

LATE Fall 2021

Monroe Community College

"There's no built-in function in any technology which can produce community. Nor can building community be done from the front of the room; it is not an exercise or a manoeuvre. Rather than code safety, rather than prescribe it, we must demonstrate it; and once safety has been established, it must be honored. In that same way, connectedness is not a strategy as much as it is an intention, not a technology but a relationship, a promise."

—Sean Michael Morris

<https://www.seanmichaelmorris.com/fostering-care-and-community-at-a-distance/>



Comp Notes



Monroe Community College
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Look inside for updates, connections, musings on the following composition and rhetoric areas of interest:

- Campus Resource Highlights
- Committee Events & Partnerships
- Comp Conferences
- Composition Myths Debunked
- Comp/Rhet. Scholarship
- Faculty Spotlight
- News
- Poetry & Art
- Student Voices

Contributors include: Jacob Bodway, Amy Burtner, Meghan Glaser, Catharine Ganze-Smith, and Jim McCusker.

All Things Composition

As the fall semester moves towards winter, I find myself reflecting on how quickly the fall goes by in a flurry of activity. Research projects are bubbling up and students are making the most of their last weeks, or hurriedly catching up, or perhaps losing steam, and a new semester will begin before long. What have we tried and found useful in our collective teaching experiences this particular point in time? In these pages you'll find collected bits about current research, teaching practices, affective prompts, using open educational resources, and more.

Fall has offered us connection with TYCA and this late November edition reflects the insights and resources from those of us teaching composition at community colleges across the northeast. The focal points were much like our own—technology and education, open educational resources, equity and honoring diversity in the classroom, working with and supporting students during a pandemic. Most of all there was a message of support and kindness as we all go through unprecedented times in education.

Poet Li Young-Lee reminds us “a flower is one station between/earth’s wish and earth’s rapture” as he tries to encourage us to be present. One of my former professors at Binghamton would urge us over and over: be in your intellectual moment. The only time we can be here is now. Peek inside for links to their research and questions. I hope you have time to muse and reflect on topics of interest throughout this month’s newsletter.



Created by

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Faculty, English & Philosophy

Composition Coordinator 2021-2022

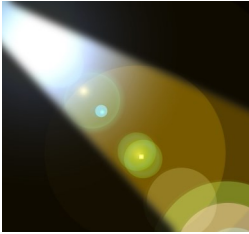
ajohnston@monroecc.edu



Faculty Spotlight: Jim McCusker

What's your favorite text to teach?

Ashes to Ashes by Harold Pinter



If I were to state any moral precept it might be: beware of the writer who puts forward his concern for you to embrace, who leaves you in no doubt of his worthiness, his usefulness, his altruism, who declares that his heart is in the right place, and ensures that it can be seen in full view, a pulsating mass where his characters ought to be. What is presented, so much of the time, as a body of active and positive thought is in fact a body lost in a prison of empty definition and cliché.

—Harold Pinter



A defaced library book. Islington Library's "doctored" book cover of Agatha Christie's *The Secret of Chimneys*. Giant cats, one cradling a bouquet of flowers, loom over what looks like Venice. From the late 50s to early 60s, British playwright Joe Orton and his partner Kenneth Halliwell secretly added absurd collages to some 70 library dust jackets. Artistic social rebellion makes me smile. Library customers confusing humorously surreal covers with reality is something out of a Monty Python sketch.

2. What's one thing you're grateful for during the throws of the pandemic?

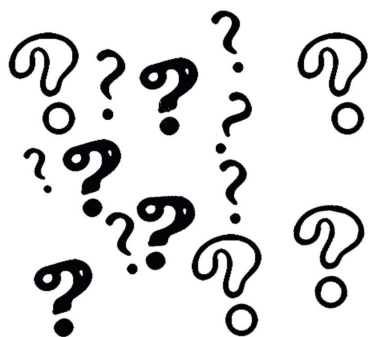
Reconnecting with friends and attending events of interest, via Zoom.

3. What are you involved in researching lately?

Teaching writers how to activate their thinking and creativity as individuals and in collaboration can be challenging. Considering the process-focused approach to writing, I'm researching the effectiveness of different prewriting techniques. Currently, I'm particularly interested in the group improvisation of role storming. A friend who recently assembled a compendium of improve games is assisting me in finding specific role storming activities to use next term. I'm in hopes applying a variety of prewriting techniques will bring both experimentation and play into the process. Shifting perceptions about prewriting is a place to begin.

4. What's one image that brings a smile to your face? Words or image works!

A defaced library book. Islington Library's



Hmm.... Got a Question?

Wondering about something composition-related lately? Like how much weight colleagues give to grammar and sentence structure? What are best practices in teaching the use of commas? Looking for a new text to share with students? Drop me a note at ajohnston@monroecc.edu. Ask a question and we'll come up with responses from fellow writing faculty.

The Composition Cemetery... Myths About Composition Debunked

Myth #2: Grammar is the most important thing needed when writing.

Yes, grammar and punctuation, spelling, and sentence construction are important; they have the power to convey clarity. Strictly speaking, in terms of a given audience for a writing task, correctness plays a role. Yet writing is not a monolith and there is not one ideal. Form expectations shift depending on genre, audience, and function, and this can create some controversy.

Therefore, no. According to experts who study writing and rhetoric, grammar is not everything. For those who closely examine the art of written expression and speaking since Aristotle, grammar is not as central as insight or evidence or purpose or audience. The trick is in how to manage written expression in all its parts carefully enough so as not to squash the whole.

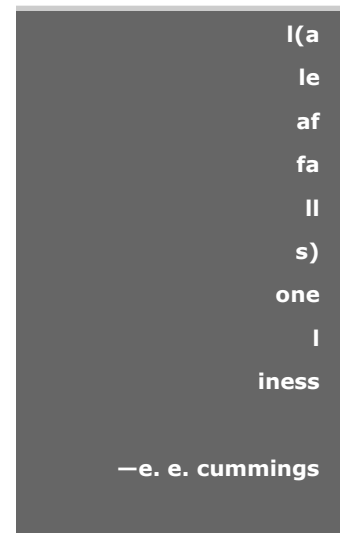
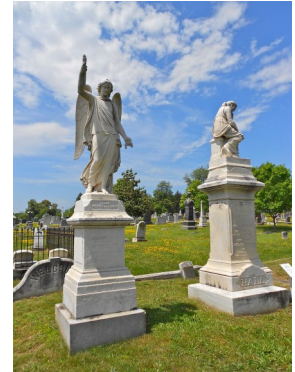
In our aim to help all our students engage with learning and grow their critical thinking, how do we navigate this? While correctness may be a goal, can overcorrection hurt? How much help is a focus on the outward appearance, if we are not in tune with the inner possibilities? If correctness is the most important thing in a writing task, what happens to a writer's voice?

Say we focus on correctness as central and teach it with drills. Might that result in better writing? In fact, according to research studies, rote memorization and drills don't actually result in better writing. Studies show that "students do not naturally transfer grammatical rules and patterns learning through worksheet drills into their own writing (Harris & Rowan, 1989; Hillocks, 1986)." To truly gain strides in mastering the art of grammar, there is huge value in spending time reading and writing to master the principles of writing. Which brings back to the complexity of the task and stages that need reinforcement for any growth to occur.

How might we maintain agency for our students as writers so that correctness doesn't lead to a shift away from meaning-making? In fact, as all thinkers engage more deeply with written expression, the process of writing gets messier. In that mess, we find complexity and can shape it with just the right amount of correctness that suits its purpose.

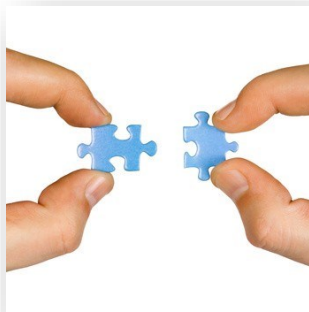
To aim at perfecting grammatical correctness is a goal worth pursuing, but to what ends and by what means? If we allow for mistakes and carve space for messiness in writing, how might we open doors not previously open for all our students? David Brooks reminds us that "If you write in a way that suggests combative certitude, you may gradually smother the inner chaos that will be the source of lifelong freshness and creativity."

Want to engage further? Check out this website for contextualized grammar instruction methods: <https://www.collegetransition.org/career-pathways/research-briefs/contextualized-grammar/>



Connect with ALP: Intro to the Affective Domain

As we continue our conversation of how to remain focused on student-centered pedagogy, the attention paid to addressing the whole student and the affective domain cannot be overstated. Simply put, meeting the students where they are, wherever they are, upon entry to our classrooms ensures that we communicate a caring and inclusive community. This check-in can be a way to gauge where our students are in this moment in time in order to validate and “debrief” as is possible. This is by no means an invitation into a therapy session; we are not trained nor are we equipped for the potentially significant needs that may be uncovered in an activity such as this,



but addressing the affective domain can be an opportunity to bridge a student in need (or sometimes crisis) with the MCC-based or community-based resources that will adequately support them.

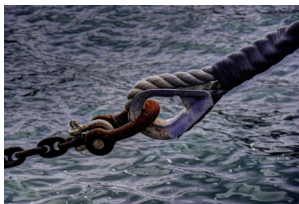


Further, this can be an opportunity to get at the mindset of students as it relates to the epistemological beliefs about their own learning and related processes we hope to understand and build upon. This window into our students’ viewpoints can be instructive; we can tailor our approaches, strategies, and instructional techniques accordingly to meet these realities of student belief and challenge. Students find, through engaging in practices such as these, that they are not alone and that together they build self-awareness and are empowered to work collaboratively to marshal resources and tackle these challenges within our relationship-rich community.

For further reading on this important domain, please see our own Judi Salsburg Taylor’s project, [The Purposeful Prof](#), on this and many other topics of interest. —Meghan Glaser

ever been kidnapped
by a poet
if i were a poet
i'd kidnap you
put you in my
phrases and meter
you to jones beach

—Poet Nikki Giovanni



In Your Words: JOY in composition

Can you name something that brought you joy in teaching writing recently?

I am experiencing joy when my students discover they're better at something than they thought---when I see their confidence grow. --EJ

My joy in teaching writing is finally being back F2F. The ability to see students' faces as they connect with the learning brings me so much joy. --DC

I always try to teach writing through engaging topics. If the topic of discussion/research/study is something everyone has experience with, it provides a common foundation for discussion, especially for those reluctant readers and writers. For example, I have had great success asking students to examine the role of technology in society--especially during and after the pandemic. --MD

I recently worked with a student on his Summary Essay rough draft. When we began the Zoom meeting, he was confused, frustrated, and full of self-doubt. Once he understood the directions and what I am looking for, a moment of clarity occurred, and he instantly started to generate ideas instead of putting up roadblocks.--JB

I enjoy teaching argument and often has a lively debate with students in 101; appreciates that students often recognize the need for good writing skills --CS

Seeing adult students (evening class) conquering the fear of college and gaining confidence by learning writing is thinking, about thoughts. --JM

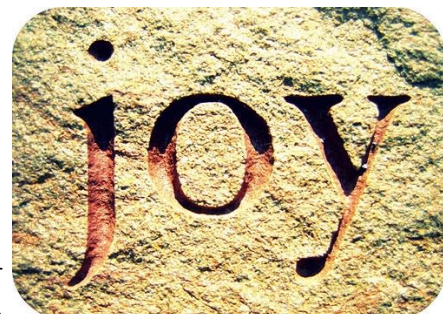
Teaching the research process from start (brainstorming/KWL chart) to finish (outlining/formatting and writing their paper). --RH

Watching the term "rhetoric" come alive as we share examples of effective communication out in the real world (such as the 20th anniversary of 9/11) and how the multimedia style choices (poetry, photos, essays, stories, documentaries) of communicators impact their audience --AJ



There are days we
live
as if death
were nowhere
in the
background;
from joy
to joy to joy,
from wing to
wing,
from blossom
to blossom to
impossible
blossom, to
sweet
impossible
blossom.

—Poet Li-Young
Lee



Connect with ALP: Affective Prompts



affective domain

Image by Karin Kirk, SERC



cognitive domain

ALP works. It offers students more breathing room to really talk about how their learning is going. One important cornerstone is integrating the “affective” (values and attitudes) along side the “cognitive” (content knowledge focused) in the composition classroom. What’s an “affective prompt” you ask? The idea is that there is space for reflection on the ways we experience knowledge-making. For example:

⇒ Struggles and Success: Think about the assignment and how it’s going for you. Which part is working best and which part is most challenging for you? Why do you think you’re doing well? What might be impacting your feeling unsure about another part? What good habits do you notice that you already have and what you might work further on? Share with your group what class is going well or not well and briefly discuss experience and options you have.

Additionally, our own Terry Shamblin offers these affective prompts for your consideration is linked here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GVUWhFI8D8WXBjxOAbqrcyw4jxWld50l/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=116494888875555491759&rtpof=true&sd=true> —from Meghan Glaser & Angelique Johnston

In Your Words: *JOY* in composition

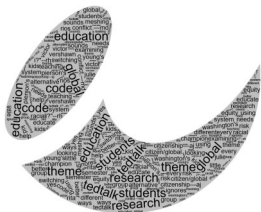
Are you doing a "themed" 101? If so, what's the focus?

I am using racial equity as a theme. —Prof. J

The theme is "Who Am I?"--Prof. H

This semester I am teaching a group of education students. We are examining alternative ways to better educate at risk students. We are looking at Julie Washington's research on code switching, Vershawn Young's research on code meshing (sounds the same but it is a little different), Victor Rios' TedTalk on Help for Kids the Education System Ignores, and Rita Pierson's TedTalk on Every Kid Needs a Champion. —Prof. C

Yes! We are doing the global citizen/global conflict.—Prof. D
Global Citizenship—Prof. J.



In Your Words: JOY in composition



What's a particularly "fun" writing exercise you like to use with students?

I don't know that I have a fun writing exercise; I'm feeling like my 101 is pretty boring and bland these days. I do have them find a meme that expresses how they feel about writing and then they post it in VoiceThread for their icebreaker in Week 1 and they discuss why they chose it. They all seem to enjoy that. —Prof. J

A fun writing exercise I do is during the first week I have students interview each other. Then they have to write an essay about the person they interviewed for homework. During the next class, they peer review with their partner and revise their essay based on feedback. The following class they introduce their partner to the rest of the class. This helps to create a positive learning environment and connects students with each other. It always ends up being their favorite assignment of the semester. —Prof. C

Students love creative writing and have very little opportunity is secondary education to practice it. NPR's 3 minute Fiction is a big hit with students.—Prof. D

Most of my video lectures are informational, but I do include some fun discussion board topics.—Prof. B

The Simile of Writing. Students are asked to fill in only one of the prompts below. Groups are formed based on the senses. Each sense is tasked with constructing a mini-paragraph that captures each group member's simile. Writing feels like -Writing tastes like -Writing sounds like -Writing looks like -Writing smells like --Prof. M

“This I Believe”—Prof. H



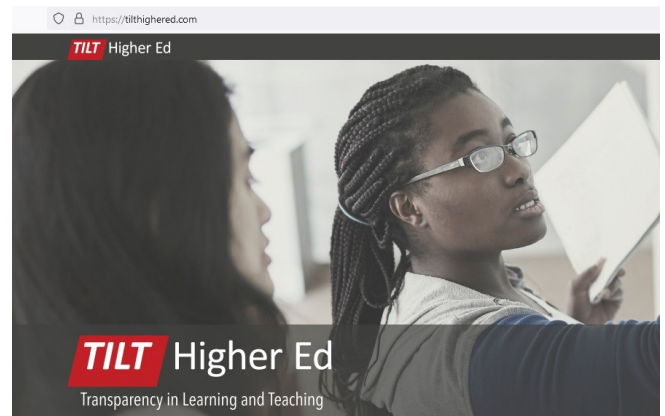
TILT, TAAC, GO! Pilot UPDATE

The Comp Committee TILTED an assignment for composition. What's that you ask? Check this out:

Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) emphasizes the importance of clearly explaining to students how and why they are learning the course content. Instructors can increase students' academic confidence, sense of belonging, and self-reported mastery of skills simply by being more explicit about their purposes and intentions (Winkelmes, 2014). So called "transparent" assignments help students understand the skills they are practicing, the knowledge they will gain, and their relevance to course learning outcomes and professional goals. Clearly explaining what to do and how to do it and enabling students to assess their own work through a discussion of evaluation criteria and annotated examples of excellence, demystifies assignments, and has been shown to benefit all students, with larger effects for underrepresented, first generation, and low-income students (Winkelmes et al., 2016). —C. Ganze-Smith

For more about TILT:

TILT Higher Ed. (2014). Transparency in learning and teaching. <https://tilthighered.com/>

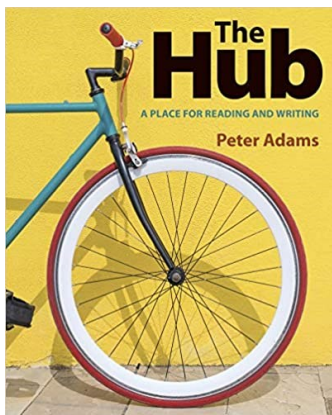


Winkelmes, M. (2014). Using transparent assignments to increase students' success equitably. <https://tilthighered.com/assets/pdffiles/Faculty%20Workshop%20Slides.pdf>

Winkelmes, M., Bernacki, M., Butler, J., Zochowski, M., Golanics, J., & Weavil, K.H. (2016). A teaching intervention that increases underserved college students' success. *Peer Review*, 18(1-2), 31-36.

Coming soon: MCC's English 101 website will include "TILTED" assignments in composition.

Peter Adams's New Composition Textbook



Baltimore County CC guru Peter Adams set the stage for massive national change in developmental education and has national data to show that ALP can transform student success. But don't just take my word for it. Check out the national studies by the CCRC (Community College Research Center run by Columbia University) whose studies show that "compared with the conventional approach, in which students first take an upper level developmental course and then English 101, the ALP approach produced double the success rate in half the time." Want to check out the textbook created by Peter Adams with feedback from a team of community college professors? Check out the link for a sample unit or an exam copy:

<https://www.macmillanlearning.com/college/us/product/The-Hub-with-2020-APA-Update/p/1319362354>

CCRC research: [https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/cbc-alp-student-](https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/cbc-alp-student-outcomes-follow-up.html)

[outcomes-follow-up.html](https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/cbc-alp-student-outcomes-follow-up.html)

Highlight: TYCA NE

TYCA had much to offer this year. Here are two highlights.

Open Educational Resources

TYCA presentations "OER and Ungrading: The Blasphemous Quest for Ultimate Student Control" by Sybil Priebe from North Dakota State College of Science and Michael Whelpley's "Strategies for Adopting OER in English Composition Courses" highlighted the use of OER as a philosophy that offers more choices for students. The resources for OER texts they recommend include:

This nonprofit that has a free tool for annotating website content:

<https://web.hypothes.is/about/>

This resource includes free online readings including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry:

<https://www.narrativemagazine.com/>

Here's a resource of 88 open essays:

[https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Literature_and_Literacy/Book%3A_88_Open_Essays - A Reader for Students of Composition and Rhetoric \(Wangler and Ulrich\)/Open Essays](https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Literature_and_Literacy/Book%3A_88_Open_Essays_-_A_Reader_for_Students_of_Composition_and_Rhetoric_(Wangler_and_Ulrich)/Open_Essays)

Interested in North Dakota State's presentation for more? See the google slides presentation here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1KoEJhfS1pfEgyyuMokRjlydbT5Mp5XstXWMvhl46gRQ/edit?usp=sharing>

Highlight: TYCA NE

Equity considerations in Grading/"Ungrading"

Multiple sessions at TYCA included resources and discussions around equity in grading in composition. These included Guttman College's presentation on "Anti-Racist Writing Programs" and Queensborough Community College's Meg Tarafdar's presentation on "Linguistic Diversity." Meg Tarafdar notes that the "best feedback enhances human dignity" and shared ways to recognize cultural patterns we all have as we engage in language patterns for grading.

Check out these current articles considering the varied impact of language choices:

<https://jeffreyaustin.org/2020/07/27/talking-to-students/> An Argument Against "Cop Shit"
<http://anatomy.lauragibbs.net/2015/03/grading-omnibus.html> Ungrading: It Can Be Done in College
<https://accelerationproject.org/Grading-for-Equity-Workshop-Series> Online resource for Katie Hearn's work in CA
<https://asaobinoue.blogspot.com/p/labor-based-grading-contract-resources.html> Asao Inoue's labor based grading blog

Want to add your voice to the conversation on grading? Watch your email for more information on an upcoming January Workshop on grading practices and equity featuring the Composition Committee.

Book-Themed Art

Check out this carved book artist: <https://isobelleouzman.com/>



“Throughout my life books have been my best friends. In bookstores and with books I have been able to forget the cruelties of the world. I have been able to shield myself when I needed safety. I have been able to find solace and joy. I have been able to find sanctuary—a consecrated place, a place of refuge and protection. I have been thinking a lot about sanctuary lately during this rising age of American disgrace. I have been thinking about how I have long believed that to write as a woman and to write as a black woman is political and that words are my sanctuary and more than ever, I need refuge.”
—Roxanne Gay



Composition at MCC can use your help! Please share what you can, when you can to make the newsletter informative and helpful as we aim to support our students.

Thank you!



Poetry



Check out Carolyn Forché's recommendation of a current poetic voice: Jericho Brown. His videos share the beauty of words and honor diverse experiences as a person of color and someone living a queer identity.

<https://www.jerichobrown.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0DsG-tMZjKY>

Poetry

"...all earth a quarry, all life a labor, stone-faced, stone-drunk with hope that this assemblage, taken together, would become a shrine or holy place, an ossuary, immovable and sacred, like the stone that marked the path of the sun as it entered the human dawn."

Listen to Carolyn Forché as she reads her poem "The Museum of Stones":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2ucdCVxfJg>

Zoom Webinar

Chat

From V Melograno to Everyone: 11:48 AM
We're muted, right?

From Elizabeth Nesius to Everyone: 11:49 AM
<https://www.tycanortheast.org/>
<https://xoyondo.com/ap/ygzk85suMgQKnA>

From Maria Vint to Everyone: 11:50 AM
Yes, all attendees are muted, but you can send messages via chat as well as questions through the Q&A option.

From Sue to Everyone: 11:52 AM
She is muted

okay

yes

Who can see your messages?

To: Everyone

Your text can be seen by panelists and other attendees.

Carolyn Forché