

Helping Transfers to Triumph

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

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

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

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

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

These classes will help transfer students get ready for upper-division university writ-

ing and learn techniques that can help with writing in any subject. Professor Toth says; "I want to make sure that we're doing our part to make the promise of open admissions education in community colleges real. It's a promise I really believe in." This project and class is the first step in helping student writers transition from community college to University.

To learn more about WRTG 3020, 3030, or other writing resources for transfer students, you can contact Christie.toth@utah.edu, lshaw@utah.edu or visit the [Writing Department website](#).

- Elyse Bangerter



L-R: Christie Toth, Emily Beck, Shauna Edson, Nic Contreras, Wes Porter, and Nathan Lacy. Not pictured: Sandra Salazar-Hernandez, Davor Simunovic, Stephanie Weidhauer, and Justin Whitney.

Writing as Service

CEL courses allow students to share writing skills with community

When people think about volunteer work, they often picture groups packing up canned goods at a food bank, or cleaning up after a natural disaster. In the U's Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies however, volunteer work looks a little dif-

ferent—and it leads to learning!

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

An Assistant Professor in Internal Medicine and Associate Instructor in Writing, Dr. Sample combines her backgrounds in **WRTG 4905: Discourses of Health &**

Medicine. The course uses rhetoric theory to analyze the language used in health-care—in TV shows, patient-created art, and even in pharmaceutical ads. Its CEL component involves students both shadowing and providing rhetoric-informed research to the U's Center for Wellness & Integrative Health. "We're trying to come up with projects that the Wellness Center can really use



by providing research to back up their rhetorical choices,” says Dr. Sample.

Students in **WRTG 4830: Usability Testing**, taught by Dr. Natalie Stillman-Webb, perform similar work. This course focuses on the usability of text by analyzing websites. For the course’s main project, students test a community partner’s website for its usability before brainstorming updates and repairs to make it more user-friendly. These results are then shared with the partner. “Usability is used really broadly. In terms of writing, we’re making sure that text is usable, that it makes sense to people,” Dr. Stillman-Webb explains.

Importantly, everyone involved in these CEL courses is benefited. For students, community-engaged learning is about giving theory physical form, while also helping them contribute to their communities. “The CEL work the students do gives them a context, a very practical setting for the issues we discuss in class,” Dr. Sample says. Dr. Stillman-Webb agrees, adding that “These are not only skillsets that students are gaining, but also broader awareness

Do You Hear What I Hear? Class Explores Rhetoric of Sound

When you think about Martin Luther King Jr’s iconic “I Have a Dream” speech, what do you remember? Do you hear his voice in your head; the moving delivery? Do you think of historical implications? Of course. But have you ever considered the setting for the famous speech? The open-air of the National Mall, the equipment used to record it, or the acoustics of a packed Lincoln Memorial?

Sonic Rhetorics 'sä-nik 're-tə-riks): How layering and overall composition of sound influence meaning and perception.

Assistant Professor Jonathan Stone’s new class, **WRTG 5905: Sonic Rhetorics (Spring 2017)**, will examine how sound (including elements like recording equipment, setting, and acoustics) influence perceptions. Students will explore soundscapes and their potency through discussion, fieldwork, composition, and research.

Although part of the class will focus on theory, Stone insists the experiential is just as important. “We’ll start with age-old arguments between oral and visual rhetoric—but then expand outward in

different directions.” One direction will use newly purchased recording equipment, courtesy of a generous Dee Grant, to collect samples for hands-on learning about sound architecture. Stone says there’s nuance and subtlety to what we hear and students will be encouraged to reflect on sonic qualities that get overlooked but are hugely persuasive.

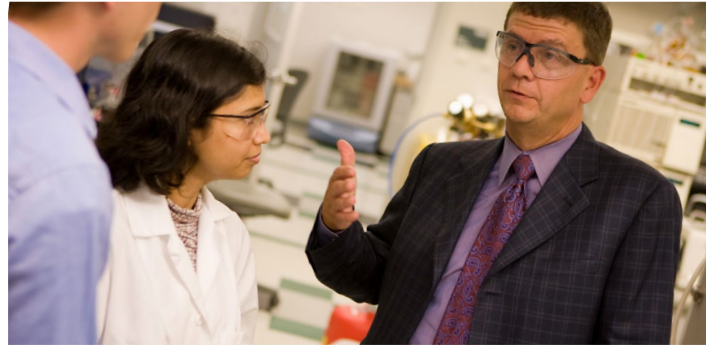
21st century themes will also be part of class lectures. As Stone explains, even with the same recording, meaning can change dramatically in different contexts. In the 1960’s, the New York band, Blues Project, expressed themselves and their time with the track, “Flute Thing.” But when another NYC band,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

Prof. Stone says U students from a variety of disciplines can benefit from practical knowledge and applications gained from the class. Those with interest in audio, or just curious how sound shapes the way we think and communicate, can learn more by contacting jon.stone@utah.edu or lshaw@utah.edu.

of issues facing our particular community.”

Both courses will be offered again in ‘17—along with other CEL courses, including WRTG 3015: Professional Writing and WRTG 4001: Business Plans & Proposals. To learn more about CEL courses in writing or sign up for a class, please visit the [department website](#) or email Lisa Shaw at lshaw@utah.edu.

- Casey Koldewyn



Students in WRTG 4905: Discourses of Health & Medicine work with physicians at the U’s Wellness Center

A Research Class for the 21st Century Student

A new course offers students a toolkit for effective online research

In an increasingly digital world, the ability to navigate online environments is essential—especially in academic settings, where students’ online skills must be used to conduct authoritative research. In spring 2017, the Writing Department will introduce its first **Digital Research Methods** class, **WRTG 3440**, a 3 credit hour hybrid course with both online and face-to-face elements. Taught by Associate Professor Joy Pierce, the class will prepare students to develop efficient, effective, and ethical research methods for online environments.

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

Professor Pierce also plans to briefly introduce the theory of method in the class. “This is important,” Pierce explains to potential stu-

- Cliff Feddema

dents, “because without it, students may choose the wrong method and/or research tools, which could lead a student to abandon their research due to lack of data.” Pierce says she’s interested in helping students avoid these common pitfalls and find the path most likely to succeed.

Though the class isn’t intended only for students thinking about advanced studies, those considering graduate school will find this course particularly helpful. Pierce explains that a portion of the class will focus on performing research with human

subjects, and “the ethical responsibility of observing or participating in an online space for the sole purpose of research, as well as using qualitative methods software.” These are often critical skills for the graduate researcher that are hard to find in other courses.

To learn more about WRTG 3440, students can consult the Writing course catalog or contact the Writing & Rhetoric Studies academic advisor, Lisa Shaw, at lshaw@utah.edu.

-Hollie Olsen

Writing for a Multilingual World New writing course prepares students for diverse language environments

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

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

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

Everything.

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

This Spring (‘17), Dr. Jordan will teach a graduate course on the subject of multilingual writing. WRTG 6400: Multilingual Writing will give students an understanding of how multilingualism affects writing and writing instruction. Though the course is specifically geared toward students interested in teaching writing, Dr. Jordan believes that the course will benefit anyone who wants to communicate more effectively in multilingual settings. He says, “we’re interested in preparing writing instructors to work with different language communities, but really anyone—in finance, business, medicine, law—who plans to work in diverse cultural settings will appreciate the class.”

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

- Mark Stone

Write Your Wild Side

Learn to write your story with WRTG 4200

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

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF WRITING & RHETORIC STUDIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

WRTG 3440

Digital Methods

This course is designed to interrogate the ways in which online research is conducted. The material also engages social media, software, hardware and societal online norms.

Students will learn about methodology (the theory of method) and how to conduct a qualitative research study (method). Students will leave the course prepared to submit an Institutional Review Board application; the first step toward conducting a qualitative research study within and outside of an academic setting.

Spring 2017 Thursdays 10:45 - 12:05 pm

Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies | 255 S Central Campus Drive Room 3700 | Salt Lake City, Utah 84112
(801) 581-7090 | writing.utah.edu





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

- Nolan Young

Recognizing Great Student Writing

Free Food & the Power of the Pen

Teachers in the Department of Writing & Rhetoric work with thousands of young writers in their classes, and they're often blown away by the ingenuity of their students' work. Lisa Shaw, a Student Advisor in the department says this is why Writing came up with the idea for a Student Awards ceremony at the end of the year. For the past eight years, the Excellence in Writing

Awards has recognized the best student writers from across campus. "Students get so excited for the awards," Shaw says. "It's a chance to be celebrated for their hard work, have their family around them—and, of course, there's great food!"

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

Students are nominated for the awards by their instructors, so there is no application process. Professors search through hundreds of papers each year to find the best ones, and nominations are reviewed

by a committee of tenured faculty and Career line faculty. Shaw explains, "it's a rigorous process with a lot of different input involved, and final selections are based on the paper's merit, wealth of information, and quality of the work."

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

-Samantha Foote

