Helping Transfers to Triumph

Nearly 40% of University students are transfers—how writing helps them succeed

When I arrived on campus at the U after transferring from another school, I was completely lost. I wasn't sure where any of my classes were, how I was supposed to get around, where to go for help with my writing, or how to choose a major. These are challenges every transfer student faces. Many transfer students feel isolated when starting at a new school—they don't know where to find resources or get the support they need—and many need a little extra help bridging the gap between schools and finding their way to success.

Thankfully, Professor Christie Toth is doing just that. In Spring 2017 the Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies will be teaming up with Salt Lake Community College to offer two 3000-level writing classes on the SLCC campus for potential transfer students to the U. WRTG 3020: Write4U is designed for students in any major, and WRTG 3030: Writing across Locations is intended for students planning to major in Writing & Rhetoric Studies.

Professor Toth, along with her research team of undergrad and grad students, has been working on the project since 2015-16. Together they are designing the classes at SLCC based on interviews with transfer students and feedback from current students in the University's Fall 2016 Wrtg 3020 class.

This spring Professor Toth will teach WRTG 3020, and later this summer she'll team-teach WRTG 3030 with faculty at SLCC. WRTG 3020 will count as CW credit, and maybe best of all, both courses will be offered through the U’s Continuing Education, allowing the department to keep costs the same as SLCC classes.

These classes will help transfer students get ready for upper-division university writing and learn techniques that can help with writing in any subject. Professor Toth says; “I want to make sure that we're doing our part to make the promise of open admissions education in community colleges real. It's a promise I really believe in.” This project and class is the first step in helping student writers transition from community college to University.

To learn more about WRTG 3020, 3030, or other writing resources for transfer students, you can contact Christie.toth@utah.edu, l.shaw@utah.edu or visit the Writing Department website.

- Elyse Bangerter

Writing as Service

CEL courses allow students to share writing skills with community

When people think about volunteer work, they often picture groups packing up canned goods at a food bank, or cleaning up after a natural disaster. In the U’s Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies however, volunteer work looks a little different—and it leads to learning!

Take two of the Community-Engaged Learning courses in Writing & Rhetoric Studies: Usability Testing, and Discourses of Health & Medicine.

An Assistant Professor in Internal Medicine and Associate Instructor in Writing, Dr. Sample combines her backgrounds in WRTG 4905: Discourses of Health & Medicine. The course uses rhetoric theory to analyze the language used in healthcare—in TV shows, patient-created art, and even in pharmaceutical ads. Its CEL component involves students both shadowing and providing rhetoric-informed research to the U’s Center for Wellness & Integrative Health. “We’re trying to come up with projects that the Wellness Center can really use...
The University Writer

Do You Hear What I Hear?

When you think about Martin Luther King Jr's iconic "I Have a Dream" speech, what do you remember? Do you hear his voice, and do you hear what he is saying? Dr. Stillman-Webb agrees, adding that "These are not just old arguments between oral and visual rhetoric, but then expand outward in different directions." One direction will use newly purchased recording equipment, courtesy of a generous Dee Grant, to collect samples for hands-on learning about sound architecture. Stone says there's a nuance and subtlety to what we hear and students will be encouraged to reflect on sonic qualities that get overlooked but are hugely persuasive.

21st century themes will also be part of class lectures. As Stone explains, even with the same recording, meaning can change dramatically in different contexts. In the 1960s, the New York band, Blues Project, expressed themselves and their time with the track, "Flute Thing." But when another NYC band, Beastie Boys, sampled the aforementioned lick twenty-eight years later in "Flute Loop," the feeling and message shifted radically.

Assistant Professor Jonathan Stone's new class, WRTG 5905: Sonic Rhetoric (Spring 2017), will examine how sound (including elements like recording equipment, setting, and acoustics) influence perceptions. Students will explore soundscapes and their potential through discussion, fieldwork, composition, and research. Although part of the class will focus on theory, Stone insists the experiential is just as important. "We'll start with age-old arguments between oral and visual rhetoric—but then expand outward in new ways." The class will explore the theoretical, perform similar work, and help students contribute to their theories of method.

WRTG 3015: Professional Writing and WRTG 4001: Business Plans & Proposals. To learn more about CEL courses, in writing or sign up for a class, please visit the department website or email Lisa Shaw at l.shaw@utah.edu.

- Casey Koldewyn

A Research Class for the 21st Century Student

In an increasingly digital world, the ability to navigate online environments is essential—especially in academic settings, where students' online skills must be used to conduct authoritative research. In spring 2017, the Writing Department will introduce its first Digital Research Methods class, WRTG 4340, a 3 credit hour hybrid course with both online and face-to-face elements. Taught by Associate Professor Joy Pierce, the class will prepare students to develop efficient, effective, and ethical research methods for online environments.

Professor Pierce explains, "In the class, students will learn how to develop questions as well as use the appropriate tools to explore those questions." These are skills important to every area of study across campus, which is why Pierce says WRTG 3440 is a great course for anyone interested in writing. "There are so many parts of the research process—the interview process, searching for a research site, writing a formal proposal—that will benefit students in future courses and the workplace."

Professor Pierce also plans to briefly introduce the theory of method in the class. "This is important," Pierce explains to potential students, "because without it, students may choose the wrong method and/or research tools, which could lead a student to abandon it to lack of data." Pierce says she's interested in helping students avoid these common pitfalls and find the path most likely to succeed.

Though the class isn't intended only for students thinking about advanced studies, those considering graduate school will find this course particularly helpful. Pierce explains that a portion of the class will focus on performing research with human subjects, and "the ethical responsibility of observing or participating in an online space for the sole purpose of research, as well as using qualitative methods software." These are often critical skills for the graduate researcher that are hard to find in other courses.

To learn more about WRTG 4340, students can consult the Writing course catalog or contact the Writing & Rhetoric Studies academic advisor, Lisa Shaw, at l.shaw@utah.edu.

- Hollie Olsen

Writing for a Multilingual World

New writing course prepares students for diverse language environments

Students at the University interact with people of diverse backgrounds every day—people of different races, cultures, and languages are all around us. This growing diversity is what makes our community so great, and with a plethora of ideas, languages, and unique worldviews coming together, our lives are enriched and improved.

Here at the U, diversity is greater than ever before, due in large part to recent international recruitment efforts. On campus, it's become nearly impossible to avoid meeting someone with a different native culture or language at least once a day.

But you might be wondering, what does this all have to do with writing? Everything.

As we see more and more diversity, it becomes increasingly important to learn to communicate with those of different cultures, especially those whose first language isn't English. As Dr. Jay Jordan, Chair for the Writing & Rhetoric Studies Department, puts it, "Most people around the world communicate in more than one language, and more multilingual students are coming to US colleges and universities. People invested in researching and teaching writing need to understand relevant scholarship."

This Spring (17), Dr. Jordan will teach a graduate course on the subject of multilingual writing, WRTG 6400: Multilingual Writing. This course will give students an understanding of how multilingualism affects writing and writing instruction. Though the course is specifically geared toward students interested in teaching writing, Dr. Jordan believes that the course will benefit anyone who wants to communicate more effectively in multilingual settings. He says, "we're interested in preparing writing instructors to work with different language communities, not just anyone—in finance, business, medicine, law—who plans to work in diverse cultural settings will appreciate the class."

For more information on the Multilingual Writing course, please contact Dr. Jordan at jay.jordan@utah.edu—and to learn more about ESL learning opportunities at the U, visit the Writing Department webpage.

- Mark Stone

Write Your Wild Side

Learn to write your story with WRTG 4200

Nonfiction, including personal essays, memoirs and online blogs, has become popular in recent years. While many figures like Lena Dunham and Patti Smith, and relative unknowns like Leslie Jamison and Cheryl Strayed, have captivated readers. A new course in the Department of Writing, WRTG 4200 delves into why this genre is so popular and helps students understand the craft behind good nonfiction. Students even learn how to craft their own stories to captivate and inspire readers.

Assistant Professor/Lecturer David Hawthorn, who teaches WRTG 4200, which begins with close readings of some of today's most powerful nonfiction writers, including Ta-nehisi Coates, Hunter Thompson and David Sedaris. Students start the semester with Strayed's Wild and Coates’ Between the World and Me. “These are books students seem to connect with—ones that allow us to peep into the twin themes of confession and redemption that still drive such nonfiction,” Hawthorn explains.

Many students enter the course with little experience writing their own stories or sharing them with others. “It takes tremendous courage,” Hawthorn explains. “But as writers like Augustine Bouroughs and Lidia Yuknavitch show us, our stories become better—the impact more profound—as the writer becomes more vulnerable...more honest.” The class provides a safe space for students to explore their stories, to write and develop supportive and critical feedback—"It's important when a young writer finds her voice, and discovers the courage to write about a deeply meaningful experience,” Hawthorn adds.

The University Writer
Students looking for a class that enriches their understanding of nonfiction and stretches their ability to tell their own stories are invited to join WRTG 4200. Or to learn more, please email the instructor at david.hawkins@utah.edu or Writing’s student advisor, Lisa Shaw at l.shaw@utah.edu.

- Nolan Young

**Recognizing Great Student Writing**

**Free Food & the Power of the Pen**

Teachers in the Department of Writing & Rhetoric work with thousands of young writers in their classes, and they’re often blown away by the ingenuity of their students’ work. Lisa Shaw, a Student Advisor in the department says this is why Writing came up with the idea for a Student Awards ceremony at the end of the year. For the past eight years, the Excellence in Writing Awards has recognized the best student writers from across campus. “Students get so excited for the awards,” Shaw says. “It’s a chance to be celebrated for their hard work, have their family around them—and, of course, there’s great food!”

At the end of every academic year, teachers can nominate up to two students in each category for the Excellence in Writing Awards. Categories include best paper in a Lower Division class, best paper in Upper Division, best Multimodal Composition (a visual rhetoric category that includes charts, posters, short movies, and video games), and best Graduate Student Writing. There’s also an excellence in teaching award to recognize extraordinary instructors.

Students are nominated for the awards by their instructors, so there is no application process. Professors search though hundreds of papers each year to find the best ones, and nominations are reviewed by a committee of tenured faculty and Career line faculty. Shaw explains, “it’s a rigorous process with a lot of different input involved, and final selections are based on the paper’s merit, wealth of information, and quality of the work.”

Instructors are already searching their classes for the next batch of nominations. The next awards ceremony will be held in late April and will cover classes from the summer of ’16 thru the spring of ’17. That means there’s only one semester to go! Students hoping to earn a nomination should be on the lookout for opportunities to let their writing talents and school work really shine! To learn more about the Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies Excellence in Writing Awards, please visit the department website or email Lisa Shaw at l.shaw@utah.edu

- Samantha Foote