

Department of Writing and Rhetoric Writing Excellence Awards 2011



Wednesday, March 28, 2012
12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
Oakland Room, Oakland Center

Sponsors



- Department of Writing and Rhetoric
- Mary Beth Snyder, Vice-President, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
- Oakland University Writing Center

Important Supporters



- Virinder Moudgil, Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Provost
- Ron Sudol, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Robby Stewart, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Kathleen Moore, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Marshall Kitchens, Chair, Department of Writing and Rhetoric
- Susan Hawkins, Chair, Department of English

The Committee



- Matthew Burkett
- Suzanne Drapeau
- John Freeman
- Kasia Kietlinska
- Sherry Wynn Perdue, Chair

Submission Statistics



- About 80 entries were received across five categories.
- Disciplines/Programs represented include Art History, Bachelor of Integrative Studies, Communication, English, Exercise Science, Nursing, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, and Writing and Rhetoric.
- Four writing center members earned awards this year (and yes, the reviewing was blind 😊).

Awards



- First place winners in each category receive \$100.00 and a certificate.
- Second place winners in each category receive \$75.00 and a certificate.
- Third place winners in each category receive \$50.00 and a certificate.
- Honorable Mentions receive a certificate.

Please Note: Monetary awards are processed through Financial Aid and will be mailed directly to the winners barring overdue tuition fees.

The Categories



1. Writing from/about Sources
 - A. First Year Writing
 - B. Critiques and Reviews (primarily humanities)
 - C. Secondary Research (primarily in non-humanities' disciplines/forms)
2. Original Research
3. Visual and/or Auditory Composition
4. Fiction and Creative Nonfiction
5. Poster and Newsletter

1A. Writing from/about Sources: First Year Writing



Submissions in this sub-category, reserved for First Year Writers, ask readers to revisit our conceptions of such issues as self injury, animal captivity, and divorce within informed arguments, literature reviews, and other types of secondary research.

First Place



Katie Malone

Self-Injury: A Way to Cope

Faculty: Lauren Rinke, WRT

Malone “explores the misconception that adolescents who engage in self-injury do it for suicidal purposes.” Using statistics, secondary studies, internet community information, and various individuals’ experiences, she demystifies the practice of self injury and supports the claim “that adolescents use self-injury as a way to cope, rather than for suicidal purposes.”

Second Place



Kevin Stephens

A Look at Animals in Captivity:

The Gap between Environmental Messages and Conservation

Faculty: Wallis May Andersen, WRT

“Establishments must adjust their animal themed conservation message to better connect with their targeted audience, the public.” With his text, Stephens seeks to raise awareness of the gap between the goals of zoos and similar organizations to raise public awareness of animal and environmental issues and to reintroduce endangered species to the wild as he simultaneously acknowledge the complex realities of these efforts.

Third Place



Nicolle Jarrett

From Failure to Fabulous: Reframing the
Societal Stigma of Divorce in American Culture

Faculty: Bethany Shepherd, WRT

“Society is in desperate need of a new paradigm, a constructive framework from which to view divorce in a much healthier fashion and one conducive to optimal function and emotional and mental well-being.”

1B. Writing from/about Sources: Critiques and Reviews (primarily humanities)



This sub-category elicited essays that explicate photography, paintings, novels, films, television series and other artistic texts. And, in the case of the top three essays, the submissions invite a reconsideration of how gender influences the subject and the craft.

First Place



Lynne Beaghan

A Comparison of How Childbirth is portrayed in Mass Media
Today with Artwork that Depicts Women Giving Birth from the Past
Faculty: Ben Bennett-Carpenter, BIS

“Every human being comes into this world through the profound experience of childbirth. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the earliest forms of artwork depict this dramatic event. According to midwife and birth photographer Harriette Hartigan, “Details of pregnancy, labor and birth have been inscribed on cave walls, sculptured in bowls and ceremonial objects, woven within fabric, and carved on stone and clay since the beginning of human history.” . . . History reveals that birth was sometimes dangerous for the mother since it is known that many women and even more children died as a result of the birth process. This combination of scary stories, a dangerous history and the unknown aspect of birth can foster fear in a first time expectant mother. It is in fact, relatively “common (indeed rational) for women to feel fearful about childbirth.” Therefore, some fear of giving birth is expected and normal. However, considering that childbirth is significantly safer than it was in the past, at least in most modernized countries, why do so many women remain afraid of giving birth?”

Second Place



Stephanie Erdodi

When Life Gives You a Lemon, Put Lipstick on It

Valerie Palmer-Mehta, COM

“Can feminists wear makeup and dress fashionably without feeling guilty? This is a question that has plagued many feminists since the 1970s. If a woman decides to wear lipstick, is she a traitor to the cause? Or does the fact that a woman has a choice to wear lipstick reflect the progress women have made in regards to their right to make their own choices? . . . On *30 Rock*, the problem with Liz Lemon’s appearance is not that she is unattractive. The problem is that the writers, including Tina Fey, depict Liz’s appearance as a hindrance to her happiness”

Third Place



Elizabeth Frazier

Women of Letters: The Unspoken Words of Women Writers

Faculty: Kathleen Pfeiffer, ENG

“People crave stories—simple words on a page—a voice that explores, encourages, and encounters life. There’s something inherently powerful in gaining knowledge, whether it’s the knowledge of new ideas, the knowledge and comfort of a shared experience, or the knowledge of entirely different options. Writing is an avenue of expression, a cornerstone of education, and a symbol of power. People who write have had the money, time, and opportunity to learn, while people who don’t know how to write cannot afford the same education, lifestyle, or luxuries.”

Honorable Mention



Jamison Knudsen

God is Dead and You Better Believe It: Exploring a Post-Metaphysical Christianity without God

Faculty: Tristin Hassell, PHL

“In Zizek’s Christianity, a material theology, God only exists as the Holy Spirit that is the community of believers. Only in their action does God exist, which means that God is beyond metaphysics and is not subject to any criticism of Reason. Thus, it is imperative for Zizek’s God to remain in the material world, which is why he insists that the Resurrection did not occur three days after the Crucifixion. This would once again posit a metaphysical God-man, for whom there would be no answer. Instead, for Zizek, the Resurrection and Crucifixion are one simultaneous occurrence. In the moment of God-Son’s death on the cross, God is resurrected as God-Spirit in the gathering of the mourning believers at the foot of the cross.”

Honorable Mention



Sunny Rishi

Tōmatsu Shōmei's Nagasaki:
A Spectacle in Nuclear Photography
Faculty: Claude Baillargeon, AH

“Of all the modern postwar Japanese artists and photographers, Tōmatsu Shōmei’ (born 1930) may possibly be the most celebrated and revered (Kimmelman). . . . The beauty of his pictures lies not only in the physical image itself but also in the subtle, representative aspects that can be discerned from a close analysis. Tōmatsu approaches photography as a writer would approach a literary novel: he incorporates various elements of symbolism, abstraction, and other figurative thoughts as means to add new dimensions for appreciating a piece. . . . Perhaps his most astounding pictures are those taken during the early 1960s in Nagasaki, several years after the atomic bomb was dropped on August 9, 1945. It was then that Tōmatsu was able to capture some of the most ingenious and thought-provoking images that have deeply resonated with his viewers.”

1C. Writing from/about Sources: Secondary Research (non-humanities' fields/forms)



This sub-category elicited essays and literature reviews on such topics as interview protocol, the cultural landscape of our lawns and our literacy practices as well as structural discussions of the human body.

First Place



Taryn Myke Coetzee

Anxiety and Memory:

The Moderation Effect of Interviewing Context on Children's Memory

Faculty: Mary Lewis, PSY

“The influence that anxiety has on children’s memory is important to understand since it can have equal influences on the overall accuracy and reliability of their testimony. Saywitz and Nathanson (1993) found that stress and anxiety in children appeared to have a negative effect on memory, where children exhibited less accurate free recall in a mock courtroom context compared to children who were interviewed at their schools and who had fewer indicators of anxiety. This suggested relationship between anxiety and memory has been supported, in part, by Visu-Petra, Cheie, Benga, & Alloway, (2011), whose findings suggest that some aspects children’s memory appear to be negatively influenced by anxiety. However, certain aspects of memory may remain unaffected, and thus require further research to allow for differentiation between these aspects.”

Second Place



Jenelle Dembsey

Women and Literacy: The Need for Feminine Focus in Literacy Campaigns

Faculty: Dana Driscoll, WRT

“A famous saying by Rudy Manikan states, ‘If you educate a man, you educate a person, but if you educate a woman, you educate a family.’ In 2008, 131 million children (61% female) lacked basic reading and writing skills (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010, p. 3). Since women tend to be the first teachers of their children, ‘literate mothers are a strong weapon in the fight against illiteracy’ (Walter, 1999). While illiterate mothers tend to raise illiterate children, literate mothers can pass their literacy skills on to their offspring”(CAF America, n.d., p. 1).

Third Place



Lesley Sleeman

Gender Differences in Knee Biomechanics Focusing on ACL Injuries in Females

Faculty: Brian Goslin, EXS

“Multiple factors contribute to the increased rate of ACL injury in females. The most researched of them is neuromuscular control, especially that of the quadriceps and hamstrings. Studies have shown that with neuromuscular training, many strides can be made to reduce the risk of ACL injury⁵. Female athletes demonstrated marked imbalance between hamstring and quadriceps muscle strength before training. After training, co-activation of the hamstring muscles increased in athletes who originally had imbalances⁸. This training is important because soft tissue ACL tears can lead to Osteoarthritis, especially in athletes who are prone to overuse injuries¹⁰. Prevention programs targeted towards trunk, hip and knee neuromuscular control are key in decreasing the prevalence of ACL injury in females.”

Honorable Mention



Stephanie Letterson

What is Wrong with American Lawns

Faculty: Benjamin Bennett-Carpenter, BIS

“Americans have a destructive obsession: their lawns. . . .The problem with lawns is American’s narrow definition of what constitutes a good yard, regardless of the environmental consequences. Historical preferences and social messages favoring English-styled lawns still permeate today’s society. Studies show that most people prefer open grassy fields, with a few clumps of trees and strategically placed shrubs. Neatness is essential; mowed lawns, trimmed hedges, and maintained flowerbeds are a must. Plants deemed as ‘weeds’ are to be eradicated. Bushes and fences should not block the view into adjacent forests (Parson, 1995; Zhenga, Zhanga, & Chenb, 2011). This ‘quest for the perfect turf’ causes severe environmental damage. . . .” (Steinberg, 2006; Zhenga, et al., 2011).

Honorable Mention



Jessica Dalton

Inadequacies of Emotivism

Faculty: Fritz McDonald, PHL

“Moral language tends to be employed with such simultaneous vagueness and conviction, that settling on a single meaningful definition for a term like “good” appears an insurmountable undertaking. By the contradictory sentiments moral terms are used to convey, wide, ardently certain misunderstanding about their true definitions would have to be rampant, should such a definition exist. To philosophers like A. J. Ayer and Charles Stevenson, this suggests that we are looking in the wrong direction, trying to “define” these terms, declaring them equivalent with some property or set of properties. We are better off ascribing to moral statements a common function, one that gives them the flexibility to withstand their variant uses and, for Stevenson particularly, the emotional heft to account for the strong feelings we attach to them. However, to explain moral statements by his Emotivist concepts is to incompletely account for our use of them and to deny due consideration to the process by which we arrive at them. As such, Stevenson’s Emotivism is an unsatisfactory theory of moral language.”

Original Research



This category elicited primary research in the form of ethnographic observations, interviews (not transcripts), and survey reports on such topics as congressional decision making, cultural writing practices, and rape exam protocol.

First Place



Elizabeth Wandrei

Congress and Trade: What Drives Legislative Decisions?

Faculty: Byungwon Woo, PS

“Does Congress respond to economic policies using a ‘rational actor’ method, described as the best possible choice out of all possible existing choices from an international perspective (Allison, 1969)? Or do domestic politics in the form of partisan lines and electoral calculations encapsulate the motivations behind congressional decisions in U.S. economic policy-making?”

Second Place



Jessica Tess

Attitudes on Academic Writing: Perspectives in Japan

Dana Driscoll, WRT

“When instructing Japanese ESL students, the teachers should be aware of student struggles unique to the Japanese ESL population. As indicated by this study, some of these struggles might concern features of American writing, especially the location of the main point or thesis in a paper, and the attention of Japanese ESL students in their composition to low order issues such as grammar mechanics over high order issues like content and organization. At the college level, these students might also fail to grasp the gravity of plagiarism in Western culture even if they have a general understanding of plagiarism.”

Third Place



Kelsey Walsh

The Post Rape Examination: A More Comfortable Approach

Faculty: Cornelia Pokrzywa, WRT

“The fact is that patients feel the gynecological is the most uncomfortable aspect of the exam, so there needs to be an improved comfort protocol. Since there are so many different options that these patients have to choose from in regards to their results found in the post-rape exam, there needs to be a handout of detailed explanations about these different options. If patients understand they can just get the exam for their health purposes, there could be a possibility that more victims would report the rape.”

Visual and/or Auditory Composition



This category emphasizes using nontraditional methods of composition to create multimodal essays and presentations just as compelling and complex as traditional essay formats. Visual or auditory essays allow for innovative, “out-of-the-box” thinking to present and engage with scholarly sources, creating a new genre of academic writing.

First Place



Rachel Zachar and Julie Mysinger

An Inside Look at Detroit's Illiteracy Crisis

Dana Driscoll, WRT

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQ8U7xPgUY8>

Ms. Zachar and Ms. Mysinger's video brings to light a dire public issue within our own state, the drastically high rates of illiteracy in Detroit, MI. The project meticulously outlines the problem, employing both scholarly research and first-person interviews with people who must endure the day to day struggles of illiteracy. Ms. Zachar and Ms. Mysinger's work is by its very nature a democratic call for public action to help a criminally undervalued citizenry.

Second Place



Luke LaFountain

Michigan Skateboarding

Matthew Burkett, WRT

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJNkW9vCGHk>

Mr. LaFountain's video, although seemingly just about one person's hobby, is elevated through an inspection of the abandoned businesses and empty parking lots of Metro Detroit's economic recession. The video, rather than sinking into depressing images, builds to a passionate and positive exclamation of pride in Detroit and inspires viewers to take their own leaps.

Third Place



Sandra El-Haj-Ali-Ahmad

My Journey With Skype

Lori Ostergaard, WRT

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdzsdVOtUKQ>

Ms. El-Haj-Ali-Amad's video reveals how technology can help a husband and wife, separated by thousands of miles, connect through video chat and still feel each other's love. The project is a moving example of how humans can adapt and make an emotionally difficult situation much more bearable through ingenuity and the use of new media.

Honorable Mention



Nicole Warden

Voicethread

Marshall Kitchens, WRT

In this Voicethread project, Ms. Warden explores the origin of her first and middle names, learning an interesting family story. Through the project, her family bonds are strengthened as she connects with the women in her family.

Creative Fiction and Nonfiction



This category elicited such entries as literacy narratives, personal essays, memoirs, odes, and profiles that explore everything from the mundane to the supernatural.

First Place



Seth Clarke

Bathsheba

Faculty: Pamela Mitzelfeld, ENG

“I see the copper basin, plain and unadorned, each hammer-dent visible. The basin is large and full of steaming water, sitting in a pool of sunlight in a courtyard, surrounded by date palms and ferns, lilies and jasmine. I see the maidservant pour the last bucket of heated water into the basin and curtsy to someone just out of view. I am standing on a private rooftop at the edge of my palace where it borders the homes of the modestly wealthy; I am alone in the palace except for a few servants. I see her now; she has approached the basin and is standing next to it, staring off into middle distance as she lets down her hair from its elaborate braid. Her hair spills down in long black waves, shimmering in the bright morning sunlight, deep lustrous black like raven’s wings, like starless night.”

Second Place



Aaron Perry

In Praise of Hazelnut Spread

Faculty: Pamela Mitzelfeld, ENG

“What is the most common problem with breakfast food? Taste to health ratio. If something tastes good it is inevitably bad for you, and if something is good for you then you can bet gnawing on your own fingers would be less painful. Take Kashi brand cereal for example. It’s so healthy I often wonder why they don’t add it to the bottom of the food pyramid, but it tastes like a mouthful of pulverized gravel. You could chip fewer teeth with a ball and peen hammer. Pancakes on the other hand are delicious and fluffy, but let’s face it; “cake” is in the name. That should be more than enough said for their nutritional value, and the same goes for waffles and French toast. So what’s to be done, when what’s good is bad and what’s good for you is worse?”

Third Place



Kelsey Hanna

Joe Shmoe

Pamela Mitzelfeld, ENG

“Joseph Jobin Thompson. Better known as Joe. Just his name made him sound like such a nice guy. How could you not like a ‘Joe?’ A ‘Joe’ was the kind of guy who helped you out just because he wanted to. A ‘Joe’ was the old man next door who told crazy war stories. And after all wasn’t ‘Grandpa Joe’ from *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* the most entertaining grandparent? He got Charlie to burp his way out of trouble! Now what kind of person couldn’t like a ‘Joe?’ Obviously a lunatic like myself.”

Honorable Mention



Jacqueline Van Skiver

Dark Appearances

Faculty: Pamela Mitzelfeld, ENG

“Needing a moment to readjust, Dennis glanced around the store. Beside him was a ceiling height carousel swinging zombie baby dolls. ‘I hate Halloween,’ he thought to himself. All the dolls had either matte white or glowing red eyes, with sallow off-colored skin. There was an empty box on the floor for a ‘Creep-A-Long Sally,’ a zombie doll with the ability to crawl on any flat surface. It struck him that he had purchased a similar crawling baby doll for his daughter, without the corpse flesh.”

Poster and Newsletter



Submissions in this category are all about brevity. To succeed, the poster maker must ask: What one point do I hope to convey to the viewer, and can I do so in less than 15 seconds? This year, they particularly demonstrate interactivity and an effective use of hues.

First Place

Jessica Zacharias

Helen Mishreky

Ashley Makedonsky,

Brittany Murphy

Chelsea Bistue

Presidential Debates via Twitter

Faculty: Cathy Rorai, WRT

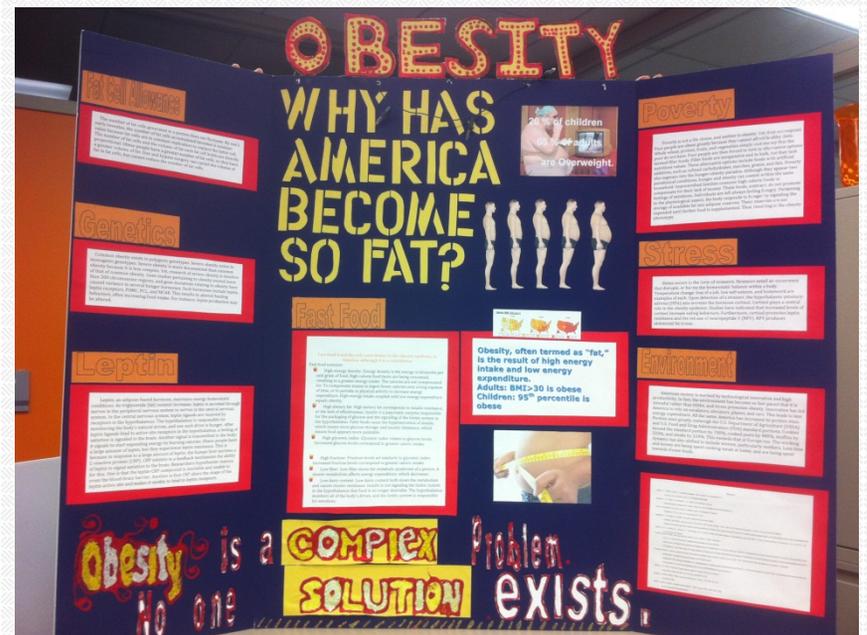


Third Place

Crystal Ajja

Obesity

Faculty: Cathy Rorai, WRT



Special Recognition



Please join the committee in recognizing:

- Marsha Packer, WRT Administrative Secretary, for organizing the luncheon and preparing the certificates
- Mentoring faculty in all disciplines who daily hone writing excellence
- Pamela Mitzelfeld, Associate Director, Writing Center, for copy editing the PowerPoint and the Brochure.
- Chartwells' Catering for the wonderful meal and the terrific service