

Citings

Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies Newsletter

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The DRWS Welcomes a New Faculty Member

We hope by now that you have had a chance to meet our newest faculty member, Dr. Suzanne Borderlon, who comes to San Diego from a somewhat cooler climate. Professor Borderlon was formerly the Assistant Professor of English and Director of Composition at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She received her doctorate in English (Rhetoric and Composition) from the University of Oregon and her master's in English (Literacy and Language Development) from California State University, Chico. Her interests include women in the history of rhetoric, nineteenth-century rhetoric, literacy studies, advanced composition, and teacher education.

When asked how she likes DRWS so far, Professor Borderlon replied, "I have found the faculty and staff to be extremely helpful. I really appreciate it. I'm also enjoying the students. I'm teach-



ing primarily seniors, and they seem engaged and responsible." And her impressions of her new home? "San Diego is a beautiful city. Every weekend, we try to visit a different destination. We already have purchased an annual pass to the San Diego Zoo, which is a wonderful place to visit."

A Few Words on Ethos—Ours

Glen McClish

Traditionally, the first essay one writes in the new school year features "what I did on my summer vacation." My break was uneventful, but one experience—although not dramatic in conventional terms—sticks in my memory. Let me set the scene for you.

Called for jury duty, I found myself—after waiting many hours for something to happen—occupying the seat reserved for juror #6 in one of San Diego's superior courtrooms, listening to the judge prepare us prospective jurors for one of the final phases of the selection process: the attorneys' automatic strikes. When I was initially called for jury duty, I fervently hoped that I would not be chosen to hear a case. It's not that I have anything against performing my civic responsibility—I served on a civil case nearly a decade ago and found the experience profoundly rewarding—but my uneventful summer was nonetheless filled with the

kind of unglamorous but necessary work that suffers from a lost week or two. Once I was seated as a prospective juror and had answered the basic questions about my occupation and family, though, my hesitancy dissipated. I wanted the job.

I listened with great interest as the judge suggested that attorneys' automatic strikes are more about their own insecurities than a given juror's fitness to serve. To illustrate her claim, she told a revealing story about her prior career as a trial lawyer. A native Hawaiian who grew up speaking Pidgin English, she disclosed that her self-consciousness about her use of language compelled her routinely to strike English and speech teachers from the rolls of prospective jurors.

I was as impressed by her honesty as I was dismayed by her practice. Having related her ex-

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When Student Athletes Hand You "The Memo"

Mark R. Gumble

As director of SDSU's Athletic Academic Services, I'd like to provide some clarification on a memorandum you may have received from a student athlete in your course. For several years Rick Bay, the Executive Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, has drafted the memo explaining that student athletes will on occasion have to miss class time in order to represent the university in varsity athletic competition. The letter also explains that the student athlete is responsible for all assignments and tests that may be due during his/her absence.

Being that there is no official university policy for students who have to miss class time to represent the university (one is being discussed at the faculty senate), I ask that instructors work out arrangements with student athletes to accommodate these conflicts, and/or contact me. In the past, some student athletes have asked me to hand in papers for them when they were on the road and some instructors have asked me to proctor exams. More often than not, instructors have asked the student athlete to turn in assignments or take tests the class time before or after the day of conflict. I am aware that some instructors have strict attendance poli-

cies but I hope that some flexibility can be given to the student athlete whose attendance is good except for when they are away representing the university in varsity competition.

Hopefully you are finding the student athletes in your class to be eager learners. The vast majority are good students as evident by 124 of them earning above a 3.2 GPA last semester. The varsity athletes are also graduating at a higher rate than the general student population at SDSU and their pass rate in remedial courses is higher as well. However, I understand that a few student athletes can be a challenge and I hope you feel comfortable discussing student athlete's class behavior, attendance, and academic progress with me if problems present themselves.

Finally, I am one of four academic advisors who work with the athletes. Todd Snedden, Bre White, and Rebecca Nunes are the others. I will forward any comments or concerns onto the appropriate advisor if you have any, and I can be reached at mgumble@mail.sdsu.edu or X45891. Thank you for your cooperation and let me know if I can be of any assistance to you.

Textbook Committee Returns

Candace Boeck

The DRWS Textbook Committee is back after a two-year hiatus. In an October 9 meeting, it was decided that the new committee will be reconfigured and operate differently than in the past. Under the new arrangement, one or two members are assigned a publisher. These individuals will contact that publisher's representative and obtain potential books for use in developmental, lower division, upper division, and technical writing courses.

In addition, Textbook Committee liaisons will coordinate with program administrators if the administrators themselves are not available. The meeting participants included Candace Boeck, Suzanne Bordelon, Dick Finn, Randy Harrison, Melody Kilcrease, Glen McClish, and Elise Miller.

Papers, Etc.

Joanne Spiegel's article "The Construction of the Romance In Jane Eyre" was published in the 2002 double issue of *Readerly/Writerly Texts*.

Use Electronic Reserve

Albert Moorin

You can now put chapters from books (up to 16% of the content) or one or two articles from a journal on electronic reserve. Take the printed pages of your article or chapter(s) from a book and visit Sara Baird, the Reserve Book Room Coordinator. She will handle the copyright matters and provide you with a web site that you and your students can access throughout the semester.

In fact, you can add other material to that web site as needed. Should you require your students to use your electronic reserve material as part of their research for an essay, you can track their skills in paraphrasing and documentation. This idea is especially helpful for teachers of DRWS 100 or 200. Please share your experiences with other faculty

AMWA Will Hold Annual Conference

Marilyn Morgan

The American Medical Writers Association 2002 Annual Conference will be held in San Diego on October 31-November 2 at the Town and Country Hotel in Mission Valley. SDSU will be well represented. Linn Bekins, director of the Certificate Program in Technical and Scientific Writing, Carl Fielden, DRWS lecturer, and Charles Hurley, an alumni of the Certificate Program and BATS instructor, will be giving presentations at this year's event.

The conference program includes more than 160 educational workshops, presentations, and round table discussions designed to help medical and scientific writers expand

their horizons and hone their skills. Technical and Scientific Writing Program students who are interested in the medical, biomedical, or biotech writing fields are encouraged to join AMWA and attend the meetings and conferences.

The primary mission of AMWA is to provide education and networking opportunities for members. This event will put attendees in direct contact with hundreds of medical writers who can provide essential job information. Discounted student rates are available for the conference. If you are interested in attending, contact Linn Bekins for further information.

Teaching Students to Access On-Line Library Indexes

"I can't find anything. And I looked for three long hours."

"Well, I found some web-sites, but I couldn't tell if they were any good."

"I looked on Google, but there were too many sites. I gave up."

"The library indexes aren't there! Please help me (tearfully)!"

How many times have we asked students to find articles for class projects and heard something like the above? Something happens on the way to the library (God knows what!). In some instances students never get there; they're waylaid by the "easy" access to the many web search engines - engines that we teachers often recommend. Google works for some projects but is not usually as helpful for locating quality academic articles, especially if the scholar wants something older. Even when we distribute printed handouts

with forty or more search engines and explain how to use them in detail, the student sits at the computer with both a blank screen and a blank head.

So we take students to the library for a workshop. We have probably all watched the librarian showing the tricks of the trade to the students, as the students stare off into space or check their e-mails because, we are told, they "already know how to do this." Yet, ironically, these same students show up to class empty handed or perhaps with a questionable source from Dogpile, Google, or an on-line encyclopedia. Dang!

After discussing this matter, James and I did a test run. We used Proquest to find information about the cognition of chimpanzees (everyone's favorite topic), and we easily located five quality articles. To share our insights about Proquest, we conducted

James Towner and Albert Moorin

a seminar during Staff Development week entitled "Using On-Line Sources for Research."

What to do: we suggest that students need help and encouragement to find quality sources. We offer the following ideas:

- Require two or more peer-reviewed sources for essays
- Require the use of one or more SDSU Library's article data bases, such as Proquest or Ebsco Host
- Give students some help, either in a computer lab or with an overhead or hand-out: we might make up a short separate assignment on using library data bases or include it as part of the larger writing assignment.

Along with requiring the use of library

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Orientation Charts Route for Graduate Students

Melody Kilcrease

Tuesday evening, September 17, Cezar Ornatowski met with a group of new and returning graduate students for an orientation into the bureaucratic route to the Master's Degree.

He offered checklists of the Graduate Division and DRWS requirements for completing the degree, including notes on the required filings and some timeline planning.

Ornatowski hopes that this early discussion of the process will help students avoid those "last minute petition detours" that can be a frustrating and sometimes costly way to complete the journey to the Master's.

He also emphasized how important it is for graduate students to do their planning in consultation with him, and invited students to come see him "early and often" during their progress through the program.

DRWS Holds First Graduate Program Symposium

Marilyn Morgan

The first Rhetoric and Writing Studies Masters Program symposium was held in Scripps Cottage on May 13, 2002 at 7:30 p.m. Geoffrey Sauer, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

of Rhetoric and New Media in the Department of Technical Communication at the University of Washington-Seattle, gave a presentation titled "Negotiating Content Management: How the Recent History of Publishing Has Fostered Both TC and Online Collaboration (and why we should care)."

Professor Sauer is also the author of *Negotiating Internet Culture: Legitimizing Computer Hackers Within the History of Publishing* (2002) and the director of Eserver.org.

The symposium was created to provide students with the opportunity to hear and interact with authorities on the topics of online information design and electronic literacy, which are important issues in our new Masters program.

The symposium also is aimed at familiarizing the university and public community with current research and initiatives relative to these issues. The symposium was funded by an Instructionally Related Activities (IRA) Grant.

Congratulations!

Jennifer Young married Matt Sager on August 10. They met during graduate school here at SDSU while she was studying English and he was studying Business.

New LORE Issue Online

The July 2002 issue of LORE, the DRWS electronic journal, is now available. You can access LORE from a link on the department's web site. Edited by Ann Johns, this is a special issue on ESL topics. Contributions are needed for the next issue. If you're interested, e-mail the editors at lore@lists.sdsu.edu.

Ethos

perience, she turned to the attorneys and declared, as if almost to challenge them, "And now, gentlemen, your insecurities, please." Without the slightest hesitation, the district attorney began the strikes with the simple phrase "Juror #6."

I was shocked by the haste at which I was dismissed, and had to fight back the urge to exhort the district attorney, who knew virtually nothing about me except what I do for a living, to reconsider my fitness to serve. As the apparent unabashed avatar of the young Hawaiian attorney featured in the judge's story, the district attorney had eliminated me because of my profession, a life's work that should in fact qualify me to serve with distinction, to evaluate the case with utmost care and impartiality. But one does not make such speeches, justified or not, from the jury box. And there was, after all, plenty of work back in the office. I scooped up my things and exited the courtroom, leaving justice in the relative security of less critical minds.

The more I've thought about this experience, the more concerned I have become about society's impression of our profession. We writing teachers believe that we empower students, that the literacies we cultivate enable them to succeed in college and beyond. We trust that the epistemic qualities of critical thinking and writing extend our students' minds. To these attorneys, though, we are merely the grammar police, the correctors, the knuckle rappers, the relentless guardians of an arbitrary and arcane linguistic purity that functions to clog the machinery of justice.

And if this is the impression of attorneys, then imagine the level of distrust we inspire in those whose access to education and social power is considerably more limited. At some level this problem has been known to me since I began grading papers and leading discussions many years ago, but it carries special poignancy since my early exit from seat #6.

Please note that we cannot sidestep the

stigma by simply divorcing ourselves from the department that bears the dreaded name. My preemptory dismissal came after I identified myself as a composition teacher from a department of rhetoric and writing studies. I never used the term "English," but he found me out, nonetheless.

Recently, I told my story to a prominent San Diego judge I know socially. He declared that he, too, eliminated our kind when he worked the other side of the bench. English teachers ask too many questions, he explained. I have found little succor in his rationale.

I have little specific to offer as a remedy for this ongoing public relations nightmare, but there's no doubt that we need to continually reassess our collective ethos. I'm confident that we think we know the role we intend to play in the classroom, but I'm worried about the character we actually communicate while we're there. As rhetoricians who teach the salience of awareness of audience, we need to be ever mindful of our own.

On-line Library Indexes

indexes, we can help students by showing them or reminding them of a few simple points:

- Appropriate search words and phrases
- Add an "and" to a key word: i.e. composition and women
- Limit the search to particular printed sources, such as magazines or periodicals
- Use the index to list the number of found articles
- Limit the search dates.
- Try several types of search words, such as trying masculine for men or females for women

To do the above, we need to research the topics we assign. Our experience shows that we instructors can often save much frustration by spending a little research time on our own before we assign topics, and we do mean a little time - perhaps fifteen minutes to assess index capabilities on a given sub-

ject. Then we can suggest workable search words for students to try on their own or in our computer labs. We can make the search a team effort so that students can help one another to invent search terms.

Of course, librarians can show our students these methods, but unless we insist on the use of library indexes, our sometimes-reluctant learners will balk at trying something new. New equals fear or frustration, which interferes with the learning process. Instead, we want students to complete the learning cycle and enjoy the power of the modern library with its technological capabilities. As we all know, the power of learning carries with it the thrill of discovery and the confidence of mastering new skills. Jamie Escalanti, who taught his developmental high school students calculus, stated confidently, "The student rises to the level of the expectations of the teacher." Unquestionably, he gave them a road map to succeed. We too can supply a roadmap as well.

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