

VERBAL EQUINOX

SPRING 2019



EDITOR'S

INTRODUCTION

The Fall 2018 - Spring 2019 school year has been a year of change, and it began with new emphasis placed on digital literacy. As Ashton Corsetti describes in his editorial "From Grammar to Graphics," our digital world challenges the traditional double-spaced, Times New Roman, printed paper that students have typically been required to write for classes. As a result, the WSU English Department has tried to incorporate additional elements of digital literacy into their classes this year. Ashton Corsetti argues, quite rightly, that tutors must adapt to the new demand and help students learn to use good rhetoric with the new digital formats; therefore, tutors had to quickly master using and tutoring students in three Adobe programs: Spark, InDesign, and Premiere Pro/Rush. Of course, the best way to truly teach something is to learn it yourself. As a result, part of the training for our tutors this year included the creation of a personal introduction in Adobe Spark, designing an editorial with InDesign, and presenting a digital documentary with Adobe Premiere Pro.

To reflect this new focus, this year's edition of *Verbal Equinox* consists of the magazine editorials that tutors made using Adobe InDesign. The structure of the traditional editorial is divided into three parts: First, the writer introduces the facts about the issue to the reader. Second, the writer takes a deliberate stance and presents an argument. Third, the writer explains the reasons behind their chosen stance. For this assignment, tutors were required to use MLA formatting, compelling images, a clear layout, and five separate sources (three peer reviewed secondary sources and two primary sources). Next, the tutors explained the reasons behind their design decisions in an analysis of their rhetorical decisions because, even in a digital format, the piece should be deliberately constructed to fulfill its purpose.

The tutors' resulting editorials were incredibly perceptive and captured crucial insights into how tutoring and writing has been impacted by the current issues of our time. These editorials covered a broad range of topics. A few editorials focused on the effect our digital world has had on students' lives, their writing, and their ability to learn. Others focused more on how the polarization of political views has impacted writing—for example, how writers use the internet to find sources that support their view while deliberately ignoring other views, which undermines their argument. Others focused on a wide range of concerns regarding the Writing Center and its ability to meet various students' needs. All are valuable pieces in regards to both their topics and implementation of digital design, and we hope you appreciate reading them as much as we did.

Please enjoy.

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VERBAL EQUINOX

SPRING 2019 EDITION

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Verbal Equinox is a Weber State University Writing Center publication. Articles produced for the Fall semester 2018 tutor training course have been honed and refined for this edition, and that process has included licensing or replacing supposedly fair use images so that these pieces appear in as close approximation to the original documents as possible.

Writing Center editorial staff accomplished all copy editing, layout, and publication design work with great attention to detail.

Cover photos by Llewellyn Shanjengange.

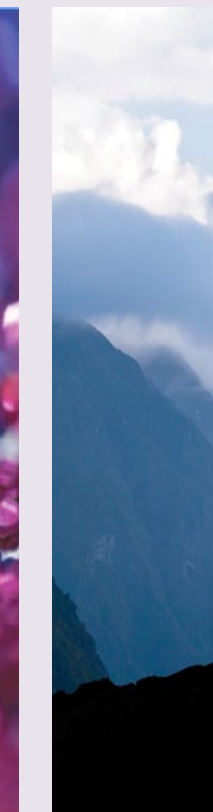
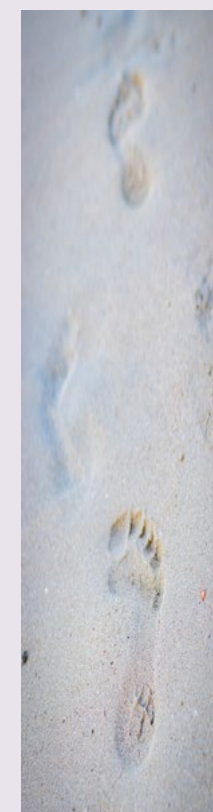
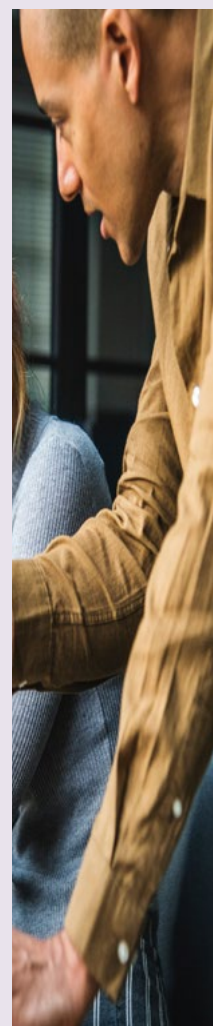
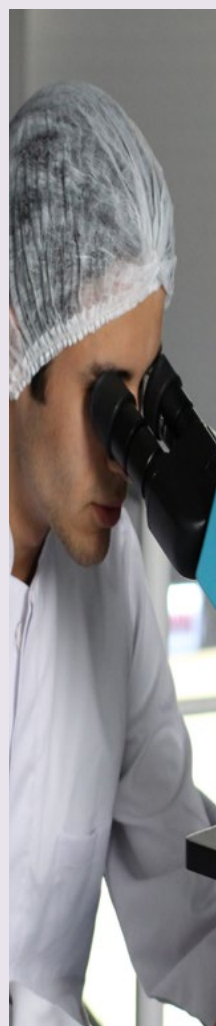
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VERBAL EQUINOX

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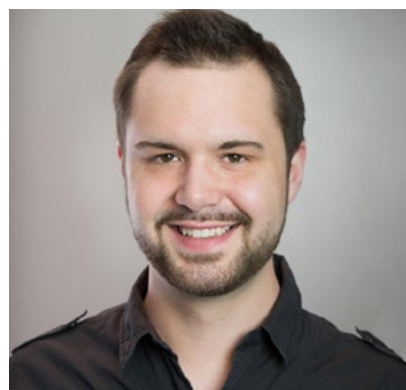
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From Grammar to Graphics: Addressing New Media Composition in Writing Centers



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Lately, the subject of new media technologies has been discussed among tutors, instructors and students of composition alike.

Joshua Daniel-Wariya, an assistant professor of rhetoric and professional writing at Oklahoma State University, opens his discussion of new media by quoting literature professor and Storyspace co-founder Jay David Bolter, who once referred to this current era as the “late age of print.” According to his analysis, print still seems like a viable resource for rhetorical composition, but it is quickly becoming obsolete as the use of new media proliferates (Daniel-Wariya 33).

Jackie Grutsch McKinney, professor of rhetoric and composition as well as the Writing Center director at Ball State University, shortens this idea to the scope of college campuses—specifically, to the realm of tutoring programs. The decades-long norm of “typed, double spaced, thesis-driven texts on 8½-by-11-inch, stapled,

white paper” is no longer relevant (McKinney 32). Instead of writing in a linear fashion—“left-to-right, top-to-bottom, page-to-page”—

students now have a multitude of choices available when it comes to packaging and distributing their ideas (McKinney 33).

Considering this range of possibility, McKinney adds a note of caution: “We ought to really think through whether a paper essay, say, is the best way to reach our audience or purpose.

If we decide to compose paper essays knowing we have the wide range of available textual choices, we are deeming the paper essay the best way to meet our rhetorical ends . . .” (33).

However, deciding whether a paper essay is the best medium for a student’s project would require some knowledge of the other media out there. Recognizing that other media exist is half the battle; what is more important is knowing how they work and what their limitations are.

This creates a problem for

college tutors who, no doubt, see the possibility in helping students bring their message to a different platform. While it is our goal to help students become effective communicators, it is worth deciding how much writing tutors—with their already-extensive knowledge of mechanics and rhetorical analysis—should know about new media technologies so that they themselves can also remain effective.

Perhaps McKinney states this point best. According to her, if the focus of new media composition is just about learning the technologies themselves, then students will find it more effective to visit software specialists rather than Writing Center tutors. Thus, to remain relevant, we have to not only know the technologies themselves but show students how they also work as rhetorical devices (McKinney 35).

That sounds great, but as McKinney mentions, what happens if we spread ourselves too thin? If we do, how well will we be able to address the concerns in which tutors are traditionally trained (McKinney 29)? After all, what actually constitutes “new media,” and how

would we decide what texts students can bring into the Writing Center?

Anne Frances Wysocki, associate professor emerita at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, makes the distinction that new media include more than just computer programs. She writes that the makeup of these texts is endless, but the producer of the text, as well as its recipient, must “understand . . . that the various materialities of a text contribute to how it . . . is read and understood” (Wysocki et al. 15).

These “materialities” are the elements that do not merely supplement the text but carry it along. They demonstrate how “any text—like its composers and readers—doesn’t function independently of how it is made and in what contexts” (Wysocki et al. 15). Digitally speaking, this can include those design features that are familiar to us, such as typeface, color, pictures, graphics, graphs and charts.

However, there are other ways we can engage—or “interact,” as Wysocki puts it—with a text that doesn’t require merely physical sensation. Clicking a hyperlink can have the psychological appeal of



“Writing has evolved with new composing technologies and media, and we must evolve, too . . . A radical shift in the way that writers communicate . . . necessitates a radical re-imagining and re-understanding of our practices, purposes, and goals” (Daniel-Wariya 49).





pushing a button. Solving a puzzle carries a sense of accomplishment or progression. Even juxtaposing a poem with an image can allow us to make simple connections between the two (Wysocki et al. 17).



Maybe, then, the issue is not what type of new media we should tutor but how it should be tutored. If we can focus on these “materialities” as just other higher-order concerns that lend to rhetorical devices, then we can successfully blend new media with composition.

McKinney backs up this idea by suggesting that writing tutors be trained in various “modes” of design (41). For example, a tutor can show how certain design elements set the stage for the upcoming message, connoting the tone of the project and representing “underlying themes” (McKinney 43). Repetition of visual elements, like typeface and color, can likewise unify the message of the student’s text (McKinney 44). Students can also create salience by making readers focus on a specific portion of whatever they’re writing (McKinney 45).

Instructors of composition can contribute much to this new era, but before they can help students compose their own projects, it is just as important to consider new instructional methods.

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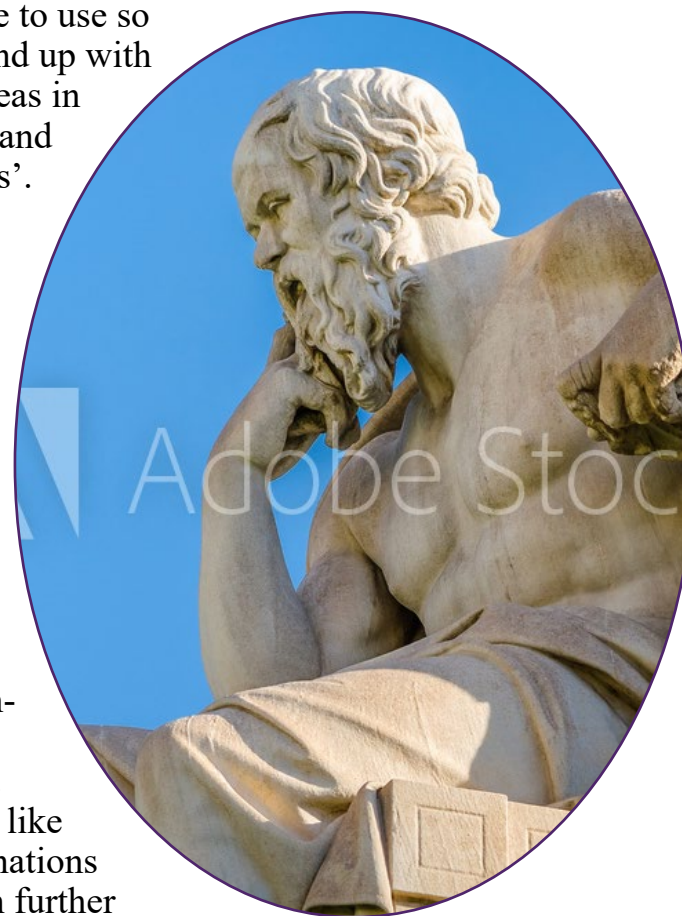


Tutoring With Socrates

Tutors have many tools to help their tutees first understand and then apply new concepts. One of these tools is the Socratic method. To begin, it is important to understand what this method really is and what it can look like within a tutoring session. In a nutshell, the Socratic method is a means of discussion wherein the teacher, in this case the tutor, asks questions to help students develop their ideas and create more analytic thought processes. Questions are typically open-ended and often do not have just one response. Socratic questioning can also be used by tutors to help gain a knowledge of what tutees do or do not know and to help tutors know what direction a session should go. James C. Overholser, in his article “Socrates in the Classroom,” describes the method as a way to “Promote an active learning environment in which students learn to evaluate information and develop a more sophisticated approach to various problems” (18).

Like all tools, this method is only effective in a tutoring session when used in the correct

circumstance. When discussing a thesis or developing a paper, Socratic questions would make a lot of sense to use so that tutees end up with their own ideas in their papers and not the tutors’. However, many students come into a writing center because they do not understand the basic elements of writing, how to connect independent clauses for example. In situations like these, explanations can go much further than questions would. In his essay, “Negotiating Pedagogical Authority: The Rhetoric of Writing Center Tutoring Styles and Methods,” Steven J. Corbett lays out a simple rule for when tutors should use the Socratic method and when



they should not. He says, “The more knowledge the student holds, the more nondirective we should be; the less knowledge the student holds, the more directive we should be” (Corbett 86). Simply put, if students need a skill base on which to grow, then tutors should avoid asking them open-ended questions and should instead focus on giving them the knowledge to create that base.

Much like using a hammer to fix a window, if the Socratic method is used in the wrong situation, it could potentially “break” a tutoring session. If a student does not understand the subject matter, the tutor asking questions can make the student feel “perplexity, humiliation, and shame” (Delić and Bećirvoić 515). This is the exact opposite of Weber State University’s, and hopefully all other writing centers’, focus “to support students in improving their writing skills” (“Writing Center”). This is not to say that no questions should be asked in a session in which gaining a base knowledge of grammar skills is the main focus. Socratic questioning is also a valuable skill in testing comprehension of a topic. According to Dr. David Hartwig, an Assistant Professor in the English Department at Weber State University who often utilizes Socratic discussions in his classroom, the Socratic method is a means to encourage analytical ideas and thought processes that allow for deeper understanding of the material being covered. Hartwig also describes it as a way to allow students to take more ownership over their ideas and knowledge rather than relying on a teacher to provide them the information. This ownership then leads to better comprehension.

This method was also scientifically proven to improve interactions between students and teachers in a study performed in 2013 by Dubravka Knežić. Not only did interactions immediately improve after teachers were instructed through a course about Socratic dialogue, but they “continued to improve for three months after the completion of the course” (491). Teachers and students together created the knowledge being taught during the discussion rather than the teacher lecturing (502). Since studies like these show promising results in the classroom, writing centers and tutors, along with traditional teachers, should add the Socratic method to their toolbox to better help students. However, it cannot be used as a one-size-fits-all approach to tutoring, nor should any other learning method. To best decide when to use this particular tool, tutors must keep in mind the level of knowledge their tutees have. The Socratic method is only truly effective in writing center tutoring when the tutees have at least some “Modicum of background information” (Overholser 18). Tutors are responsible for helping tutees to the best of their ability, and that includes knowing when to use and when not to use Socratic questioning along with the many other tools available to them.

—Caci Kynaston





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*"The first draft is just you telling yourself the story."
- Terry Pratchett*



The Writing Center as a Safe Space

Reed Brown

Some LGBT people on Weber State's campus may experience minority stress that affects their mental and physical health, but having a student body and faculty who are allies to LGBT students can ease that stress. Another factor in easing this stress is the use of Safe Zones. Many people may not be aware that the Weber State Writing Center is marked as a Safe Zone. If you go to Center Supervisor Claire Hughes's office, you will find a Safe Zone sticker on her door. This sticker is part of a nationwide program called The Safe Zone Project that is geared at providing training and resources that make people allies for the LGBT community. Safezoneproject.com states that these stickers mean someone has undergone Safe Zone training, indicating that a person is able to talk about and be supportive to LGBT individuals. A Safe Zone denotes a place where LGBT identities will be welcomed and accepted. The safe space in any writing center in the United States is an important component to helping LGBT people on campuses. Another component is the tolerance and allyship of the tutors. An ally is someone who is part of a majority that helps end oppression of a minority through supporting and advocating for the oppressed group (Poynter and Tubbs 122).

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Transgender instructor, Neil Simpkins, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center wrote an article in his writing center blog dedicated to how tutors can best help LGBT students. Simpkins says there is a lack of literature on how to meet the needs of LGBT tutees. Simpkins says that LGBT people and those writing about queer interest topics may feel anxiety. To help them feel at ease, Simpkins says it is as simple as helping them be stronger writers and validating their choice of topic, honoring their identity expression, and accommodating the tutoring style to their anxieties. Simpkins suggests watching out for microaggressions, which can be as simple as not using correct pronouns with a trans person or using slang terms that are not LGBT friendly.

A post written for the University of Texas at Austin's Writing Center blog *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, by Galen David Bunting, discusses the university's Safe Zone tutors. Bunting was working on his M.A. in English Literature at Oklahoma State University and lead the "LGBT+ Writers and Tutors within the Writing Center" research project at the time of the blog post. Attending Oklahoma State, he discovered tutors who had done the Safe Zone training. The writing center there allowed for transgender people to use the names they identify with, not their legal names, and had a Safe Zone sticker. He said having Safe Zone trained tutors and these welcoming actions send a message to LGBT students saying they are welcome and add voice to the LGBT students who feel unheard.



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These tactics help ease stress and create healthy channels for LGBT individuals. This stress is known as minority stress. Minority stress happens when people are stigmatized and exposed to prejudice and discrimination (Meyer 675). In the paper “Coping with Sexual Orientation-Related Minority Stress” from *The Journal of Homosexuality*, Russell Toomey claims that minority stress is a factor in LGBT individuals being at higher risk for depression and for drug and alcohol use (484). In this paper, Toomey did a study in 2017 of 245 gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults ages 21-25 and explored their responses to coping with this minority stress as adolescents ages 13 to 19 (484). Some of the coping strategies that Toomey explored were



problem-solving, information-seeking, escape, self-reliance, and support-seeking. The authors found in their research that having community support was a better coping mechanism than ones that were on an individual level (487). When interviewing LGBT individuals, it was found that the top three ways they responded to stress that helped them were getting involved in LGBT groups or organizations, looking for services for LGBT youth, and looking for information on LGBT issues (Toomey 490). These studies and concepts illustrate how Safe Zones, allies, and LGBT resources can help support LGBT individuals.

Universities have been more accommodating by having gay-straight alliances and LGBT resource centers. Safe Zone training is



another addition in normalization and acceptance. The training is different and varied and is unique to every school. There is no one way for a university to do it (Young and McKibbin 362). LGBT students at Weber State are lucky to have a writing center as a Safe Zone and several campus resources to turn to. Tutors of the writing center can enhance their interactions by becoming allies.

If a writing center tutor wishes to be Safe Zone tutor, they can take advantage of Weber's LGBT Resource Center's Safe Zone training by visiting <https://www.weber.edu/lgbtresource-center/SafeZone.html>, or they can visit <https://thesafezoneproject.com/>. With tutors who are allies, the LGBT community of Weber State can be confident they are in a safe space and can foster their writing ability without added stress.



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"You can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page."

- Jodi Picoult

Are Writing Centers Benefiting Each and Every Student?

Writing Centers must ensure they are broadcasting a message that conveys helping all students is their priority.

Written by Porter Lunceford



Who are the students visiting writing centers most often? Lori Salem, Temple University's Writing Center Director and Assistant Vice Provost, tracked an incoming group of students for four years to find the answer. To summarize her results, underprivileged students were far more likely to utilize writing center services than their privileged peers (Salem 159-160).

Underprivileged, for our purposes, draws meaning from a few factors. We will start by looking at SAT scores. Students with lower SAT scores are more likely to use writing center services. In this context, SAT scores are being interpreted as a reflection of academic preparation and socioeconomic status culminating in a term researchers call "inherited merit." The chances of one of these low scoring students visiting a writing center

"They sit in scholastic quarantine until their disease can be diagnosed and remedied,"

-Mike Rose

increases when the student possesses further underprivileged identities. To quote Salem, "the identity that is less socially privileged is associated with higher rates of writing center use. Thus, non-native speakers of English, women, and non-white students are all more likely to use the writing center than native-speakers-" (Salem 158). Salem addresses that lower privileged identities often have fewer resources and opportunities than their privileged peers and are thus often less prepared for academia in a college setting and have a higher possibility of needing extra assistance or being labeled as underperforming.

What are the implications of this data in regard to writing centers? Historically, writing centers have fought to shed the label of "remedial" and recently have even begun to shift away from the use of the label "developmental." Writing centers themselves have feared being marginalized as student support services. The push to be seen as a valid service has led to campaigns to not necessarily be seen as centers to help underperforming or struggling writers but as places to support already functional and "good" writers. Statements and slogans like "Good writers use the writing center!" are often seen in this regard.

Mike Rose discusses, "the function of labeling certain material remedial in higher education is to keep in place the hard fought for, if historically and conceptually problematic and highly fluid, distinction between college and secondary work. Remedial gains its meaning, then, in a political more than a pedagogical universe." We now see the word remedial as meaning substandard or inadequate. We associate the word with disease and defectivity (Rose 556-557). In reference to students who would have once been considered remedial, Rose says it best: "They sit in scholastic



Our own Weber State Writing Center does not track the data needed to pull off a study such as Salem's, and to complete the study as efficiently as Temple University would require tracking an incoming year of students for four years. This may be outside of our current scope of abilities.





quarantine until their disease can be diagnosed and remedied” (Rose 559). The effort to avoid saying remedial is a fine sentiment to pursue, but it has come with the ability to tear down systems that could help students who would have been previously labeled as remedial. The desire to seem prestigious with formalities and a focus on already successful writers could be alienating other students who still require assistance.

While writing centers are not necessarily failing an entire branch of students at this time, how are centers using their privilege to ensure all students receive the help and guidance they need? If writing centers cling to messages of only helping students who have already established writing skills, this could drive away students with lower skills, who may see writing center spaces as places that are not for them. As bell hooks tells us, “An engaged pedagogy assumes all students have something valuable to contribute to the process, but it does not assume every voice should be heard for the same amount of time.” The need and ability to learn presents

itself differently for each student based on levels of privilege (hooks 21). Writing centers will have to acknowledge that a focus on helping already “good” writers can, effectively, deter students with lower writing abilities who want to improve.

As writing centers become a more integral and mainstream part of institutions, the tooth-and-nail fight to uphold an image of a valid student services has started to calm down. With this foothold, writing centers are in a position to bravely use their privilege to step out of the shadows and no longer fear being tagged with an outdated phrase such as remedial. It should become the mission of each writing center to use their established presence to ensure a broadcasted message of working with all students, no matter their level of need or skill.

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*All photos can be found in the Weber State Branding Guide at www.weber.edu/brand/photo.html

The Need to Aid Students with Disabilities in the Writing Center

As of 2012, about 22% percent of college students had a disability (NCES). While the disabilities can vary, the difficulty of participating in school does not. From being blind, deaf, or having an anxiety disorder or dyslexia, students with a disability have to adapt to keep up with other students. It should not have to be this way though. Instead of students accommodating for schools, institutions should adapt for students. Having a disability does not make learning any harder, the students just take a different path than others have.

Writing centers need to learn how to assist students with disabilities while they are training. During the time tutors are learning to tutor, there are classes in grammar and workshops on how to handle students who need help with writing, but the training never mentions how tutors can specifically support those with disabilities. Taking some time to get a few tutors trained to help with anxiety, dyslexia, and sight or hearing loss might help these students feel more comfortable coming to the Writing Center, as well as be more confident in their own school courses.

In recent years, American society, along with those of other countries, has made huge efforts to create better learning environments to adapt to students with disabilities. Baylee Price, an employee at Weber State University's Student Services department, said that "[They] often send [their] students [to the Writing Center] if they need help. . . . I think it helps a lot. . . . We've always had good outcomes with them." Often though, these efforts are not enough. There are still many "misconceptions" about how Writing Centers can help students with disabilities (Mullin and Wallace 84). Often, students do not want to admit that they have a disability, especially to a tutor, or they might feel like getting accommodations is too inconvenient. For students who are blind or deaf, there may be a need for interpreting or transcribing, which, for Weber State, can cost around \$65,000 (Weber State). While Weber State is taking the measures to make sure most students get such help, this is probably not the case everywhere. Universities need to become more aware of the students who need assistance and how to get them that help.

Writing Centers are often a safe place for every student. They are a no-judgment zone where any student can get free help. This free help should encompass every students' unique situations. In the article "Learning Disabilities and the Writing Center," Julie Neff states, "By changing the picture of the writing conference, the writing center director can ensure that learning-disabled students, no matter what the disability, were being appropriately accommodated."

With a rise in students with disorders like anxiety, 25% of teens are in need of services to help these students get started with planning their

college experience and dealing with their classwork, there are not always sources for them to get the proper help with their assignments. In Neff's article, she gives several explanations for how Writing Centers can help students with learning disabilities. If a few tutors were to have this training, it would help these students with disabilities.

The New York Times ran an article about tutors who are trained in both educational and psychological services. "Homework Therapists,' as they are now sometimes called, administer academic help and support as needed. Via Skype, email and text, and during pricey one-on-one sessions, they soothe cranky students, hoping to steer them back to the path of achievement" (Spencer). The article talks about how these services are expensive and most students cannot afford them. If universities were to apply this service for free on campuses through writing centers, it would help these students stay in school and succeed.

With the world changing to accommodate students with disabilities, there needs to be a focus with Writing Centers and how they can help students. There should be an emphasis in finding tutors who can help with students who are deaf, blind, or dyslexic, as well as some disabilities that are less obvious and create a need for greater support.

Though this endeavor could be more expensive for colleges and universities, it will be worth the cost if students could be more comfortable and able to succeed. A writing center's goal should be to help students from every walk of life and help the whole student body to fulfill their goals.

—Raquelle Turner

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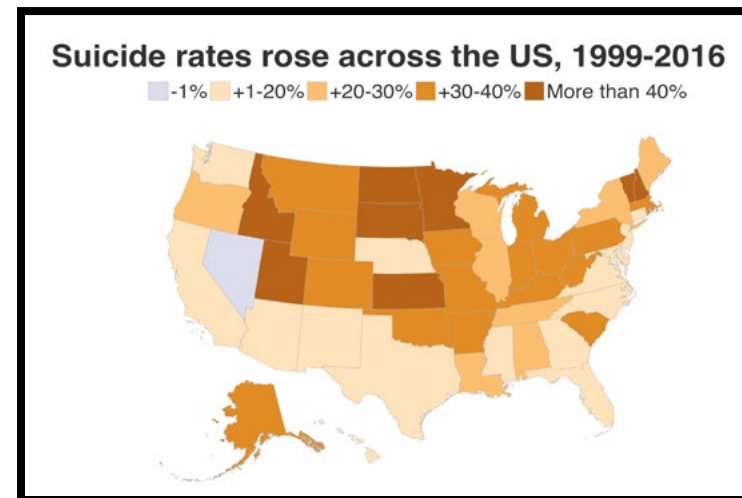


The Loneliness Epidemic

The world is full of epidemics. From starving children to obese ones, drugs, war, or even sex trafficking, the world seems to be falling apart around us. Utah has its own epidemics, including child porn, opioids, and methamphetamines. I will be discussing a problem that causes more death than any of the other problems previously mentioned: suicide. This is a problem that has plagued many people and their communities. College students across the nation are killing themselves, and less than half of them have a known mental illness (Nutt). To aid those in crisis, or even catch them before it becomes a crisis, not only do peers need to step up, but colleges and universities need to take a stand and stop the increase of suicide rates.

Among college-aged people (15-35), suicide is the second leading cause of death, with Utah holding the place as having the fifth highest suicide rate in the United States (Nutt). This is clearly a problem, and it will continue to be since suicide rates have only been increasing. There are many theories as to why the rates are increasing so steadily across the nation, but few actually help us understand how to decrease

them. While the causes are important to understand, the resolution is critical. Success will be seen when the suicide rates begin dropping.



To lower suicide rates, one of the solutions most often given is that the afflicted just need to get help. In the article “Depression, Desperation, and Suicidal Ideation in College Students,” researchers concluded that roughly 85% of students with suicidal ideations do not seek help (Garlow et al). This is likely because of how expensive it is to get help from an expert such as a therapist or psychologist. Students often have to pay copious amounts of money to the school they are attending, leaving them with the crumbs of what they have earned.

Thankfully, Weber State University is taking a step toward helping the students who are struggling. Weber State University offers many free services to help depressed or suicidal students, including free therapy. There is also a page on their website for students to find resources other than counseling, such as crisis hotlines, websites, and groups for the LGBT community. This is a step in the right direction because it allows broke college students to access help. With hundreds of people killing themselves every year, this small step can have a huge impact.

If there is still disbelief in suicide being an epidemic, then maybe a personal story would be more convincing. During my three years of high school, there were five suicides and over fifty attempts, two of which were done in the school bathrooms during class periods. I know of at least a dozen people who have tried to take their lives, and unfortunately, a few have succeeded. This is all in my community, but it is not as personal as it gets. My sister has tried to kill herself and thankfully failed each time.

Unfortunately, suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety happen to be genetic in my



family. Everyone in my household has some form of mental illness, including myself. Contrary to popular belief, this is not just a problem for teenagers that they grow out of when they grow up. My sister has been suicidal since she was fourteen, and a decade later, she is still “fighting [her] own brain” (J. Lowder). She has been to therapy, tried exercising, and even tried medications, but none of it works for her, so she handles it on her own by meditating and having a support system. Of course, my family is supportive of one another, but with all of us fighting internal demons, it can be difficult to take care of each other and ourselves at the same time.

I have grown up with suicide present in my life since I was nine years old. It is an epidemic because children should not have to be trained on how to handle a suicidal friend in eighth grade. It is an epidemic because thousands of people have lost friends and family. It is an epidemic because people should not have to call an ambulance for someone they care about because of suicide. It is an epidemic, and it can be fixed; people just need to step up and fight against it. Fighting one’s own brain is harder when one is alone, so it is time to come together and help save some lives.

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"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." - Maya Angelou

ENVIRONMENTALISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ARE UNIVERSITIES DOING ENOUGH?

An exploration of the different approaches to take and what gets overlooked

By Mekenzie Williams

17 September 2018



Commercial entities account for almost 20% of Utah's energy consumption (Utah Office of Energy and Development 18). A large portion of that use is a direct result of the 25 universities and colleges across the state. It makes sense that, as such, higher education has become a champion of modern day sustainability practices; carbon pledges and building renovations that improve energy efficiency on campus are commonplace. Despite their efforts at "going green," however, other areas in which they have real potential to make a difference are

neglected or overlooked. Universities take admirable measures to reduce their waste production, and, similarly, their energy consumption and dependency on traditional fossil fuels are at all-time lows. This can include everything from building renovations on campus to recycling programs to awareness campaigns advocating on behalf of environmental interests (ES3 Consultants Inc. 9).

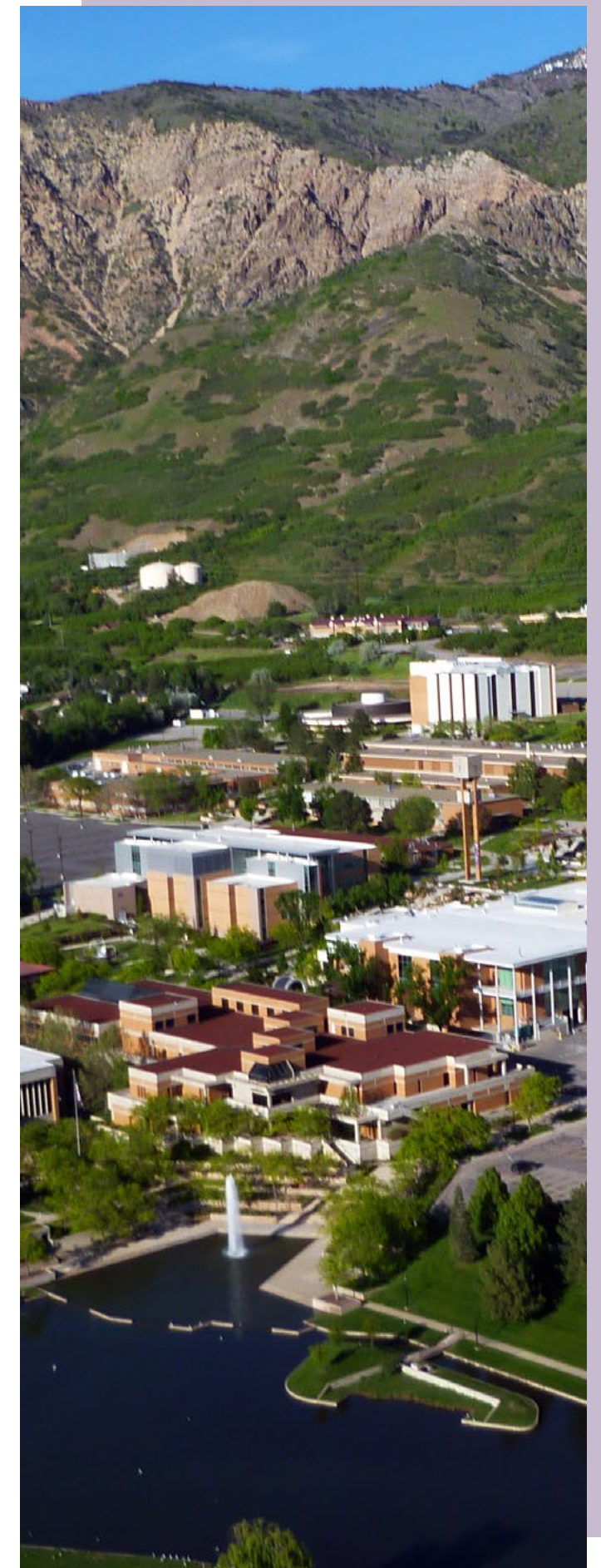
Water bottle refill stations (WRSs) are one example of higher education's success in these areas. WRSs reduce landfill by provid-

ing a simple way to refill water bottles on campus. The stations allow students and faculty to fill disposable bottles multiple times before throwing them away and encourage the use of reusable bottles so that less plastic waste exists in the first place (Takuro 3). Logically, it follows that if students are going through fewer bottles on campus, they are doing it off campus, too. In one small but powerful way, universities are influencing how their students think about their environmental footprints and what they do about it.

In many ways, however, the benefits of what a university does to limit its environmental impact does not reach beyond just that: its own impact. Universities provide a sort of bridge between early adulthood and the beginnings of students' professional lives that makes it a great time to develop habits that carry over into careers and homes. If a difference is really going to be made, higher education needs to take full advantage of that. It needs to do more than draw attention to an issue and provide practical solutions instead. It needs to broaden the scope of its efforts and take steps to integrate education and sustainable habits into its courses and campus life.

Weber State University is a perfect example of the institution being described here. In its 2015 Energy and Sustainability Investment Plan (ESIP), the university outlines its plans for conserving energy and water, improving infrastructure, and improving what its facilities management can do to work towards that (ES3 Consultants Inc. 26). Inside is a detailed summary of renovations, new construction plans, energy and water conservation projects, and other "changes to the built environment of the campus" (ES3 Consultants Inc. 28). Clearly, the institution is very aware of what can be done on the macro level. It is what sets Weber apart as the stunning example it is. The same reports do not exist to address student education or behavior.

It could be argued that the Sustainability Practices and Research Center, or SPARC, is a step in the right direction. The center's goal is to "inform and educate" WSU's campus and local community "to ensure the sustainability of our region" (Sustainability Practices and Research Center). The center is a perfect example of what most universities lack. If it was having a deeper impact on students' experience in their classes and on campus, then this article would only have to point to the university as the gold standard. As it stands, Weber shows that the university is not afraid to make the right steps in some directions and power forward in others. Other universities should not be afraid to do the same.





So, the question is, could higher education make a real difference in what its graduates do later by changing their habits now?

Renewable energy only accounts for 13% of the US's energy consumption as of 2014, almost double what it was in 1990 (Joyce). "Look at cars," said environmental chemist Nathan Williams in an interview. "Most of the first cars were electric. They started to come back again in the '60s and '70s when there was some interest, and now we're seeing them again because they're what people are asking for. One of the biggest factors in how quickly we start to see renewable energy take over is how visible the demand is." How better to start generating interest in renewable energy and waste reduction methods than for universities to do everything they can to encourage it in their students?

Our effect on the world we live in is undeniable. Taking everyday steps to cut down our carbon footprints is something easy to learn when the right habits have been developed—when better to learn that than during college? Higher education usually stands on the forefront when it comes to environmental issues. Producing not just alumni with emphases in sustainability but giving that knowledge to graduates across the board encourages high numbers of graduates to continue on the path going forward. Awareness and collecting pledges go a long way; action and responsibility go further.

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*Ecology of the Writing Center
and Student Athletes*

Striving for Greatness On and Off the Field

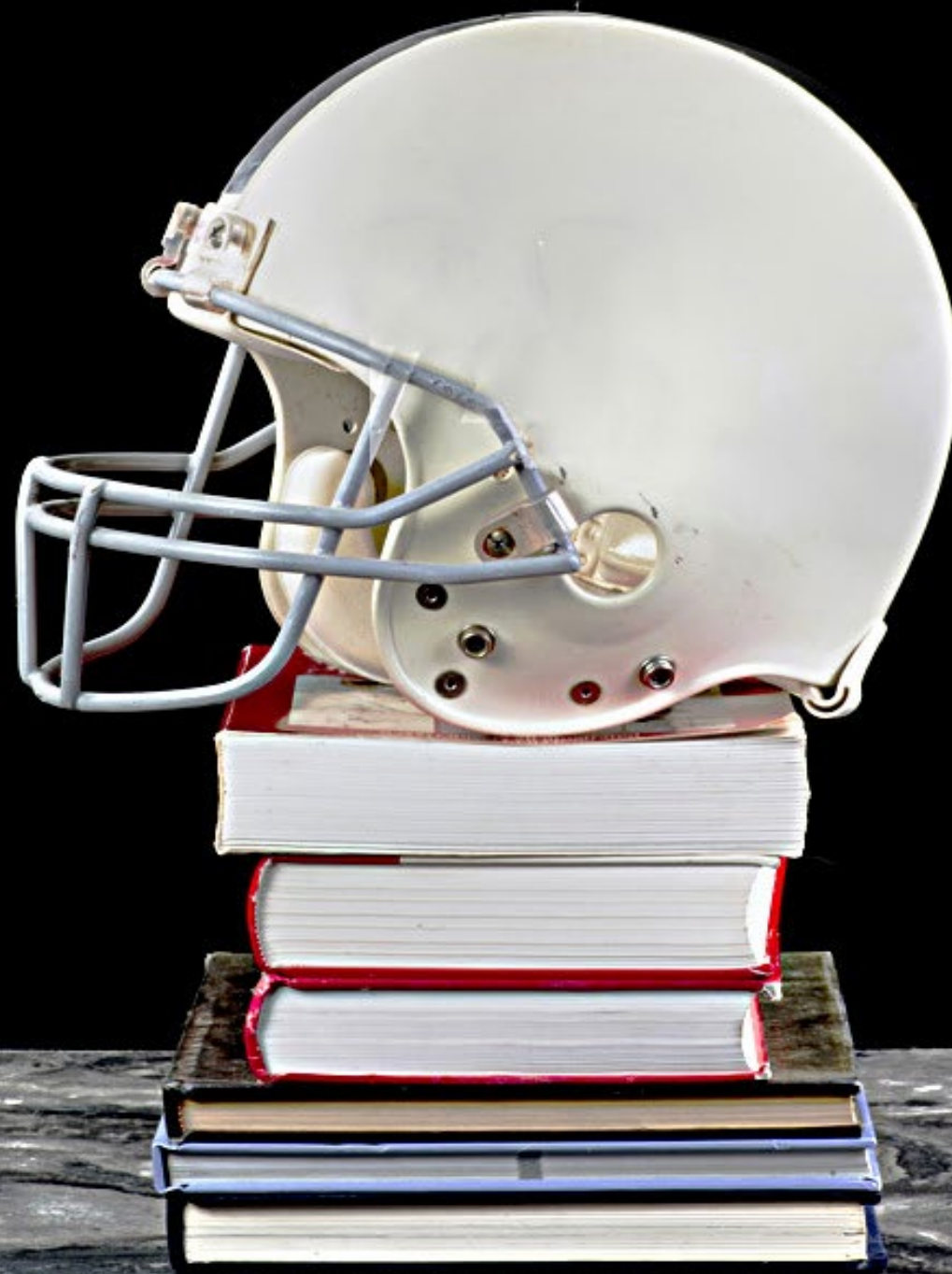
By: Katelyn Shaw
September 21, 2018

Over the past several years, serious concerns have been raised about the graduation rates and academic performance of student athletes. Many players were able to fill their schedules with elective courses and switch their majors multiple times without affecting their playing time. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) decided that the issue needed to be addressed, which led to stricter academic rules for athletes to maintain eligibility.

The new rules require athletes to earn at least six credit hours each term, keep a minimum 2.0 GPA, and reach a certain percentage of credit hours toward their degrees every semester (NCAA). The NCAA's new motto became, "Go pro in something other than sports." With the large push toward better academic performance, many universities built stand-alone academic centers. Most of

these centers are exclusively for student athletes. These special departments work with student athletes so they maintain their academic standing with the NCAA. When teams do not reach the academic standard, they lose scholarships, which can be detrimental to institutions and athletes. To remain in good scholarship standing, some universities have even included Writing Centers specifically for individual teams.

Critics of tutoring believe it is ineffective, inefficient, and even harmful to students. They may believe this because tutors can be too passionate when working with students. Tutoring is viewed as a cop out because it is believed that tutors do all of the work. In 2002, only 74 percent of Division I college athletes graduated, but in 2017, that number grew to 87 percent (NCAA). The difference is the big push for academics and tutoring centers for college athletes.



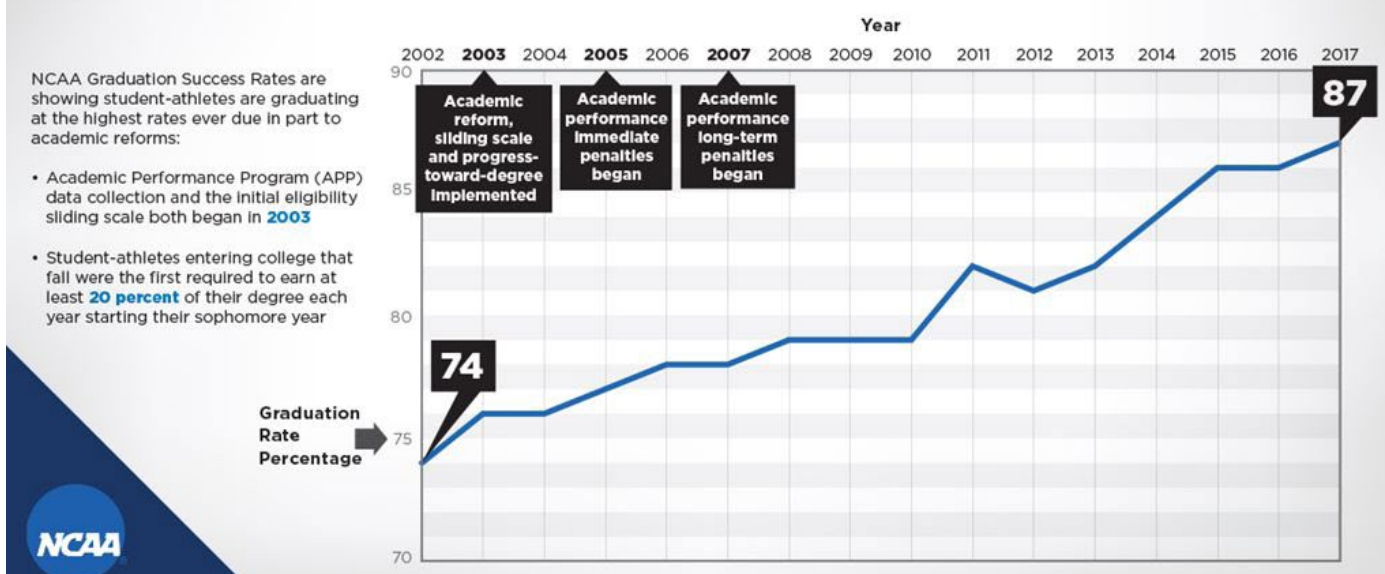
Many cases have shown that large numbers of student athletes were ill prepared for the extensive college level writing required for their classes. "Most Division I universities offer admission exceptions to get athletes into school, even if the athlete is under prepared and not ready for the academic reality of college work" (Ridpath 258). Because of the competitive environment surrounding college athletics, coaches rarely look at players' academic abilities and only focus on their athletic abilities. In 2014, Sara Gamin found that for many athletes competing in high revenue sports, such as football and basketball, writing and reading skills were only at an eighth grade level (CNN).

"Rather than separating sports and school, we should challenge ourselves to find ways in which they overlap and connect."

Robin Redmon Wright reported that some student athletes graduated high school without learning the basics of writing because they rarely attended their English classes. This limited academic background of student athletes can create a mindset of us versus them, meaning that athletes separate themselves completely from education and feel as if they have no place. This is a perspective that needs to be tackled, and it can start with tutoring. Marisa Sandoval Lamb suggests, "Rather than separating sports and school, we should challenge ourselves to find ways in which they overlap and connect" (66).

CROSSING THE FINISH LINE

GRADUATION RATES ON THE RISE



College athletes are spread thin. They have busy schedules that include practices, training sessions, classes, academic work, travel, and games. Balancing everything in their schedules can be a very difficult task. “The key, as in any Writing Center, is to meet each student where they are and tailor our approach to their distinct personality and needs” (Bitzel 3). Tutors must understand and acknowledge the fact that student athletes differ from other students. Wright found that only a few athletes would ask for help, and when they did, they wanted a short, quick answer. For example, they wanted to know where commas belonged but avoided speaking about thesis statements, structure, or supporting sentences. Athletes are taught to be invulnerable on the field, which can translate to academics and personal life. When tutors read their papers, players

may feel uncomfortable because it is a place of vulnerability they are not used to. Although there are many stereotypes surrounding student athletes, they do not plainly apply. Not all athletes are uninterested or refuse to work hard in academics. Student athletes may be resistant to the Writing Center at first, but when they develop a relationship of trust with the tutor, they are able to flourish.

Wright recounts many circumstances in which athletes would transition from failing English, to barely passing composition, to receiving an A on their final papers. He accredits this to the connection between student athletes and the Writing Center staff, a connection that also changed the outlook many of the athletes had about writing. The goal of Writing Centers is to produce better writers not papers. Writing is integral in

not only academic settings but also professional settings outside of school. Very few student athletes will make it to the professional level, so it is extremely important that the Writing Center helps student athletes develop the necessary writing skills for life beyond sports.

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HOW TO GET OUT OF THAT BOOK REPORT

- Miranda Spaulding

How to Get
Out of that
Book Report

- MIRANDA SPAULDING 11/21/2018

As I sat down to tutor another paper as part of my work at Weber State University Writing Center, I was excited to look at an assignment the tutee described as a “film analysis.” As a film major, I was ecstatic to hear the students’ detailed account of their feelings, thoughts, and unique opinions regarding a medium I am increasingly familiar with. Much to my dismay, however, I got a summarized play-by-play of what happened in the documentary *Happy* that could have come straight from *IMDB*.

Through my work at the Writing Center, I have noticed students’ tendency to summarize films point-by-point rather than providing an analysis. When analyzing literature, a common mistake students make is to summarize what happened in the story when really what the professor is seeking is the student’s individualized perceptions, objections, or interpretations.

Liz Wharton, another tutor at the Writing Center, responded to a tutee’s film analysis paper “I actually had a student who came in and was supposed to respond to a film she watched. She outright told me she didn’t even watch the film; she just listened to it, and she totally missed the point of the film.” This misconception is becoming applied more frequently to film analyses than to their print counterparts.

This tendency could be because students are not adequately trained to think critically about films in the same way they think about books. Graeme Turner explains, in the introduction to her book *Film as Social Practice*, that students lack substantial evaluation of

film. “Film studies have largely been dominated by one perspective—aesthetic analysis. This book breaks with this tradition in order to study film as entertainment, as narrative, as cultural event” (Turner 2). It is because students analyze films based on how well they replicate art, rather than the actual story, that they simply summarize the film.

Another reason for this dismissal of film in academia could be that the professors’ main concern is simply that they watched the film, not that they formed their own opinions on it. In research conducted by Bronwyn T. Williams, he explains the ambivalence toward popular culture in the classroom, “For many (professors) in the field (of academia), popular culture remains a silly or even dangerous influence that is either ignored when it comes to thinking about pedagogy, or even critiqued as antithetical to the goals of a college writing course” (Williams 112). In this scenario, the professors are only asking for a summary of a film because they believe summary is the only thing that films can contribute to their classes.

Regardless of which of these issues are causing the students’ misunderstanding, the fact remains that films should be treated with the same importance and understanding that a book is for literary analysis. This refusal to recognize films and other popular culture as valid literary texts can create a dangerous learning environment where culture becomes a thing only to be found in the 30-year-old books we teach.

We analyze books to understand more about a culture. In an age in which printed forms of entertain-

MOONLIGHT

Promotional Art from the 2016 film *Moonlight*.

ment are less common than ever, film serves as one of the most relevant and recent expressions of our culture as it is now.

Legitimizing films as academic texts to be evaluated provides us with the insight into culture that is currently coming into being, rather than texts that are based on a culture from years ago. As good as the book is, reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* for the 500th time is not as relevant for understanding bigotry in 2018 as watching the Oscar nominated film *Moonlight*, and, frankly, it will not mean as much to the student writing about it.

Students want to watch films; as Sharyn Peirce affirms, “The evidence clearly shows that young people can be ‘reached’ via popular culture” (Peirce 175). Films are a very popular form of media, meaning stu-

“THIS REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE FILMS AS VALID LITERARY TEXTS CAN CREATE A DANGEROUS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WHERE CULTURE BECOMES A THING ONLY TO BE FOUND IN THE 30-YEAR-OLD BOOKS WE TEACH.”

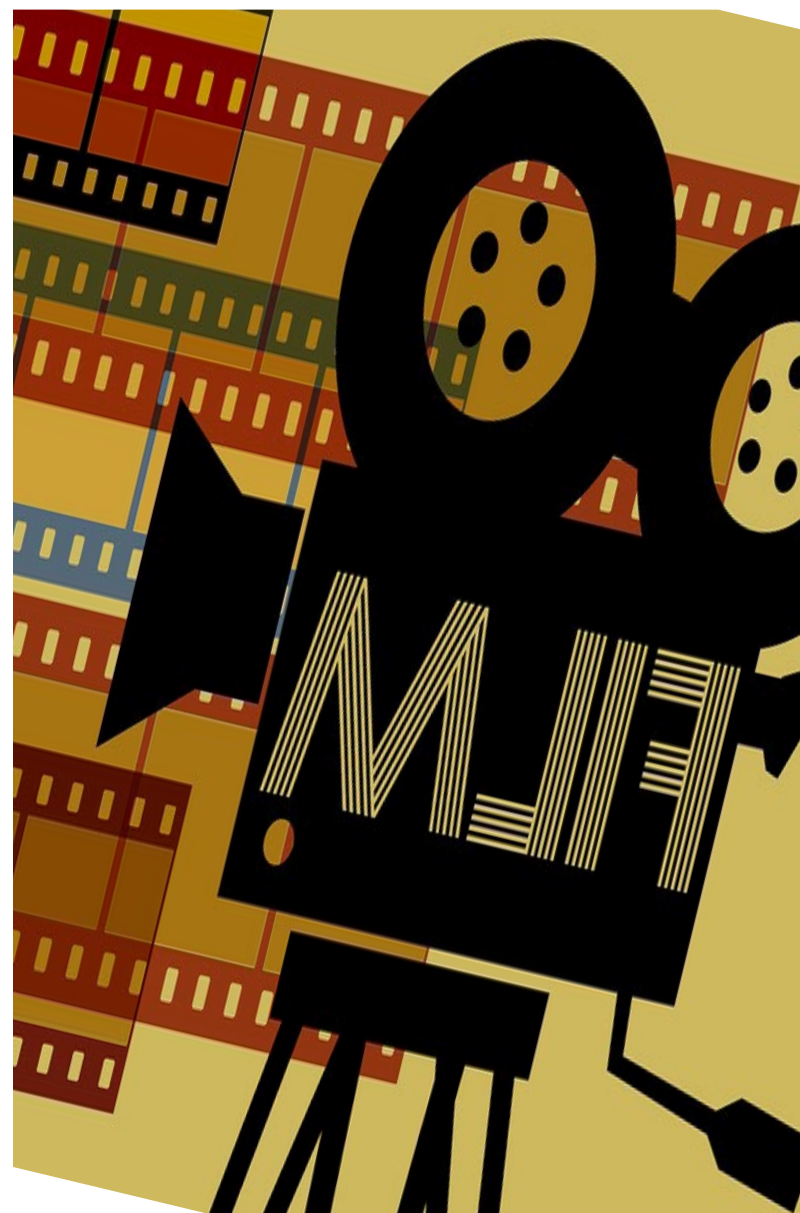
dents will oftentimes be much more excited to write a paper about their favorite movie than they would their favorite book.

This is especially true for my experience tutoring beginning level English courses. Students in English 0955 are nervous about their papers, especially an assignment titled “textual analysis.” By professors giving the option to do an analysis on a film instead of a book, students can relate the assignment to something they do for fun. Paul Willis describes the importance of this excitement as a writer for producing better writing and creating less fear around the assignment (Willis, 147).

Using film as a literary source does not mean it needs to be the only type of source we evaluate. I am

not advocating for a ban on books. Students should definitely do that book report, and they should read the book instead of just looking it up on *Sparknotes*. But why should professors limit student education to things only to be found on paper?

We should be able to study relevant content that will lead us to new academic discussions and maybe even a new way of learning. Many movies, although fun to watch, are not simply forms of entertainment to be distracted with but high-end forms of art that represent intriguing elements of culture today. Invaluable education of that kind should not be denied because of the medium in which that culture is presented.



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No One Wins

The American's Fight against Americans

Disagreements between parties in our political system are becoming increasingly intense and divisive. The reason? We live in a time when the impact of logic in an argument is diminishing. In our country, this change is occurring at an ever-greater speed. "The increasing importance of emotional language and the focus on trust in the discussion . . . reflects the attempt to substitute for the shortcomings of logos with ethos and pathos" (Gottweis 1). Because we lack trust in the facts, we often must resort to the manipulation of emotion to get our point across. When a nation has citizens whose beliefs are founded on emotional manipulation, those citizens only know how to think with their hearts, not their heads. They become defensive and convinced that the stances they hold are morally right, and that, by extension, those who do not hold the same beliefs are morally wrong. In America, this has created a polarizing effect.

In an interview conducted by Prager University, a woman living in New York was asked if she has any Republican friends. In reply, she stated "No, I wouldn't be friends with a republican. I don't like that kind of extremism" (Do You Have 00:36). This is an example of the detachment she experiences from other points of view. She feels that her views

are the norm and anything else is extreme.

Republicans are by no means the only recipients of this unfounded prejudice. Many Democrats also feel that their beliefs are questioned and attacked on a consistent basis. This creates a sense of fierce loyalty to one's own party. As a result, a huge portion of the populace now holds the conviction that the country is teeming with those whose morals are questionable at best, based on nothing but illogical drivel. As time goes on, "It becomes easier and easier to ratchet up the rhetoric and dehumanize the other side" (Beck 933).

This political culture of hate leads to a country divided in two—each side incapable of entertaining the idea that it may be wrong.

Confirmation bias, the process by which "people seek out and interpret information that is consistent with their expectations," may play an important role in this argument between the parties (Hernandez and Preston 1). We seek out information that confirms what we believe and ignore that with which we disagree, and it causes the chasm between differing ideas to grow ever wider.

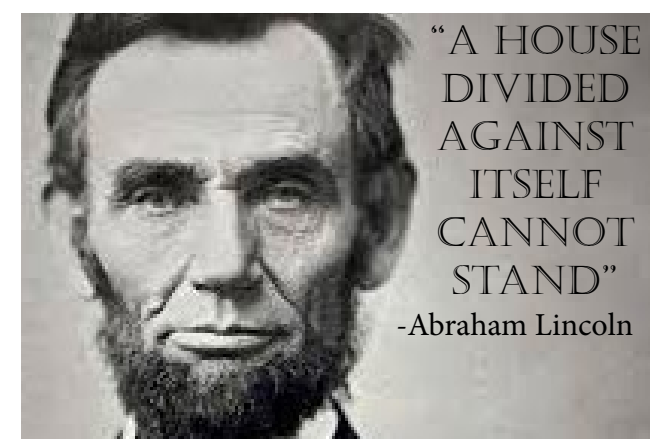
One example of this dissonance within the country is found in the writing center. When writing a literature review, the author should try to accurately represent what the conversation looks



like in any given topic. This means that an author must represent both sides of an issue without bias. In my experiences as a writing tutor, I have seen students who want to write only one side of a literature review. Many students cannot allow themselves to express a differing opinion, even as a learning tool. They find that the exercise challenges their ideals, convictions, and even belief systems. I have had to stress the importance of including both sides of the conversation, making sure that the student's review was full and complete.

Universities are rightfully striving to increase all forms of diversity. Differences in sexual orientation, physical ability, socioeconomic class, gender, and many other factors are being celebrated within universities. This step toward inclusion is absolutely necessary to cultivate a progressive and open environment for students, but there is one form of diversity that is considerably less accepted: diversity of opinion.

This has to stop.



As Americans, we cannot allow ourselves to continue rejecting diversity of thought, the very thing we need the most, especially in a university. When beliefs are challenged, it creates a unique opportunity for growth. For example, if my ideals were challenged, and I were able to successfully defend them, it would show that my belief was founded in logic. If I were unable to defend those opinions, it would provide a humbling experience for me. In other words, intersecting ideas breed development of the mind.



There are many ways that we, as a country, could overcome our shared obstacle to unity. Unfortunately, most of those solutions run contrary to what is easy. For example, we could take the risk that we might be wrong, try to understand the opposing side, or argue with logic instead of emotion. All of these methods require maturity, insisting that we see others as human beings with different perspectives instead of insensitive argument-machines programmed to oppose the truth. While one individual perhaps cannot fix the disjuncture within the entire nation overnight, we can and must do what is necessary to increase understanding and open-mindedness within our own circles of interaction. This will lead to more understanding between people and a greater number of productive discussions between mutual members of our society.

—Emily Rich



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Your Lab Report Sucks

Written by Seth Siebersma

How Writing Centers and Science Students Can Work Together To Improve Professional Writing in the Fields of Physics, Chemistry, Engineering and More

Writing centers in academic institutions are typically believed by students and faculty alike to only be applicable to such course work as freshman English, creative writing, lower-division history and philosophy courses, &c. In the minds of chemistry, biology, and engineering faculty members, writing centers might as well not exist at all. This is a travesty. Excellence in writing is a skill that encompasses every single discipline. From journalism to medicine, from aerospace engineering to screenwriting and everything in-between, professionals are expected to produce works of writing in one form or another in an intelligible and relevant manner.

In January of this year, Robert Weissbach of Indiana University and Ruth Pflueger of Penn State Eerie collab-

orated on a project designed to improve the quality of student lab reports in the engineering program by making use of the existing staff in the Writing Center. Weissbach, an engineering professor, identified two major contributing factors to the poor quality of student lab reports. First, engineering faculty, especially those teaching upper division courses, do not have time to instruct students in proper writing technique (Pflueger and Weissbach). The in-class time that they have with students must be devoted to the subject material since it is both complex and dense, and the lab time they have must be dedicated to the lab procedure since the projects are time consuming, and the amount of time that students have in lab is limited.

Second, engineering students have little desire to seek out assistance for their writing. When interviewed regarding this, the authors report that tutors attempting to work with the engineering students were met with comments like “I just want to get out of here, quick” (Pflueger and Weissbach). This kind of approach hinders successful collaboration. Assuring students that tutors have the essential training to support them can make a difference and can also inspire faculty confidence.

For their joint research, Weissbach and Pflueger devised a system that drew on the existing staff of the Writing Center and required no additional funding from the institution. They first designed a training module for tutors that briefly explained the mechanics of engineering lab reports. This training was incorporated into tutor staff meetings at the beginning of the semester. Second, they created a checklist and rubric for tutors to fill out that would be turned in to the lab instructor with the report. This rubric included general guidelines such as “Report should be written in the third person,” and more specific ones such as “Watch for run-on sentences.”

The results of this experiment were reported as being overwhelmingly positive. Tutors, students, and faculty were all asked to fill out



“It’s not a question of how they can help us, its a question of whether they can help us at all.” Danielle Haverkamp

surveys at the end of the test semester. Students reported gratitude for having the opportunity to improve their skills in a tangible way; faculty reported a significant quality increase in lab reports, and tutors reported a deeper understanding of a field that they were not necessarily a part of (Pflueger and Weissbach).

Kate Kiefer of Colorado State University and Aaron Leff of Front Range Community College also investigated this same type of interaction between composition and the sciences. Rather than relying on tutoring to assist students in developing their writing skills, however, they proposed that the university offer an upper-division writing course geared towards science majors. Their study yielded much the same results as far as student reception and faculty appreciation (Kiefer and Leff). Students in the sciences need to be proficient and professional in their writing if they wish to succeed in their careers.

It may be difficult for science majors to take writing centers seriously. After all, the “soft sciences” do not bring much to the

table as far as technological or medical advancements. One of the hazards of studying the sciences is a certain type of isolation that each specific field places itself into, namely the unconscious understanding that collaboration is unnecessary, and that researchers ought to be perfectly capable of obtaining the results they need all on their own (or with the help of other researchers in the same field). This mentality, inadvertently passed along to new students, is a big contributor to students' hesitancy to seek out tutoring, says Danielle Haverkamp, a senior in the physics department at Weber State University, "It's not really a question of what they can do for us so much as it is a question of whether they can help us at all."

Since we are already aware that science students often struggle to create appropriate lab write-ups and that the ability to do so is critical no matter what field the students pursue, there are only two major factors that hold back a mutually fulfilling relationship between the sciences and writing centers on



college campuses. The first is a lack of tutor training pertaining to technical work such as lab reports. The second is a lack of understanding among students of the value that using tutoring resources, while they are in school, will have throughout their careers.

Weissbach and Pflueger explored a few critical areas of the solutions to these problems, and Leff and Kiefer explored a few others. The aspects of the relationship between the sciences and writing centers that they wished to address were addressed appropriately, but neither study encapsulated the whole dynamic. In order for writing centers to fully serve their student body, they must be constantly on the lookout for new ways to teach and new ways to grow. This may entail learning how to compose a good lab report, or it may entail learning how to discuss results and interpretation with a student. Regardless of what obstacles must be addressed, the writing center must be prepared to give all students the tools they need for success.

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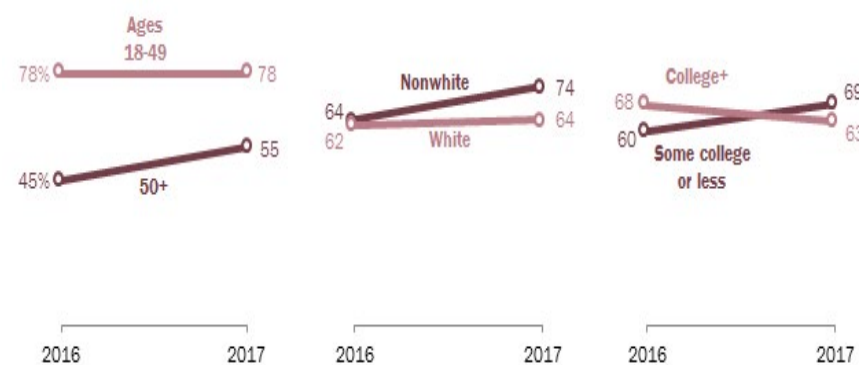
Persuasion through Digital Rhetoric Is Valid

Written by Trey Hawkins

In the current digital age, current debates have abounded about whether accessing information from online mediums is a reliable way to access reputable information. For example, The New York Times has been covering the latest story surrounding the growing controversy over different online suspensions of the show *Infowars* hosted by Alex Jones. The story has escalated to a point where President Trump stated the following in a series of tweets: “Censorship is a very dangerous thing & absolutely impossible to police...Too many voices are being destroyed, some good & some bad, and that cannot be allowed to happen...Let everybody participate, good & bad, and we will all just have to figure it out!” While I agree with President Trump that censorship can be dangerous if used to silence people, I also think that one should consider the potential ramifications that come with the idea of spreading fake news. “Fake News,” a term recently used by President Trump, has made its way into the mainstream media from the war between the credibility of the press and the president. A St. John’s Law Review defines “Fake News” as “untrue stories, factually warped reports, or otherwise nonexistent events which represent “statements of fact” as being real, that is, not parody or some form of opinion, in a pseudo-journalistic manner” (Kraski 923). This political rhetoric has caused the public to be skeptical of what news mediums are credible.

Social media news use increases among older, nonwhite and less educated Americans

% of U.S. adults who get news from social media sites ...



Social Media is totally discriminating against Republican/Conservative voices. Speaking loudly and clearly for the Trump Administration, we won't let that happen. They are closing down the opinions of many people on the RIGHT, while at the same time doing nothing to others.....

4:23 AM - 18 Aug 2018

....Censorship is a very dangerous thing & absolutely impossible to police. If you are weeding out Fake News, there is nothing so Fake as CNN & MSNBC, & yet I do not ask that their sick behavior be removed. I get used to it and watch with a grain of salt, or don't watch at all..

4:32 AM - 18 Aug 2018

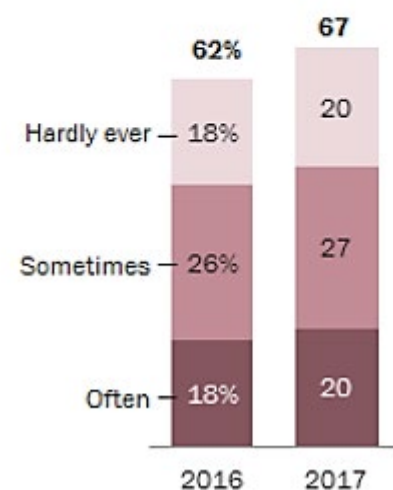


....Too many voices are being destroyed, some good & some bad, and that cannot be allowed to happen. Who is making the choices, because I can already tell you that too many mistakes are being made. Let everybody participate, good & bad, and we will all just have to figure it out!

4:40 AM - 18 Aug 2018

In 2017, two-thirds of U.S. adults get news from social media

% of U.S. adults who get news from social media sites ...



The Internet has allowed students to be able to access an endless amount of information all at once. It is a tool that is relevant toward how we will communicate and innovate as a society. Our current generation gets access to most news information through social media with the Pew Research Center reporting that “As of August 2017, two-thirds (67%) of Americans report that they get at least some of their news on social media—with two-in-ten doing so often.” (Pew 2017). This allows us to be more connected than previous eras. However, it is important to consider that we can set ourselves up to exist in an environment that has allowed us to spread misinformation. A study that covered partisan perceptual bias stated that “The prevalence and persistence of misinformation is often linked to motivated reasoning, which enables individuals to protect pre-existing attitudes. As a result, people find information that agrees with prior-held beliefs to be more credible and reliable than disconfirming information” (Jerit & Barabas, 2012; Taber & Lodge, 2006). The proliferation of online sources allows us to research at much faster rates than the past. However, in the era where anyone can customize information to reflect personal beliefs and positions, there is danger in surrounding yourself with a bubble of beliefs that can mislead you into spreading misinformation that pertain to your own biases. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that the use of rhetoric within a digital framework can be an effective tool in persuasion if one is identifying unreliable online sources and diversifying the mediums in which one obtains research. Otherwise, the validity of using digital tools to research can be undermined.

Alex Jones’s Infowars Is Removed From Apple’s App Store

Knowing how to identify inaccurate sources is important because, as a student, it is crucial to set a standard to hold each other accountable to prevent the spread misinformation. The Journal of Academic Librarianship points out that “inaccurate messages often continue to go viral even after being debunked, whereas the correct information does not receive as much attention (Friggeri et al., 2014, Oyeyemi et al., 2014). Indeed, catchiness—rather than truthfulness—often drives information (and misinformation) diffusion on social media (Ratkiewicz et al., 2010). This point is important because if we allow an inaccurate piece of information to be perpetuated, it will have the potential to be sensationalized throughout the public, which can diminish the credibility of sources. We must also learn to acknowledge that doing research requires looking at multiple perspectives. For example, a conservative may be inclined to do research only from news sites like Fox News, while a liberal may only use MSNBC as a reference. Having only one source for news consumption does not act as news but rather propaganda. As a researcher, it is important to consider multiple views and investigate to see if the content is factual. All in all, we need to maintain a sense of integrity when exploring online persuasion because digital rhetoric is a tool that can enhance self-expression and establish a community for open discussion and abstract thinking.

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You're (More Than) Welcome

Kathryn Sullivan

5 November 2018

People alter their responses and feedback depending on their situations. For example, in the workplace, it is appropriate and welcome for employees to show off their skills, but among friends, this kind of showing off is likely less appropriate and welcome. There is a fine line between what feedback is useful and what might be unwelcome. This varies depending on the situation and the roles of the people involved.

One example that has become especially relevant for me in the last few months is writing tutors who are employed in the university writing center being required to participate in peer review sessions for their own classes.

Let me define the difference between tutoring and reviewing for the purpose of this piece. Let us call tutoring the thing that happens in the writing center, involving a paid tutor whose job it is to work with students and a student who brings in a piece of writing.

Let us call reviewing the thing that happens between classmates when they both bring in an assignment and read through one another's work to give feedback about it.

The fact is that tutors in the writing center are also students; therefore, sometimes the participants in review sessions are also those who work as tutors in the Writing Center. These students find it difficult to use their tutoring skills in review sessions for a number of reasons.

Both tutoring and reviewing are useful and beneficial for everyone involved. A 1984 study conducted by Benware and Deci reinforced the idea that the best way to learn something is to explain it to somebody else (qtd. in Topping 324). In an article called "Peer Review in the Classroom," the authors say, "effective peer review...stimulates learning and critical thinking" (Liu et al. 824). Despite the fact that both are



beneficial, there are some major differences that could make it so those students involved in both have a hard time using tutoring skills in review sessions.

In peer review sessions, both the reviewer and the reviewee are in the exact same class, working on the same assignment, so reviewers assume they have a similar level of knowledge and experience as the reviewee. Students in review sessions tend to focus on grammar and sentence level issues. One upper classman at Utah State University explains that this may be because those are the things that are easy to find and that the students in the class can see and know how to fix (Thorley). A student who tutors in the Writing Center might feel uncomfortable trying to point out

larger level concerns in this atmosphere even though they might see them. Do they want me to tell them the structure of their paper could use some work? I know I would try in a tutoring session, but would that be welcome and helpful in a review session?

In the same way it feels rude to tell everyone who casually asks all the jargon-filled nuances of everything you know about your job, students who also work as tutors participating in a review session might be unsure about how to be helpful to classmates while still fitting in with the class and not come off like they are trying to show off. If the norm is to give some feedback without ever touching things like structure and organization, it is hard to be the member of the group

trying to point out those things.

Katelyn Shaw, a tutor at Weber State University's Writing Center, said that the fact that she works in the Writing Center probably is not information she would volunteer in a review session. These students who secretly work in the Writing Center might feel it is more important to fit in than to provide as much help as they are capable of providing.

One main benefit of tutoring face-to-face is that it encourages discussion between both participants about the writing. Sometimes in review sessions, there is not time for any discussion between students. Sometimes, students just pass their papers around the room and get them back at the end of the hour with comments written in the margins. Because there might not be time to talk, students do their best to communicate ideas and suggestions by writing them, which can sometimes turn into the ideas of one student making their way right into the paper of another. Because tutors know better than to suggest specific ways to word things, they might find it difficult to use this method of writing in the margins to help peers with their papers. In her article, "Tutoring Within Limits," Beverly Lyon Clark states, "Obviously a writing tutor shouldn't rewrite a student's paper – it would be unethical and the student probably wouldn't learn anything..." (238). Because tutors have been trained and practice being ethical in tutoring sessions, this is another concern they might have when participating in peer review

sessions.

Both review and tutoring sessions are very helpful to those involved. However, in review sessions there is not any kind of perceived power position, and neither participant has had any training. For this and other reasons, those students who tutor in the Writing Center and participate as students in review sessions in class might find it difficult to play both roles most effectively because nobody wants to provide more information than is welcome in a given situation.



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Mechanic Eye

ATTENTION

PERCEPTION

Textual Color



I was not _____ enough.

One could fill that space with an innumerable amount of words, but, just for a moment, I want you to think about what you consider to be precious, of value, of importance to your current life, of such significance that you take it for granted during every second of every day?

I, for one, know it, but do you?

I understand its significance, and yet I do not value it nearly as much as I should. Its something that you give away of your own free will, yet, at the same time, you may not feel as if you had a choice in the matter.

I could say that a fundamental aspect of it is time, but *it is much scarcer in society.*



Creativity Bulb



Thus, as society wades further into this world of digitality and digital rhetoric, this aspect plays a crucial part in everything. Through digitality, we have this interconnectivity that places constraints, especially time, on this economy. This proliferation of media that monopolizes our mind. . . . It affects our "consent without any conscious decision on [the user]" (Wampfler). So, today I would like to bring forth this concept to the very edges of your mind.

So, pay _____. If one has been cognizant so far, one may already know this ideal.

Art

Yes, this very thing **that** you may be giving to me **this** very moment. I consider **it** to be precious as **there** is so much going on around the world, and yet **this** is what you choose to focus on. **This** is what may perplex **your** mind for the next few moments. If **anything** from this piece lasts, it is that you may have been selective with your _____, but you gave me your _____ nonetheless. Leading Amishi Jha to contend that if we are not cognizant when our minds wander, there could be dire consequences.

Yes, I struggled because _____ is no simple concept. Researching on the internet brings forth a new being, a new entity. If you consider Kittler (24), for a moment, media makes man. But I contend that man and media concurrently make each other. Now, with writing centers and digitality, we inspire research, but research also inspires us.

In a similar vein, the emergence of digital rhetoric is a product of media. Thus, media being a product of technology or the medium in which we view that technology, and with the proliferation of media, we have manufactured the production of scarcity. Therefore, we have essentially manufactured the scarcity of our _____, which is the most precious commodity of our time.

Integrating digital media into composition, one alters the way that writing is composed, allowing the writing center to be at the forefront of this change. Through new media, we must be selective with our _____, while simultaneously facilitating the change that will occur either way. Throughout this process, we will need to be mindful that this is a learning process that requires our _____.

Arty Smoke Bomb



Significantly, in this advent of media, one simply cannot be content with meaningless, insignificant, and uninspiring rhetoric as one would not be able to contend in this _____ economy. So, I believe that one has to be innovative, understanding, and above all unique in the content that you create.

Thus, society needs to rethink the connections that we make online because our audience is not the same. I cannot use the same ideas or concepts hoping to reach everyone, so I have to be mindful of the audience that I want to reach, the audience that I want to inspire, and the audience's _____ that I want to liberate.

Writing in this new advent of digitality calls for a new style, something that just grabs your _____.

Now, I purposefully have not mentioned the crucial word, but if you were paying enough _____, you may have guessed it.



Thought-provoking Eye



Reflection

I chose my specific InDesign layout as a distraction. I wanted to play on the theme of an individual's attention and selective attention when composing projects. In this new age of digitality, we need to grab an individual's attention, so I decided to tempt or intrigue the reader with a mechanic eye with the title of perception. We all perceive the world in different ways, and this is another one of my thematic ideas.

Along the same line, the textual colors are meant to play with the reader's depth perception, thus, getting the reader to think or consider the topic further. Overall, the colors that I chose are meant to distract the reader along with the words. The chosen images are meant to draw your eyeline, and get the reader thinking. I considered another photo of a lightbulb, but this intrigues me and will hopefully intrigue others. The vivid colors are constantly battling for your attention. Thus, you have to be selective and not allow your mind to wonder too much.

I envisioned an audience who would like to be intrigued yet would not be averse to negative comments. I envisioned an audience who wanted to discover the answer along some clichés of attentive sayings.

Ultimately, a constraint is that I am not forthcoming with my answer. So, I do not explicitly mention my answer but get the audience to consider the worth of my words. Thus, my affordance would be appealing to someone who would enjoy a thought-provoking distraction.

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DIGITAL TUTORS

the advancements and quandaries with automated graders

Ian Duncan

If robots were to take over the world today, they would be able to fill most positions the world over. Robots, ranging from super computers to the cellphone in your pocket, are capable of logically thinking, processing decisions, regulating systems, and computing complex mathematics. Yet where they fall short is in one of the oldest art forms known to humanity: the written word.



Developers the world over have begun introducing software systems into education that act much like your tenth grade English teacher. They check grammar, mechanics, style, and the word complexity that students use in essay writing. The e-rater actually checks for nine different features in submitted essays. The e-rater is a computer system used in the United States, developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) whose use has been primarily focused on grading the Graduate Record Examinations, an exam that is vital in the graduate school or business school application process (Born). Students submit their final essays to the computer, which runs it through its algorithm.

These systems have made enormous leaps and bounds in their development. David Williamson, who is employed by ETS, says

that the e-rater can grade 16,000 essays in 20 seconds (Williamson qtd. in Winerip).

And yet, many programmers say that computers are very limited. A researcher in China, who is developing an equivalent of the e-rater said, "In the future it may be used to relieve the teacher's burden but it will never replace teachers. The machine has no soul" (qtd. in Chen).

These online graders and educational computers are incapable of recognizing truth. They are amoral, and they fail to grasp the essence of writing as a form of art and expression.

Lee Perelman, director of writing at MIT, told the *New York Times* in an interview with Michael Winerip that the ETS is incapable of understanding truth. He

gives the example: "E-rater doesn't care if you say the War of 1812 started in 1945," (Perelman qtd. in Winerip). Students have also found that the e-rater prefers long sentences linked by words like "however." When students used this, in conjunction with enormous words, they saw a boost in points awarded for lexical complexity.

While being incapable of understanding truth, the automated graders are capable of storing vast amounts of data. Turnitin is an

anti-plagiarism software that compares submitted essays against its online database. The more essays that are submitted, the "smarter" the software becomes. On a superficial level, this is good. It eliminates the need for teachers to scrutinize the Works Cited, and it expedites the grading process.

Turnitin is not a non-profit organization nor good Samaritan. The objective of this company is to expand its business. The greater the volume of essays, the smart-

"When a paper is submitted to Turnitin, it is compared against a vast, secure proprietary database of licensed source material, including millions of periodicals, academic journals, books, and web pages."

[Turnitin Privacy Policy](#)

er the program becomes, which in turn allows Turnitin to charge more for its services. Many educators and specialists alike argue that “schools should emphasize plagiarism prevention instead of trying to bust plagiarists” (Wired Staff). Education systems sacrifice their students' privacy in an attempt to catch the few who are guilty of plagiarism, as well as spending upwards of two thousand dollars for licensing and eighty cents for each student (Sharon).

In the vast majority of instances, submission to Turnitin is mandatory. Students are required to hand over their essays to a corporate entity, surrendering their intellectual property in order to be awarded a grade.

Too Orwellian? Perhaps. But big business is always looking for new ways to grow. Information becomes a bargaining chip that goes to the highest bidder. In an era of less and less privacy, what would the impact of a student's tenth grade final have on a job interview, or even, what impact would a student's tenth grade final have on a job inter-

view, or what impact would a presidential candidate's undergraduate essay have on the campaign? People, educators as well as developers, need to consider the implications of the increasing digitalization of graders.

All of this, concerns with ethics and privacy, can be avoided through the usage of human proofreaders and creative teachers. Dr. Kelli Marshall, an educator in humanities, suggests that teachers craft more creative writing prompts (Gorges). This increases the difficulty for students to plagiarize and encourages critical and original essay writing.

Above all else, a computer could never replace, or truly replicate, what a human brings to an essay. The old phrase “if you teach a man to fish he eats for a day...” could be changed to: “Proofread a student's paper, he gets an A for a day. Teach a student to write, he learns to communicate clearly, share ideas broadly, and change the world through words.” Papers with underdeveloped ideas and weak organization could pass the electronic graders if every-


thing were grammatically sound. Is that, then, the ultimate purpose of writing?

These proofreading, anti-plagiarism systems are, in essence, glorified grammar police that look for breaks in patterns that indicate error. They miss the brilliance of the writing process and look solely at the end product. According to Beth Young, a professor of English at the University of Central Florida, “Proofreading...ignor[es] the global revision needs of a paper in favor of error checking, especially when the writer still needs work on ideas and organization” (141).

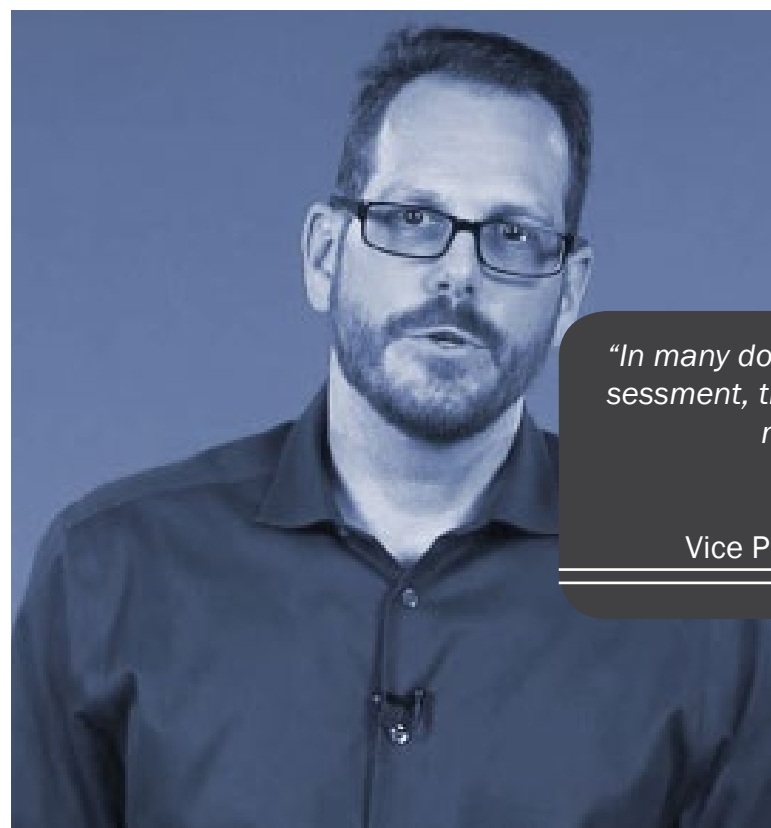
Computers fail to recognize the beauty of creative writing. David Williamson said of his own system, “E-rater doesn't appreciate poetry” (qtd. in Winerip). A computer is incapable of feeling the emotion that writing provokes in its readers. Granted, most high school essays are not page turners, but they show the value of critical and creative writing. They allow regulated students the liberty of expression that goes beyond writing a formula of an essay. A computer cannot grasp the emotions provoked by *Hamlet* nor feel the tragedy in *The Great Gatsby*. Essays,

narratives, and poems written by humans need a human audience to appreciate them.

So, as it stands now, when the dust has cleared and the robot overlords begin their regime, the last humans will be the ones writing and grading essays. •



Scan the code to visit Grammarly.com and try writing your own ludicrous statements

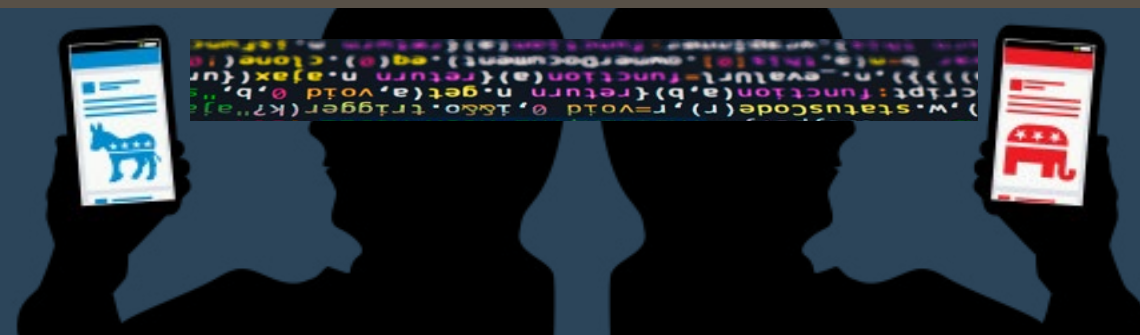


“In many domains, including educational instruction and assessment, there is a natural tension between what is fundamentally valued and what is efficient.”
 David Williamson
 Vice President for ETS New Product Development



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Echo Chambers: Can You Hear Me?

Jackson Reed
23 January 2019

The internet, an ever-expanding source of information and data, was designed to allow for expanding growth. The success of this goal has propelled us into what has been termed the age of information overload. The methods and programs that help us sift through all of this material, while essential for finding the validity of a subject, can also contribute to creating a myopic view about current events and issues. This process, if left unchecked, could have a catastrophic impact on the way we interpret, gather, and discuss information and potentially make once unacceptable behaviors become more acceptable. Users will be able to surround themselves with only what they believe, or worse, what they want to believe even if it contradicts fact. As tutors in the Writing Center, we need to be aware of this process so that we are able to help students distinguish between quality information and erroneous opinion pieces.

The use of technology to create feeds and profiles that serve primarily to prove one's ideas and ideologies correct are known as echo chambers. This process can lead to isolation, polarization, and social division and compromise the ability of users to think and write. As educators and those who instruct students in digital as well as more traditional rhetoric, we can help students open their minds to new ideas and to synthesize inconsistent opinions.

Facebook offers a good example of how the process of echo chambers work. It allows its users to choose what news sources and public figures they would like to follow. Someone who is more liberal might choose to subscribe to CNN, Hillary Clinton's page, and other liberal Facebook pages. A con-

servative might choose to follow Fox News, Donald Trump's page, and other conservative sources. This Facebook example is important because, as a Pew Research Center study indicates, two-thirds of U.S. adults get their news from social media (Greenwood 1, see fig. one). The problem is that users choose to see only what they agree with in their feed.

As internet use increases among students, their opinions are continually being formed and influenced by the digital worlds they create through internet profiles and interweb relations on social media platforms. These secluded worlds, while potentially beneficial to connectivity and the spreading of ideas, can contribute to narrow minded worldviews that can have disastrous consequences.

Disagreement in itself is not the problem. A moderate amount of disagreement can even be quite beneficial in helping students consider new opinions. However, the type of disagreement that echo chambers are instigating is a discussion that does not prompt listening but one that incites individuals to surround themselves with information that fits in their comfort zone.

We spend an inordinate amount of time on our cellphones and on the internet. A study conducted by Dr. Bart Pursel at Penn State shows the average adult spends about ten hours a day in front of a screen (Pursel 1). Continually absorbing material from social media is compromising our ability to think for ourselves. We would do well to help students break out of these insular worlds and emphasize the importance of being a

free thinker. Learning to be a good writer includes learning to synthesize information from various sources including sources one may not agree with.

The root of the problem is that news outlets and pages do not want to lose followers. They manipulate content to create media pieces and headlines that will satisfy their viewers—even if the information in these pieces is not always presented in an unbiased and straightforward manner. As a result, we have ever-increasing divisions in opinions and a growing and more rigid polarization between our two major political parties. Although the United States was never designed to be a one system political party, the dangerous paradigms formed on social media encourage parties to no longer listen to one another and ignore opposing views entirely. This mentality could transfer to workplaces and schools—places where listening to others is key.

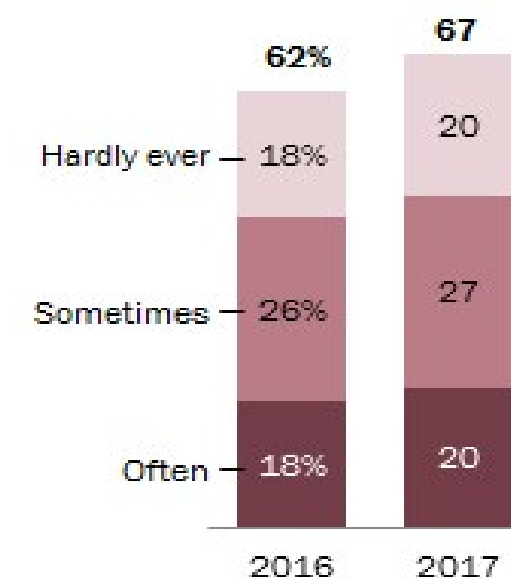
One Pew Research study concludes that “beyond dislike, users see the other party as a threat to the nation's well-being” (Suh 1, see figure two). Resentment has always been an issue, and one could argue that this divide has existed since the Federalists and their opponents fought it out in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. But it is clear that the disconcerting animosity between our two political parties is definitely being exacerbated through the use of digital technologies.

Politics are only part of the issue here. If students' political beliefs are being formed on the basis of Facebook and Twitter posts, then they can continue to choose the information they want to see even if it is purely propaganda meant to destroy whatever it opposes. This process of echo chambers makes it difficult when helping students write papers because there is a high risk that they will have access to a plethora of information that will support their ideas and worldviews, no matter how bizarre or inaccurate the information might be.

Many of the sources students bring in could in fact fit the parameters for an academic source. The problem is not that students get their news from social media; it is that they get the news they want from social media. Users are not receiving unbiased opinions but rather are surrounding themselves with what they can comfortably perceive.

In 2017, two-thirds of U.S. adults get news from social media

% of U.S. adults who get news from social media sites ...



Source: Survey conducted Aug. 8-21, 2017. "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2017"

Fig. 1. Greenwood, Shannon.

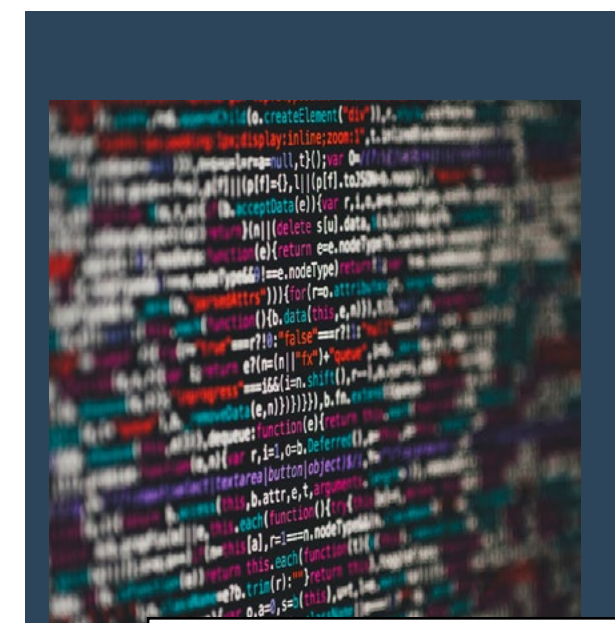


Fig. 4 Marcus Spiske. Unsplash. Web.

Beyond Dislike: Viewing the Other Party as a 'Threat to the Nation's Well-Being'

Democratic attitudes about the Republican Party Republican attitudes about the Democratic Party

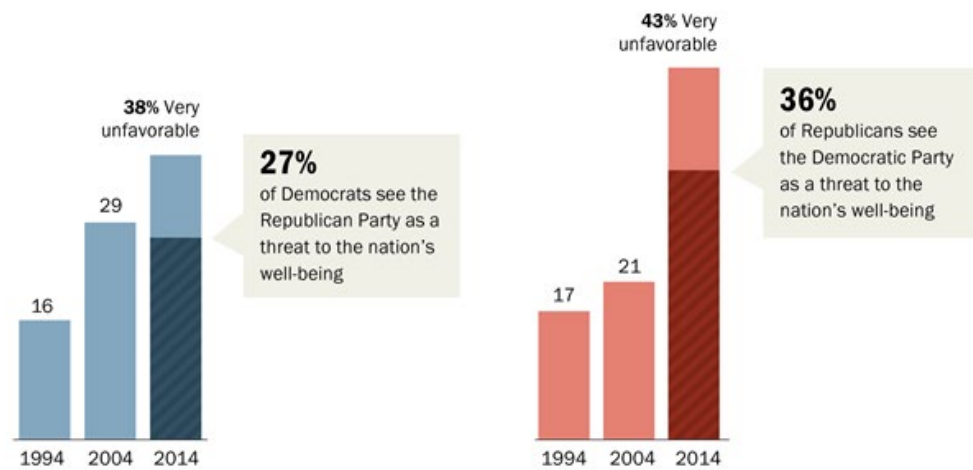


Fig. 2. Suh, Michael.



Every time they turn on their phone and start up an application, they have the ability to unsubscribe to an article they disagree with or that makes them feel uncomfortable or angry. With the simple tap of a finger, they can unfollow the perceived nuisance, and it will no longer be even a blip on their radar.

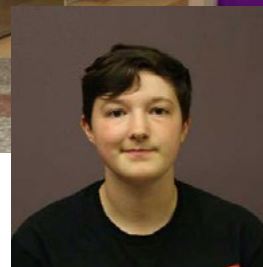
We need to remember that the internet was designed to create more information, not necessarily credible information. It is important that students understand how looking at multiple sides of issues will help them create sound arguments and help them become more interesting writers as well. The issue of echo chambers extends to friends, family, businesses, hobbies, and brands, all of which affect the way our students write. If students' worldviews are being formed by blocking out what they do not want to see, we need to help them open their world, so they can better understand issues that surround us and be better equipped to write about them.

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“Just Look at It”

How to alter student perspectives and help students who are required to be there.



Written By: Emily Rimmasch

Whenever I begin a tutoring session, after asking some basic questions about the assignment, I will ask the student, “What are your concerns? What would you like to focus on?” This will often yield meaningful results and will help to build a strong and productive tutoring session. However, sometimes the student’s response will be something like, “I’m not sure. Grammar, I guess? I have to come in here for credit in the class.” This response leads to sessions that are, while hopefully helpful, not as energizing and geared toward producing a better writer as many tutors would prefer.

The problem, then, would seem to be required sessions. Students often have little investment in the session and will wait until the last minute, expecting tutors to simply proofread their papers. This leads to long wait times and disheartened tutors (Bell 6). However, despite these negative effects, most evidence shows that at least some required tutoring is indeed helpful (Babcock). Students will often start off disinterested, but after realizing that the Writing Center focuses on the “process” of writing instead of just proofreading to get a good grade, will come back voluntarily (North 438). We, as tutors, may balk at the idea of someone being required to come to us because it does not fit within our “idealized version” of what the Writing Center should be, but we need to understand that most students will not begin coming to the Writing Center voluntarily, even if they would benefit from the services we provide (Wells 89). This means that a nudge in the right direction in the form

Pexton compared giving students a nudge in the right direction through required tutoring to Star Trek. Even though Starfleet has a strict no interference policy, Captain Kirk will often interfere anyways when he thinks it will be of benefit (Pexton).



of required tutoring can go a long way toward helping them (Pexton).

Despite the proof presented to us that required tutoring is indeed helpful for students overall, it can still be disheartening and exhausting to tutor those students who merely view tutoring as one more thing that they have to do before their homework is completed. Even worse is when students request that a tutor attempt to grade their paper, or expect their grades to go up because of the tutor’s input. The problem we are left with, then, is how to figure out how to mitigate situations like these while still helping those students who are required to see us. The main solution to this problem does not rest with us; however, it rests with the faculty and changing the general attitudes towards the Writing Center.

Oftentimes, when students are told about the Writing Center, they are not offered the full vision of how the Writing Center should work. I once had a student say to me, “I was told during orientation that your grade goes up a letter when you come into the Writing Center.” I was taken aback by this and explained to the student that what was meant by this is that the work done by the tutor and student will often help to improve the paper and



that this can lead to an increased grade, but that it is not a guarantee. I understand why faculty and student volunteers will tell students this; it provides a tempting incentive to go to the Writing Center. The downfall of this is that if a student is given this information and said student does not get the grade that they expected or hoped for, they will become dissatisfied with the Writing Center and be less likely to come in the future (Gordon 158).

Another way the Writing Center is misrepresented is that students are not told explicitly what practices the center values. During orientation, students will be brought in and told how to use the Writing Center but are never told outright that the center values making better writers, as opposed to making better papers through proofreading. Since people tend to think of grammar and spelling as the most important parts of writing, this lack of specific information creates a gap that students automatically fill in with the assumption that their papers will be proofread.

Obviously, the responsibility for properly representing the Writing Center should not rely wholly on the faculty. Those at the center should make their voices heard by letting the faculty and students know what ideals the Writing Center strives to uphold. More importantly, we must follow through. When we take a genuine interest in the students and their writing, no matter why they came to us, the students will tend to be more engaged in the learning process (Gardner).



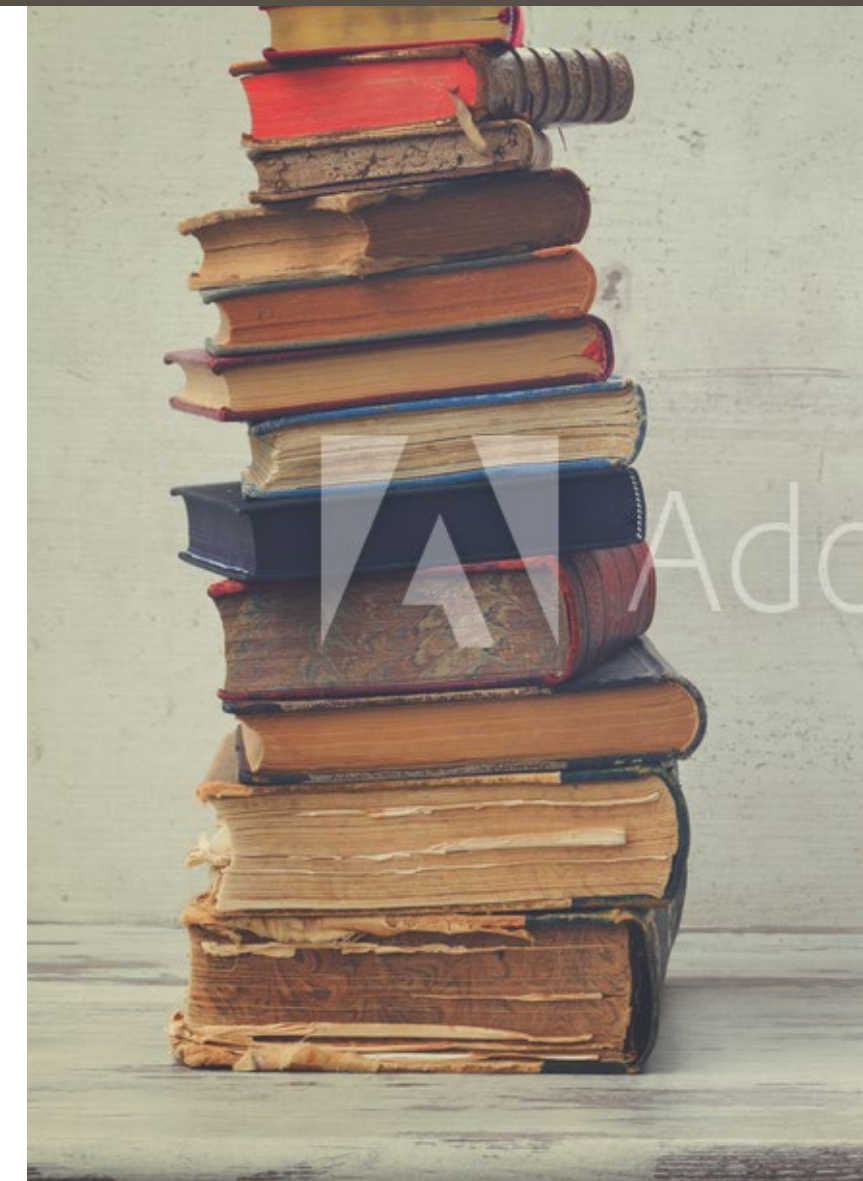


As frustrating as it can be at times, required tutoring is not something that should be done away with. There are students who need our help who would otherwise never think to see us. Instead, in order to promote productive and enriching sessions, we need to encourage the faculty and students on campus to promote the ideals of the Writing Center so that students who come to us will be prepared and ready to work on their writing, not their paper. We are here to help the students, and we can do so more effectively if they are prepared for their sessions and actively engaged with the writing process.



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Digital Footprints: Managing Our Irrevocable Traces

Written by Joshua Abbott



Social media have permeated cultures around the world, drastically changing the way we stay in touch and our mediums of expression. Just as man's one small step onto the moon left permanent footprints, our activity on social media also leaves irrevocable traces (Varando 719-775). As social media become the norm for self-expression, these "digital footprints" begin to have a greater impact on our professional lives.

Our digital footprints are primarily used by companies to better market to us. Each little search users make and each post they react to, all are recorded into vast databases. These databases are often used to help business psychologists better understand how to advertise to consumers. This information is not only used to know how to advertise but also when they are in the right mood for a particular advertisement. Danny Azucar, Davide Marengo, and Michele Settanni, from the University of Turin's Department of Psychology, studied the accuracy of the Big 5 personality traits used by psychologists to describe human behavior as portrayed by digital footprints captured by social media. Azucar et al. claim that the information taken from users' digital footprints can allow researchers access to larger unbiased groups, further the customization of online marketing, and be used to create more person-



alized computer-human interactions and better targeted health campaigns (157).

As aforementioned, the information taken from our digital footprints provide businesses with great databases of knowledge and, therefore, power. Knowing how to control our personal information—our digital footprints—has never been as paramount as it is today, in the Information Age. In the 2018 publication of *Distance Learning*, Maureen McDermott claims "...people should receive education enabling them to create and strategically implant positive, active digital footprints on the Information Superhighway" because "People who lack this knowledge

"To adapt the changing landscape of the job market, instructors must concentrate on presenting a balanced view of social networking, focusing equally on what information students should provide as well as that which they should not"

(Kelly 32).



may generate digital footprints with negative implications, thus necessitating remediation" (54). I agree with McDermott. As people continue to pour more of their personal lives into social media, it becomes increasingly important for people to receive some form of education on how to control their digital footprints.

Many students believe that they do not need to worry about their digital footprint for various reasons—the biggest of which is that social media portray an accurate version of themselves and are, thus, not causing any harm to their reputations. Mar Camacho, Janaina Minelli, and Gabriel Grosbeck conducted a study to gauge students' knowledge of, and level of comfort with, social media and the concept of a digital footprint (3180-3181). The results certainly suggested that students feel content with

the virtual selves their social media display. They are also aware of their privacy settings and think they use them properly. While I accept that they feel comfortable with their settings, they are overlooking the fact that the average student surveyed has over two hundred friends. Can those students truthfully say that they know and trust each of those friends well enough to share all of the things that they post on social media? Considering that, in person, most people only discuss their true feelings with a handful of people, I find it hard to believe.

Frequently, students also doubt that employers check their social media; however, just consider the recent controversy over James Gunn who was fired from Walt Disney Studios for offensive tweets he posted between 2009 and 2012. He is not the only one to have been fired for tweets/posts. One can simply do a Google search to find countless cases similar to his.

On a different note, Stephanie Kelly, Scott Chrirten, and Lisa Gueldenzoph conducted a two-year qualitative research project to measure the efficiency of students' online reputation management. What they found is that many students set their privacy settings to the extreme and lost many chances to promote their professional presence and establish a positive professional network. They concluded that, "To adapt the changing landscape of the job market, instructors must concentrate on presenting a balanced view of social networking, focusing equally on what information students should provide as well as that which they should not" (32).

I fully agree that it is crucial for students to be instructed on how to manage

their digital lives efficiently because students who do not can suffer a variety of consequences. There are several approaches that instructors can take to help their students better manage their digital footprints. A great place to start is by explaining that the internet can be a friend or a foe, depending on how it is used. Then instructors can explain the importance of social media and digital footprints in the professional world. Examples will be key to helping the students know the difference between professional and unprofessional digital footprints. Who should teach these concepts to the students? This responsibility falls to those in charge of teaching the students about digital literacy, and other departments such as Career Services and the Writing Center can be of assistance when students have additional questions. With this support and training, students will be better equipped to manage their digital footprints in a digital world.



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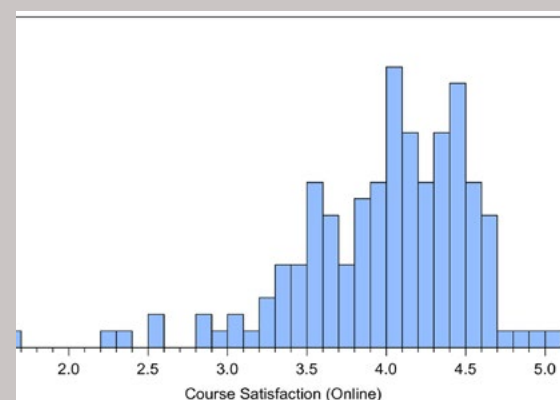
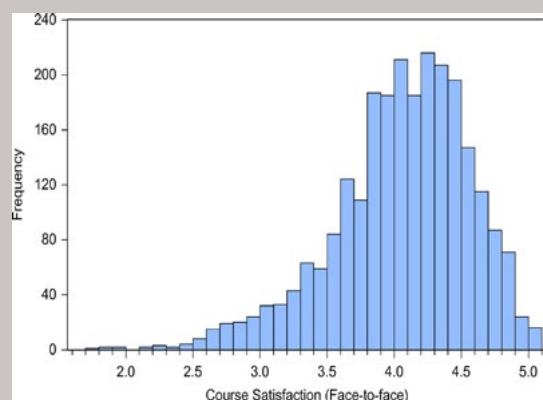
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The Future of English Teaching

Kelly Hart
September 20, 2018

Asian countries have a problem. There are not enough native English speaking teachers to meet the demand. For this reason, Cindy Mi started a company called VIPKid in 2011 through which native English speakers could have online video-call based teaching sessions (Lunden). The demand was so great another company with the same premise began in 2013, founded by Hui Zhi (Jones). While these companies are filling the need for native English speakers in their countries, studies have yet to consider what the lack of the in-person human interaction element does to English teaching. For learning the ways of English grammar and spelling, a non-classroom based setting may be able to fill those requirements, but when it comes to actually learning English, as with any language, immersion is key. One simply cannot get immersion in a language from an hour-a-day video-call with a native speaker. While some may claim there is little difference between an hour-a-day video-call lesson and an hour-a-day in-person lesson, I argue that there is a tremendous difference. The classroom setting, versus a video-call setting, engages students in a conversational manner that online video-calls cannot replicate.

In a study on course satisfaction in face-to-face instruction versus online instruction, data indicate that students feel more satisfied with face-to-face instruction versus online instruction and that “online teaching is less well received by students” (Guest, et al.). The following graphs display the data and indicate each responding student’s satisfaction with both instructional methods:



So why are students displeased? What is it about online instruction versus face-to-face instruction that leaves a student dissatisfied with their experiences? The level of human engagement in a social setting is lacking from online instruction. Video-call teaching and tutoring tend to be one-on-one, but the social aspect of learning in language is valuable and lost in these video calls. Being able to immersively study a language with peers, using the language amongst those studying with you, is invaluable.

Recently, Japan has been designing artificial intelligences to teach English in its classrooms. A robot would be the instructor of the class. Details regarding the breadth of knowledge this technology would be

teaching has yet to be revealed, but one may suspect that applications such as Google translate may be utilized. Google translate and similar utilities typically translate word-for-word and are unable to, as of yet, process the more complicated meanings behind some word combinations. An article that focused on Japanese ESL and EFL learners and English collocations states that, “In order to express the same meaning of English collocations, the Japanese language has to use different word combinations (e.g., crush/break time or kill time),” effectively showing how straight translation, which would be used by the artificial intelligence, would not be able to teach true meanings (Jiang, Yamashita 655). The true meanings of words across languages can more quickly and accurately come to be understood through human interaction and explanation, abilities that artificial intelligences as of yet do not possess.

Another trial that artificial intelligence would have to be human-like to overcome is the simple matter of, “. . . what works for one kind of student in one kind of learning environment with a particular set of educational goals might not work for someone else” (McMurtrie).

Google translate is far from perfect, and while it may be able to help someone say a dirty word in almost every language, it cannot explain the finer details of something like kakkooii, meaning cool as in awesome, rather than cool as in cold, but not freezing. Will an artificial intelligence be able to explain these things one day to students?

While one day it is likely there will exist artificial intelligences that can teach and tutor these finer points of meanings in languages, based on data from studies regarding face-to-face versus online instruction satisfaction, how satisfied would students really be learning from a robot? Will we one day be seeing data showing satisfaction among students taught by human instructors versus robotic instructors? What value is there in that in-person human interaction that is otherwise lost in video calls and robots?

For the former, satisfaction in classes is at stake.

As for the latter, for now, it would seem only science fiction can speculate.

Created with images by markusspiske - “code html internet computer web digital software” • iAmMrRob - “hacking cyber blackandwhite” • tigerlily713 - “code hacker data security technology digital password” • John Cameron - “untitled image” • Fifaliana - “pc computer computer part” • fancycrave1 - “computer fan wires parts inside technology design” • Fancycrave - “Computer Parts” • Fancycrave - “Computer Components” • Maxime Rossignol - “Gaming PC” • Owen Beard - “My best friend Pepper” • skeeze - “robonauts touching fingers fingers greeting friends machines” • Franck V. - “untitled image” • Lukas - “Robot in Shopping Mall in Kyoto” • Franck V. - “untitled image” • gerald - “digitization old new” • Fancycrave - “Desktop Repairs” • freestocks.org - “untitled image” • TheDigitalArtist - “android science fiction cyborg” • Franck V. - “untitled image” • Franck V. - “untitled image” • Daniel Fazio - “Office Time” • Taskin Ashiq - “Keyboard background” • Taskin Ashiq - “Keyboard background” • gerald - “planet a journey of discovery binary” • Pankaj Patel - “Data is the truth” • Markus Spiske - “untitled image” • Markus Spiske - “untitled image” • Rebecca Oliver - “Lumen P3” • “robot” • kellepics - “cd cover fantasy science fiction” • Computerizer - “robot mech machine”

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EDITOR'S NOTE

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

While writing these editorials, tutors were asked to write a rhetorical analysis explaining their design choices. Some of the tutors included it in their editorial while others submitted it as a separate document. As a result, most of the rhetorical analyses were not included in *Verbal Equinox*.

In the analysis, tutors described what influenced their layout design; more specifically, they were asked the infamous (and sometimes dreaded) question: "Why?" To answer this question, tutors described the type of magazine that they envisioned might publish their editorial and the audience they were addressing. In regards to their design choices, they explained why they had decided to use certain images, infographics, colors, fonts, and so on. This exercise helped reinforce the idea that the design itself should deliberately support and reinforce the writer's argument, not undermine it.

While design can help strengthen an argument, it is not infallible. Towards the end of their analysis, tutors addressed their design's limitations. More specifically, they identified the type of audience who would not find their design effective. Contrary to what some may believe, acknowledging the limitations in an argument or design does not detract from the end result. In fact, such analysis can strengthen the argument because it indicates that the writer has consciously and objectively evaluated their work. Such deliberate decision-making and awareness on the writer's part ensures that the Writing Center's main goal—to create better writers, not better writing—persists into the digital age.

Sarah Taylor
Editor in Chief



EDITORIAL

IMAGE CITATIONS

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First, the *Verbal Equinox* staff would like to thank all of the Writing Center tutors who allowed us to publish their editorials. We appreciate the thought, time, and effort that went into researching, writing, and creating these eye-catching editorials. The results provide exceptional insights into a variety of topics related to digital literacy, writing, learning, tutoring, and more. All of the different topics and designs within this volume were intriguing, unique, and engaging. Thank you all for sharing your opinions and designs with us and our readers.

Second, as the Editor-in-Chief for this year’s edition, I would like to thank each individual *Verbal Equinox* staff member for his or her time and effort in constructing the journal. This year’s issue posed a unique challenge for the *Verbal Equinox* staff because the nature of our work differed quite a lot from what we have done in previous years. Because of this year’s new focus on digital literacy, we wanted to preserve the writers’ editorial design along with their words. This posed an interesting challenge as we tried to combine various InDesign files into a unified file that could be published. Every single staff member has been more than willing to take on the challenge of this unique project. Each contributed in their own ways by offering suggestions, identifying potential problems that needed to be addressed, and tackling problems when they arose. I would like to thank the copyeditors for their thoroughness and the designers for handling the rollercoaster with astounding professionalism. I would like to extend a special thanks to Llewellyn Shanjengange, who really stepped up to the challenge of creating the Creative Cloud file that made editing the VE file easier, making multiple suggestions regarding our design options, and consulting Patrick Thomas about publishing the images included. I would also like to thank the tutors who posed for this year’s *Verbal Equinox* cover: Reed Brown, Porter Lunceford, Jackson Reed, Emily Beck, and Llewellyn Shanjengange.

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Fourth, but certainly not least, myself and the rest of the *Verbal Equinox* staff would like to thank the Writing Center Coordinator Claire Hughes for all of the effort she put into this project. Despite her very busy schedule, she has, as always, been there to support us and guide us through the process. We greatly appreciate her willingness to give us her time and feedback. Her enthusiasm for and commitment to the project has helped our hectic prodigy take wing and soar. Thank you, Claire, for your outstanding and everlasting support in everything that we do. Words fall short of adequately describing your contribution to both the journal and the Writing Center.

Sarah Taylor
Editor in Chief