



Logo by Terry Dolson

# Richmond Writing Across the Curriculum Newsletter

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## Announcements & Notes

By Joe Essid  
Writing Center Director

Lee Carleton  
Assistant Writing Center Director

Daniel Coudriet  
Newsletter Editor

<http://writing.richmond.edu>

Welcome Marie Boylan!

We'd like to welcome (belatedly) Ms. Boylan to the Writing and Academic Skills Centers as our Administrative Assistant. She joined us at the beginning of the semester. Please feel free to visit and ask any administrative questions. She will handle the on-line scheduler if you need to revise your schedule.

Ms. Boylan is originally from New Jersey and moved to Northern Virginia 33 years ago. Two years ago she relocated to Richmond to be closer to her daughter and grandchildren. She has previously worked in higher education. Currently she volunteers at the READ Center tutoring low level literacy adults.

Online Ideas Needed!

This semester's Eng. 383 class has been discussing under which circumstances, and with which technologies, we might deliver some online services to students who are NOT in the School of Continuing

Studies. Those students use a Blackboard site to leave papers and receive feedback from Happy Herbert, our SCS specialist.

Such a service easily could, for our general population, encourage a "fix-it shop" mentality, but other models might work, including an e-mail "hot line" for easily answered questions, IM at certain hours, or other options.

Any change would be huge one for us, so we need your advice!

Send your concerns & suggestions directly to Joe Essid ([jessid@richmond.edu](mailto:jessid@richmond.edu)).

Writing Fellow & Tutor of the Year

At the end of the spring semester, we give an award to a Writing Fellow and a Tutor about to graduate. We look for those who have done outstanding service for faculty and writers. If you wish to nominate a Tutor or Fellow, please send your nominations to Lee Carleton by e-mail. ([lcarleto@richmond.edu](mailto:lcarleto@richmond.edu))

## Faculty Column:

The Bosphorus Project

Joe Essid, Writing Center Director



I was so heartened, on a visit to Istanbul in 2006, to see Greek and Turkish

academics working together across cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical divides. In that spirit, I wanted to use "wiki" technology to enable faculty and tutors (both the peer tutors common in the US and professional ones more common in Europe) to contribute lesson plans, ideas for conferences, commentary, and personal development. A plain-old Web site needs one author; I instead hoped that dozens of us could collaborate to make a resource worthy of my ambitions for Bosphorus.

Briefly put, Bosphorus < <http://bosporus.wikispaces.com> > attempts in cyberspace what the actual bridges across the Bosphorus (or Istanbul straits) accomplish: closing gaps between different worlds.

For the physical bridges, the gaps are continental, with Europe to the west, Asia to the east. For our collaboratively authored Web site, the gaps are between teaching and tutoring practices in Europe and America. Our Writing Center and WAC Program, as well as programs in Turkey, Greece, Germany, the Netherlands, and England are involved. These include, notably, Sabanci University in Istanbul and Hellenic American University in Athens.

It's no accident that we began there, with the strong bonds made by Vasiliki Kourbani, Hellenic American's Writing Center Academic Coordinator, and Dilek Tokay, of Sabanci's Center for Individual and Academic Development. I'm proud to see other colleagues from Europe and the US joining our efforts now. This site will continue to evolve to suit the needs of our users.

Incidentally, both "Bosphorus" and "Bosporus" are correct spellings...and I believe I stumbled upon the less-common one. I rather like that,

because to me this sort of international collaboration, even in the intensely collaborative world of writing centers, is unique. Perhaps not for long...that would be a good thing for both writing centers and the nations that contain them.  
(jessid@richmond.edu)

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## Article:

Re-Reading National Geographic

Daniel Coudriet, Visiting Instructor of English

As teachers we are often seduced by the new: new technological applications, new editions of course texts, new phrasings of an assignment that will push students that much further intellectually. Over the course of this past semester, I've attempted to meld this desire for the new with a reconsideration of the cultural institution *National Geographic* as a breeding ground for archival study of cultural representation.

Before embarking upon this assignment, which asked students to read and respond to "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes" by Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins (an excerpt from their 1993 text *Reading National Geographic*) and to then explore representational trends in *National Geographic's* online photography archives, I was delighted to "re-discover" that Boatwright Library houses archives of more than 100 years of the magazine. These archives enabled students to explore a wide array of cultural representations within the shifting social and political parameters of the 20th century. For instance, it was enlightening and refreshing to see a Turkish student's exploration of representations of his home, Istanbul, across several different decades; with the photographs at times emphasizing lack of industrial development and poverty, at times highlighting Islamic influences, at times gasping at architecture. Always the representations correlated to

political and social circumstances in U.S./Turkish relations.

Although I'd be happy to discuss the specifics of the writing assignment with anyone interested, my purpose here is more to encourage the full utilization of resources readily available on campus. Particularly during these exciting times for International Study at University of Richmond, it seems prudent to consider the various methods by which other cultures are presented to us, and how very dependent these cultural representations are upon political circumstances. Opportunities like these allow us to embrace the new by fostering new approaches and perspectives to what's been thought of as already known.  
(dcoudrie@richmond.edu)

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## Sample Assignment:

Bridging the Gap with Imagined Dialogues

Pat Princiotto, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

An "Imagined Dialogue" assignment I used last year alongside course text *Ways of Reading* worked remarkably well.

Students were asked to write a dialogue in which they participate and also assume the voices of the "characters" (any genre prose works); this dialogue forces them to get inside the minds and ideas of authors and really acknowledge and wrestle with them in a tangible way. Students created "scripts" within which, for instance, Adrienne Rich talks to Virginia Woolf, who in turn talks to Charlotte Perkins Gilman, etc. The student acts as moderator analyzing and commenting with the various "characters" in the dialogue.

Students responded very enthusiastically to the assignment, citing that the dialogue really helped them come to grips with intellectual debate and argument within a prescribed format.  
(pprincio@richmond.edu)

## Teaching Tips:

When "Good" is not enough...

Joe Essid, Writing Center Director

Writing commentary on student essays is a difficult task. As a faculty member, I do want to praise writers as well as point out areas for improvement.

But when does praise go awry? All Fellows and tutors in Eng. 383 learn to "direct" their praise. It's a complex business, but here's a recap for everyone.

Do not provide "blanket" praise to writers. Writing "this thesis is good" tells a writer that nothing needs to be changed at all. We can expect novice writers, in particular, to then follow our advice verbatim.

I try, in my own commentary, to give the sense of an active reader who says why he likes certain things. So I might, were I a Fellow and not a faculty member assigning a grade, write "I like how your thesis takes a risk. But be sure your faculty member also wants that."

Even sentence-level praise can be directed. For instance, replace "nice word choice!" with "Your choice of words highlights the contrast between the ideas well for me."

Direct both praise and critiques and attentive writers will respond.

Good luck!  
(jessid@richmond.edu)

**Have a photo, announcement, or idea for our next newsletter?**

**Please contact Joe Essid at [jessid@richmond.edu](mailto:jessid@richmond.edu) or Daniel Coudriet at [dcoudrie@richmond.edu](mailto:dcoudrie@richmond.edu)**

**Thanks for supporting Writing at Richmond!**

**<http://writing.richmond.edu>**