



Logo by Terry Dolson

# Richmond Writing Across the Curriculum Newsletter

Issue 26, October 2010

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Fall Semester Writing Workshops

Sponsored by the School of Continuing Studies.

#### Preregistration required.

For registration & location go to <http://scs.richmond.edu/about/events.html>

### Online Reading & Research

Lee Carleton,

Writing Center Assistant Director  
October 20, 5:30-6:45

Is online reading significantly different from reading a physical book? If so, how? and why is this significant? What new tools do we have access to when reading online? How can we sort out the most reliable resources from thousands of search engine hits and make our searches more efficient? How do we cite our sources properly and how can we cite the text most effectively to support our writing? We will explore these questions and more in this workshop.

### Writing From Sources: Pitfalls, Padding, and Perfection!

Dr. Joe Essid,

Writing Center Director  
November 15, 5:30-6:45

Marshaling and employing credible evidence can be the hardest aspects of academic writing for those new to it. This workshop will introduce the basic rules for employing sources once a writer

has done some research on a topic. Using samples of actual writing provided, we'll see strong and weak ways to signal direct quotations, use paraphrases, cite references in text (APA and MLA formats), and use just enough of a source to make a point work well or support a claim effectively.

### Staying in Touch With Your Faculty Member or Consultant

By Joe Essid & Lee Carleton

The success or failure of a program like ours depends on good communication. Every semester, for a few classes we tend to play nanny, chasing down missing Consultants, non-responsive faculty, or writers who are lost and confused. Here are some quick tips for everyone, faculty member or Writing Consultant, to make every writer's experience as effective as possible.

#### Tips for Faculty:

--Post your Consultants' names and e-mails on your syllabus

--Remember that a Consultant should work between 45 and 60 hours with you during the term, unless you have arranged otherwise with us. Typically, this work load involves meeting 15 students for at least two projects

--Remind writers of the value of having a trained reader review drafts and bring the Consultant to class, if possible, on days you discuss assignments

--Get a sign-up sheet from your Consultant(s) and give it out when you collect drafts. Be sure the sheet notes where the Consultant will be at a particular time, and keep a copy

--Assign some penalty for writers who skip a meeting. Joe Essid's sections face a +/- grade penalty on the final draft for missing the meeting or not turning in a draft.

#### Tips for Consultants:

--Be prompt and courteous during every meeting with writers and faculty

--Check e-mail regularly and reply to all faculty e-mails ASAP within the work-day you get them

--Contact us if you feel overwhelmed and need more assistance or if the faculty member to whom you are assigned is not using your services.

### Four Consultants Become National Reviewers

By Joe Essid & Lee Carleton

We want to congratulate four of our program participants who were chosen by the editors at *The Writing Lab Newsletter* (WLN) to review submissions to "The Tutor's Column," a part of the publication written by undergraduate and graduate students. WLN's chief editor, Muriel Harris, founded the modern writing center movement with Purdue University's Writing Lab, where WLN is still published. WLN is the best known publication internationally about the work of writing centers. We are very proud that *Austin Carter, Aimee Plaisance, Megan Reilly, and Victor Wasserman* will be serving as peer reviewers. We hope this opportunity will be no small line on their resumes for graduate school or employment.

Our program's directors always try to recognize superior performance and dedication. Next year we will choose a few more reviewers to recommend to the editors at WLN. The publication also seeks the best short work written by peer tutors and consultants. If you have an interest in publishing, contact either of us for more information.



## A Professor's Perspective

by Mavis Brown

By its very nature, writing serves in a number of ways. Writing lets students show what they know; as such it becomes a means by which a teacher judges the student's knowledge of subject matter. For years I have been collecting books about the process of writing and attending writing workshops. Lucy Calkins, Shelley Harwayne, and Donald Graves have influenced the way I think about and evaluate writing. After perusing some of their ideas it appears that there are two broad areas that instructors think about when they evaluate student's work.

First, there is the world of ideas and the way a writer puts those ideas together. Often called "rhetoric" or composition," this aspect of writing is the product of the way a mind works when composing thoughts. It involves invention, discovery, logic, organization of ideas, and style. Second, there is the area of correctness, often called "mechanics," "grammar," or "usage." This is the domain of more easily measured skills: a word is either right or wrong, a sentence is either complete or incomplete, and an apostrophe is either required or not required.

An English teacher, Dr. Harvey Wiener often uses a comparison between effective writing and the human anatomy to illustrate these two broad areas. Rhetoric, the organizing part, is like a person's body: the blood, muscle, bone, tendons, and nerves. Correctness, the right-or-wrong features of our language system, is like the skin, the outer layer, what we see straight off when we think of the human body. This analogy is a good one, because it equates the writing process with a living being—but it is helpful only if we keep in mind that both the skin and the body make up the whole person. One without the other is incomplete.

Also, I have learned that guidance is the key. And that is where writing consultants come into play. They can offer valuable assistance to students.

Just as skin and body make the human being, so composition and correctness make writing. Without the clear arrangement of ideas, the outer layer of correctness has no meaning. Nonsense correctly spelled and punctuated is still nonsense. Similarly, a set of brilliant ideas that follows none of the principles of correct writing falls apart, a heap of organs without a skin.

Clearly, the process of writing as a form of communication demands that ideas, the language used to explore them, and the conventions of correctness work together as a total form of expression. Isn't it great that we have a Writing Center in place that supports our efforts to become better communicators?



### The Golden Passage

By Victor Wasserman

As the first round of writing assignments are being handed out and students are cracking open their books from the first half of the semester (perhaps for the last time until finals), the busy mind of nearly every writer on campus turns to that age-old pursuit of supporting the thesis by finding that golden passage in the text. Effective citation is a hallmark of superior academic papers.

Often I'll come across a paper in which a quotation is simply dropped in amongst the author's own sentences. The source is properly cited but is neither introduced nor evaluated, so the reason for its inclusion in the paper remains a mystery. Generally, this is not due to laziness on the part of the writer; the writer is usually just confused about how to integrate a quoted source. While the relationship between the evidence and the thesis may be apparent to the writer,

it is important to keep in mind that the reader of the paper has not necessarily read the source being cited. Thus, to the reader, the quotation is completely devoid of context and clear relevance to the thesis.

I find one of the difficult parts of citation is remembering that the quotation does not speak for itself. By quoting a sentence from a source within our own papers, we are transplanting the author's ideas into a new context, and this needs to be taken into account. We need to tell the reader that a quotation is about to be included, and then we need to explain how it relates to our argument. Remember that the source was not originally written with our papers' governing claims in mind, and we have to take the time to evaluate the words of the citation to clarify how it contributes to our points. By doing so, we ensure that the golden passage we include enriches our arguments, rather than distracts our readers.

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What is the **SEMANTIC**  
*significance* of FONT CHOICE?  
**JUST FOR SHOW?**

*silly?*

or

**subtextual?**

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**Do YOU have a photo,  
an announcement, cartoon or idea  
for our next newsletter?**

Please contact Joe Essid  
(jessid@richmond.edu) or  
Lee Carleton  
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