

WORDWORKS

WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES AT MADONNA UNIVERSITY

First ‘writing tutor cadre’ prepared

The peer tutors for Madonna University’s new Writing Center just completed their training workshops. Now they’re ready—and eager—to go to work.

“I think that the Writing Center is awesome because it’s a safe place to let it all out, you know, really put everything out on the table, so to speak. The tutors are great at opening people up to new and exciting ways to go about writing a paper,” said tutor Melanie Keiper, a freshman who tutored in a writing center during high school.

“What a great group! Our tutors sacrificed two Satur-



Photo by Cody Pickren

Tutor talk—(L. to r.) Heather Spooner, Lauren Duggan, and Andrea Finlayson discuss an issue related to the Writing Center at a Jan. 20 workshop.

[See Training, page 8](#)

MU to stage International Festival



Here’s an unbeatable combination: food, facts, and fun.

MU’s 2007 International Festival will take place on Feb. 14 from noon to about 3:00 PM in the Take Five Lounge. The event, sponsored by the International Students Office, will showcase our students’ diverse cultural heritages.

“Basically, the celebration activities at the festival will fall into three categories—performance, food and display,” stated Committee Chair Yu-Jo Grace Philson. “[Participants] can either cook some ethnic food, sing or dance, or make a display to represent a culture. It will be a fun event.”

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Festival, *continued from page 1*

Festival-goers will be asked to pay a small fee for food samples at the various booths, but the exotic tastes will be well worth a couple of dollars.

Philson said the festival was started seven or eight years ago by Taiwanese students celebrating Chinese New Year. It has since grown to encompass many different cultures.

Last year's International Festival included displays about Egyptian, Indian, Korean, Philippine, Japanese, and other heritages.

"This time I would like to expand the goals of the festival to a greater scale," Philson said.

Festival goals include promoting cultural awareness and cultural exchange in the University community and the local community. The festival will also promote MU's programs and services for both our current and potential students, Philson said.

For more information about the International Festival, contact Yu-Jo Grace Philson at 5791.

The Writing Center: doorway to a different culture?

MU's new Writing Center will have a booth at the International Festival.

"When Grace first invited us to participate, I was a bit puzzled about how we'd fit in," said Writing Program Director Ann Russell, "but when I thought about it I realized that the Center's ultimate goal is to introduce students to the culture of the academy. I think Grace realized that right away. Brilliant idea!"

Writing Center tutors "caught on immediately," said Russell, and began planning a display that will highlight the Center's role in helping college students understand expectations and approaches in academic writing.

Looking on
the lighter
side



Editor's note: We are indebted to Anita Ehrenfried for the following howlers. They are part of a posting on Intersivity.org. that

lists some of the funniest similes and metaphors from high school essays. These are some of the "best" from 2006:

1. Her face was a perfect oval, like a circle that had its two sides gently compressed by a Thigh Master.
2. His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliances like underpants in a dryer without Cling Free.

3. He spoke with the wisdom that can only come from experience, like a guy who went blind because he looked at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it and now goes around the country speaking at high schools about the dangers of looking at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it.

4. She grew on him like she was a colony of E.Coli, and he was room-temperature Canadian beef.

CJ majors hone writing and interviewing skills for on-the-job success

Why would someone preparing to work as a police officer need to hone his or her writing skills? When students ask Barry Sherman, Chair of Madonna's Criminal Justice Program, he's ready with an answer.

"Strong writing skills are very important to students of all disciplines. They are especially important to those going into the human services fields," Sherman said. "In order to be successful in these areas, you need both good interpersonal and writing skills. Once a police officer writes a report, it is scrutinized by many, including supervisors, defense attorneys, prosecutors and jurors.

"A poorly written report is a reflection on the entire organization. Several years ago the *Detroit Free Press* printed the actual police report of an incident they obtained under the 'Freedom of Information Act.' The report was so poorly written, I was embarrassed for the officer and the department he worked for" said Sherman.

Need for a writing course

Sherman no doubt had this in mind when he attended a Criminal Justice curriculum review committee meeting in early 2000. Dan Pfannes, Chief of Police of the Westland Police Department, also attended.

"A poorly written report is a reflection on the entire organization."

—Barry Sherman



Photo by Karen Sanborn

CLEAR COMMUNICATION—Criminal Justice Chair Barry Sherman emphasizes the importance of strong writing and interviewing skills for students interested in a career in law enforcement.

"The review committee was comprised of members of the Madonna faculty as well as command officers from three of the area's largest police departments," said Pfannes.

"During the discussion, the faculty asked if the members of law enforcement would be able to identify the major problem that we were experiencing with our police new-hires and if it would be possible for the educational system to provide a solution to that problem. All three of us were in unanimous agreement that a great number of our new-hires were exhibiting

See Criminal Justice Course, page 6

ESL instructor offers insight into plagiarism

By Susan Ruellan

Coordinator, ESL Lab

Over twenty years ago, A. M. Kolich (1983) expressed his concerns about students who plagiarize and English composition teachers' reactions to plagiarism. In his article entitled "Plagiarism: The worm of reason" he stated, " it [plagiarism] breaches a code of behavior that encompasses my classroom, my teaching, my university, and my society—a society that supports a system of education based on certain moral standards" (p. 145). Even today as we discuss plagiarism at Madonna University, many of us may still bristle when we find text from a secondary source that has not been acknowledged in student writing.

Why do we react this way? Do most students intentionally plagiarize? What happens when the student writer does not share the same ideological perspective? As an instructor of ESL 4230, the capstone ESL academic writing course in which second-language (L2) writers learn how to incorporate outside sources and use citation, I have wondered about these questions, particularly with ESL students in mind. So, I endeavored to explore these questions in a qualitative research project.

As I researched, I learned that Eastern cultures meet Western ones on paper. The L2 writer of English and native-speaker writers often do not share the same ideological perspectives about concepts such as originality, imitation, authorship/ownership, and plagiarism. Unlike western cultures that view "authorship of individual works of literature as individual acts of creativity" (Pennycook, 1996, p. 205) and that consider "...discourse as individual or personal property (Scollon, 1995, p. 4), writers who come from an eastern perspective may write to demonstrate that they are members of a social group (Matalene, 1985; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999).

"Integrating into a new culture with different ideological perspectives is a continual process, so when ESL writers complete the ESL program they continue to learn and adjust to our discourse community."

—Susan Ruellan

After exploring the participants' perceptions of adapting to the American academic discourse community at Madonna University in my study, several noteworthy patterns emerged which provide insights into ESL students' writing experience. The following table.

[See Table, page 5](#)

Table: L2 learners in the classroom

Continued from page 4

Fitting In
Putting the Pieces Together
Research Findings

Learning the conventions and values that are important to the American academic discourse community may be complex and challenging for **all** L2 writers regardless of their L1 origins, experience with the genre, or experience with a university discourse community.

An apprenticeship about how to integrate secondary sources and use citation may develop a greater awareness and appreciation of ideological differences such as authorship/ownership, acknowledgment/plagiarism.

Using a writing process to improve the integration of secondary sources and use of citation may develop not only an awareness of a larger academic discourse community, but also provides opportunities to practice "signaling" that the L2 learner is a member of the community.

Some novice L2 research writers who may be less proficient in the target language may be attending to cognitive and linguistic concerns due to the challenges of reading, writing, and establishing meaning. This may cause them to seek out survival strategies, such as apparent plagiarism.

An L2 learner's competence may not coincide with his or her performance.

Learning how to adapt to the L2 discourse community is a "lifelong process". Courses like ESL4230 *initiate* the L2 learner. Continual education in content courses with opportunities for revision may be necessary for an L2 learner to write a research paper well.

It appears that the more successfully an L2 student uses citation and integrates secondary sources, the more confident the student will be that she can succeed in a larger university community.

Ruellan, S. (September 26, 2006) Fitting In: Textual Borrowing, the L2 learner, and the academic discourse community. MATESOL Thesis Presentation. Madonna University: Livonia, Michigan. Slide number 13 and 14.

**See Tips on teaching
L2 learners to cite
sources,
page 9**



Criminal Justice course, continued from page 3

deficiencies in their written communication skills,” Pfannes recalled.

Two common writing problems, Pfannes said, were the “inability to construct grammatically correct sentences and the inability to construct police reports that flowed in a logical and chronological sequence. We also identified a concern that a number of unsuccessful officers lack the verbal communication skills that are necessary to elicit information from the victims and perpetrators of crimes alike.”

Pfannes takes the lead

As result of this meeting, Sherman asked Pfannes to create and teach an investigative report writing class that included an interview and interrogation component. Pfannes was well-prepared for the challenge, and soon put together the course known as CJ 2400: Interviewing and Investigative Report Writing.

“I knew that my class would incorporate the interview and interrogation techniques that had been developed by John Ried and Associates,” said Pfannes. “Their techniques are very effective, and they have garnered respect from criminal investigators world-wide.

“I was formally trained in the use of these techniques, and I was also a practitioner. I knew that the students would benefit from the exposure to this information, and I knew that they would enjoy the subject matter, due to its real-life applications.”

What Pfannes found difficult was identifying an appropriate textbook for teaching the report writing component.

“The major fault that I discovered with almost every book was that, regardless of their titles, they did not actually teach students how to write an investigative report akin to what would be created by a person employed in the field of public safety. They did not have any applicability to a job related setting.”

Pfannes finally settled on Debie Goodman’s *Report It in Writing*.

“All of the book’s terminology is geared towards law enforcement. Its subject matter provides information on the components that are necessary to construct and complete a police report. Most importantly, it focuses on what I refer to as English 101. The English 101 component provides instructional material related to proper grammar and word usage,” Pfannes said

Students say they learned

Both Pfannes and Sherman have received regular feedback from Madonna’s CJ students about the CJ 2400 course.

See Student feedback, page 7

Book review***Eats, Shoots, and Leaves*
offers humorous help with
punctuation**

by Dr. A. Anne Bowers, Jr.

Grammar is fun? You bet! If you are looking for a great read that is certain to change your views about boring grammar, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* is a must! Reader's Digest, USA Today, The New York Times, Newsweek, and more support this book!

Truss was the former host of BBC's *Cutting a Dash* radio program. In her new best seller, she attempts to remind her readers of the importance of punctuation in the English language by using humor. She addresses apostrophes, commas, smileys, semicolons, colons, exclamation marks, question marks, italic type, dashes, brackets, ellipses, and hyphens. Truss reminds us of the importance of punctuation rules and the damaging effects of email and Internet punctuation

Student feedback, continued from page 6

"At the conclusion of my first class in the Fall Semester of 2001, I asked the students to complete a questionnaire about the class," Pfannes remembered.

"To my amazement, a large number of the students commented positively about the English component of the class. Some of the comments included that the class had helped them pass the M.C.O.L.E.S. test, a police academy entrance exam, and others commented about how it helped them in their current employment."

Sherman reports that both students and employers are pleased with the results of the writing course.

"Everything has been positive. Students praise it as it gives them an intensified report writing course while reinforcing basic grammar and writing skills. The course also teaches them the necessary questions to ask in order for them to write a proper and complete police report. Our graduates, who leave Madonna and go on to police or correctional academies, tend to graduate in upper levels of their class. Chief Dan Pfannes of Westland, who instructs the course, gets good feedback from his colleagues who lead other agencies," said Sherman.



A perfect example of the author's humor is demonstrated by the title:

A panda walks into a café. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and proceeds to fire it at the other patrons.

"Why?" asks the confused, surviving waiter amidst the carnage, as the panda makes towards the exit. The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder.

"Well, I'm a panda," he says at the door. "Look it up."

See Panda, page 10

Training, *continued from page 1*

Days to participate in this training,” said Writing Center Director Ann Russell. “They are also committed to ongoing professional development. We’re lucky to have such bright, creative students as our first ‘cadre’ of tutors.”

“Even after two workshops, I can admit I am still a little nervous about my new role as a tutor,” said Stefanie Mastic, “but I know that I will learn a lot on the job, especially from the students who come in to be tutored.”

Writing Center Coordinator Frances FitzGerald expects MU students will benefit from the dedication of peers like Stephanie.

“We’ve got an incredibly talented and capable crew of student tutors. I think they’re going to be a great help to other student writers,” FitzGerald said.

Ten peer tutors, Senior Tutor Diane Baumgartner, and FitzGerald have been on the job since Jan. 15, when the Writing Center opened for the first time in room 2410 Academic Building. The writing tutors are Lauren Duggan, Andrea Finlayson, Samantha Fugate, Melanie Keiper, Mary Therese LaPalm, Stefanie Mastic, Debra McCann, Elizabeth Michalek, Cody Pickren, Briana Coombs Proveaux, and Heather Spooner.

“I enjoyed every single speaker that came to speak in our tutor training sessions,” said tutor Andrea Finlayson. “Each speaker discussed a different topic, reiterating the idea that the writing center is a unique program with different, unique characteristics. I feel that the process of peer tutoring will be a success!”

“...Both sessions really helped shape my idea of the tutoring process. Along with the valuable information I received at these sessions, the food was great too,” joked Heather Spooner.

During an all-day training session on Jan. 6, tutors studied writing center theory and practice and were introduced to the MU center’s policies and procedures. Library Director Joanne Lumetta gave a presentation about helping students with research paper assignments.

The second session continued a discussion about theory and practice with two more guest speakers. ESL Lab Supervisor Susan Ruellan spoke about working with L2 writers. Scott Russell, coordinator of the University of Michigan-Flint’s Marian E. Wright Writing Center, talked about approaches to reading student writing.

Briana Coombs Proveaux said hands-on work in the new center helped make the training meaningful. “It gave me a clearer idea regarding what I had questions about and what I needed to work on,” she said.

See Humor and aplomb, page 10

Madonna University Writing Center

2410 Academic Building

(734) 432-5304

Hours: M-W 9 AM to 9 PM,

TH 9 AM to 2 PM

Tips on teaching L2 learners about citing their sources in research papers, *continued from page 6*

With this knowledge in mind what could the academic discourse community at Madonna University do assist the apprentice L2 research writer with his or her adaptation to our academic discourse community?

The relationship includes our ESL professionals, our students, and content-course instructors. First, my research (Ruellan, 2005) showed that in the ESL classroom, instructors should try to:

Develop an appreciation for different values.

Think and discuss concepts related to textual borrowing.

Explore the university discourse community outside the ESL classroom.

Integrating into a new culture with different ideological perspectives is a continual process, so when ESL writers complete the ESL program they continue to learn and adjust to our discourse community. University faculty, as readers, writers, and educators within the discourse community, can contribute to the adaptation process of the L2 writer. My research and experience suggests some ways in which this may be accomplished:

Explain the concept of academic integrity and the importance of acknowledgment in your discipline.

Provide models- Introduce discipline specific documentation styles. Provide sample research papers with examples of how citation is used.

Clearly explain consequences for incorrect citation form, weak summary, paraphrase, copying or submitting complete works from other writers. Plagiarism.

Foster a learning environment: Submit sources and identify passages; Review quality of summary, paraphrase and direct quote before assessment.

Provide opportunity for Revision. Provide teacher feedback in the margins.

Request that students revise inadequate summary, paraphrase or direct quote.

By implementing these types of steps, we can encourage L2 writers to improve their writing skills as well as foster a collaborative approach to learning. It is my hope that these steps will also promote understanding and appreciation for what both the reader from the west and the writer from the east contribute to a text.

Humor and aplomb, *continued from page 8*

Scott Russell said he was impressed at meeting MU's peer tutors.

"Working in a writing center for the past twenty years, I've realized that writing tutors always emit a certain social vibe or signal, a combination of energy, intelligence and personality, and a necessary amount of nonconformity.

"Meeting with the Madonna Writing Center tutors this last weekend, I recognized that signal. It felt like I had spoken with them before, though I had met them for the first time. I was impressed with how confidently they entertained ideas that I found a bit disturbing the first time I encountered them. They seemed completely ready to question conventional wisdom with humor and aplomb," said Russell.

About this newsletter

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Panda, *continued from page 7*

The waiter turns to the relevant entry in the manual and, sure enough, finds an explanation.

"Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China; Eats, shoots and leaves."

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest rating, I award this book a "10."

- Great humor throughout
- Provides excellent information—things we always knew and a few items we may have neglected
- Includes humorous everyday errors in grammar/punctuation the reader can easily relate to

- Easy to read
- Makes you laugh

Includes Punctuation Repair Kit stickers & The Panda Says No stickers

Interested in playing the "Eats, Shoots & Leaves" online punctuation game?

Go to: <http://eatsshootsandleaves.com/ESLquiz.html>

Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, shoots & leaves: The zero tolerance approach to punctuation*. New York: Gotham Books.