

THE PAPER CHASE

A NEWSLETTER FOR WRITERS AT AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE

Fall 2007

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Happy Birthday CWS!

by Shannon Yarbrough

What's significant about the year 1987? Well, on January 3rd Aretha Franklin became the first woman to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame; on April 19th "The Simpsons" aired for the first time; on May 11th the first heart-lung transplant was performed in Baltimore, Maryland; and on December 29th Prozac debuted in the U.S. Many of us were born and Agnes Scott was only two years shy of its centennial.

Amidst all of this excitement, another very important event was taking place. Agnes Scott's English department chair, Linda Hubert, was brainstorming a way to help students improve their writing. Buttrick 306 was designated the Writing Workshop, where two students began tutoring their peers in English and other subjects. With the help of the Kellogg Foundation and Myrtle Lewin (who still serves as a Professor of Mathematics), the Workshop was furnished and provided computers and other equipment. The following year Christine Cozzens became the director and she now oversees the 16 tutors here to meet your writing needs.

The Speaking Center was conceived in 1996 as a response to a desire to expand the Writing Workshop. The College was growing and students were seeking more meaningful work on campus, so expansion seemed like an obvious solution. In addition, professors were beginning to emphasize oral presentations in the classroom and a need rose for more formal attention to training in public speaking and other oral presentation skills. Dudley Sanders (who still serves as a Professor of Theatre) drew up a proposal and the Center for Writing and Speaking was born.

In addition to celebrating Aretha Frankin, "The Simpsons", heart-lung transplants, and Prozac, the Center for Writing and Speaking invites you to join us in celebrating 20 years of peer tutoring in writing and 10 years of tutoring speaking at Agnes Scott. Besides coming in to meet with us, look out for more updates about a CWS birthday bash later this year!



Writer's Spotlight: An Interview with Jessica Chesler

by Hika Anani

"We're big storytellers in my family."

I'm sitting comfortably in the Fireplace Lounge with Jessica Chesler as we discuss what inspires her to put pen to paper and transform her world. She's a transfer student and philosophy major, which seems to confuse some people. Everyone assumes that only English majors write, but for Jessica it's a matter of who has something to say—a story to tell. So what's her story?

Jessica laughs as she talks about the debut of her writing career in the second grade. An observant teacher advised her mother to keep a pen and paper in front of her at all times. From then on, Jessica has written anything that comes to mind. Born into a family of storytellers, it was simply a matter of transferring her ideas to paper.

But this doesn't mean that it has always been easy for her to share. For a long time no one got to see her work. Jessica had always considered her writing to be a private affair—a conversation with herself. The goal of her writing was not to entertain anyone or to gain their approval. What made her change her mind? "I'm ready to be criticized." Jessica feels that she has reached a point where writing is no longer just about her own pleasure or creative expression. It's not so much that she wants others to feel the same way about her work that she does, she just wants to know that what she writes is good. It's time for a critical opinion that will push her skill to a more refined and precise level than it has been before. And maybe there's a slight need for the approval of others. Maybe.

So, what does Jessica like to write? "I tried to stick to fiction, but nonfiction crept in," she admits. There is no one genre that Jessica feels she can claim as her own. She smiles as she recounts an Introduction to Nonfiction class that she took here at Agnes. That semester she realized that real life held as many story options as her imagination. But the thread that ties all of her work together is humor. Not "funny haha," but a

mature humor that explores the absurdity of life and human fallibility. "I've tried to mimic others that I love, but it doesn't work." Jessica finds that her reading and writing interests constantly change as her view of the world evolves. A piece that she has been working on she was sixteen has yet to be completed as she rediscovers her social, cultural, and moral standards.



As Jessica described to me the pieces that she is currently working on, I asked her what the process is like for her. "It comes in spurts. And never from beginning to end. I tend to feel an ending and then struggle for the beginnings that get me to that end." She continues to live by the advice of her second grade teacher, keeping a notebook and pen nearby. Anything that strikes her attention—a quote, a piece of art, something she overheard in conversation is archived for future inspiration. The phrase that recently found a place in her notebook is

"a buzzing mass of hopeless confusion."

And to Jessica this is true. "Isn't this part of why we write? To make sense of some of that confusion." And she always starts with pen and paper. Her thoughts are only transferred to a computer if they seem to be going somewhere.

And as for going somewhere, what does Jessica predict for her writing future? "I don't know. I would like to be an editor or a publisher someday." Or perhaps just an English teacher with a published short story or novel. "I don't feel the need to change the world or answer all the human questions. I just write because I can and because I want to."

Don't forget that the Writing Center is open 24/7!

The Googleization of My Life

by Caro Simpkins

My Google Reader overwhelms me. Collecting over twenty feeds, I consistently log on to see 400, 500, and sometimes even 600 unread items. Most of them are one-second snips of news that I get from the five or six news sources that feed into my reader— car accidents and public scandals from back home in the Tennessean, ridiculous news from CNN, and even headlines from Agnes Scott's Profile present me with articles to connect me, however briefly, to everywhere I've been. I also subscribe to an absurd number of blogs on various topics ranging from veganism to revolutionary knitting to librarian activism. I filter my information very strategically, and recently I've started to wonder what that really means— directly reading the opinions of others in a way that I've never really experienced before. What then does it mean to be directly connected to someone else's opinion?

I'll admit it—I have a couple of blogs, too. I have a blog for my knitting and crafting adventures where I post

pictures and production details of the stuffed toys and underwear and scarves that I knit. I have a more personal blog that I use mainly as a somewhat less public forum to discuss gender, queerness, and life minutiae that no doubt is relatively uninteresting in the grand scheme of things. Over the summer, I tried to start a topical blog looking at my recent biking adventures and dabbings in veganism, but that fell to the wayside in light of trying to keep up with everyone else's online adventures. Most of the writing that I do is overwhelmingly put into the public sphere through these blogs, fairly open to criticism and critique. The blogs I subscribe to also allow me to critique and trade thoughts directly with their writers. The blogs I write and the blogs I read, both personal and private, form a network of ideas and identity, allowing for opinions both small and grand to float around, primed for response.

Particularly interesting is the degree to which I rely on blogs to interpret news. The feeds that I subscribe to certainly have a regional slant, from something

as small as news on our campus to world news from BBC. However, opinion blogs like the ones I read relating to library activism, copyright issues, and the labor movement all tailor the news that I receive, delving deeper, past the headline, and removing the objective lens. These blogs move beyond personal experience and work to bring to light much more than daily events; instead, they critique how we live through those events.

Blogging allows writers to publish their work and opinion on a scale that is increasingly accessible to public analysis. Opinion blogs allow for current events to be interpreted on a personal level, and then for those interpretations to be shared and examined. Perhaps I should move past my personal and crafty blogging to something more substantial as critiquing the situations that go on around me. Maybe someone out there wants to read the news from the slant of a 19-year-old vegetarian bike-riding queer pre-librarian knitter?

CWS Calendar of Events

November 9 th :	Writing Center Special Event at 10 am: <i>Careers in Writing</i>
November 13 th :	Speaking Center Special Event from 5:30 to 6:45 pm: <i>Impromptu Speech Contest</i>
December 10 th :	Speaking Center ends regular hours— meet by appointment only
December 11-12 th :	Extra Walk-In Hours in the Writing Center
December 18 th :	Writing Center ends regular hours; CWS closes
January 15 th :	CWS opens for the spring semester.
February 12 th :	Speaking Center Workshop: "Improving your Speaking Style"
February 25 th :	Writing Center Special Event: "Faculty Tell All About Their Writing Secrets"

Facebook Academia: Learning About Writing Through Facebook

by Louisa Hill

Usually the best time to update your Facebook profile is the night before a paper is due. What may be thought of as mindless procrastination may instead be an astute exercise of critical thinking geared toward paper-writing. Facebook is an interdisciplinary academic tool that outlines paper-writing theory to put into practice.

Each profile page, like each paper, is different and personally connected to the author.

In a paper, you must first establish a context to address your topic. Network, Name, and Birthday can easily translate into important names and background information for your topic. It also clarifies what you are Looking for or Interested in proving. By introducing the subject in the beginning, you establish the focus of the rest of the paper.

The middle of your profile corresponds to the body of the paper. What do you want to say about your topic? What are you trying to prove? How are you going to do that? This may take the form of an exploration of a historical event or an examination of your favorite television shows. Don't forget to use evidence to help prove and clarify your points. Favorite Quotes are an example of using outside texts to support your claims.

Like the conclusion of a paper, the About Me is last on the page. This is where you tie all evidence together to make a satisfying and cohesive conclusion. What information will transcend all of the pointed facts you have mentioned?

Other important parts of Facebook Academia include:

Set the tone of your paper with your Status. What perspective should the reader assume? What kind of feelings do you have about the subject? Just like your Status can give us insight into your profile, so the tone of a paper indicates how you will approach the subject.

When asked for a summary, think about News Feed. If it wouldn't make News Feed, then is it really important to mention?

What scholarly camps does this topic pertain to? Whether you are writing about economics from a Marxist perspective or defining yourself through your membership to "R. Kelly's 'Trapped in the Closet' Changed My Life Fundamentally," association with these groups allows for assumptions to be made.

To make a strong argument in a paper, one needs to analyze a situation from more than one perspective. What better way to conceptualize this than the useful Wall-to-Wall feature? Whether you are Facebook-stalking your Friends' conversations or having to compare and contrast different ideas or points of view, Wall-to-Wall can help ideate the necessity of seeing two sides of a situation.

If you can master Facebook, you can succeed at writing papers. Both are founded on the desire to share your ideas with an audience. So after your Facebook indulgence the night before the deadline, get back to writing that paper. It can be as fun as poking!

about the Paper Chase

The Paper Chase is a semesterly magazine for the Agnes Scott community written and published by the staff of the Writing Center. Through it we aim to highlight the ways in which our status as writers unites students of all disciplines and other members of the campus community - faculty as well as staff. We welcome submissions of short pieces of writing (creative or otherwise). Please e-mail WritingCenter@agnesscott.edu with any questions, comments, or submissions.

Faculty Tell All: Writing in the Disciplines

by **Betsye Mullaney**

Didn't come to last spring's Faculty Tell-All Workshop about writing in the disciplines? Want to know something about those other papers you write, the ones that aren't for English classes? Thanks to a group of kindhearted professors, you too can learn helpful hints for writing in diverse subjects at Agnes Scott.

Philosophy

In philosophy papers, it's all about the argument. Plan ahead and think about what you're going to say! Carefully reason the argument of your paper. Anticipate objections to your argument and address them. Have somebody else read the paper and raise objections that you might not see. Leave the paper alone for a while, come back to it with a fresh mind, and rethink what you're saying in the paper. Remember, you can't write a philosophy paper (or any other paper) in just one sitting! See *Handout No. 31: Writing in Philosophy*

The Sciences

Most of your professors have a particular set of rules they would like you to follow when you write a lab report. Follow them closely! In general, however, every lab report has specific sections that you must include. The reports should have a logical, coherent structure that is designed to inform (not impress) the reader. Write as clearly and as precisely as possible; focus on the particular subject of the report. The reader should not need to make any inferences in places where you leave out information.

Keep in mind as you write about your experiment that other scientists must be able to replicate what you did. Be persuasive in the results and conclusions sections.

Make sure that you include graphs and tables throughout the paper. It is important to be able to communicate using both text and non-text in science. Tables should be easy to read and understand independently from the rest of the paper. Their titles should be clear, relevant, and simple.

Everything you include in the report must be academically justified. In other words, it must be scientifically verifiable! And, finally, revise! Peer editing and reviewing are valuable tools to help you improve the report. See *Handouts No. 14 (Biology) and No. 24 (Chemistry) for help writing lab reports.*

Math

When you write a mathematics paper, articulate an objective. This is similar to a thesis or argument. Once you've defined your objective, you can map out the rest of the paper. And if you need more information on writing math papers, there's also a handout in the Writing Center! See *Handout No. 34: Writing in Math is Integral*

Economics

Use plenty of quantitative support in your papers. Numbers count! And remember the Golden Rule: Revise, revise, revise.

Sociology and Anthropology

Do your homework before you write; review relevant literature and see what others find of interest in your topic of study. Sometimes you can even look at the way other authors structure their articles or books; you might be able to glean some helpful hints. (Always cite if you borrow information, of course!) When you discuss tables and figures, either your own or somebody else's, include a brief reference to the table itself and spend your time analyzing, not describing. For more detailed information about writing in sociology and anthropology, consult the brand new Writing Center handout!

History

Again, it's all about your argument! Think about what you want to say before you write. Argue using clear, legitimate reasoning (sound familiar?). Furthermore, have a balanced argument that takes all the relevant evidence into account.

As you read and write more in history, you will learn new terms and new vocabulary for whatever you study. But the best way to be clear and effective is to use your own voice. Use the words you know! And we know what's next: revise!

See *Handout No. 53:*

Historiographical Essays

Some final words of wisdom...

Most of the principles of good writing apply to whatever type of

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A New Type of Traveler: An Interview with Spring 2007 Travel Writing Workshop Participant Yaya Guo

by Michelle Turney (former tutor and Class of 2007)

"This is strange," Yaya Guo laughs nervously, "I am not used to being interviewed."

We are huddled over a table at the Black Cat Café after her shift has ended and the other employee sweeps up the remains of the day. Yaya leans forward attentively, and laughs every time that she is taken aback by a question. Since she first started attending the Travel Writing Workshop, I have desired to learn more about what fresh perspective she could offer in a workshop that has generally drawn American students who have studied abroad, not international students studying here at Agnes Scott.

Over a six week period, the travel writing workshop explored the genre of travel writing and aided students in preparing a story for submission to *Abroad View*, a student-edited travel magazine. The participants delved into the facets of writing such as structure, pacing, style and tone, learning from one another and from guest lecturers and experienced travel writers, Dr. Cozzens and Gingle Lee ('07).

Yaya wrote her article about her hometown in the Chengdu province of China where "people know how to have fun." While she does not consider herself a writer, her travel essay, an astute and comical portrayal of the seemingly anarchic melee that follows catching a bus in her hometown, suggests otherwise. She recounts how every character, from children to dignified ladies, battles to assert her dominance. Yaya describes the awareness she gained while participating in the workshop: "When I write, I never thought about

the different ways to express such as pace or length of sentence." For her bus story, Yaya employed these techniques to recreate the frenzy of the intense competition within a crowd to secure a seat on the bus. "I want people to feel as though I feel when they go there."



However, writing about her hometown became more than just a comical reflection. Yaya explained the more personal revelations she experienced through writing in her second language. "It is a different writing experience. I pay more attention to feelings in English. In Chinese, I pay attention to style." As she explained, Chinese writing, especially poetry, pays close attention to structure and meter. Good writing emanates

from presentation and the delicacy of the characters. Yaya relates this difference to a greater cultural diversion: "In China, people control their feelings. Here there is more freedom."

Despite Yaya's denial of her writing abilities, her reflections on the writing experience signal her cultivation of artistic voice through two different cultural interfaces. However, this self-reflection through writing coupled with her comment,

"I write because I am curious about myself,"

signals that her voice will not stop developing anytime soon.

Community Voices

Do you have a special place where you go to write?

photos/compilation by Olivia White



"I really enjoy writing in a **big comfy chair** at Java Monkey. It gets my creative juices flowing!"

-Ella Tackett



I prefer to start my paper at 11 p.m. in the **TPS** and then stay there all night, drinking tea and **taking brief YouTube breaks.**

-Caroline Borden



"When I took my poetry-writing course, I tended to write on my bed late at night...but then I fell asleep and had to resort to my dorm desk."

-Shannon Yarbrough



"I love to write using **someone else's laptop** while in bed. It's most comfortable and I can surround myself with everything I **need** to write for a particular paper.

-Briana Bergstrom

Writer's Gallery

Really

by Tanzania Nevels

I am in a skin not of my own choosing
Running from my blackness
Trying to escape my history
Cause when they look at me
They don't see a Phd.
Only a philosophy
Contaminated with bigotry
That's a hop, skip, and jump away from anarchy
Damn will there ever be any rest for me
But you may say
Does it really matter?
I say it matters
Really

Because as soon as I define myself
I have to turn around and defend myself
Against this Utopia of confusion
Which houses a social construct of exclusion
Shrouded in mass quantities of disillusion
Bordering on inequality, oppression
Shake your head musings
about the racial, economic, and social climate
pilfering my consciousness
But you may say
Does it really matter?
I say it matters
Really

Cause see I've already had many dreams deferred
And opportunities denied
Walked in the rain with the criticized
Talked with no shame to the ostracized
Studied the game with the institutionalized
Diligently kept my eye on the prize
Until it started itching with discontent
For money spent on a war
Not of my consent
But you may say
Does it really matter?
I say it matters
Really

No longer can you lock me out without locking yourself in
No longer will I concern myself with your definition of beauty
No longer will you denounce my legacy of royalty
No longer will you extinguish the fires of faith and loyalty
With veiled threats and propaganda dressed up like poetry

No longer will I wait in expectation for the Messiah to come
Cause like the messiah's before me
Messiah Moses, Messiah Martin, Messiah Malcolm
Messiah Mandela, Messiah Marley, Messiah Mayfield
I know
I am the one I've been waiting for
To step out from the shadows
And believe his eye is on the sparrow
And he watches over me
To fight for equality and common decency
To uphold the right and dispute the wrong
To stimulate dialogue
And discover the answer to
Messiah Marvin's question
Echoing throughout the universe
What's goin on?
What's goin on?

But you may say
Does it really matter?
I say it matters
Really

Words on Writing

"I believe everyone has a voice and a story to tell. The only difference is that some of us are more courageous about exposing ourselves to the world, through our art, whether it be writing poetry, music, painting, etc... If writing is something that interests you, as the Nike ad would say, Just Do It. Whatever form it may take, embrace it, write from a place of integrity, and never stop discovering who you are."

Tanzania Nevels

Locked Up

by Betsy Gaultney

I am about to walk out the door to go to a 10:00 meeting with an organization on the Agnes Scott College campus. I go to open my door (it is unlocked) and it will not open. I can turn the knob and pull but nothing happens. I love to talk to myself, I will admit this. I have put it down to living alone and being plain verbal. So I am telling myself, "You are kidding" and "this is not happening." (As if I can convince the door to open.) I am not freaking out yet. I mean Nancy Drew can get out of weirder situations than this, so why can't I? That's it! I thought about what she would do and ended up slipping a credit card in the door. (Don't try it. That does not work.) We are not allowed to open windows. I would have broken rules to get out of the room. But I am on the third floor of my building. So I didn't light on the idea for long.

By this time, I am calling friends that I know are in my dorm, Inman. They do not answer because they are

asleep or in class. I am realizing that I am missing meetings so I email everyone with, "I am locked in my dorm room and can't come." I finally get a friend who I ended up waking up. I am trying to tell her that I am locked in my room. I apologized briefly and explained the situation. I missed my first meeting and am working on missing the second one. I, of course, have forgotten the Resident Assistant's name and I don't have her number. They usually leave it outside their door, but I am locked in my room. My friend calls the RA through some connections and by the time she gives me her number the RA is standing on the other side of the door.

She is using the master key to try and get me out. The key does not work. One of the custodians is trying her key. It does not work. The RA has an 11 o'clock class and she asks if I want her to stay. I appreciate her concern; it's not as if I'm locked in a storage closet. I am in my room—my home away from home. I am surrounded by my stuff. I am okay now that someone knew that I was stuck. If it got bad I could eat raw noodles. I am okay. I did not want her to miss a class. I

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On Being a Chair

by Kimberly Crews

Listen. I do not know what it is about being rounded toward the lower spectrum of my body, but skinny people love to sit on me. So. On being a chair. This is a topic I can relate to fairly well. Butts, bunions, and lumps are rushed and plopped, swung and fall, mount and crawl on me, the chair. Sitting 5 feet 6 inches I am not the tallest playground, but I have enough surface area to make a difference. My manufacture chose to don my arms with a warmed gold, while my legs are colorfully painted with warm brown tones and freckled black here and there. At the moment the mechanics of my edition are complex but do-able. The first step would be to have all the parts from the box. Now, some chairs already come assembled without mistakes, but the worthwhile chairs are made with sweat and blood and strain. This is the beginning for every piece of merchandise.

Frequently, things just stop existing: like a blinking cursor line deleting mere letters than an orchestra of

living words. A very compulsive detail to check, persons are anal about the search and destroying of anomalies. They look for missing, damaged, or disfigured parts and if any of these acts of nature should occur, a great sense of touch is lost. An object such as a chair lives to be touched; this is its purpose—to be touched; to gain then to give. People will smile and nod and pass the object by while buying, leaving a wide circumference of space between the merchandise and that last step of sanity for the chair. Anything less than social correctness is nothing. It melts and leaks through the grass somewhere.

Though people do not like to admit it, they love relaxing into an over-plush chair. I've never known a person to snuggle into the gut of a straight back Captains chair and wished to stay there for the rest of their lives. The Captains chair is a classic design as much as the chaise chair of Greece, France and Rome, but my extras, to me, are my strengths, then bulging deformities.

Chairs can be made by hands. A soldier's rough, ruined hands clasping an Iraqi brother. Palm to palm, fingers

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International Perspectives on Writing

by Leticia Santos

As a Writing Center tutor, I am always happy to see international students from countries across the globe coming in to get help with their writing. Often times they are struggling with the language barrier, as English is not their first language. Other times, they want clarification on the expectations of professors in the United States. However, over time, they overcome these obstacles and become better writers and better communicators. In these cases, one often thinks about how our academic system helps international students in this process. However, I wanted to understand what kinds of backgrounds these students were coming from academically and what their experiences and techniques have been while writing in a foreign country. I asked a series of questions to four international students to see what their thoughts were.

The students that answered had variations in their thoughts on the differences between writing expectations in the United States and expectations in their own countries. Elisabeth Meir said that she was surprised that plagiarism was such a big issue. "It is also important in Germany but I am not scared to do something wrong and to be punished for it," she explains. Several of the students expounded on things that they think American students take for granted in our educational system. Cui Jing found it strange to place a thesis at the beginning of a paper because, "if the readers know what I want to talk about at the beginning, why should they continue reading the rest of my paper?" Although many of the students discussed how they enjoyed more student-teacher interaction and the environment at Agnes Scott, their statements show the cultural and linguistic differences that most international students must face in a new location.

Several of the students shared stories with me about challenges that they have faced when writing in

English. The first was the idea of translating ideas from one language to another. Cui said that "In one of my papers, I tried to describe the initial state of a city's foundation. I checked the Chinese-English dictionary and found the word "embryo". My writing center tutor told me that she had only seen that word in high school biology textbooks." Hanwen also said that she found writing in English difficult because "when people re-write your sentence, it's not your language any more." Both of these insights speak to the difficulty of translating not only words, but whole feelings and ideas into another language.

When asked about what techniques and developments they went through during the writing process, all of the students had interesting insights. Hanwen Li said that for her, "the thought always comes first," and that the "meaning is more important than the wording." Nelcarne expanded on this point by describing how she would "type fast and as much as I can without worrying about grammar and sentence structure. Then I go back and read it out loud to myself, to see where my mistakes are." These techniques are useful to both international writers and writers in the United States, as they promote clear argument and a thorough writing process that allows for improvement.

It is true that many international students must face challenges that break down language and cultural barriers in order to become better communicators in a foreign environment. However, it is also important to consider that many students from the United States will have to face this challenge as well. In fact, there are challenges and experiences that U.S. students must face in their own writing everyday, and the opinions, experiences and skills of students from around the world can help to overcome them.

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paper you wish to write, whether a chemistry lab report or a historiographical essay. There are, of course, standard practices and conventions in every field. You will excel if you make sure to adapt to the discipline in which you write. Never hesitate to talk to your professor if you have questions or concerns about the types of papers you write for your classes. But if there's something to remember that will almost always guarantee a better paper, and will make you a better thinker, it's that Golden Rule: Revise, revise, revise! And at the Writing Center, we're always here to help you brainstorm, write, rethink and revise your papers.

On Writing Abroad: Tutor Maggie Greaves Shares Her Experiences on Writing in England

by Maggie Greaves

I've tutored a lot of international students in writing, and when I became an international student in my own language, I never thought my experiences would overlap with theirs. I, after all, was going to England, a nation that had birthed my own literary language, traditions, and conventions. I already knew to leave out the pesky comma before 'and' in a list, how to spell 'colour' and even to use single quotation marks instead of double ones. I could not wait to impress my English professors with my sensitive, nuanced understanding of their grammatical culture. But when it quickly became apparent that no one could have cared less about my punctuating brilliance, I had to face the more fundamental differences between English and American writing. As I adjusted to writing in an English institution my conception of writing conventions shifted, leaving me with a refreshed and more grueling approach to the writing process.

I had a lot more to adjust to than merely the differences in punctuation and spelling (which, as it happened, were more difficult than I'd haughtily expected—how was I supposed to know about 'gaol' for 'jail' or, more embarrassingly, 'pants' for 'panties'?). And, most difficult of all, I was given absolutely no guidance on how to write my papers. There was a page in each course syllabus giving us options for essay topics as well as instructions on how to write and support a thesis statement. But did we need sources? What kinds of sources did these people use, and how should I cite them? How long could my papers be? Would the

Paper writing was the dead child of the English classroom, something everyone knew the details of and knew even better not to discuss...

professors look at drafts, or do Britons even write drafts? Not once was a paper mentioned in class, not even secretly among anxious students before and after the lectures, not even in a friendly professor's reminder

of the due date. Paper writing was the dead child of the English classroom, something everyone knew the details of and knew even better not to discuss, and something I as an outsider would be committing an unforgivable faux pas to bring up.

My first reaction to writing in England was animosity. This feeling was only intensified by my first stressful paper meeting with my science fiction professor. 'William?' I called to get his attention as I stood in the doorway of his office. 'Dr Stevenson, please,' he answered, although he'd signed his email scheduling this appointment as 'William.' Things did not improve. In my nervousness, I probably defaulted to arrogant

What began as a rebuttal to this professor ended as a revamping of my entire writing process.

mode, which he responded to with condescension that I immediately attributed to his obvious hatred of all Americans. When I asked him how to go about organising my paper, he asked me if I had read the syllabus. When I asked him what sources I should read to inform my paper on entropy, he handed me a book full of equations explaining entropy in mathematical rather than literary terms. When I asked him how I could use a book like this in a literature paper, he answered that I probably wouldn't actually use it but it was nonetheless important to read and cite in my bibliography. When I next asked him for sources that I could actually cite in my paper, I was told that the Liverpool library has 'a lovely science fiction collection.' I was too embarrassed to tell him that I was utterly terrified to ride the train to Liverpool, much less find the library once I arrived in the unfamiliar city (if I could even find my way out of the train station, of course). How many of the international students I tutored at home, I wondered, were hindered by such small-seeming obstacles that had absolutely nothing to

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The Writing Center Book Club

A Review of John Connelly's *The Book of Lost Things*

by Rebecca Poole

The Book of Lost Things, the latest offering from Irish novelist John Connelly, is a poignant and lyrical look at death through adolescent eyes. A homage to storytelling and the power of myth, *Lost Things* begins appropriately with, "Once upon a time." What follows is a bittersweet, coming of age tale that blurs the lines between fantasy and reality, and speaks to both the pain of loss and the redemptive power of forgiveness.

Set in London during the Second World War, Connelly's novel follows twelve year-old David as he struggles to come to terms with the death of his mother and his father's remarriage. As David withdraws from his family to seek solace in books, he finds himself increasingly troubled by strange visions and voices no one else can hear. Eventually, this world of the margins overwhelms David's everyday existence, and a dark modern fairy tale is born.

In an inversion of reality reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*, Connelly transplants his protagonist into a strange and menacing landscape where mythical figures and modern horrors coexist. Despite its otherness, this world is colored by David's subconscious fears; while there, he is forced to confront the darker facets of his own nature and reevaluate deeply rooted beliefs. What begins as David's quest to restore his lost mother becomes a quest to overcome his own fears and prejudices. As he does so, David takes his first steps toward maturity.

Despite a few lighter moments—David has a particularly humorous encounter with a band of communist dwarfs—Connelly's dark imagination lends his novel an air of melancholy that it never quite shakes. Readers will enjoy Connelly's clever re-imagining of classic stories, and should find it easy to empathize with David following his mother's death, but may find his petulance growing tiresome as the novel progresses. Nevertheless, *Lost Things* is an engrossingly clever and genuinely moving novel that is worth the discerning reader's attention.

Food and Forethought: A Review of Amy Sedaris's *I Like You: Hospitality Under the Influence*

by Shelby Zimmer

Have you ever wondered what you'd get if you crossed Martha Stewart with David Sedaris? The answer is Amy Sedaris's *I Like You: Hospitality Under the Influence*. With a brilliant combination of serious recipes (Coconut Custard Ice Cream, for example), manners tips (ALWAYS R.S.V.P), and witty – at times nonsensical – suggestions for entertaining ("always exploit your guests for money" and "don't ask your blind date difficult questions such as *Do you tip a cobbler?*"), Amy manages to thoroughly entertain and enlighten the reader while mocking Martha Stewart, Good Housekeeping types at the same time. Such a feat, I believe, could only be accomplished by someone in the Sedaris family.

Narrowing down my favorite parts of the book is difficult as I read all 304 pages in one sitting and laughed out loud the whole way through. Some of the highlights, though, are the Blind Date Conversational Suggestions (p. 49), and ideas for children's party games: Play Grown-Up, P.O.W., etc. (p. 110). The section on entertaining the elderly is in large print and there are also pages devoted to entertaining lumberjacks and gypsies.

At first I was a little wary of the recipes, but upon further review they are comparable to "normal" recipes, which makes the book that much more delightful—who ever thought a cookbook would make you laugh hysterically? The Perfect Party Cake (p. 107) is a nice, simple recipe to try (it involves cake mix and ice cream), but I won't ruin the experience of the recipe by trying to paraphrase what Sedaris so cleverly writes.

In summation, this book gets five gold stars and is a definite must read (also a great gift), especially if you're a fan of Amy's brother David.

Ask a Tutor: Answering Your Questions About Writing

by Betsye Mullaney

Dear Betsye,

I have to take a stand on a controversial subject for my next paper. How do I avoid offending people?

- Hesitant Heather

I sympathize with your dilemma, but keep in mind that you will not be able to avoid offending everyone. There might always be someone who takes issue with what you write. Nonetheless there are a few precautions you can take when writing this type of paper.

1. Consider a broad audience as you write. Hopefully, the arguments for your position will be based on logic and reason that appeal to everyone, not on your personal opinions and beliefs. You don't want to base your arguments on, for example, your religion. Doing so will alienate the readers who do not share your beliefs, making it much more likely that you will offend them.

2. Address the arguments of those who disagree with you. You can admit the validity of another's argument while still claiming the superiority of your position. Doing so will strengthen your own argument as well.



3. Remember to use appropriate language. Use formal, academic terms and phrases. Do not slip into slang, as oftentimes this language is inappropriate when discussing controversial subjects. Besides, it should not be in your papers anyway!

4. Have someone else read your work! They can give you an outsider's opinion about whether or not your writing is offensive. As always, the Writing Center is the perfect place to visit!

Dear Betsye,

I just got a paper assignment and I think it's stupid. What do I do?

-Angry Anne

It's never fun to write when you don't like the paper assignment. Unfortunately, you still have to write this paper. Try to focus on any part of the assignment that interests or attracts you. Thinking about why you don't like the assignment might even jumpstart the brainstorming process, so that you can begin thinking about how you will tackle it. It is possible that you can talk to the professor about a different approach that would be more appealing to you. But keep in mind that professors are still professors, and they might just have some reason for the assignment that you aren't aware of.

For First Years

Separation Anxiety: What will we do without the five paragraph essay?

by Annalise Bryant

First years, let's face it. High school is over, which means no more English teachers who require a five paragraph analysis of *The Grapes of Wrath*. What do you do? Do you add the lack of five paragraph essays to your list of "high school stuff" to mourn? Of course not! Breaking away from the five paragraph theme is not only a healthy writing "break-up", but it's also quite easy to do. First, simply organize your thoughts and ideas for your paper into several categories. If you

have many different categories, begin to think about narrowing the focus of your ideas, which leads directly into the development of your thesis. After you have a tight thesis nailed down, think about how you can use your "categories" to support your thesis and the order in which you should present them. Finally, connect your categorized ideas with plenty of transitions, making sure that each point reinforces the original direction of your paper: your thesis! What's the best part of writing papers in this fashion? You'll have no anxiety about developing three specific points that all must be equally devolved in single paragraphs. And, as we all know, less anxiety will lead to a newer, more mature stage in your "relationship" with writing! Best of luck, Scotties!

Crews, continued from page 9

interlocked brown to tanned arms about chest width apart, with chests being the chair's arms and running legs being the chair's legs, and together another brother is saved from the *Butterfly* bomb wound. BOOM! It's still all about a sense of touch, the sense of comfort that persons take for grant from the suede, mesh, leather, and Ergonomic chairs. Chairs are not always made with black bolts and plastic gray wheels. Sometimes chairs are made by flesh, are flesh.

I am both burden with the heavy and the thin spectrums of human society. I am cushioned with the softest of materials: glucose, sucrose, and a build up of cells that are kneaded upon, poked, and prodded as the youngest to the oldest mark their place on me.

I have been a Bean Bag, an Easy chair, a Slumber chair, an ottoman, and even a Poofbag chair, but I've served being something other than space and time. I play the part that is given to me when needed and thus is the life of being a chair.

We are merchandise. Sold and bought daily with rules, and money, and time. I am just another piece of

merchandise made with love from my manufactures hand and damaged— some by people, my caretakers. People will use and misuse a chair and never say thank you. At sometime, within someone's life you are an object and with this title you can be one of two things. You can be the depressed and unseen, unheard object that is sat upon and reclined in, or you can be the silent, watchful, foundation that lifts the future onto the shoulders of the chair while settling the old into the plush of your lap, cuddling them as they sleep. Being a chair, a human chair is being the greatest invention mankind has ever mimicked.

Words on Writing

Life, like writing, is nothing more than a bargaining chip. It's a loaned anomaly. You keep it as long as possible. You don't understand it—you just do it. You play the hand you've been dealt.

Kimberly Crews

Greaves, continued from page 11

do with writing itself? We don't ride trains in America, so I would have more trouble procuring sources than my English peers. What unforeseeable obstacles were we taking for granted in America that could prevent our international students from writing the best papers possible?

But if my defensive animosity set up more challenges for me, it also helped me. I became determined to write the best paper I possibly could for this professor and to include American spellings so he'd know that this American could write. What began as a rebuttal to this professor ended as a revamping of my entire writing process. I spent weeks on the 1,000 word assignment. I took extensive notes on my research (gathered not from Liverpool but from my Agnes Scott access to JSTOR in the safe confines of my bedroom), I did free writing exercises, I wrote draft after draft after draft. For the first time in my life, I went through writing as a process to the very best of my ability. When I received my grade and comments, I was in for another stomach-curling cultural writing shock. Under my grade of 75% (oh how my heart fell after all my hard work!) followed the comments, 'I have no suggestions to give you on

improving this piece of writing; it is simply a brilliant—dare I say near perfect—piece of work. Sincerely, William.'

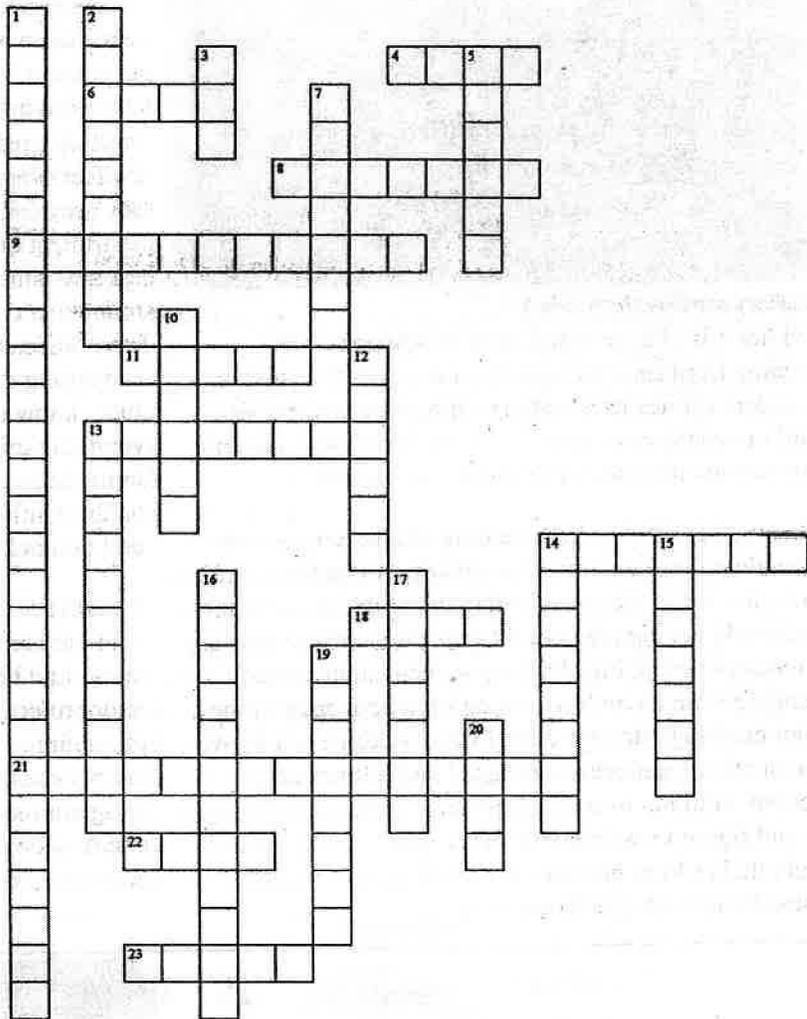
I wrote five more papers after this one and approached each one with the same rigorous approach to writing as a long process, a trend I've continued since returning home. If I hadn't been forced to confront writing in a new context, I would never have forced myself to improve my process of writing. But even with my successful overcoming of these challenges, I know that I was working in a very similar tradition to my American one. With enough hard work, I could intuit what was considered objectively strong writing in an English institution and adhere to it. I know this is not a luxury many of our international students have, but I still hope and expect that they, too, can come to a deeper understanding of traditions and processes in writing by being forced to write in alien contexts. Even something as simple as adjusting to foreign systems of punctuation and citation—systems which, I now think, make much more sense than ours—helped me to conceive of writing in a broader way. But I never did stop using American spellings in my papers.

Just for Fun: A Writing Center Crossword

created by Michelle Bach

Across

3. "We _____ cool. We/left school," from Gwendolyn Brooks famous poem
5. How tutors feel when students come to be tutored
7. Citation style generally used in humanities
8. The Writing Center's illustrious leader
9. The writer's required drug (excluding the famous alcoholic writers)
14. Agnes Scott's literary magazine
16. A rather egregious mistake that is exemplified by this sentence in a transpicuous way that is best known for, and this may be no surprise, asphyxiating clarity in writing
18. A-possibility even for undergraduates: a chance to have work viewed by the public
20. Step following draft writing in the writing process
21. "To sleep, perchance to dream- ay, there's the rub," source
22. Brainstorming technique that reduces "fear of the blank page" and allows thoughts to flow uninhibited
23. Best place for snacks, free coffee, and tutor-ific advice on a Monday night



Down

1. The Dutch scholar Erasmus said, "the desire to write grows with _____."
2. Citation style of choice in literature and languages
4. Gabriel Garcia Marquez utilized this type of realism
5. "Everyman's life is a fairy tale written by God's fingers," said _____ Christian Anderson
6. The student's favorite form of self-abuse
10. Ayn Rand's 1957 masterpiece, set in near-future USA
11. _____ comedy; Drama that treats the horrible with humor
12. A loose thesis used during the writing process is a _____ thesis
13. Toni Morrison, the first African-American to win a Nobel Prize in Literature, also won this prize for her book *Beloved*
15. A writer suffering from writer's block may await this Greek mythological figure
17. Generally fourteen lines long
19. "Never pick a fight with people who buy ink by the barrel," said _____ Clinton