. Instead, I may focus entirely on the beauty of it, and perhaps describe it to you through metaphor or simile. I could use diction or any literary device to attempt to provide you with an understanding of the melody and its power; however I could not — not merely due to my lack of proficiency in this field, but also because, although you would have a clear understanding of the power of the melody, you would not have the melody itself, and even the power is open to interpretation."

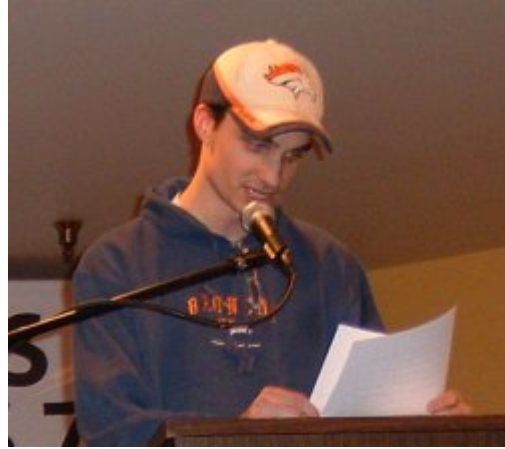
The young writer speaks of essences, of muscle memory, of art as non-discursive moment. He reminds us of the ineffable, of melodies we can only know by analogy, and at the same time he is working with meta-fiction, demonstrating the process of making story even as he makes his story.

All in all this was a valuable contest experience. It is part of the Writing Program's attempt to set up opportunities for "out of the classroom" writing experiences. We sponsor the "Open Mic" nights in the Pub — which happens twice a quarter. We are working with the Botanic Gardens to hold an "Open Mic" in the Botanic Gardens on May 12, 2008. We are also planning a competitive Grammar Bee wherein teams will compete by correcting grammatically incorrect sentences and all monies will be donated to the Colorado Literacy Project. We sponsor informal creative writing workshops once a month in the evening. We hope to set up seminars on publication and to continue to encourage the undergraduates at DU to explore the possibilities that writing offers.



THE POINT

Spring 2008



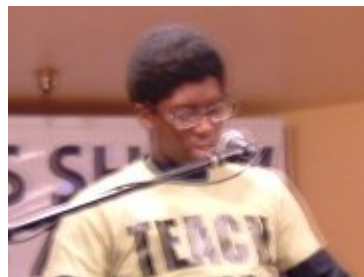
Open Mic Nights
Rebekah Shultz Colby

The Social Justice Open Mic Night, held on Tuesday, January 29, and co-hosted by the Writing Program and Partners in Learning, was a success. While Kamila Kinyon introduced readers, Karen Bensen handed out magnet prizes. According to Kinyon, the night's readings were excellent.



Open Mic Presenter

Russ Takeall is from the Bronx and lives in New Jersey now. He is a sophomore at DU. He is majoring in International Studies. [Read more . . .](#)



***THE POINT****Spring 2008*

Geoffrey Bateman
Literature PhD

Where did you get your undergraduate degree? What was your major? Where did you get your MA and/or PhD and what was each in? Why did you choose DU?

Long ago, in the melancholic mists of the Pacific Northwest, I earned my BA in English at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. But it took me awhile to find my way to this major. I dabbled a bit in music education, mathematics, and German, ultimately finding an intellectual home in the English Department, thanks in large part to a lovely advisor who specialized in rhetoric and composition studies.

A few years after finishing my undergraduate degree — with a bit of a detour teaching English in Mattersburg, Austria, and a stint as an HIV prevention program coordinator in Portland, Oregon — I started my first round of graduate school at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I took my MA exams in 18th and 19th century British Literature and theories of gender and sexuality. I took time off to start a family with two lesbians, and while I changed diapers and made baby food in my Cuisinart, I worked for a research center that studies gays and lesbians in the military. I ended up returning to doctoral work at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where I am finishing my dissertation on “The Queer Frontier.” In this project, I’m trying to queer the American West by examining all sorts of texts that feature same-sex desire, racialized subjectivities, and alternative gender identities that resist the respectable norms of late nineteenth and early twentieth century America.

I chose DU for a few reasons: I like working on a smaller campus and teaching courses with fewer students. It’s rewarding to be able to have the time to get to know students on a much more individual basis. But I love living near the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and working at DU lets me stay in Denver with friends and family.

Describe what your writing process is like:

Messy. When I start drafting, I overwrite and generate notebooks full of random thoughts and obsessive close readings of passages that seem interesting and relevant in the moment. Sometimes they are, and sometimes not, but I find that I have to write around and through a text or a question quite a bit before I really figure out what I want to say. The hardest part is usually taking the reams of notes and scribbles and mad dashes and finding ways to organize this material into something insightful. I’ve been known to cover my office walls with paragraphs cut from documents. I use tape and bits of clay to post my ideas in front of me and move them around until I find the best way to organize my work.



What do you enjoy most about writing?

Editing. I love to take a substantial, mostly finished draft and find ways to polish it until it shines. Tinkering with verbs, cutting the crap out, finding that perfect phrase — these are delightful ways to spend an afternoon. Okay, I know I sound like such a geek. But what can I say? I love to write and muck around with language.

Briefly, how would you describe your teaching philosophy?

I'm a very forgiving and encouraging person in the classroom, but one who sets fairly high expectations for student writing. I believe that all students can learn to think more critically and write more effectively, so I do everything I can to help students find their voices, gain confidence, and figure out whatever it is that they need to figure out to succeed as writers in the college classroom and beyond. Because I firmly believe this, I also expect it, so students end up working very hard in my classes, but even as they might grouse about the work, they come to appreciate the results in their writing.

What drew you to become a writing teacher?

I love to work with students on process and unlocking the mysteries of working through a problem. (Hmmm ... maybe that's my math-brain coming through.) I also struggled in my own writing as a college student, so I know firsthand how students feel who are confused by university expectations. In a way I almost feel obligated to pass down the helpful advice that my professors gave me and demystify this process for students in my courses.

What do you enjoy most about teaching writing?

Reading and responding to student work. Even when I feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of papers that sit on my desk, I love to see students' ideas unfold, especially in their drafts. Then to revisit a piece and see how they've learned to respond more effectively or more insightfully to an assignment—it's fascinating and so rewarding to see their determination and hard work pay off.

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

Smart and sassy television series. Right now, I'm currently obsessed with *Ugly Betty*. Who wouldn't get sucked into the campy world of high Manhattan fashion full of outsiders and misfits? By far, though, my guiltiest pleasure is reading fantasy and science fiction novels, especially those with dragons or talking horses. I know, it's embarrassing. My partner doesn't get it, but it's an addiction that started at a young age. I don't think there's any hope for me ...

Name an unusual or little-known fact about yourself.

I was an Eagle Scout and played football in high school. I guess that's two facts, but folks tend to be surprised when I share them at parties. It's fun to unsettle people's expectations.

**THE POINT***Spring 2008***Carol Samson***PhD in English/Creative Writing***1. Background**

I studied for my B.A. in English at Colorado State University, and the course I enjoyed the most was a page-by-page study of *Moby Dick* taught by a Melville scholar who told us, "Everything I am is in this book," and who proceeded to act out the entire novel. I went on to study for my M.A. in Theatre History at Colorado State University where I wrote my thesis on the 17th c. French theatre troupe of Moliere. In particular, I researched documents in French pertaining to the troupe, and I focused on the record-keeper Charles Varlet de la Grange who kept a personal record book wherein he ceremoniously marked, among other things, the days when the actresses refused to perform. I received my Ph.D. in English/Creative Writing here at the University of Denver. My dissertation is a collection of stories, *They Say the Owl was a Baker's Daughter*.

2. Writing Process

I appreciate what Henry James said about consciousness being a gigantic spider web that collects particles. I know how to wait for the particles. I collect them. Like one of those gleaners, the field women who bend to pick things from the ground in that old French painting, I like to sort through the leftover bits: orange things, carrots or yams, things I choose because I like the sound of the words, oddments.

3. What I enjoy about writing:

Once in a writing seminar where we spent 4-5 hours a day freewriting, I realized that writing is surprise, that a word comes when it wants to, that an image waits and leaps like Elizabeth Bishop's old fish, bringing its history with it.

4. Teaching Philosophy:

In one word: patience.

I believe in encouragement.

I believe that you cannot push a string.

5. Why did you become a writing teacher?

At the old Thatcher School in first grade reading class, five of us sat in a small room with tall and wooden-framed windows, panels of glass that opened with a lengthy wooden pole lifted to the high locks. The day I remember is the day the elderly teacher, a saintly woman with watery-blue eyes, wrote the word "cinnamon" on the board. She told us to open our hands. She put a teaspoon of cinnamon, mixed with sugar -- as I was only to understand later, in our palms. She told us to taste it. I saw the word on the chalkboard. I lifted my hand to my mouth, and at that moment I tasted language. As I walked home, I thought about the sweetness. I understood that I could store the word in memory and write it later on a tablet with a pencil.

I think I am a writer, if not a writing teacher, because of that moment.

6. Something you might not know about me:

I keep a small ivory statue on my writing desk. It is a Chinese horse, its right forefoot lifted, its head looking toward the clouds. The Chinese horse is covered with fine, black ink drawings, hand-etched swallow birds, and flowers. Its belly is marked with a lotus blossom. I bought this small statue at an antique store. It may or may not be ivory.

I'm told that if you heat an embroidery needle and press it into such a piece, that if it is nothing but ivory-colored plastic, the needle will pierce the material, making a small hole. If the statue is ivory, the needle will not make any marks.

I do not know if the horse on my desk is old ivory or plastic.

I will never heat the needle to find out.

What you need to know is that the horse's saddle has been carved as if it were a leather seat covered with a silken drapery and that the horse's tail is wrapped in carved ribbons as if this small horse is about to enter a ceremony.

***THE POINT****Spring 2008*

Kelli Custer
Composition PhD

I earned my BA in English with a minor in music from Idaho State University. I also completed my MA in English with emphasis in Victorian fiction and rhetoric at Idaho State. I am completing my PhD in English with an emphasis in Composition-Rhetoric from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I have taught at colleges, universities, and high schools in Idaho, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Colorado.

I think it's important for our students to know that we are writers, too, sometimes struggling with the same problems. Something that has been important to me as a writer is to get a better understanding of my own writing processes. When my schedule allows for it, I find that I write best in the morning. I like listening to jazz in the background, with a fresh cup of coffee at hand. I used to need to start with a first sentence. I would walk around for days, turning words over in my mind. Finally, I would type out the sentence and everything else tumbled out. I have had to teach myself to begin in the middle because I have learned that I don't really know for sure where my ideas will go until I let them loose. Since I also tend to procrastinate (as do many writers), I force myself into the chair by timing my writing, promising myself to write for at least 15 minutes. That always turns into at least an hour of work. I try to stop at a point where I know what I want to write next. This makes it much easier to get started the next day.

What do I enjoy most about writing? To me, writing is magic. Walter Ong tells us that in some early dialects, "glamor" and "grammar" both meant something meaning magical. I am not always able to explain my feelings out loud, but I can in writing. I have relied on it to help me through hard times — in my journals — and to give voice to what seemed in my head to be destined only for silence.

Describe my teaching philosophy? I believe everyone in the classroom deserves respect. I believe it is important for me to be as engaged or more so as I expect students to be. I also believe we all learn more in a classroom that is safe and enjoyable.

What drew me to become a writing teacher? At first, I think I majored in English because it was a place where I excelled. I had a wonderful high school English teacher, Mary Lu Barry, and I wanted to be like her. But in my sophomore year of college, I dropped my English Education major and daydreamed about being a lawyer, an advertiser, a journalist. But when I started my Master's degree, I had a Teaching Assistantship, which brought me to the classroom. I was hooked. I was fascinated with all the different ways people approached writing, and I loved finding new ways to help students get over their fear of it.

What do I enjoy most about teaching writing? Most students come into our writing classes not liking writing. Few truly want to be there, and many believe they will never, ever find anything to enjoy about the written word. I like that I have really no where to go but up with such attitudes. I love it when a student suddenly "gets it" or when one admits that maybe, just maybe, they have changed their minds about writing and can feel some of the magic themselves.





THE POINT

Spring 2008



Heather Martin Featured in Yellow Pine Reading Series

Linda Tate

Heather Martin, faculty member in the University Writing Program, read from her novel-in-progress, *Latimer's Stone*, on Wednesday, March 5. Martin was one of five featured readers in the Yellow Pine Reading Series in North Boulder.

In addition to teaching in the University Writing Program, Martin is also currently completing a PhD in DU's Creative Writing program. As part of her doctoral program, Martin is writing *Latimer's Stone*, a novel chronicling five women and their contact with a fabled object (Latimer's Stone) over the last 150 years. As each character comes into contact with the stone, she becomes obsessed with it in her own way.

Latimer's Stone, says Martin in a [recent interview](#), "is broken up into sections about women in very different historical periods, in different parts of their lives, and under different circumstances. Each of these sections is its own compact, independent piece. In some ways, it's a set of short stories connected only by the stone object. The voice of the narrator, a researcher, introduces the stone and reveals the primary documents that she has found for each of the characters." At the Yellow Pine reading, Martin shared a highly entertaining and humorous excerpt from a section about Crystalline, one of the women connected to the stone.

Martin holds a 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 DU's First-Year English Program. Her creative and scholarly work has appeared in regional and national publications, including *Matter*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *DoubleRoom*, and *Electric Velocipede*.

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

Spring 2008



Eliana Schonberg, Geoffrey Bateman, and I received a DU Public Good grant to pilot community-based writing center sites at The Gathering Place and the Saint Francis Center, two daytime homeless shelters here in town. We'll spend six weeks this summer on site, working with clients and staff to determine their writing needs, inventing ways to meet them, and exploring other possible partnerships. We hope this pilot project will be the start of a longer lasting and more extensive engagement between the Writing Research Center and the public.

John Tiedemann