

WRITE FREE OR DIE

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Writing Center Future..... | 1 |
| Upcoming Events | 1 |
| Writing Committee | 2 |
| Ask Perkins | 4 |
| The Grammar Box | 5 |
| Dangling Modifier | 6 |
| Library Faculty Profiles | 7 |
| Past Perfect | 10 |

The Future of Writing Centers

Meaghan Dittrich, PhD

Director, University Writing Programs

To be sure, COVID has impacted us all. The UNH Connors Writing Center (CWC) is no exception and is apparently in good company with other writing centers across the nation.¹ Most centers, particularly those who were only offering in-person appointments before COVID, have been operating at around half of their usual services. Some centers have fared better if they already had virtual options before the pandemic hit. However, after a brief hiatus in the spring of 2020, the CWC piloted its new virtual appointment system that summer and rolled out a fully fledged version of it that following fall term.

In considering changes to student writing practice during a pandemic, we made the following adaptations to our services:

- Online synchronous appointments: While we've always had the OWL, we now also offer virtual conferences. We now have the ability to permanently provide this service as a more accessible option even outside of a pandemic.

(continued on page 2)

Future Tense: Upcoming Writing Across the Curriculum Events

March 31: Guest Speaker Dr. Temptaous Mckoy (12:40-2:00pm, via Zoom). This year's guest presenter will be Temptaous Mckoy, winner of the 2020 CCCC Outstanding Dissertation Award in Technical communication, and Assistant Professor of English with a focus in Technical Writing at Bowie State University. Dr. Mckoy teaches a multitude of courses such as Developmental Writing, First-Year Writing, Research Writing, and Technical and Report Writing. She also serves as the Coordinator of Graduate Studies for the Department of Language, Literature, and Cultural Studies. At UNH, she will be presenting on "Centering Student Technology: Moving Past PowerPoint," a focus on what technical and multimodal writing can look like. Please register by March 30: <https://www.unh.edu/ceitl/writing-programs-invited-speaker-presentation-spring-2022>. [Attendees will receive 1 CEITL participation point]

April 1: Student Exit Interviews (12:30-2:00pm, via Zoom). The Writing Committee will once again be conducting exit interviews with a panel of graduating seniors on their writing experiences at UNH. Faculty are invited to join and participate. Contact Meaghan.Dittrich@unh.edu to attend. [capacity: 12] [1 CEITL Participation Point]

(continued from page 1)

WAC(ky) People

UNH Writing Program

Meaghan Dittrich, Director

Cyndi Roll, Writing Ctr Assoc. Dir.

Alicia Clark-Barnes, WP Assoc. Dir.

Nicole Cunningham-Frisbey, WP Assoc. Dir

Writing Committee:

College Representatives Term End

| | |
|--|------|
| Paul —Inchan Kim (Decision Sciences) | 2024 |
| COLSA —Davida Margolin (MCBS) | 2024 |
| CEPS —Robert Letscher (Earth Sciences) | 2023 |
| COLA 1 —Josh Lauer (Communication) | 2022 |
| COLA 2 —Michelle Gibbons. (Communication) | 2023 |
| CHHS — Lauren Ferguson. (Recreation Management and Policy) | 2022 |
| UNHM —C.C. Hendricks (English, Director of First- Year Writing Program) | 2023 |

Permanent Representatives:

Writing Program Director and Connors

Writing Center Director:

Meaghan Dittrich (Academic Affairs)

Director of Composition:

Cris Beemer* (English, Director
of Composition)

CEITL:

Catherine Overson (Academic
Affairs)

Discovery Committee:

Kathrine Aydelott (Dimond Library)

Ex officio (non-voting):

Committee Secretary:

Elizabeth Smith (Registrar)

*Faculty Chair

- Online accountability groups: Prior to COVID, the CWC had paired with the Graduate School to provide writing accountability groups to graduate students, particularly those participating in the annual writing retreats. Seeing how useful this was to our grad students, we expanded the invitation and our sessions to a weekly accountability group via Zoom for all UNH students to set goals and check in on their writing progress.
- More social media involvement: More than ever, a web presence is essential. Our social media task force made it their mission to reach out more frequently about services, events, and other useful links and resources. Follow the CWC on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- Updating our website: Our talented Graduate Students in the Writing Program have begun efforts to make our website more user-friendly. The work they are doing includes soliciting feedback from both student and faculty focus groups. If you are interested in participating in that process, please contact us by emailing Alicia.Clark-Barnes@unh.edu.
- Updating our staff training: In fall 2020, we added a section to our tutor training course syllabus regarding online writing. Class discussion included the adaptations that are made between face-to-face and virtual conference approaches. We now expect our annual staff training to include online conference instruction.
- Community Writing Table: This spring 2022, we introduced a new opportunity for those seeking an in-person place to write. The Community Writing Table is offered four hours each week (Tuesdays from 10am-12pm and Wednesdays from 6pm-8pm) in the Writing Center. So far we've seen a great number of students eager to share their energy while writing with others.

Challenges:

- Maintaining community with our staff via Zoom. Whether we like to admit it or not, it does feel different to interact with our colleagues on screen versus in person. With a staff of over 30 students, it's tough to establish real connections on an individual basis. During the remote-only time period, the CWC team created a virtual space that acted as a stand-in for our "Big Table" at the Center.

(continued on page 3)

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While not an equal substitute, it did help maintain a sense of support during shifts and a space to share fun collaborative messages between staff when not conferencing with student writers.

- Software hiccups: The software our Center uses, called WCOOnline, acts much like a cross between Zoom and Google Docs. While we've had many successful online conferences with this software, the most frustrating factor continues to be formatting changes in documents (it does not support Microsoft Word formatting). We are hoping that the software designers are working on a way to fix that issue. In the meantime, our staff and the students who make appointments with us continue to find creative new ways around the problem.
- Self-care: It's been a challenge for everyone to handle any extra emotional distress when writing or working with student writers during the pandemic. To combat this, we've held several social events, tried to incorporate more light-hearted activities in our ongoing staff training sessions, and asked several guest speakers such as PACS to come speak with us about best practices in self-care.

We've thankfully been able to overcome many of these challenges. From a writing assistant who was *not* part of our staff before 2020, they felt:

It must have been a lot easier to connect with people, both coworkers and students. That being said I think this shared experience makes us work harder to form connections, so the ones we do make are stronger. I see everyone, especially core staff and directors, doing everything they can to make sure the center stays a warm and welcoming environment. It's hard navigating COVID in the center but honestly it's proven to me how much everyone cares about the CWC and that despite everything the people here care very deeply about each other and the center itself.

Writing centers provide a service students continue to need. Supporting writing centers is even more important now than ever so they might expand their resources – a need for more computers, for instance. When we broaden our services, we promote accessibility. While overall numbers may be down, the demographic of students we now see has expanded. We have opened possibilities of reaching different types of users, such as more commuter students who can't make it to campus, or those in isolation/quarantine, more students from e-UNH, students with anxiety or social obstacles, etc. I'd say that's progress.

¹For more perspectives on writing center operations during COVID, please see:

Brooks-Gillies, M., Bell, L., Dembsey, J. M., & Theobald, D. (2021). Writing Center Administrator Guidance in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Progression of a Position Statement. *The Peer Review*, 5(1).
<https://thepeerreview-iwca.org/issues/issue-5-1/writing-center-administrator-guidance-in-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic-the-progression-of-a-position-statement/>

“Don't let yourself be weighed down by what other people think, because in a few years, in a few decades, or in a few centuries, that way of thinking will have changed. Live now what others will only live in the future.”
~ Paulo Coelho

Ask Perkins:

Your teaching concerns addressed by our very own Perkins Cunningham-Frisbey

As Transposed from Peep to Person by Nicole Cunningham-Frisbey, UNH Writing Programs

Dear Perkins, I struggle to communicate effectively with my students through Canvas. How can I use my LMS to support my classroom community?

~Trying to Tech



Dear Trying to Tech,

I'm glad to *chirp* in about this! Though many incoming students may have engaged with a Learning Management System (LMS) interface as part of their K-12 experience, both faculty and students may not be aware of the opportunities for using these platforms (like Canvas) in college.

For faculty, LMS is most often understood as having one of two functions, a repository of materials, and or a way to remind students of future deadlines and letting students see their graded progress. It can therefore sometimes be difficult for faculty to discern how to best use Canvas to establish teaching presence, whether teaching face-to-face (f2f), hybrid, or online. Teaching presence is more than just being seen as *fluffing your feathers* at the front of the class. To briefly summarize work from Terry Anderson¹ and Ida Jones:² for an instructor to be seen by their students as “good” at teaching their subject, they will establish a teaching presence by being reliable, consistent, and present communicators to their students, while presenting a “meaningful” experience for them.

Don't let technology *ruffle* you. Despite limitations, Canvas can be a useful interface for many college courses where writing is featured, in-person or online. By seeing Canvas as an “interface genre,” we can more clearly indicate how we want students to use it. In a 2018 case study, Alison Whitte reflects on a shift to seeing it as genre in her teaching experience:

It allowed me to think of the interface not as a tool, but as a text with both expectations and formal conventions attached to it. It also provided a shift in focus from not only what the interface looked like, but also (1) how the interface was used by both students and teachers in specific situations and (2) how the ways the interface looked shaped how students and teachers perceived its functions and their roles as readers and writers.³

It therefore helps to understand our institutional access to Canvas as a genre *first* and *then* as a tool for communicating with our students. We can then address its functions, purposes, and uses that we also want our students to see in its use as an interface-text of classroom instruction. Because we know the conventions and limitations of what it can and can't do, we know how to more clearly communicate to our students our expectations for engaging with Canvas in our courses.

Utilizing some of these features of Canvas can help bolster your teaching presence because it can help students to see how personally invested you are in their learning and your plucky personality. Offered here are a few course design teaching tips for how to use Canvas as an “interface-text” with your students:

(continued on page 5)

¹Anderson, T., Rourke, L., Garrison, R., & Archer, W. (2019). Assessing Teaching Presence in a Computer Conference Context. *Online Learning*, 5(2). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24059/olj.v5i2/1875>

²Jones. (2011). Can You See Me Now? Defining Teaching Presence in the Online Classroom Through Building a Learning Community: Can You See Me Now? *The Journal of Legal Studies Education*, 28(1), 67-116. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-1722.2010.01085.x>

³Witte, A. (2018). 'Why Won't Moodle...?': Using genre studies to understand students' approaches to interacting with user-interfaces. *Computers and Composition*, 49, 48-60. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2018.05.004>

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- In your syllabus design, consider including a section that highlights how you intend to use Canvas in your course. Explicitly address student-user expectations on how they should use Canvas for your class and also verbally discuss this during your first days of class.
- Consider using the announcement feature in Canvas on a weekly/biweekly basis. While the announcement posts can be used to *tweet* deadline reminders, they can also be used to reflect current changes that occurred during class time as a result of a discussion topic that took an interesting turn, or to share a resource link or file you came across unexpectedly.
- Similarly, consider using the discussion feature less like a blog and more to continue class-time discussions by circling back to key

terms and concepts that they learned about that day. This is also a great way to introduce more formal, low-stakes and heuristic writing practices.

Naturally, there are a number of limitations when using Canvas, as well. One limitation is the top-down structure which can sometimes inhibit a student-centered approach. More specifically, Canvas is a challenging interface for equal access collaboration between students' knowledge and teachers' knowledge when the teacher is the one determining what can be shared in somewhat narrow communication pathways.



But don't feel *caged in*! Canvas offers enough options for an instructor to consider its use in helping to establish a teaching presence. Thanks for listening! You must excuse me now; it's time for my bird bath.

For more information, please email Perkins at Nicole.Frisbey@unh.edu

The Grammar Box: This or That?

Nicole Cunningham-Frisbey, Associate Director, UNH Writing Program (Nicole.Frisbey@unh.edu)

Sometimes called demonstrative pronouns, "this" and "that" can be used in the English language to *demonstrate* proximity to distance or time. In most student writing habits the use of "this" or "that" is often used to reference the proximity of one abstract thought or concept in relation to another. When used effectively, it can connect two unassociated concepts, actions, or theories and create a clear proximate relationship between them. Pronouns are used all over in academic journals because scholarly writing is often associated with theory work - *that* ephemeral not quite tangible thing we want to say about humanity.

In student work, *this* and *that* are used as placeholders for when students are told not to use first person in certain academic assignments and are attempting to try and "vary" their writing style and sound academic as best they can. You'll see *this* appear when students get tired of writing "the" when they really want to say "I," such as "This paper/essay/article will argue/claim/explore/examine concept X...." Most often the misuse of *this* or *that* is most prevalent in nascent college student writing. However, *this* is a great opportunity for their instructor to help them as they struggle to negotiate an academic tone in their writing but not an *overly* formal academic tone. Consider, when you see *this* or *that* in reference to a vague unidentifiable thought or concept in student writing, it represents the student working through their thought process trying to name the thing they want to say about *that*.

Dangling Modifier: Connecting the Cloud to the Classroom

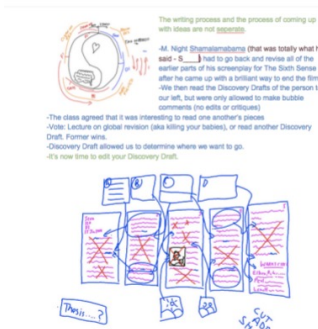
Alicia Clark-Barnes, Associate Director, University Writing Programs



Faculty and students are increasingly meeting and working together in online spaces using digital documents. In the past, this work may have taken place via Zoom with documents shared via Box or Google Drive. UNH is in the process of migrating shared resources from Box to Microsoft 365. Two resources available as a result of this migration are OneDrive and Sharepoint. OneDrive and Sharepoint are secure online platforms for faculty and students to share and collaborate on materials.

Many faculty use Canvas to interact with students during and beyond class time. While Canvas is ideal for communicating with students individually, such as through grading, or asynchronously, such as through discussion forums, it can be difficult for students to work together in real-time.

For Individual Work: OneDrive can be used by students or faculty to create and work on a project alone using Microsoft software and to save their work securely. This work can then be shared with students or other faculty for feedback and additional input without the need for document reformatting. One way to use OneDrive in class is for an ongoing Class Notes document. An instructor creates the document then shares it with students who add their written notes, drawings, links, photos of the board, etc. throughout the semester. The shared document can be embedded in Canvas



as a link so that notes are visible to the whole class at any time. Some faculty include student note-taking in the course participation grade or incorporate the final document into exam reviews. Students and faculty may also use shared notes when attending conferences or training sessions.

For Collaboration: Sharepoint can be used by students or faculty to create and work on a project together. According to the USNH Knowledge Base, Sharepoint works best for these types of projects as Sharepoint connects easily to Microsoft Teams so that groups can meet online and work together on the same project within the same secure system. This makes Sharepoint a useful tool for collaborative projects where students need the ability to compose and edit together. Sharepoint can also be used to peer review assignments, including multimodal files which are often too large to share easily on Canvas.

In addition to the extra storage space (one terabyte), OneDrive and Sharepoint can add a space for collaboration and experimentation in your pedagogy. Sharepoint or OneDrive can be used to share large files from student to student or faculty to student, and be used to share or co-construct portfolios of work.

To learn more about the UNH Box migration to Microsoft 365, see this link <https://www.usnh.edu/it/projects/m365/box-migration>. For more information about OneDrive and Sharepoint, visit <https://td.unh.edu/TDClient/60/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=2375>.

Image: <https://compcomm.commons.gc.cuny.edu>

Special Collective Profile Feature: UNH Subject Librarians

This semester we are introducing the first column in a limited series focused on UNH library faculty and staff. Look for part two in the fall semester of 2022. The UNH library has six subject librarians who “work with department faculty, staff, and students to provide instruction and research assistance and to develop library collections.” In addition to this work, subject librarians also engage in scholarly projects, often in collaboration with faculty in the college they support or with other librarians. If you haven’t already met them or are considering ways a subject librarian can help you and your students in your WI course (or non-WI courses), we highlight brief profiles of each librarian and summarize some of the specialized support they provide for a variety of disciplines and the scholarly work they do as faculty themselves.



Kathrine C. Aydelott

COLA, Associate Professor, Arts & Humanities Librarian

Kathrine C. Aydelott holds a BA in English and Philosophy from Colby College, an MA and PhD in English from Uconn, and an MLIS from Simmons College. Her current scholarly work is in genealogy. In addition to providing research support, she enjoys partnering with faculty on assignment design and digital humanities projects. She also hosts monthly Zotero workshops. She encourages WI faculty and students to reach out to her for assistance with refining research vocabulary and with evaluating the purpose and format of different types of information.

Megan Bresnahan

COLSA, Assistant Professor, Life Sciences & Agriculture Librarian

Megan Bresnahan holds a BA from University of Arizona and an MS from the University of Michigan. She is currently pursuing an M.Ed. at UNH and serves as faculty advisor to the NH Toy Library. She is co-authoring an article on the role of librarians serving on IRB and Institutional Ethics Boards. She enjoys helping faculty and students access ebook versions of textbooks and encourages students to complicate initial binary judgments of scientific scholarship. She also works with students to reframe and resize the scope of scientific questions and to help them evaluate evidence in scientific literature beyond peer reviewed articles. She encourages faculty to co-partner with her on assignment design and to brainstorm ideas to set students up for success in the research process.



(continued from page 7)



Louise Buckley

COLA, Associate Professor, Social Sciences,
Public Policy & Government Librarian

Louise Buckley holds a B.A. in Public Administration and an M.A. in Government & Politics from St. John's University and an MLS in Library Service from Rutgers University. She worked in corporate law as a legal assistant and then in banking before going into academic librarianship. She is currently working on an article based on teaching with quantitative data in the social sciences at UNH with Patti Condon, Research Data Services Librarian and Eleta Exline, Scholarly Communication Librarian. She provides information literacy instruction, reference and research support, and creates online and digital content, in addition to other services. As Government Information Librarian, she assists the UNH community and members of the public with identifying and accessing primarily US and NH government information.

Chris Loughnane

CEPS, Assistant Professor, Engineering & Physical Science Librarian

Chris studied English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. He holds an MSc in Library Science from City, University of London and a PhD in Information Studies at the University of Glasgow. At UNH he has just started the Feminist Studies Graduate Certificate, to inform his approach to librarianship in terms of social justice issues and STEM. At a previous institution he has been involved in interdisciplinary research projects with faculty in Pharmacy, Computer Science, Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and Culinary Arts including working a Teslasuit, a full-body haptic suit used to map and track physiological responses and provide the wearer with an immersive embodied virtual experience. He is actively looking for scholarly collaborations at UNH, and is currently revising an article for publication on Gilbert Simondon's *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*. He supports CEPS faculty and students in finding, citing, managing, organizing, and synthesizing sources. He enjoys teaching classes how to search library databases, and how to find datasets and other sources online. CEPS Libraries will be hosting a table at the Admitted Students Visit Day on March 26. He is also hoping to plan many more CEPS library events, possibly a speaker series or mini-conference.



(continued from page 8)



Eugenia Opuda

HHS, Assistant Professor, Health & Human Services Librarian

Eugenia Opuda is one of UNH's subject librarians in Health and Human Services. She received her Bachelor's degree in Art History from Georgia State University, her Master of Library Science degree from SUNY Buffalo and recently graduated with a Master of Education from UNH in 2020. She has a Certificate in Effective Instruction from the Association of College and University Educators. Eugenia assists faculty and students to find available evidence-based resources to support their research projects and coursework, by accessing clinical tools that can be useful in healthcare settings. She provides individual consultations and guidance on review methodologies that lead to evidence-based recommendations. To support our WI faculty Eugenia shares strategies for collecting, organizing, and citing their research, and will discuss with WI faculty in her consultations strategies for finding relevant journals to publish their manuscripts, help them plan ways they can make their research more easy to identify in subject searches for their readers and peers. Recently Opuda's research received a \$71,832 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to lead a team to develop online training on empathy in museums and libraries to improve user experiences. She is also a co-author on two systematic reviews, one rapid review. She is currently working on three scoping reviews that includes a WITH Foundation-funded review in collaboration with the UNH Institute on Disability. Eugenia wants you to know that she is passionate about participating in systematic review teams to support evidence-based-practice recommendations and encourages faculty and students to book appointment with her at <https://bit.ly/HHSLibrarian>

Wendy Pothier is a UNH subject librarian in Business and Economics services. She received her Bachelor's in English Literature and Japanese and has a Masters in Logistic Management. She offers support for students and faculty in Data literacy and developing baseline data analysis skills for business management students that are transferable to the workplace environment. For business students involved in thesis-track research, as a subject librarian she can assist them in their research goals through weekly individual meetings with her and will guide them to appropriate types of resources they need and potential publishing options for their thesis upon finishing. In addition she provides instructional support to faculty who teach courses for the business school that include classes in marketing, accounting and honors thesis coursework. For faculty doing scholarship in their specialty Wendy facilitates a more focused research method and methodology that fits into each individual faculty researchers' needs such as conduction "deep-dives" like company data collection/analysis using financial reports and connecting these components in their research process into industry publications that have scholarship overlap. She would like students who are Business majors to consider enrolling in a new course being offered in Fall '22 called "Disrupting a Supply-Chain"



Wendy Pothier

Paul College, Associate Professor,
Business & Economics Librarian



Make an appointment



Research Guides



Ask a Librarian



*“I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library.”
~ Jorge Luis Borges*

Past Perfect: Director’s Notes

Meaghan Dittrich, Director, University Writing Programs

The Writing Program’s 2022 January CEITL Workshop on Plagiarism, “Setting Students up for Citation Success in the Era of Plagiarism Detection Software,” enjoyed fourteen faculty and graduate student participants from various disciplines. The Writing Program perspective gave an overview of resources from the Connors Writing Center useful to faculty and students alike. We first answered: What is plagiarism? What isn’t it? Are students and faculty on the same page? Many students are victims of citation error or lack of knowledge about source attribution. This isn’t plagiarism, but an opportunity for them to be, well, students. They are learning. We can provide them with resources to learn what plagiarism truly is—intentionally claiming ideas that belong to another author, with no attempt at attributing the ideas or words to the original author.

Dr. Cristy Beemer (Assoc. Prof. of English and Director of Composition) spoke from the faculty viewpoint, providing helpful tools and strategies for building plagiarism-proof assignment prompts that focus on writing in stages, and suggestions for in-house solutions to plagiarism when it occurs. Many approaches focus on the student holistically and rely on direct communication by asking them questions about their writing process or offering an opportunity for revision.

Dr. Kathrine Aydelott (Assoc. Prof. and Arts & Humanities Librarian) then joined us to present the research standpoint—approaching research and citation as “scholarship as conversation” and stressing the value of knowing why and how citation is important to each discipline. Of course, librarians are always an overlooked resource, but we were pleased to discover that most of our participants knew who their subject librarian was. Do you? Conveniently, this very issue of *Write Free or Die* tells you exactly that information! (See pages 7-9.)

Our graduate students, Alicia Clark-Barnes and Nicole Cunningham-Frisbey, each presented the student perspective of plagiarism and common student struggles (anxiety, cultural differences, confusion about various expectations by discipline, lack of practice, etc.). Building off our teaser from the fall 2021 newsletter’s article on Turnitin software and its risks, Alicia and Nicole then gave us some pointers on best practices for using this type of technology strategically. They suggest customizing how the results filter works and teaching students to interpret the similarity report.

Each workshop participant shared that they had experienced some form of plagiarism in their classrooms. More than half expressed that they used a version of plagiarism detection software. Our goal with the workshop was to provide resources beyond the software that encourage and necessitate original work.

