

# In Writing

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## Proposed WRT Curriculum Becomes Reality

*Mieke Stoub*

After almost five years of planning by faculty since Fall 2007, the revised writing curriculum has been approved by the University Curriculum Committee. The Writing Department's new program will begin full implementation in Fall 2012. Writing majors and their professors will be able to achieve more specific goals with the new and improved program.

The new curriculum affords students the flexibility to choose the direction in which they want their career and future to go. While the major is still 42 credits, there is no longer a need to declare a professional or creative emphasis. Instead, the major now includes nine modules that offer a variety of courses (see diagram on page 8). Writing majors will pick three modules depending on their interests and career goals, allowing a tailored program for each student.

Students starting at GVSU in Fall 2012 will be required to follow this curriculum. Students who started prior to Fall 2012 will have the choice to follow the new curriculum or stick with the old.

To make the transition smooth from the old curriculum to the new, current students have the option to substitute many of the updated courses with those in the old curriculum. Most of the WRT 380 courses offered this past

year can serve as course substitutions.

"We'll have to show some flexibility in the transition in order to help students match existing coursework with our new course offerings," said Writing Department Chair Dan Royer. "Since we didn't remove any writing courses, it will still be possible to use the old curriculum."

Associate Professor Ellen Schendel, who aided in the curriculum's revision, envisions the program will better prepare students for the many careers in writing. Instead of having to choose between the professional or creative emphasis, the new program will allow students to tailor their college experience with a modular approach that allows a mixing and matching of both.

"We've developed many new courses to more fully flesh out different aspects of workplace and professional writing and that marry concepts in creative and professional writing," she said.

Schendel is currently teaching the new course WRT 307 Consulting with Writers, which focuses on the way writing consultations happen in academic contexts (such as writing centers) and how technical communicators work with software

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**APPROVED!**

# Playwright Randy Wyatt Delights

*Michelle Coppens*

On Monday, February 13, GVSU welcomed renowned playwright Randy Wyatt for a craft talk and performance. Wyatt is an Assistant Professor and the Theatre Program Director at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, MI. He is the author of many impressive works ranging from children's theater to short plays challenging social norms.

During the craft talk, Wyatt answered questions about his background and style. He said, "My style is acidic comedy, not realistic melodrama." Wyatt began playwriting while he had roots in the evangelical church; this led him to write short plays that asked questions, explored serious topics, and examined complex social problems. He referred to his works as "economic and elegant." His writing also helped him realize his homosexuality, a process which fueled his short plays.

In the transition between the craft talk and the performance, Wyatt gathered six student volunteers to be spontaneous actors and actresses. He talked with them about their parts, giving them directions and suggestions.

Assistant Professor Austin Bunn introduced Randy Wyatt and narrated the stage directions during the performances of two shorts from Wyatt's collection titled *Tiny Catastrophes*, two monologue plays from *Ghost Moments*, a ten minute play called *The Strange Case of Hector Ramirez*, and a short play from his

*Said and Meant* collection. Kira Butland-Smith enjoyed participating in the performance. "Well, he said a lot of his writing comes from rage," Butland-Smith said, "and when he's angry, he becomes funny; that's what stood out most to me."

During the performance of "Not Judgmental," students read lines that held profound meaning. "Just think, if only we would communicate all our thoughts, clearly and with no prejudice, world peace could actually be achievable," a student read. This short play in *Tiny Catastrophes* tells of a man who speaks his mind to the people he encounters, which embarrasses the woman he was taking out for coffee. Wyatt challenged the audience during this performance; he questioned their ethics and responded to the racism seen every day. "Thank you, my friend of a different race which I acknowledge and respect. I, in no way, consider you servile for performing this transaction," the student read in a loud voice, responding to the African American coffee guy. While the outbursts of the man were comical, Wyatt leaves the lingering thought in our minds: what if people spoke this way?

Each performance had a comical, dark humor element mixed with an undertone of seriousness. As the audience watched the performances, Wyatt stood, casually leaning against the wall, watching his work come to life, chuckling along with his audience.



Wyatt's "economic and elegant" plays were around ten minutes long and were well constructed. "*The Strange Case* is a play for total Hasbro nerds," Wyatt said as he introduced this play. It was a witty and satirical look at the Hasbro games of childhoods past such as GI Joe, The Inhumanoids, Transformers, and Jem. "The Essential Components of Marriage"

*See WYATT on Page 10*

# Klatt: Fluidity of Thought

*Marissa Bell*

Poetry is a form of music; the rhythm of the words often makes sense to us before the meaning does. This was one of many thought-provoking ideas discussed by poet L.S. Klatt during the craft talk preceding his performance at the Pew Campus University Club on February 20, as a part of the GVSU Writers Series.

Pulling the audience through a tumble of words, compelling and often mysterious, Klatt demonstrated the hypnotic power of poetic melody, which can enchant the senses even when the full meaning of the words is not clear.

Each line of Klatt's poetry settled dream-like on the minds of the listeners, as a dust composed of half-tangible secrets and "electric connections" (Klatt's description of the raw emotions words can provoke).

"A compelling poem rarely proceeds in a straight line," Klatt told his audience during his craft talk.

His follow-up performance was the evidence behind his argument. Listeners stumbled along eagerly with his readings, intrigued by the rhythm and visual impressions found in the language, which was presented by Klatt with humble

*See KLATT on Page 3*

# Wilkins Invokes Insight on Writing



*Karla Lamb*

**G**VSU was honored to host writer Joe Wilkins on March 13 to close out the GVSU Writers Series for the year. Joe Wilkins' work has won numerous awards, including appearances in Best American Magazine Writing 2010, Best New Poets 2006 and 2009, and multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. He is the author of a memoir, *The Mountain and the Fathers*; two collections of poems, *Notes from the Journey Westward*, and a

chapbook, *Ragged Point Road*. His eclectic repertoire includes poetry, fiction, narrative nonfiction, essay, and creative journalism.

During the event, audience members listened attentively to Wilkins' publication advice, career tips, and crafting ideas. Wilkins encouraged students to "just keep at it and be patient." He emphasized that "practice does make perfect" and that all you need to succeed in the writing world is "persistence, time, and a little bit of luck." He admitted to being an impulsive writer that gets easily bored with one genre, hence his wide array of subject matter, interests, and activism. Wilkins discussed the importance of being a critical thinker along with an informed citizen to acquire the core skills it takes to become a proactive writer. He also

expounded on the fact that to be a good writer, one must also be an avid reader, loving the technique as much as the product.

During the question and answer portion of the lecture, he alluded to his creative process, explaining that it consists of hours of "playing around" with sounds, cutting and pasting forms, and testing out different literary devices until he gets his finger on the pulse of something unexpected. The moment of insightful discovery is what keeps his affinity for language keen, feeding his craft, and sharpening his skills. Wilkins also included tips on how to stay

sane during the editing process, while being a father, teaching, homebrewing, whitewater rafting, and balancing it all.

Growing up in the lone-country farmlands of Montana, Wilkins brings to the page revelatory and exciting moments of loss and gain, fleeting pleasures, and the rural flavors of the everyday life of the American interior. His lines coax beauty out of chaos, coming alive with the buzz and sting of highway and railroad. His poems ooze with the white noise of dirt and barbed wire while staying faithful to the fragmented nature of truth and memory. Wilkins' wide oeuvre defies typical literary conventions by combining compassion, humor, and wisdom with themes concerning social justice, nostalgia, and history. His progressive style is the rugged intersection between the political and the profoundly personal, fused together to form a delicate wreckage of innovative images.

What Wilkins loves most about writing are the quiet, hushed moments when he is forced inside a place and time, free to navigate and experiment through his own understandings of stories, characters, and the worlds they inhabit. Wilkins obviously pays meticulous attention to sentence structure, line breaks, and formatting. He expertly builds lyrical and heightened prose out of the constituent parts. His distinctive works demand attention. Whether it is an activist essay or an unapologetically romantic poem, Wilkins' imaginative wordplay is sure to satisfy any literary appetite.

**KLATT**

*...continued from Page 2*

enthusiasm.

"It definitely inspired me," said Aaron Doublestein when asked about Klatt's poetry after his performance. "Sometimes when you're writing a book, you map out the whole process, but in his case, he seemed to let it glide right out of him. It was really smooth."

Klatt's craft talk had clearly resonated with his fellow writers. Klatt gave some insight into his own views on writing

when he explained that poets are "driven by need." For the poet, there is always the desire to portray what cannot be entirely captured by words, and when words fail, the resulting poem often manages to portray the writer's mood purely through instinct. According to Klatt, it seems, a hunger for perfecting the finesse of self-expression is the driving wind in every passionate writer's sails.

When he is not teaching American Literature and Creative Writing at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI, Klatt spends his time cultivating his poetry, which he calls "the least rational form of

discourse." His poems have appeared in publications such as *Best American Poetry 2011*, *Verse*, and the *Boston Review*. His first collection of poetry, entitled *Interloper*, won the Juniper Prize in 2008. His second book, *Cloud of Ink*, won the 2010 Iowa Poetry Prize and will be published by the University of Iowa Press in March 2012.

Hooked readers will be eagerly awaiting his next publication. To quote a line from "The Fluid Rider," which will appear in *Cloud of Ink*, there is something addictive about Klatt's poetry, "But I can't/Put my finger on it."

# Attention Writers: Free Money

*Hannah Matro*

**G**VSU offers a variety of scholarships to students in all different areas of study. Some of these scholarships are well-known, based on GPA, and do not require an application. Other funding opportunities seem to fly under the radar and require more work to acquire. One such little-known fund is the Writing Department Scholarship.

Though the information is clearly visible on the writing department's website, only about five to 10 people apply for the scholarship per year. This lack of awareness is a shame, for the scholarship is easy for students to apply for once found and it reaps sufficient benefits.

Kristina Pepelko, the most recent recipient of the Writing Department Scholarship, used the money to relieve some of the burden from college tuition.

"It has also been great to know that I have the support of the Writing Department behind me. Additionally, being awarded the scholarship has helped to

reaffirm that my writing will be able to stand up in the world beyond classroom walls—that I already possess the ability, or at least the foundation, to succeed in the professional and creative writing worlds," said Pepelko.

To apply for the Writing Department Scholarship, students must meet these seven criteria:

- Be entering the senior year, with at least 85 credits completed
- Be enrolled as a full-time student seeking a degree
- Declare writing as a major
- Have a 3.0 cumulative GPA overall and a 3.5 overall in writing courses
- Submit a portfolio of five separate writing samples
- Fill out the FAFSA
- Be a GVSU student

Clearly, submitting a portfolio is the most challenging and vital portion to the application process. The other six criteria are as straightforward as they come. Therefore, creating a portfolio that demonstrates adaptability and aptitude

in different writing genres is supreme to length or breadth of samples.

Pepelko stated about her own portfolio that won the scholarship, "I chose these five pieces in particular because at the time I applied, they best exemplified my ability as a writer. I think my portfolio as a whole illustrated my ability to write effectively in more than one genre, which I believe any successful applicant must demonstrate. It's much more impressive if you can produce strong, well-written poetry and professional documents than simply showing that you can write well in just one particular genre. I wanted to show my range of abilities to the scholarship decision committee with my portfolio submission. I wanted to show them that I can thrive in both the creative and professional worlds."

The award is for \$500 per semester, totaling an even \$1000. The recipient of the 2012-2013 scholarship will be announced on April 27 at the Writing Department Awards Ceremony.

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# SRS's First 10-Minute Play Festival

*Therese Stastny*

**T**his April, the Student Reading Series (SRS) will be holding the first ever 10-Minute Play Festival at the Dog Story Theater in Grand Rapids, MI. This festival will include a series of performances of selected 10-minute plays that were written and submitted by GVSU students. The SRS is a campus organization that allows student writers to showcase their work. Lynn Dimick and Jeremy Llorence have been the student coordinators of this organization for the 2011-2012 school year.

The SRS received a total of 16 submissions and five have been selected. Jason Lenz, a GVSU graduate and guest judge of the event, was chosen to read all of the submissions and select the plays that

will ultimately be showcased. Most of the submissions fell somewhere under the genres of drama or comedy, but even within each of these genres there is a broad spectrum of style and intensity, so the plays featured in the festival will be unique from one another.

The following is a list of the selected 10-minute plays that will be featured:

- "Home is Where" by Lynn Dimick
- "Biology" by Russ Kaminski
- "In Between" by Hannah Moeggenborg
- "Little Mary with Her Head Bashed In" by Andrew Wernette
- "Continue?" by Jeremy Llorence

The playwrights of the selected submissions will work closely with students from S.T.A.G.E. (Student Technicians and Actors Guild for Entertainment) and GVSU theater students, participating in the directing of their own work. Other

student volunteers will be assigned tasks such as assisting in stage crew, managing props, and distributing flyers to promote the festival. This event will also be filmed by GVSU film students.

Austin Bunn, Assistant Professor and Faculty Advisor of the SRS, asked the Dog Story Theater to agree to host the festival. This local venue, run entirely by volunteers, provides an intimate space for various artists of the Grand Rapids area to showcase their hard work and dedicated passion in the form of theater, dance, poetry, and more.

GVSU students and other community members are encouraged to experience this original showcase and to see what these talented students have been working on all semester. The festival will take place on April 18 from 8pm to 9pm at the Dog Story Theater.

# Club Unites Student Writers

**Brian Hudson**

It's 9pm on Thursday night, and, as they've been doing for several years, the GVSU Writers' Club gathers in one of Kirkhof's many conference rooms. Most are writing majors or minors, and they come to share stories, talk about technique, and socialize. Occasional jokes are made about the thumps that come from above from the Swing Dancing Club or other organizations that get a bit noisy (a perpetual curse of the club, it seems).

The group began in 2008 when several writing consultants gathered to make a dedicated time for them to write and provide feedback on each other's stories in a comfortable environment. Since then, it has grown to an organization of over 40 members who continue to share stories, provide feedback, engage in writing contests with each other, and hang outside of the club.

"The club is a group of people who enjoy writing. They come together and give each other feedback and support with anything they're writing about in or outside of

class," said Josh Campeau, the current club president.

Drake Parker, the former secretary said, "[It's] a chance to feel like you are keeping current in your writing, even if you're slacking otherwise. If you don't bring something to club, you're always encouraged to write in your own free time. It's a chance to connect with other writers."

Perhaps the most recognizable feature is its semi-annual publication, *Running Out of Ink*. The publication began as a one-off compilation of student work entitled *Don't Open This*, but the following year, then-president Hannah Moeggenborg wanted to make it a regular occurrence. Submissions are received from across the university from writing and non-writing majors. Pieces are reviewed each week for acceptance, and roughly a third to half the pieces submitted are included in the final publication, which is released at the end of each Fall and Winter semester.

"My favorite part of the club is the publication," Parker said. "It's a chance to really invest in a project, get your own work out there and to see an end product that you're proud of."

Circulation grows with each subsequent semester, from approximately 150 copies in Fall 2010 to over 400 copies for the upcoming Winter 2012 edition. A release party accompanies each edition, in which accepted authors and their friends are invited to celebrate the release. Some authors will also read their work. The release party for this semester will be on April 19 in Kirkhof at 9pm.

Despite all the work that goes into the publication, the club isn't all business.

"I enjoy the people there the most; it's a fun group of people," Campeau responded when asked about his favorite part of the club. Members also sometimes engage in alternative writing exercises, such as "Build-A-Creature" in which the entire group contributes to creating a mythical creature, such as its physical features, habitats, general personality, etc., and it is then illustrated by the current secretary, Theresa Johnstone.

If you interested in joining, show up at 9pm on Thursdays any time throughout the semester. Whether for fun or work, everyone comes to do what they love: write!

## *Distinction in Writing Honorees 2011-2012*

**Lynn Dimick**

**Dale Johnson**

**Jeremy Llorence**

**Kristina Pepelko**

**Megan Smith**

**Kiera Wilson**

# Writing Advice: Journey to Publishing



## *Karah Bradshaw*

Even the best writers get rejected. As budding authors, writing students must understand the publishing process before they release their work to the world. Professors in the Writing Department know that starting the process can seem daunting. With their students' potential struggle in mind, the Writing Department sponsored an informational session on the topic.

Assistant Professors Sean Prentiss, Amorak Huey, and Laurence José hosted GVSU's premier Publishing Night last February. All three professors have been published numerous times and used their experience to offer students advice on how to get published in various genres.

"We want students to understand

how creative, academic, and professional writers publish their own work, so when our students leave GVSU they know how the field works," said Prentiss, "That way, when they are ready to publish, they'll understand how to begin the process."

Student writers need to be honest with

*"The key is, whatever you do, keep writing," said Huey.*

themselves about the readiness of their work. If they are not positive the writing should be published, students need to keep revising. If pieces that are not ready get

sent to a publisher, the reputation of the writer may be tainted.

Prentiss noted that work is ready when the writer is positive the piece is the best they can do, peers have agreed the work is ready, and at least one professor or other professional suggests getting it published.

"The bottom line is, do not rush it,"

Prentiss advised.

When the writing is ready to be sent, the first step is to find the right publisher. To determine this, the writer should find journals, publications, or agents that have published work with similar content and stylistic value. Prentiss recommended that students find five different journals to submit work. Websites like Duotrope.com and Newpages.com are good places to start.

"The quickest way to get rejected is not having knowledge of what they publish," Huey added.

So how does a writer know if they could be published in a magazine? Answer: when their writing is similar to what that magazine publishes. The book, *Writer's Market*, was the suggested resource to find detailed information and guidelines for commercial publishers.

Making it in the commercial world takes more than sending out writing samples. The writer needs to build relationships with editors through networking and then send those editors writing samples that match the tone of the publication. If the samples are well-received, editors will give the writer an assignment.

“Be willing to write anything,” Huey advised, “small assignments lead to big assignments.”

José, who has worked as a journal editor, said that content is the key. She described academic writing as a good way for students to build a professional reputation and contribute to their fields of knowledge. *Scholars in Writing*, *Kairos*, *The Jump*, and *Exchanges* were recommended places for undergraduates to get published.

“Don’t always expect to be paid,” said José, pointing out that students are often paid with feedback, letters of recommendation, résumé builders, or new opportunities.

To expose themselves as professional writers, students should be willing to put themselves out there. They could offer to assist professors or other professionals in the designing or writing of projects. Non-profit organizations are usually in need of help in this arena. While these may not be paying jobs, they will advance a writer’s journey to publishing.

Learning tricks of the trade from professional writers will improve students’ chances of getting published in the future. Even though all writers get rejected, taking the right steps on the journey is what counts.

“The key is, whatever you do, keep writing,” said Huey.

Reflecting on the information session, Prentiss said, “we were pleased with the turnout from the event and the feedback from students was great, so we hope to make Publishing Night a permanent part of what we offer our students.”

### Quick Tips

- Always follow all guidelines given by the publisher
- Make a chart to keep track of what, when, and where a piece is sent
- Google “editors list of pet peeves” to avoid committing annoying offenses
- Google “undergrad literary journals” to find more places to submit
- Check out New York Press and University Presses; these are good publishers for books

### Other Advice

- Keep cover letters simple, build credentials, and don’t explain your piece
- Don’t enter contests in the creative arena; do enter contests in academic writing
- Avoid duplicate submissions; if the writing is already online, most publishers will not publish it again
- Take initiative to get your name to potential clients if you want to be a freelance writer
- Don’t get discouraged; 5-6% acceptance rate is very good



# New Writing Curriculum Starting Fall 2012

All Writing majors need 42 credits

(12 from the Core + 18 from the Modules + 6 from WRT or Cognate Electives + 6 from the Capstones)

## Core Requirements (12 credits)

WRT 200 Introduction to Professional Writing

WRT 210 Writing with Style

WRT 219 Introduction to Creative Writing

WRT 253 Document Production and Design

## Modules

*Take two courses from three of the following modules:*

### Poetry Workshops

WRT 320 Int. Poetry Workshop

WRT 420 Adv. Poetry Workshop

### Fiction Workshops

WRT 330 Int. Fiction Workshop

WRT 430 Adv. Fiction Workshop

### Drama Workshops

WRT 340 Int. Drama

WRT 440 Adv. Drama

### Nonfiction Workshops

WRT 360 Int. [Creative](#) Nonfiction

WRT 460 Adv. [Creative](#) Nonfiction

### Writing for the Web

WRT 351 Writing for the Web

WRT 451 Adv. Writing for Web

### Magazine Writing

WRT 365 Int. [Magazine Writing](#)

WRT 465 Adv. [Magazine Writing](#)

### Style and Technique

WRT 310 Int. [Style & Technique](#)

WRT 410 Adv. [Style & Technique](#)

### Working with Writers

WRT 307 [Consulting with Writers](#)

WRT 308 [Working with Manuscripts](#)

### Writing with Technologies

WRT 353 [Visual Rhetoric & Doc Design](#)

WRT 455 [Multimodal Composing](#)

### Cognate Electives

Advisor Approved Course

Advisor Approved Course

OR

### Writing Electives

Any WRT Course

Any WRT Course

### Capstones

WRT 490 Internship

WRT 495 Genre and Writing



# Magazine Writing Comes to Life

*Morgan Miller*

For GVSU writing students who hope to one day write for a magazine, there are brand new classes that can launch them in the right direction.

As of Fall 2011, the Writing Department offered two new magazine writing classes: WRT 365 Intermediate Magazine Writing and WRT 465 Advanced Magazine Writing. Both were taught by new Assistant Professor Oindrila Mukherjee. The department piloted Intermediate Magazine Writing in Winter and Fall 2011. This pilot course has now transformed into its own module in the new writing curriculum, adding an advanced level course also.

“[Magazine Writing] is a cross section of creative and professional writing,” Mukherjee said. “It focuses on literary journalism.”

Instead of writing a straight-to-the-point news story, as taught in journalism classes, students will spice up the news

using a narrative style to write the type of feature stories seen in popular magazines.

Mukherjee plans on making changes to the syllabi of both courses. This past year in Intermediate Magazine Writing, students read a variety of magazine articles, eliminating textbook costs. The “textbooks” for the class are magazines including *Harper’s*, *The Atlantic*, *Vanity Fair*, *National Geographic*, *Rolling Stone*,

*“If you want to know the standard of good writing, you should read *The New Yorker*,” Mukherjee said.*

*The Economist* and *Esquire*. Each student picked a magazine of their choice and wrote their feature stories based on the audience of the particular magazine. Students also read articles from award winning pieces in *Best American Magazine Writing*.

Intermediate Magazine Writing concentrates on basic techniques such as

how to analyze the magazine’s audience, develop reporting skills, prepare interview questions, pitch ideas to an editor, and understand different research techniques. Students wrote a mini profile and an obituary, along with a full length profile and a feature story with a local interest focus based on the magazine’s audience, which students selected earlier in the semester.

Mukherjee gave some guidelines for each assignment, but she was flexible with the topics as long as they were relevant and newsworthy.

This year, Advanced Writing students used *The New Yorker* as the textbook for the class, along with other assigned readings.

“If you want to know the standard of good writing, you should read *The New Yorker*,” Mukherjee said. “You learn from the best.”

This past year, Mukherjee assigned short critical assignments, like responses to published articles, pitches for published articles, and a long feature of a topic of

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and other engineers to write documentation. With this new curriculum, she foresees students gaining the knowledge and confidence to succeed in the various collaborative projects they will find in the professional world.

Writing programs across the country are striving to help students see and make these connections. Initially, many college writing programs began as segments of English programs and do not have their own independent academic departments like GVSU. Only recently did the trend of independent writing programs become evident.

Assistant Professor Christopher Toth, who aided in the curriculum’s transformation, hopes that GVSU’s program will serve as a model for other universities that want to break away from English. The flex-

ibility in this modular program not only allows students more options for classes they’d like to take, it also puts students in control of their professional futures.

Toth says that the new curriculum challenges students to think about how they define themselves as writers, which will ultimately allow them to excel in their chosen career.

“In the old curriculum, if you were in one track, you couldn’t necessarily branch out and take courses in the other because it wouldn’t count toward the major,” Toth said. “Now, students can start forming a conceptual view of who they are, what it is that they want to do when they leave GVSU, and select relevant courses.”

Associate Professor Chris Haven is happy with how innovative the new curriculum has made GVSU’s Writing Department and is excited about the potential outcomes. He also helped to develop the new curriculum and is currently focused on the new Style and Technique module.

“We look at writing in terms of style and technique more closely and with more precision than I ever have, even in classes I took in graduate school,” Haven said. “It’s been the most rewarding experience I’ve had as a teacher to date.”

Krysta Thelen has taken two of the new courses: WRT 310 Intermediate Style and Technique and WRT 353 Visual Rhetorical and Document Design. She enjoys the knowledge that the professors bring to courses but also the freedom that is given for her as a student to explore the topic.

“They allow us to use our creative and analytical thinking skills to bring in new information and come up with some pretty cool answers to questions we may have,” Thelen said. “I feel this helps me prepare for my future.”

Royer encourages students to work with their advisors if they’d like to blend the old and new curriculums together during this initial transition period. Many of the new course offerings can substitute for those in the old curriculum.

# AWP Conference 2012 Offers Knowledge, Expertise, and Promotion

*Elizabeth Morse*

From February 29 to March 3, the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago, IL, was the place to be for aspiring and published writers because the *Association of Writers and Writers Programs (AWP) Annual Conference* returned for its 2012 showcase.

The *AWP Conference* serves to promote writers and writing programs, as well as to create a community for them. It is known to be a professional and personal setting where they can listen to readings and panels of other writers, endorse their published work, and form new contacts with journals, colleges, and other publication opportunities.

At this year's conference, Margaret Atwood gave the keynote address. Featured presenters included Dago-berto Gilb, Luis J. Rodriguez, Esmeralda Santiago, Jeannette Walls, Phillip Levine, and many more. These presentations consisted of a reading followed by a conversation discussing craft and addressing questions from audience members.

Many writers attend the conference to meet with fellow writer friends to bounce ideas and catch up with each other, as well as to promote their own work. Assistant Professor Caitlin Horrocks has attended for the past eight years. However, she said

that this was her first time at the conference since her book, *This Is Not Your City*, came out.

"This year I gave two talks, an off-site reading, had a signing for my book, and worked at the Bookfair for a journal I help edit, plus some business lunches," she said.

Horrocks was also promoting one of her books. She stated, "It was exciting to have the signing and to see my book for sale at the Bookfair."

The *AWP Conference* is a good source of knowledge and expertise for new writers.

GVSU junior, Jim Hinkson, attended the conference for the first time this year. He was shocked by all the amazing experiences offered by the conference. Hinkson was drawn in by the abundant information and skills gathered in one location.

When asked if it was a more professional or personal experience, he replied with, "I'm not really able to make a clear distinction between the professional and personal experiences in this way, since all of the presenters were corroborating on subject matter that was so fascinating to me as well as simultaneously being enlightening as a writer, reader, and student."

Hinkson was unable to anticipate a specific event or panel. "I was thrilled for everything. In hindsight, the panels themselves were definitely the best part of the conference," he explains. "The conference organizers did a fantastic job

of compiling a simultaneously diverse and cohesive group of speakers. The differentiation of presenters' literary and personal backgrounds allowed for such a wide scope of views grouped around the focus of each panel."

Past attendees have said that it is an enlightening event in different ways. Assistant Professor Sean Prentiss confirmed with, "It's definitely both personal and professional. I get to see to see some of my favorite friends and writers, a few panels a day, chat with the GVSU students who attend the conference, and network with editors."

Assistant Professor Amorak Huey agreed, considering it a more professional setting but with some personal advantages. "When I come home from *AWP* inspired as a writer, that is both a personal and professional benefit."

The *AWP Conference* is respected amongst the GVSU Writing Department faculty. Huey stated, "Every year after *AWP*, I come away feeling good about what we're doing here in the Writing Department. This year was no exception. I feel good about my colleagues here and good about our students, and proud of the work we do."

Next year's conference will be held March 6-9, 2013 at the Sheraton Hotel and Hynes Convention Center in Boston, MA.

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their choice. All the students' assignments resembled a *New Yorker*-type writing style and tone but with a GVSU focus, since one of their main projects as a class was to make their own magazine consisting of their work from the semester. Mukherjee's long term goal for the class is to print the magazine for the campus to see.

The goal for the Magazine Writing module is to be able to write for different

niche audiences that cover various topics and genres including food, travel, sports, politics, current affairs, and entertainment. The Magazine Writing module will improve students' research skills, interview techniques, and familiarity with producing a magazine.

For anyone who hopes to write for a magazine in the future, you can't find better courses at GVSU that focus on magazine writing and how to establish yourself as a magazine writer. Only the Writing Department has these unique courses.

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## WYATT

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on the other hand, part of the *Said and Meant Collection*, focuses on language and communication mishaps.

Wyatt is a master playwright whose works challenge our opinions and emotions; he is in tune with the idiosyncrasies of life, love, and people, capturing their spirit with his short plays; they are surely not to be overlooked.

# A Life in Writing: Lessons Beyond the Classroom

*Lauren Longo*

Students sometimes struggle to take what they learn in the classroom and apply it to the world. Diana Nowak, a GVSU senior, has found a way to make her writing interests meaningful, not only to herself, but to a dying man and his family.

This past summer, Nowak completed training through Spectrum Health to be part of the My Life Story project. After feeling like she was “squandering” too much of her time in college, Nowak decided that she wanted to do something meaningful.

“I felt like I wasted a lot of time,” said Nowak. “I never utilized my major in any way that helped anybody. Nursing students go and help people, they get experience in their field. I wasn’t getting it.”

This inclination to gain experience led her to seek a program that would incorporate her passion for writing and her desire to volunteer. She found this mix through My Life Story.

The project trains volunteers and assigns them to hospice patients who want to record their life stories before they pass. The stories are then given to the patients’ families. In Nowak’s case, time was especially precious because her patient suffered from terminal cancer. She confessed that, although her training taught her to work with patients, the experience intimidated her at first.

“It was difficult,” she admitted. “It’s still difficult when I think about it because you get to know someone so intimately and see things that made up a person’s life and made it so special without them even knowing you.”

Nowak spent an hour with her patient every week, asking questions, taking notes, and listening to his story. When they finished, she wrote his life story, which focused around the theme of his work.

“The things I learned in class last semester came out a lot in my writing and

really helped the whole process,” said Nowak.

She chose to write the story from the first person point of view because she wanted it to sound like her patient was telling the story even though the words came from her voice. Although writing in first person when the nonfiction story was not her own felt uncomfortable at times, Nowak wanted to capture the personal nature of the piece.

“You could tell there was emotion in his voice,” she said, “and I really wanted to portray that in the story.”

Nowak explained that this experience has led her to experiment more this semester with different points of view and has persuaded her to write from the male perspective.

She has also learned important lessons on accepting feedback on her work.

“You could feel there is so much more weight to it,” she said. “You’re not making up a story in your head, you’re writing someone’s history. You can’t embellish or put in anything they don’t want. It helped me to be more open to people’s opinion of my writing.”

The lessons she learned were not just professional, however, they were also lessons in humanity.



“The most inspiring thing was my patient’s acceptance through all of this,” she said. “He was never unkind to me ever. I feel like some people in life can be so cruel, even I can, but he was never unkind to me in any way; he was always open and humble. It was so beautiful to me and so inspiring and such an amazing experience to have someone treat you with so much respect even though they don’t have to. It shows a different side of humanity that you don’t get to see in class.”

## *InWriting*

Faculty Advisor:

Copy Editors:

Photo Contributions:

Printers:

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Lauren Allen, Michelle Coppens, Hannah Matro, Morgan Miller, Elizabeth Morse, Karla Lamb

Karla Lamb (2,3); Karah Bradshaw (6,7);

Lauren Longo (11)

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# Writing Alum Shares Internship Advice

*Allie Oosta*

I am an editorial intern at Seattle Metropolitan magazine—in other words, I'm a blog editor, a fact checker, a researcher, a writer, a proofreader, a minion, and a drinker of way too much coffee. On a good day, something that I write doesn't get changed at all. On an even better day, my name shows up in print in the magazine. But on most days, I make mistakes—and every single day, I don't get paid.

I'm free labor—Seattle Met uses me and I use Seattle Met. I've been there 25 hours a week (yeah right—more like 35) for two months, and I'm only now starting to feel at home. I can still remember my interview. My now managing editor asked me, "How do you think working for this magazine will differ from your other writing experiences?" My answer, which is lost to me now, could only have been full of naivety and falsities—because I didn't have a clue. Here's the truth: city magazines are nothing like school. In school,

I could make some minimal mistakes and still get a 96%—a shiny, happy A. But at Seattle Met, editors will hunt you down and say, "Allie, where the hell is the missing four percent?"

Here are some tips for future magazine interns:

- Figure out your weaknesses now, and do your best to correct them. Even if it's a sticky note on your computer screen that says, "don't use ampersands in running text"—cover your screen with these! Editors hate repeated mistakes.
  - Buy a copy of the Chicago Manual of Style and read it seven hundred times.
  - Learn how to use a CMS (Content Management System) Also, learn some basic coding.
  - Practice your interviewing skills in person, on the phone, and via email.
  - Make friends with every person you interview—you never know when you'll need to talk to them again.
  - Follow deadlines.
  - Read the magazine before you start your internship.
- Try to quickly determine your beat or niche, and immerse yourself in that world. Read similar sections in other magazines or newspapers, befriend the editor of that niche, learn the lingo, and go to the events.
  - Constantly ask the editors what you can do for them. Most of the fun stuff I've gotten to do has happened when I asked. Volunteer to make phone calls, run errands, or do research.
  - Use your opportunities within the office to get published. All the pieces I've gotten into the magazine have been pitched to editors the same way that a freelancer would have pitched them, except I take advantage of only being ten feet away and ask what could improve my piece/pitch. Sometimes, communication alone pays off. One of my fellow interns kept pitching ideas that the editors didn't like, but one of them asked her to write a different article for him because he noticed her interest in a similar topic.

## Student Awards

On April, 27, 2012, the Writing Department will honor the following students at the annual award ceremony. The students are being recognized for their outstanding work and contributions. Congratulations!

**Megan Smith**

**Department of Writing Outstanding Student**

**Lynn Dimick**

**Kenneth R. VenderBush Student Leadership Award Nominee**

**Kristina Pepelko**

**Glenn A. Niemeyer Award Nominee**

**Devin Beck**

**Internship Award**

**Andrew Lazzaro**

**Kristina Pepelko**

**3rd Annual Poetry Prize**