

THE WRITING CENTER

FALL 2005 BULLETIN

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WEBSITE

www.umt.edu/writingcenter

OUR PROGRAMS

All programs are supported by Academic Affairs and are free to UM students, staff, and faculty.

§ Tutoring

Open weekdays, Sept. 12 – Dec. 13.
Referrals and walk-ins welcome. Tutoring hours reserved for ESL students on Tues. and Thurs. evenings.

§ Workshops

Custom workshops in your class, seminar, or department. Call to arrange.

§ Writing Assistants

Assigned by The Writing Center to help faculty critique, but not grade, students' drafts in courses. Call x2470 by Sept. 16 to request a WA for fall semester.

§ Online Help

Go to www.umt.edu/writingcenter for free instructional handouts, links to excellent writing sites and guides, information for faculty and advisors, overview and preparatory materials for the WPA.

New Again, and Change is Good

Change has been a constant at The Writing Center since May and we hope you will find that it is all good. First, **we have moved** the Center to more spacious but still central quarters in the Liberal Arts building, room 144. Formerly the CIS main office, **LA 144** affords us space enough to hold four tutoring sessions at a time, with a reasonable administrative area as well. Our phone number and email address have not changed, and the director's office remains in Lommasson 281. Please drop by for our Open House Sept. 6-9 to check out our new home.

As our physical environment has changed, so too has our bit of cyberspace. **We have refurbished our website** this summer to include all the information about the Upper Division Writing Proficiency Assessment (WPA) that was formerly available on a separate site. We hope you will bookmark and direct students to our site at www.umt.edu/writingcenter for all matters relating to the WPA. The updated Writing Center site also offers instructional handouts and resources for faculty that include the guidelines for w-courses, advising facts, and links to teaching materials.

We've done away with the old WPA website because **registration for the WPA has moved to Cyberbear**. For all future exams, students will register to take the exam as if it were a course. The WPA is non-credit bearing, carries no fees (including drop/add fees), and does not appear on a student's transcript. Registration for an exam opens when course registration begins and closes three days before each exam date. Students should drop the WPA if they register for it but decide later not to attend. The Registrar's Office is no longer putting holds on students who do not pass the exam before their senior year. Students, including transfer students, are responsible for taking

New Again (cont.)

and passing the exam prior to completing 70 credits.

Finally, we are especially happy about the **new tutors** who will join our staff this year. English M.A. student **Desiree Cromwell** joins us as she researches and writes her thesis on courtly love in 12th century literature. Desiree received an Outstanding Student Presentation award at the 2005 UM Graduate Student and Faculty Research Conference. She brings to the Center her passion for difficult texts in French and the English communication skills she has honed while working at a local law firm since 2001.

Gretchen McCaffrey has decided to cut back on her long hours in the molecular biology lab to pursue her interest in teaching UM students the writing skills they need to become successful, articulate professionals. Her recent work as a researcher and writer at UM has focused on neuronal cell survival signaling. She has taught at UM, Massey University, Stanford, and the University of Oregon, where she earned her Ph.D. in molecular biology in 1987.

Molly Varley begins her second year in the newly revived doctoral program in History. Currently a Moser McKinney Fellow at UM, she taught English in China in 2001-2002 after earning her M.A. in the History and Propaganda program at the University of Kent at Canterbury, UK.

Returning to the Writing Center tutoring staff this year are **Tom Bateridge** (M.S. Soil Science & Geology), **Henrietta Goodman** (M.A., M.F.A English), **Magdalena Sokolowski** (B.A. Sociology), and **Chris Wall** (M.S. EVST). **Goodman** is now a full-time adjunct assistant professor in the Center who will teach UNC 270 and the WPA workshops as well as tutor. To find out more about our crack team of tutors, go to our website and click on Staff. Better yet, stop by and meet them or bring your class for a tour.

***Engaging Ideas* Captures Our Imagination**

Faculty in any discipline who want a sober and concise guide to building more writing into their courses should borrow or buy John Bean's *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* (Jossey-Bass, 2001). Bean, professor of English at Seattle University, takes pains to show how the writing exercises he recommends direct students to address the material the way we want them to—with curiosity and skepticism. But the wisest half of his counsel is how to create writing exercises that don't bury the instructor in papers to grade. If that sounds too good to be true, it's time you updated your view of how and when students learn to write—another good reason to read Bean's book.

Bean reminds us to distinguish between formal and informal writing tasks. The latter are exploratory writings that get students to prod the course and lecture materials. Some might insist that informal writing encourages sloppy, error-ridden work, but more will be persuaded by Bean's argument that even expert writers use writing as a way to think deeply about things. He recommends using in-class writing of 1 to 5 minutes to preface class discussions, reflect on the day's class, or "refresh" a straying in-class debate. Informal writing also has a place in reading or journal entries where the instructor checks only for signs of critical thinking rather than writing technique. A favorite exploratory exercise asks students to write and submit a single sentence: a penetrating thesis statement. This gives students "practice at creating the governing abstractions that are key to academic writing."

We'll look at Bean's suggestions for making efficient formal assignments in the next *Writing Center Bulletin*. Bean's book is available in our reference library in LA 144.