



# Writing Matters

Winter 2010

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### What is Writing Studies?

## Upcoming Events

### ∞ Centre for Writers Party: C4W2 Opening

The Centre for Writers will celebrate its **second anniversary** with an open house on **Friday, March 5**. Join us for refreshments and word games and help us mark the opening of our second tutoring space: C4W2!

Time: 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM (drop in anytime)  
Location: Centre for Writers (Rooms 1-42 and 1-23 Assiniboia Hall)  
Information: [centreforwriters@ualberta.ca](mailto:centreforwriters@ualberta.ca) or 492.2639 or [www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca](http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca)

### ∞ Writing Studies, Office of Interdisciplinary Studies, Faculty of Arts

- **Heather Graves** will be speaking on her research and teaching at the third Department of English and Film Studies Colloquium "What We Do and Why (and Where) We Do It" **Thursday March 4, 3:30 pm, HC L-3**. All are welcome!

### • Writing Studies brings its first Distinguished Visitor to U of A

Mark your calendars for **September 13-29**: **Professor Cheryl Glenn**, from The Pennsylvania State University, will be in Edmonton.

Her achievements have placed her at the forefront of her discipline. Her stature is due to an impressive combination of cutting edge research, commitment to teaching, and service—most notably as the immediate past president of the major international professional association for the post-secondary teaching of writing.

Fifteen days won't be enough time for U of A to take full advantage of all she has to offer, in spite of the superhuman schedule Professor Glenn has agreed to (in addition to office hours and numerous social events):

- 8 class visits (on 4 campuses—North, CSJ, Augustana, Maskwachees Cultural College);
- 9 public talks or workshops (North Campus, CSJ, Augustana, Grant MacEwan, Concordia);
- a Town/Gown Lecture at the Stanley Milner Theatre on September 24, an event that Edmonton Public Library is partnering with U of A to present;
- an all-day Saturday workshop in Lister Conference Centre, open to 240 current and future Alberta teachers.

Professor Glenn's research on the rhetoric of silence—in politics, in public life and democratic deliberation, in classrooms, in the Deaf community, in religious practice, in native communities, in women's lives, and even in the field of rhetoric itself – will attract many (on campus and off) and will have a significant impact on writing and the teaching of writing and rhetoric in Alberta.

### ∞ Campus Alberta Writing Studies (CAWS)

The **2<sup>nd</sup> CAWS Colloquium** will take place this April in Red Deer or Calgary. Check the Writing Initiatives website for details: <http://www.writinginitiatives.ualberta.ca/>.

Writing Initiatives  
University of Alberta  
Centre for Writers  
Writing Studies  
Writing Across the Curriculum



## News

### ∞ Campus Alberta Writing Studies Colloquium (CAWS)

The first CAWS Colloquium was held 17 December 2009 at the U of A. Twenty people representing multiple universities, colleges, campuses, and faculties exchanged ideas in response to two presentations: Jill McClay (Faculty of Education, U of A) described her "Research on the teaching of writing in Canadian middle-grades classrooms: Case Studies and the National Picture" and Jillian Skeffington (English Dept., Grant MacEwan University) sketched the growth of Writing Studies as a discipline in the US ("From first-year requirement to program of study").

### ∞ Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Newsletter

Writing Across the Curriculum's first newsletter can be accessed online at <http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/WAC/Newsletter/NewsletterWinter2010.aspx>

## Focus on U of Alberta Writing Centres

### The Bilingual Writing Centre/Centre d'écriture bilingue at Campus Saint-Jean

Sheena Wilson, Director, Centre d'écriture bilingue, Campus Saint-Jean

In 2006, Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) opened the doors of a bilingual writing centre, housed in La Centrale, the student resource centre that offers support in a number of disciplines and courses in the arts, humanities and sciences. Although CSJ has supported its students with a French writing centre for over 20 years, the challenge of responding to changing student constituencies and needs made a bilingual writing centre necessary.

Students at CSJ are not homogeneously Francophone: a number are Franco-Albertan; another percentage are Québécois; yet another contingent is international, coming predominantly from former French-speaking colonies and directly from France; and finally, a significant number, ranging from 50% up to 65% of the total student population over the last eight years, are French immersion. Each of these constituencies has different relationships to the English and French languages and cultures. Some students come to study at CSJ because here they can study in French—the language in which they can claim the greatest proficiency—while learning English through immersion in the wider Anglophone university and community. In so doing, they hope to broaden their life experiences and improve their future employment possibilities. Certain French-speaking Anglophones have likewise chosen to study at CSJ with the intention of continuing to improve their French language skills and expand their post-graduation opportunities.

Therefore, at CSJ, we offer support to students looking to improve and polish their communication skills in both English and French. At the Bilingual Writing Centre (its official name as of 2009, to distinguish it from La Centrale as a whole), we offer individual half hour appointments for support with either English or French writing in any of the disciplines; we also offer a number of workshops and group study sessions, in which students work in collaboration with writing fellows and their peers. These group study sessions and workshops allow students to increase their knowledge of a diverse range of academic expectations and topics and to become more autonomous learners.

In general, the writing centre at CSJ encourages and supports all efforts to master communication skills in any language—including this year for the first time, Spanish. We also offer support and coaching for oral communication, helping students to generate, organize, and present ideas for assignments in courses and programs that place high value on oral communication and presentation skills: Education, the Bilingual Business Program, and the Bilingual Nursing Program, for example.



### Writing Initiatives Newsletter Volume 1: Number 2

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## The Bilingual Writing Centre (Cont.)

This past semester, our trained writing and communication coaches, students who come from a variety of linguistic, educational, and disciplinary backgrounds, had about 700 visits, so an overwhelming number of the CSJ student population of approximately 600 students have come either once or more during the semester, in one or more languages. Our coaches have also collaborated with a number of CSJ instructors to provide group sessions and workshops to students. We hope to see even more students in the writing centre in the second term.

Whether you are an instructor or a student, we look forward to collaborating and working with you. Please feel free to e-mail me at [sheena.wilson@ualberta.ca](mailto:sheena.wilson@ualberta.ca) or stop by La Centrale at 2-52 Pavillon McMahon anytime to ask questions or offer suggestions. You can also go online at <http://www2.csj.ualberta.ca/centredecriture/> to access general information, see announcements, view our promotional videos, make appointments, check workshop times, or make use of our writing resources.

## Writing: Centred in Camrose

Craig Peterson, Director of the Writing Centre, Augustana Campus

Located in our new library, the Augustana Writing Centre is open daily for a total of 11 hours per week, but extends its hours of operation at peak times to ensure that demand for its services is always met. The services of the Writing Centre are made available to all writers in the Augustana community—students, staff, and instructors alike.

The Centre is staffed by its director, Dr. Craig Peterson, and by nine peer tutors who serve there as part of a Community Service Learning credit course entitled "Introduction to Writing-Centre and L2-Learning Practices." The peer tutors are well trained and can provide their fellow students—in one-on-one tutoring sessions that last for 30 minutes—with confidential and supportive feedback on any writing project. Our tutors especially like to encourage student writers to establish and work toward long-term writing goals.

The Writing Centre is also the site of on-going, practice-based research focused on how peer tutors can best meet the needs of the growing number of writers at Augustana who have backgrounds in languages other than English. Camrose is a more culturally-homogeneous locale than Edmonton and therefore lacks the sort of support that is readily available for international students in the more multi-cultural city. In light of this, the tutors at the Writing Centre are quickly learning to use their new space in the library as a place to foster a sense of community between students of all cultural backgrounds. We are especially interested this year in engaging L2 students (students who are taking courses in their second language) with tutors in a shared experience of mutual teaching and learning about the different cultural backgrounds that make up the increasingly multi-cultural Augustana Campus.

Our Writing Centre is young—only four years old. But our lack of years belies our abilities, and we can confidently say that the Writing Centre at Augustana is the write place to be. <http://www.augustana.ualberta.ca/centres/writingcentre>

## Resourcing Writers from Beginning to End: U of A's Academic Support Centre

Stephen Kuntz, Director, Writing Resources, North Campus

Writing Resources, based in the Academic Support Centre in the Students' Union Building, has been aiding students with their writing for 20 years. Supporting pre-university students at post-docs, Writing Resources has attempted to meet the needs of students at any point in the writing journey with experienced guides who have taught and graded at the university level.

## Resourcing Writers from Beginning to End (Cont.)

As well as offering our core "Writing for University" six-week workshop, we also teach seminars on writing in-class essays, addressing issues of grammar and style, and avoiding plagiarism.

In order to address the needs of graduate students, last year we added a graduate writing advisor to our staff enabling us to offer grad specific services including the popular six-week workshop "Creating a Compelling Thesis" and detailed seminars focused on writing literature reviews, funding proposals, abstracts, and dissertation proposals, and on overcoming writer's block.

This past semester, Writing Resources gave eight multiple-class workshops, 15 three-hour seminars, and 265 consults, racking up more than 3200 hours of student contact. With only two staff members and the need to generate revenue, the challenge has been to balance meeting with students for extensive one-on-one consultations that take a great deal of time with offering seminars or attending classes at the request of instructors. The needs have been so great that we have been turning students away at busy times.

Currently, Writing Resources in conjunction with the Learning Resource arm of our centre and other units on campus are looking at more holistically addressing the issue of supporting, engaging, and retaining students to meet the mandate of the University, particularly in the areas of international and graduate students. If faculty or students have questions they can go to our website, <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/academicssupport/>, or contact me directly.

## What is Writing Studies?

Betsy Sargent, Director of Writing Initiatives & Interim Director, Writing Studies

Unlike spoken language, which healthy human children pick up with astonishing speed long before they attend school, written language always requires instruction. There have been no cultures without language, but there have been many oral traditions without writing. Writing is, before anything else, "a technology for storing speech sounds," for removing thought from its rich but also restricting habitat in sound and making it visible.

Writing Studies claims this phenomenon as a subject of study, and in particular, its impact on the production and transmission of knowledge across disciplines and contexts.

Research in the field focuses on everything from how we write (writing processes in different individuals, genres, discourse communities, and national cultures); to how we teach writing and develop expertise in particular forms of writing; to how writing shapes and transforms thought.

Since January 1, 2009, **Writing Studies (WRS)** has been housed in the **Office of Interdisciplinary Studies (OIS)** in the **Faculty of Arts**. Our first course, **Writing Studies 101: Exploring Writing**, is in high demand—all of this year's sections have registered full with long waiting lists (this term, over eighty students signed up to receive alerts if space opened up in the course). WRS 101 is now accepted in many U of A degree programs as fulfilling \*3 of any required credits in Writing/English.

WRS 101 has been an integral part of Science 100 for two years; however, starting fall 2010, **WRS 103: Introduction to Writing in the Sciences**, a new course developed by Heather Graves, will be taught as part of Science 100.

Ten WRS courses are in the U of A calendar now at both the undergraduate and graduate level; four more courses are currently making their way through the necessary approval mechanisms. We're grateful for the support of OIS, especially in the long process of developing strong graduate and undergraduate Writing Studies programs and strengthening our offerings in Writing Studies and Rhetoric.



Tutors in the Centre for Writers, January 2010, making the new tutoring space (dubbed C4W2) as welcoming as C4W1. This second room (also on the ground floor of Assiniboia, Room 1-23) will allow the C4W to offer appointments to more students during periods of peak demand.

(L-R) Emily de Caen, Kayla Ermantrout & Aly Koskela.  
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