So This Happened . . .

Over 9,000 Writing Tutorials in 2015!

We've come a long way, Horned Frogs, from decades ago when we inhabited the basement of the old Student Union Building or the “back forty” of the Rickel. We just closed out another record-setting year here in 419 Reed Hall, as we totaled up the number of face-to-face tutorials, online writing tutorials, and class workshops conducted by our team of well-trained writing consultants. Fall semester we assisted a steady stream of undergrad and graduate students working on research papers, dissertation chapters, business projects, history book reviews, capstone papers, scholarship applications, grad school admissions, ethnographies, and a raft of other assignments.

We have 6 full-time professional staff, several part-time professionals, and many graduate-level and undergraduate peer writing consultants from a wide variety of disciplines across campus. Our student tutors, whether veterans or newbies, take part in ongoing extensive training every semester, delving into practical matters of grammar, documentation styles, and confidentiality. We think it’s likely ours are among the best collegiate writing tutors in America. They can tell you where the running head goes in an APA paper, how to use *Ibid.* in a Chicago style paper, and how to cite a film in an MLA paper. Because of their required readings such as John Nordlof’s 2015 IWCA-award winning essay, they who can tell you who Vygotsky is and why his theory of scaffolding matters in writing center work.
"The consultants at TCU’s Center for Writing believe that the best writing instruction occurs in an atmosphere of honesty, consideration, trust, and confidentiality. We respect and appreciate each student’s individual learning style and learning needs. If we can help you accommodate your unique needs, please let us know. We seek to help our clients learn, understand, and meet the American English writing norms and standards appropriate to their academic disciplines and writing needs, and to do so in an ethical and responsible manner."

We are looking for mature, responsible TCU students with strong writing skills to work as peer writing consultants at the William L. Adams Writing Center in 419 Reed Hall or in our Library Annex. Peer consultants typically work ten hours per week and earn at least minimum wage. We are actively seeking graduate students to serve as peer writing consultants in our Graduate Writing Center. All TCU students who are interested in applying should email Dr. Steve Sherwood at s.sherwood@tcu.edu. Qualified applicants will be asked to provide a writing sample and at least one faculty recommendation. If we don't have any immediate openings, we will be happy to add qualified applicants to our list of potential future peer writing consultants.
On August 3-6, 2015, we held our fourth annual Dissertation and Thesis Boot Camp for graduate students, in collaboration with TCU’s Office of Graduate Studies and Research (GEMS) program. This four-day event is a series of intensive daily writing workshops designed to jump-start the writing process for grad students heading into the home stretch of their degree programs. This year’s program was organized and conducted by Dr. Steve Sherwood with Meredith May, Assistant to the Graduate Dean. Sessions convened at 9 a.m. up on the fourth floor of Reed Hall in the Center for Writing conference room.

Participants were TCU graduate students from a wide range of disciplines who are in the initial stages of thesis or dissertation writing. After completing a personal writing inventory, participants were guided through various writing activities, interactive sessions with faculty, working lunches, and breakout sessions of at least three hours of individual writing per day. On Day One, the key considerations were motivational strategies and writing for an academic audience. On the second day, time management and organizational skills were the focus, and how the drafting process for a dissertation or thesis differs from other academic projects. Day Three included advice on how to get past the first-draft milestone, and how to avoid the perfectionism that causes many grad students to stall out or suffer the infamous “writer's block.” The final day included discussions on how to establish viable working habits and routines for writing, skills that are important not only for finishing one's degree, but for later professional life as well. Each day included blocks of writing time, when participants faced off with the blank screens of their laptops.

We reprised our popular Lunchtime Speakers series, inviting TCU faculty to share insights with participants. Guest speakers shared sandwiches and food for thought, providing valuable insights into navigating long writing projects. This year’s roster of lunchtime speakers included Dr. Molly Weinburgh of the School of Education; Dr. Wendy Macias, professor of advertising in TCU’s Schieffer School; Dr. Jeffrey Coffer, a “card-carrying chemist” at TCU; and our own Dr. Lindsay Dunn, an art historian who recently defended her dissertation at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. During the week, participants encountered a variety of pragmatic, surprising, and often humorous advice from guest speakers, seasoned TCU professors who not only have written respectable dissertations themselves, but have also directed the research and writing projects of many grad students. Advice ranged from considerations of the norms of one’s own academic department, to the necessity for scholarly focus on a topic, to the etiquette of dealing with one’s director and committee members.

For further information about future Dissertation Boot Camps, contact Dr. Steve Sherwood at writingctr@tcu.edu. To consult with a professional-level writing consultant about your own thesis or dissertation, visit the “Graduate Writing Center” tab on our website. For a synopsis of each Lunchtime Speaker presentation from TCU faculty participating in the lunchtime series, see the following page.

Continued…
It’s a Marathon, Not a Sprint. . .

Timely Dissertation and Thesis Writing Tips from TCU Faculty

Dr. Jeff Coffer, Professor of Inorganic Minerals and Chemistry, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry:
- Schedule your defense, then schedule weekly meetings with your director. Stick to your schedule.
- Never cancel a meeting with your director, but reschedule any missed meetings immediately.
- Construct a broad but flexible project outline with your director’s approval.
- Don’t waste time turning in fragments to your director; turn in whole chapters.
- Keep all versions of chapters, and bring them with you to meetings.
- Count on making at least three revisions of chapters. Polish as you go.
- Don’t rely too heavily on quoting directly, but cite all sources clearly.
- Cultural differences about intellectual property rights are no excuse for errors in using or citing source material.
- Passive voice verbs are almost unavoidable in the sciences, but can create ambiguity in meaning.

Dr. Lindsay Dunn, Writing Consultant and Art Historian, W.L. Adams Center for Writing:
- Pick a good advisor; maintain a good relationship with that person. Listen to your advisor’s good advice.
- Consider curtailing conference presentations and teaching while you complete your dissertation.
- Understand that your topic will change a bit as you progress.
- If your research entails travel and grants, prepare and apply well in advance.
- Permit yourself the luxury of spending time thinking about how your research fits together.
- Work on your dissertation EVERY DAY. Review the previous day’s work before you start.
- Don’t leave campus; avoid having to pay tuition if you are not employed.
- Stick to your goals. If you get blocked, change up; write longhand; give yourself rewards.

Dr. Wendy Macias, Associate Professor of Advertising, Bob Schieffer College of Communication:
- Choose a topic you are passionate about, to keep you motivated. The scope should be manageable.
- Choose your committee wisely.
- Plan ahead for IRB approval.
- Be curious.
- Ask your advisor about strategies.
- Consider ease of data collection when designing your study.
- Set a writing schedule and stick to it or modify as you need to. Keep the finish line in mind.
- Know when committee drafts and the final draft must be completed. Look at examples accepted by your department.
- Do your best writing and editing; if writing is not your strong suit. Get help and plan ahead for the extra time.
- Keep making progress. Don’t let the quest for perfection or fear keep you from moving forward.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for help; committees are usually happy to help.
- Take feedback seriously and make the changes your committee suggests.

Dr. Steven Sherwood, Director, W.L. Adams Center for Writing:
- Ask your director to point you to several especially good dissertations in your field.
- Invest enough time and research in your prospectus so that you have a blueprint to follow later.
- Determine whether your department sees the prospectus as a guide or a contract.
- Keep in mind that a dissertation is a marathon, not a sprint. Perseverance matters.
- Make the project a part of your regular workday. The regularity of the effort is important.
- Familiarize yourself with your discipline’s documentation style.
- Start typing a reference list of accurate citations early in the project, and update as your research progresses.
- Give yourself short deadlines so you can reach the long deadline in increments.
- Perfectionism in the drafting stage is your enemy. Perfectionism in the proofreading phase is your new best friend.

Dr. Molly Weinburgh, Professor of Science Education, Andrews Institute of Math and Science Education, College of Education:
- There is no single silver bullet; determine what works best for you.
- Determine your department and college’s culture. What is expected of you?
- Set a realistic timeline, with the help of your committee chair.
- Establish a coding system to name your various versions. Archive all versions.
- Be mindful of faculty’s schedules and their other obligations.
- Expect lots of edits from your chair. Do the revisions!
Something Borrowed, Something True

Classical Rhetoric Is Perennially New

Professor Richard Enos first came to TCU in 1995 as the Lillian B. Radford Chair of Rhetoric and Composition, after a stint as a Professor of Rhetoric and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Carnegie Mellon. Dr. Enos is a nationally recognized specialist in classical rhetoric and oratory. Among his many accomplishments are Roman Rhetoric: Revolution and the Greek Influence (1995) and Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle (2011). His course offerings for the Department of English are popular and range from such topics as Honors Intellectual Traditions and the History of Rhetoric, to the very popular Propaganda Analysis and Persuasion. Enos also served on a committee of scholars who succeeded in getting a written essay component requirement added to the SAT format in 2004. Dr. Enos is one of TCU’s beloved professors, and we appreciate his willingness to talk to us.

Why should writing tutors and student writers study classical rhetoric today?

Citing Aristotle as the precedent, Dr. Enos regards rhetoric as the ability to perceive and exploit all available means of persuasion on a particular issue. In short: good writers and orators such as Winston Churchill and Martin Luther King Jr. both were gifted with language, but had also been trained to connect with audiences not only through the “pure reason” of logic and facts but also with a “civic vector” that appealed to the public’s sense of justice and the common good. Students today get a different training. Enos argues quite persuasively himself that many TCU students possess a natural gift for rhetoric and persuasion that is comparable to untapped athletic potential. Writing instruction should “develop in the fullest sense” a student’s individual potential through “scholastic education” that recoups some of the lost tools of classical argument set aside during medieval times.

What’s the best tool in the classical argument “toolkit?”

Argument, says Dr. Enos, but not the global verbal fisticuffs we see today in the digital age. Classical argument privileges civil discourse and presents a case that is both tactical and tactful. One of the lost arts of rhetoric is the well-reasoned rebuttal. We live in an age in which to challenge someone’s point is “not nice” and to parry a skilled rebuttal is often regarded as impolite. A common result, says Enos, is the polite “spiral of silence” stalemate that often ensues. The spiral of silence is a term coined by Nazi propaganda analysts to describe the phenomenon of how people fail to speak up on civic matters because they assume their opinions are in the minority or will be discredited. Classical argument methods can enable a writer or speaker to challenge the points of another person’s statements, but without classifying that person as an enemy combatant. You can then agree to go have a pizza together, and keep talking to solve the world’s problems.
Writing Associates Expand Our Campus Reach

Because of them, we reach more students than an individual appointment allows.

Writing Associate, noun, 1: special designation referring to a writing consultant who works closely with a professor throughout an entire semester to improve the writing skills of all students enrolled in that professor's course. 2: a “dedicated” writing tutor, in both senses of that word.

Our Writing Associates program provided extended writing support for an estimated 150 TCU students during the fall semester of 2015. We expect to exceed that number in Spring 2016.

This past fall Amanda Aguilar was the Writing Associate who assisted Prof. Suki John’s Dance 40370 class. Emma Crandall was the Writing Associate for Prof. Fran Huckaby’s EDEC 41113, section 30. Malcolm Baker served as the Writing Associate for Prof. Fran Huckaby’s EDEC 41113, section 30. Dr. Arch Mayfield was the Writing Associate for Prof. Gina Alexander’s and Prof. Sharon Canclini’s sections of Nursing 40813, Community Health Nursing. Megan Poole was the Writing Associate for two separate sections (10 and 21) of Prof. Mark Dennis’s Religion 10023. This spring, Arch Mayfield will be the WA for Professors Canclini and Alexander, 2 sections of Nursing 40813. Chase Shanafelt will be the WA for Dr. Pam Frable’s Nursing 40813. Megan Poole will serve as the WA for Prof. Mark Dennis’ Honors World Religions (10023) as well as the Religion Department’s Senior Seminar.

Originally funded by a 2006 Vision in Action grant, TCU’s Writing Associates Program is now administered by the William L. Adams Center for Writing. The program dedicates a Writing Associate, usually a trained undergraduate or graduate student, to a class in any discipline that heavily emphasizes writing instruction. The professor and writing associate work together to help students improve their writing skills. The center assigns consultants to undergraduate classes across all disciplines, based on faculty requests and available staff.

Writing Associates, who also serve as regular peer writing consultants for the Center for Writing, receive extensive training from us as well as mentoring from the professors with whom they work. Associates also have the opportunity to observe experienced professors incorporate and teach writing skills. The associates meet with students from assigned classes during regular tutoring hours, and occasionally attend class meetings alongside students.

The primary mission of a writing associate is instructional rather than editorial. A writing associate will respond to writing in ways that help students to become more aware of their strengths and to learn to overcome any weaknesses. Writing associates do not grade papers or teach classes for professors; rather, they support the course outcomes as set forth by the professors, as they pertain to writing assignments. If you would like more information about becoming a writing associate at TCU, or about embedding a writing associate in a course you are teaching in any department, please contact Director Dr. Steve Sherwood at s.sherwood@tcu.edu or Assistant Director Cheryl Carithers at c.carithers@tcu.edu.

TOM BROWN – PETE WRITE!

The Center for Writing will be conducting evening tutorials in Tom Brown-Pete Wright Residence Hall every Thursday through Sunday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. during Spring 2016 semester. Appointments at this annex may be booked online via the same Center for Writing scheduler on our website: http://wrt.tcu.edu.

Meanwhile, our Main Center on the top floor of Reed Hall, Suite 419, remains open during regular business hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. To keep up with daily events at the Center, link to our Facebook page via our website.
STAFF ACTIVITIES At the Center

Center for Writing Director Dr. Steven Sherwood's recent publications include an essay titled “Humor and the Rhetorical Proprieties in the Writing Classroom,” which appeared in The Best of the Independent Rhetoric and Composition Journals 2013 (Parlor Press, 2015) and the novel No Asylum (Texas Review Press, 2014). Dr. Sherwood continues to serve as secretary of the Texas Association of Creative Writing Teachers and as immediate past president of the South Central Writing Centers Association. Dr. Sherwood is also currently serving as president-elect of the Texas Conference of College Teachers of English (CCTE). Besides his usual duties at the Center for Writing, Sherwood occasionally teaches courses for TCU’s English department and Master of Liberal Arts program on such subjects as novel writing, creative nonfiction, humor, and the literature of survival.

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Ms. Cheryl Carithers (Assistant Director) organizes Peer Tutor Training and coordinates the Writing Associates Program. She also is a member of TCU’s Veterans Task Force Committee. This fall, in addition to literature and composition courses for the English department, Ms. Carithers taught a course for the MLA program entitled The Rhetoric of Conspiracy Theory. This spring she will teach multiple sections of Introduction to Fiction: War Stories and Intermediate Composition. Ms. Carithers also is scheduled to present a paper at the PCA/ACA National Conference in Seattle, Washington, in March.

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Dr. Lindsay Dunn joins us this year as a writing consultant. Dr. Dunn is a specialist in eighteenth and nineteenth-century European art and holds a Ph.D. in art history (2014) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Dunn received her M.A. in art history (2008) and her B.A. in music and art history (2005) from Texas Christian University. In addition to teaching at TCU, she has taught at the College of Southern Maryland and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has presented her work at several professional conferences, including College Art Association and American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies, and has given gallery talks at DFW-area art museums, including the Dallas Museum of Art. Dr. Dunn is completing an article and a book that focus on eighteenth and nineteenth-century aristocratic women's art production. Both projects draw on her Ph.D. dissertation, A Revolutionary Empress in the Age of Napoleon: Marie-Louise, Archduchess of Austria, Empress of the French, and Duchess of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla (1791-1847). This fall Dr. Dunn taught Art Historical Methods and Introduction to Art History. In March 2016, Dr. Dunn will present a paper on the importance of visual spectacle to Napoleon’s image-makers at the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies annual conference.

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Ms. Cynthia Shearer (Assistant Director) coordinates the center’s web page content, documentary style guides, and social media; edits the center’s newsletter; and assists faculty with grant proposal writing. Her two novels are The Wonder Book of the Air, and The Celestial Jukebox. Her longform historical essay on Georgia jazzman Fletcher Henderson, “Sugar Foot Stomp,” appeared in the winter 2015 issue of the Oxford American magazine. In Spring 2016 Shearer will be teaching two Intermediate Composition courses, Writing as Argument.

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Dr. Sidney Thompson completed his Ph.D. in American fiction (with a secondary area of specialization in African-American narratives) at the University of North Texas in August of this year. His dissertation, a novel about the legendary African-American deputy U.S. marshal Bass Reeves, won Second Place in the Robert F. and Bette Barsanti Sherman Inspiration Award, a university-wide competition at the University of North Texas for student projects that demonstrate innovation and a marked capacity for self-direction. He recently presented an excerpt from his novel at the Western Literature Association’s 50th Annual Conference in Reno, NV. His short fiction has meanwhile appeared in Midway Journal and Magazine, and is forthcoming in Sleet Magazine, while two poems are forthcoming in The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume VIII: Texas, edited by Nick Lantz, Paul Ruffin, and William Wright (Texas Review Press). In Fall 2015, he taught Introductory Composition: Writing as Inquiry (10803) and Reading as a Writer (10103); in Spring 2016 he will teach Reading as a Writer and Fiction Writing Workshop I (30343).

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Bon Voyage, Seniors!

Elle Carnley graduated with a dual major in Writing and Spanish, with added expertise in journalism, digital creative writing, editing, and publishing. Carnley was a peer writing consultant at the Center for Writing for three semesters, taking time out for Study Abroad in Seville, Spain. “For most people, whipping out a college essay isn’t as easy as it was in high school,” Carnley says. “Like all skills, writing a great paper takes practice. Even someone who’s scraped by on good grammar and excellent vocabulary will have to suffer some red correction marks because their thesis statement wasn’t up to par. That’s where the writing center comes in.” She published a travel blog based on that experience. What next? After an internship at D Magazine, Carnley will be looking to relocate in the Austin area to work in publishing.

Emma Crandall graduated with a degree in writing, with minors in Italian and Sociology. Crandall is from Montgomery, Texas, but will be in the Fort Worth area for a short while before her upcoming wedding in June. Crandall has published poems in Eleven-Forty-Seven; two of her poems received honorable mention in TCU’s contemplative poetry competition. She doesn’t rule out the idea of an MFA in creative writing, but is open to many possibilities at the moment. Of her tutoring experience at TCU, Crandall says, “When students write assignments for school, they get anxious because it’s going to be shared, to be graded. It can be intimidating. As tutors, we can help them go more in-depth in their own writing by getting them to slow down and enjoy it more, to take the time to work of the quality of a piece. When we are excited, they get excited. Writing is so personal, I want to be as delicate as I can. They deserve respect for their writing.”

Garrett Crissman, graduating with a Communication Studies degree, has accepted an offer from public relations firm Holmes-Murphy as an accounts manager, beginning in January. After graduation he will take a short skiing trip to Steamboat Springs, Colorado, with his family, and then head to Dallas to begin his new job. Crissman cites his experience at the Center for Writing and at the Neely School’s Professional Development Center as helpful in landing his new job. Crissman will be using his knowledge of writing and editing to handle external communications for his new employer. His writing mantra: “Clear, Concise, Correct.” Of his tutorials, Crissman remarked “I got the most out of working with the freshmen; they want to improve.”

Director’s Notes

As I tell undergraduate and graduate students who come to work as peer writing consultants at the William L. Adams Center for Writing, they have taken a job that requires continuous learning. No one can ever know enough about writing or about working with other writers to consider themselves fully trained. Each semester, we expect them to learn from experience, from the students with whom they work, from each other, from our professional staff members, and from the reading and writing assignments we give them in their tutor training course.

To reinforce this learning, all peer graduate and undergraduate consultants meet three or four times a semester for training sessions, during which they discuss an assigned reading about tutoring, such as John Nordlof’s 2015 IWCA-award winning “Vygotsky, Scaffolding, and the Role of Theory in Writing Center Work.” This article offers a new look at how to balance directive and nondirective tutoring. We also go over proper work behavior and approaches to tutoring, test the consultants on grammar and citation styles, and discuss other issue that crop up as a result of their work in the center. As important as any formal lessons they learn are their interactions with veteran tutors, who express sometimes surprising opinions—based on long experience—about our discussion topics or readings.

Like our peer consultants, our professional staff members constantly strive to learn more about writing and about helping our clientele—highly diverse in terms of discipline and ability—with the many types of writing they do. Currently, two of our staff have attended training sessions on grant writing in order to help faculty with these important documents. We plan to treat grant applications as we do other documents, viewing the author as the content expert and viewing ourselves as lay readers, who will offer feedback on clarity of expression or other issues we see.

The most recent addition to our full-time staff, Dr. Lindsay Dunn, will in fact be attending training in grant writing this year and also putting together a workshop on the topic for interested faculty members and advanced graduate students. Having written a successful grant herself, which funded her research in art history, she will bring some experience to the task. As always, our staff members are available to talk to classes about general writing issues and will develop workshops on aspects or genres of writing that meet faculty members’ needs. Please e-mail me at s.sherwood@tcu.edu if you have such a need.

Finally, I’d like to congratulate Dr. Sidney Thompson for finishing his Ph.D. in American fiction at UNT this past year, for receiving an award recognizing his dissertation’s innovative contribution (please see “Staff Activities at the Center” for more details about his project), and for his many publications this year. I also want to mention Ms. Cynthia Shearer’s publication of a historical essay on jazz musician Fletcher Henderson in the Oxford American, a project that required painstaking research. Two of our graduate writing consultants, Heidi Nobles and Megan Poole, had essays accepted for future publication in Writing Lab Newsletter, a nationally distributed newsletter on writing center topics. All of our people do wonderful work here in the center and so much more.

Dr. Steve Sherwood