



Logo by Terry Dolson

Announcements & Notes

By Joe Essid
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<http://writing.richmond.edu>

Welcome New WAC Faculty!

We'd like to welcome Terry Dolson to our program this year. Terry, of Academic Technology Services, has long worked in our program and teaches the tutor-training course. This is her first semester, however, with Fellows.

Dance-and-Writing Materials Needed

Our second "Writing in the Disciplines" site for *Writer's Web* will focus on the use of writing in our Dance program. We invite Fellows to write to us for the newsletter about their experiences in these classes, and we ask faculty to contribute materials to us that will assist future writers who consult our site.

Recommendations for Fellows and Tutors Needed

We invite faculty to recommend freshmen, sophomores, and juniors to join the program. Students must enroll

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in the Eng. 383 training course next semester, taught by Lee Carleton. To recommend a student, faculty should write a short letter of recommendation or send an e-mail to Lee Carleton (licarlet@richmond.edu).

Faculty should also tell the students they recommend to send a short writing sample (at least 3 pages) to Mr. Carleton (campus address: Writing Center).

Potential Writing Fellows should have good writing, interpersonal, and organizational skills; all students would enroll in English 383 next semester.

Faculty Column:

Letter at Home

Daniel Coudriet, Visiting Instructor of English

I was recently reading through the fourth issue of the literary journal *A Public Space* when I happened upon "A Letter From Buenos Aires" by American writer Jillian Weise. Aside from offering a listing of cultural observations of an outsider as fragmented as it is entertaining, Weise's piece raises the stark query: "Why don't people talk on cell phones as much here as they do in other cities?" I paused in my thoughts. My wife, who is Argentinean, and I spend generally 3 to 4 months per year in Argentina, but here Weise had hit upon an observation we, given perhaps our greater sense of closeness to the culture, never previously pondered. Such truth to this statement. In Buenos Aires, a city of 13 million or so inhabitants with all of the cultural and economic trappings of New York, one rarely sees a cell phone in use

(although nearly all Argentineans have, at minimum, one cell phone, due in large part to drastically lower costs).

The beauty of this paucity of cell phone usage is that people speak to one another, frequently, animatedly, freely, and, most importantly, face-to-face. Whether exchanging salutations with a stranger, greeting a slight acquaintance seen on daily walks to or from work, bumping into a close friend or colleague, or encountering a long lost schoolmate from years ago, Argentineans talk openly with one another in ways that must seem refreshing, if not astonishing, to visitors with experience in other, more closed-culture cosmopolitan locales. In Buenos Aires, it is not uncommon to see relative strangers engaged in passionate discourse in a sidewalk coffeehouse about anything from local or national politics to the latest television advertising campaign of this or that company.

In some ways, for me, it often seems that people in general pay more attention to things in Argentina. People actively see, hear, read, and experience; then form opinions or questions in preparation for the ensuing discussions with who knows who. It's a sort of internal, almost innate, sense of rhetorical necessity that's coded into daily life, as well as into the print and visual media circulating in the culture. As readers/viewers, the need to then discuss and persuade is almost automatically understood.

I find myself missing this when I return to the States, whose current culture seems, by contrast, to contain much more passive readership. We probably don't need more coffeehouses, and we could probably do without cell phones more than we'd care to admit. But, for me, the lower level of awareness and engagement

is not simply an issue of comfort and commodity, it's a fundamental result of less-and-less active readership as a culture. We might need more coffeehouses, though.
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Sample Assignment:

Writing for a Real Audience

Pat Princiotto, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English

Students are asked to write a 250 word "This I Believe" essay, following the format NPR prescribes on the project website (<http://thisibelieve.org>). Before they begin, we read a few compelling examples from TIB archives--Bill Gates, Cheever, politicians, musicians, poets, etc. And we are probably most moved by the stories of ordinary folks doing extraordinary things, in quiet, simple ways that cause us to think about what exactly we do believe.

This assignment accomplishes a couple of things: some students have never heard of NPR so this essay forces them to visit the website and listen to the program; additionally, we always tell students their voices are important, they "own" their texts, and this simple assignment makes them feel their writing does matter.

A few of my students' essays have been remarkable and I hope some might be published on NPR. The "This I Believe" submission guidelines are included on the website.
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tasks simultaneously. This is anathema to the focus one needs for effective analytical prose.

Much of our multitasking is avoidable. Listening to music is fine, but does a writer need music, an IM window, and a readily available cell-phone all going while trying to compose a paper? Some of my 103 students tried an experiment with short (and low-stakes) response papers done in the same class. They first opened every one of their favorite ways of communicating and wrote the response. Then they did the next one with no multitasking beyond some favored music, the grades were much higher. The professor was stunned when she learned about the experiment.

Consider that for our own "writing rituals" and what we tell writers to try themselves.
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Have a photo, announcement, or idea for our next newsletter?

Please contact Joe Essid at jessid@richmond.edu or Daniel Coudriet at dcoudrie@richmond.edu

Thanks for supporting Writing at Richmond!

<http://writing.richmond.edu>

Article:

Multitasking When Writing

Joe Essid, Writing Center Director

I'm learning to do it myself! I hate to admit that often in the office I must accomplish two (sometimes more)