

The University Writer

Writing at U to Become a Department

The Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies Debuts at the U

This summer the University of Utah's Writing Program will officially become The Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies. The change brings with it several exciting new developments for writing at the University—as well as fresh opportunities for students.

The new department will mean a great deal more attention for writing on campus, but it will also impact the recognition the entire university receives. “There are few departments in the country that offer classes in such a broad spectrum of areas” Professor Maureen Mathison explains. “From traditional writing forms like academic essays, to advanced writing genres, including grants and dissertations, to new media forms like podcasts, blogs, infographics and other digital genres, the new Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies has it.”

Starting this July, students can expect to see signs for the new department around campus, and early in the fall the department will launch an ad campaign to publicize the change. But the transformation is to more than just the name—it is the culmination of years of hard work by Professor Mathison, the new Department's Chair, as well as many others.

Previously an autonomous unit in the College of Humanities, Writing and Rhetoric will now become its own

distinct department, and the new status will provide better visibility for the expertise of its faculty. For students, the Writing and Rhetoric Department will continue to offer both a major (33 credit hours) and minor (18 credits), as well as an array of courses in digital writing, gender and rhetoric, environmental writing, writing for graduate students, and many others. In its first year, the major has already surpassed the expected number of majors and students have discovered the advantages of Writing's short-major, including its flexibility for a variety of schedules and suitability for many desirable career paths.

Expect to see more changes as the new department continues to grow. This fall, its first new hire, Assistant Professor Christie Toth, will join the faculty and begin leading classes in Indigenous Literacies (see story page 2). Other developments will include new opportunities for students, including internships in the workplace and community mentorships to work

with middle school students. “Our goal is to provide students the experiences they need to improve their knowledge of rhetoric as well as their writing skills,” says Mathison. “The two are inter-related.”

For more information about classes or the Writing and Rhetoric Studies major or minor, please visit www.writing-program.utah.edu or email the Writing and Rhetoric Studies academic advisor, Lisa Shaw at l.shaw@utah.edu.



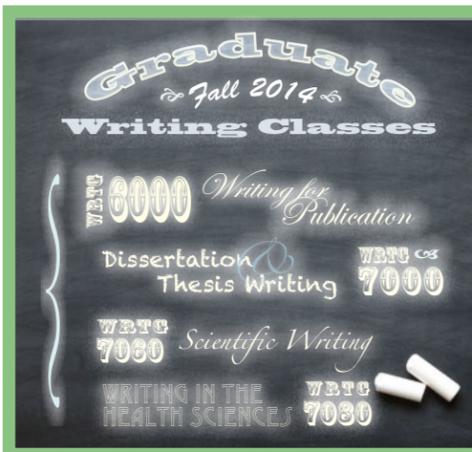
This fall the new Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies will bring unique opportunities for students.



New Writing Classes for Grad Students

Grad Students Get Help with their Writing Needs in New Classes

Most graduate students are well prepared for their specific course work when they enter the University. They've passed the entrance exams, know their material and can engage in deep conversations about their subject area; but many students struggle when it comes to writing. In many graduate programs studies show the attrition rate is as high as 50%, and many grad students who drop out report their biggest challenges involve writing.



That's why the new Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies offers a number of courses to help grad students finish their writing work and prepare it for publication.

One of the reasons writing at the graduate level is so difficult has to do with how different the expectations are for students in masters and doctoral programs. David Hawkins, an Assistant Professor/Lecturer in the Writing Department, explains that for many grad students the writing they must do is like nothing they've ever had to produce before.

"The emphasis in grad school is on publishable (rather than just passable) work, and that makes the stakes so much higher" Hawkins explains. "And in many departments

grads are expected to do their writing with limited feedback or instruction." Assistant Professor, Natalie Stillman-Webb adds "In many fields, graduate students are even expected to publish their research before entering the job market." In this type of environment it's not surprising many grad students struggle to finish their degree.

Hawkins teaches WRTG 6000 and 7000, two courses where graduate students receive detailed feedback on their own writing and learn about the conventions of different types of writing—from published scientific papers to masters theses and doctoral dissertations. Stillman-Webb leads other courses, including classes specifically designed to help students write effectively for their graduate disciplines, like scientific writing. Courses

such as **Grant Writing** and **Writing for the Health Sciences** provide students with instruction particular to the type of writing expected for different fields, purposes and audiences.

These courses can give grad students more confidence and alleviate the pressure and frustration that comes with graduate level writing, as well as help students better understand writing professionally in their own field. More information about graduate writing classes can be found at www.writing-program.utah.edu or by contacting l.shaw@utah.edu.

- Taylor Acord



Students in the Writing Department's graduate courses receive detailed feedback on their research writing or writing for their degree.

New Writing Professor Joins the U Teacher Brings Background in Tribal Literacies and Transfer Student Experiences to New Department

The University of Utah's new Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies (DWRS) is pleased to announce Assistant Professor Christie Toth will join the faculty this fall. Department Chair Maureen Mathison says, "The department is growing, and we need people (like Christie) more than ever. We're excited to welcome her." Christie brings a wealth of teaching and research experience, as well as expertise in curriculum development, assessment, and multidisciplinary approaches to writing at the U.

Prof. Toth's research interests include writing instruction at community colleges, transfer student writing experiences, and writing pedagogy at tribally-controlled colleges, where students' socioeconomic challenges, complex language environments, and unique cultural heritages inspire innovative teaching. She has done much of her research at the Navajo Nation's Diné College, where she taught writing and studied Navajo language and culture.

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Student Leadership Opportunities

The Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies is seeking applicants for open positions on its Student Advisory Committee (SAC). As part of student government (ASUU), SAC members receive hands-on experience in academic leadership and help to shape the new department. Students interested in joining should stop by LNCO 3700 to fill out a membership form, or contact Lisa Shaw at l.shaw@utah.edu

it blew my mind! I saw that people could represent themselves and their communities, rather than being written

Her interest in writing studies was ignited as an undergraduate, when she read her first Sherman Alexie novel. "My parents were both career military, so I grew up in a lot of different places, mostly overseas. I was studying anthropology when I read this book by Alexie, and

about by others." Toth became interested in teaching writing, particularly with diverse student populations. She went on to get an MA in English then taught writing at Clackamas Community College while working as a staff researcher at Portland State University.

Dr. Toth is looking forward to teaching at the U, especially her Fall 2014 **Culture and Rhetoric** class (WRTG 4050), to focus on historical and contemporary Native American rhetorics across a variety of media and genres.

"I'm really excited about living in Utah, a place that has such interesting tribal and settler histories. It's a rich location for thinking and learning about the relationships between place, politics, writing, and teaching."

Prof. Toth will bring her impassioned spirit for teaching to the U this fall. For more information about her courses or to check on class availability, please visit www.writing-program.utah.edu, or contact department advisor Lisa Shaw at l.shaw@utah.edu.

- Terra Jordan

Writing for the Digital World

U Writing Prepares Students for Bright New Future

Where does writing fit in the new technology age? What is its role, what can it do, and how has it changed in response to the new digital realm?

A host of new classes in the Department of Writing offer some clues for students seeking to understand 21st century audiences. As new technologies become more mainstream, new reporting, social and viral media, entertainment and advertising, and even personal communication have shifted to new digital platforms. Courses such as Digital Rhetoric, Digital Story Telling, and others prepare students to write using some of the most sophisticated, state-of-the-art tools.

"The innovations of digital technology make more tools available to the average writer than ever before," Professor of Digital Rhetoric, Casey Boyle explains. Sometimes that overabundance creates a sense of confusion and disorder for writers and readers.

Boyle's classes tackle the issues created by this excess, and explore the variety of tools available, from Photoshop to podcasts. Students examine the makeup of online audiences and ask how technology has changed the way they read.

"That's the reason a class like mine exists—because we're all writing in digital spaces now."

Professor Boyle's class is just the beginning of introduction to new tools. Other digital classes study certain tools or me-



Students who want to learn more about digital writing tools have a variety of Writing classes from which to choose.

dia types more closely. For example, **Visual Rhetoric** closely observes the relationship between message and image, in medias like infographics or memes; while **Digital Storytelling** focuses on narrative in video communication and storytelling. **Digital Publishing** explores the many tools in Adobe InDesign and the relation between appearance, typeface, and design. Students get hands-on experience, and even produce this very newsletter for the department.

These classes take a practical approach and give students a leg-up in the workplace, a real benefit when they graduate. Students who want to learn more about new digital writing courses or check on availability should contact the Writing Department's in-house advisor, Lisa Shaw, at l.shaw@utah.edu.

- Kayla LeFevre



Writing and Nature a Perfect Match at the U

Two New Environmental Writing Classes Offered this Summer

The Writing and Rhetoric Studies Department now offers TWO half-summer courses of Environmental Writing, WRTG 3420. The first half-semester course meets May 28 through June 7 at the Capitol Reef Field Station in Southwestern Utah. The second half-semester course meets August 1st through 5th at The Taft-Nicholson Environmental Humanities Education Center in the Centennial Valley near Lakeview, Montana.

Assistant Professor/Lecturer, Max Werner who teaches the course says,

“When students immerse themselves in the subject matter, they gain a deeper understanding of the environment as well as the language used to convey environmental issues.”

Students who take the course get to hike and explore wilderness study in one of two exciting locations, with guest lecturers in fields such as ecology, sustainable farming, archeology, astronomy, wilderness photography, and wildlife resource management, among others.

Student, Rachel Fong says, “Spend-

ing time in a natural environment can provide truly remarkable healing and relief from modern pressures.” And student James Karkowski adds, “[In] the natural world... we have the best potential to develop interpersonal relationships, [strengthen] physical and mental health, and increase [our capacity for] living in balance.”

Find course availability and information at www.writing-program.utah.edu, or contact Academic Advisor, Lisa Shaw at l.shaw@utah.edu or Max Werner at mawerner@gmail.com.

-Terra Jordan

