



# writing center



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As I write this, I am sitting in my office listening to the low rumble (sometimes escalating to a punctuated din) of conversation in the Writing Center. I

hear a tutor and writer talking about the effects preposition usage has on meaning. (This particular writer is an International student who comes weekly to the Writing Center to talk about writing in English.) I hear another student writer discussing political theory, and a tutor helping her articulate how Aristotle informs our political world. Two tutors sit in the orange chairs outside my office, discussing what they have learned from the student writers with whom they have met. I just met with a faculty member in GIS about his writing assignments, and had a wonderful conversation about the similarities between mapping and writing.

The community of writers, the conversations about writing, the articulation of ideas, the relationships that develop – that’s what makes this place so special. Doug Downs, interviewed for our section *On Teaching Writing*, describes the Writing Center as the kitchen in a home: “a source of heat and fuel.” He points out that our cultural view of writing as a solitary activity is not how most professionals experience writing. Instead, professional writers recognize the importance of community and collaboration while they are writing, many individuals coming together to lend words and opinions to any given project. The Writing Center, then, “takes writing from the solitude and privacy of one’s own room into the central gathering place of the house, where we commune and compare notes and cook together.”

In this newsletter, we introduce you to a handful of the people who make up our community. And we invite you to join us – because writing is happening here.

- Dr. Michelle Miley, MSU Writing Center Director

## Wilson Hall, Room 1-114

M / W / F: 8:30am-5:00pm

 T / Th: 8:30am-7:00pm

## Renne Library

First Floor Commons

M - F: 8:30am-5:00pm

Su - Th: 7:00-10:00pm

## North Hedges

Tutorial 4

First Floor

M / W / Th: 7:00-10:00pm

## New and Upcoming:

### - Write Night is coming up!

This is a great place for writers and readers to come together and collaborate.

- **Session Notes** are helpful tips and reminders that get sent to the writers after a tutoring session.

- **North Hedges** is open and ready for business! Peer Tutors are available from 7 -10pm T/W/Th.

- **ESL Office Hours** are provided by Fred Fox from 4:10-5pm M/W in the Writing Center

*writing happens here.*



## Tutor Spotlight: Emily Jo Schwaller

*How long have you worked at the Writing Center and how have you changed in your tutoring since then?*

I have been working at the Writing Center for two years (4 semesters.) Since I began tutoring, I have learned to talk less and let others lead, which has been incredibly rewarding. People have so many cool things to say!

*How has being a tutor at the Writing Center influenced you as a student?*

As a student, working at the Writing Center has made me realize how wonderful it is to share writing and collaborate with others.

*What is your favorite part of tutoring?*

My favorite part of being a tutor is the community of writers, both within the Writing Center, and outside. There is always a surprise in meeting new people—and getting to talk to them is like opening a new book! It is both valuable and refreshing.

*“Writing and Cooking are the same: both forms of communication.”*

*-Maya Angelou*



### Write Night!

Write with us on

**March 25<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm Renne Library**

Bring any writing in at any stage!

*\*PLUS: Win 1400 Champ Change*

## ESL Specialist: Fred Fox

Provided by Office of International Programs



Originally from Pennsylvania, Fred began tutoring ESL students in 2009. Since then, he has co-founded an online ESL school and hosted multiple internationals at his home, though he doesn't speak any other languages fluently. His favorite part of tutoring is

the “Ah-ha,” light-bulb moment that occurs. Already a published poet, Fred also spends his free time co-writing mystery novels with his wife. Fred has office hours Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:10-5pm in the Wilson Hall Writing Center. He is also available on the Writing Center schedule for one-on-one appointments.

### The Writing Center is actively seeking peer tutors.

If you know students (freshmen, sophomores, juniors) who are empathetic, easy to talk with, and interested in think and talking about writing, please encourage them to apply!

We're interested in hiring tutors from ALL colleges and disciplines.

*Please visit our employment web page for more information:*

<http://www.montana.edu/writingcenter/employment.html>

# On Teaching Writing:

## Doug Downs

As an ongoing article, we begin this series *On Teaching Writing* with the Director of MSU's Writing Program



### As an instructor, do you have any advice for someone teaching writing?

Oh, a little. Here's what I find myself saying most often:

*Avoid double standards:* ask your students to write like you do, but know *how you actually write*, not how you think writers are "supposed" to write. The vast majority of what students are taught in high school reinforce double standards – if the teacher stood back and looked for a moment, they'd realize that they never write like they're asking their students to write. Which is less than ideal.

*Give students real work to do in their writing, and don't ask for writing you wouldn't like to read.* Too often students feel like all their writing does is expose them to judgment and get them a grade – like there's no other purpose to it. That's completely unlike writing outside of classrooms, which has real work to do – bridges to build, wars to end, lovers to woo, narwhals to study. And if you're asking your students to do important

writing, you might like reading the results, so the corollary: if you wouldn't like to read it, consider not asking someone to write it.

Do in fact *read* your students' writing. Don't merely grade, rate, judge, and evaluate it. *Read* it, the same way you read all the other writing you read in the world. Students are *people talking*, and it's astonishing how much better they write when it becomes clear to them that they are genuinely being read and listened to.

### What are your dreams for Writing at MSU?

That there would be a lot *more* of it, and a lot less *fear* of it.

Writing is tough to build into a lot of courses because it takes so much time for students to create and for instructors to read and respond to. But it's an incredibly powerful learning strategy, because writing

helps you learn what you're talking about. So in a dreamier MSU, there would be a lot more writing being assigned.

There would also be more *talk about* writing. Faculty would be *showing* their students their own writing much more, and explaining what roles writing plays in their professional and civic and personal lives, and how their writing comes to be.

And in all this showing and telling and writing, more students would have much less fear of writing – they would be able to see it as everyday, normal, and *useful*. They'd be able to see it as *powerful* rather than as threatening.

So my dreams for writing at MSU have to do with changing our "writing climate" – to transform from a university that doesn't do very much at all with writing, to one that actively and openly thinks and talks and *makes* a lot more writing.



## Undergrad Tutor: Un Hye Kim

If there's nothing else that I've gained from working at the writing center, it's direction. I mean this on both the small scale of specific essays and the large scale of life in general. I have seen students come

in with a jumbled mess of potentials and leave with a definite plan for where to take those ideas; and I've seen writers go from having half-finished drafts to full-fledged reports after coming to the writing center with nothing more than a desire to see how they can challenge their own thoughts. The writing center is a place of communication; written or spoken, we engage

in the exchange of ideas and arguments in the writing center, and it's my favorite part of my job. I started working as a tutor during the past three years, and in that time, I've figured out what I want to do with my life. My passions in life surround the expression of thoughts in comprehensible forms, and I know that wherever I go from here, I'd like for the art of communication to be a part of my life.

## Graduate Tutor: Jacob Henan

I started my time as a tutor in the Writing Center as a part of my GTA position, a way to "earn my keep" that the department so generously bestowed upon me. I honestly was not sure what to expect as I was one of those "dreadful" people who only thought of the Writing Center as a "fix-it shop" or a place for "remedial" writers. Thankfully, I have seen the error of my ways. I now have the opportunity to experience a few different roles as a writing tutor.

With my "tutor" hat on and trying NOT to be too much an instructor, I have found that many writers strive to write primarily for their professors.

They want to do well and recognize that the instructor holds the power of the grade firmly in their grasp. This often leads to student anxiety of "what the teacher wants." As a tutor, one of my most valuable tutor roles is that of "mentor" or "guide." We often forget that not everyone might be as comfortable as we are with writing.

And that leads me to what I learned about *TEACHING* as a tutor in the Writing Center. By tutoring assignments similar to my own, it helps me to see how students respond to assignment sheets, instructor feedback, and the peer-review/revision process. As a tutor, I am fortunate to get this brief peek behind the curtain



that separates students and instructors. The questions and concerns that writers bring into the Writing Center are likely similar to problems my students are experiencing. Tutoring has been a valuable asset to my teaching experience, without which the experience wouldn't be nearly as successful or rewarding.

### March Madness: Photo Contest

Take a picture of where you write/where your favorite place is to write and send it to: [msuwritingcenter.etc@gmail.com](mailto:msuwritingcenter.etc@gmail.com)

The winner will be announced on April 1, 2014 - and awarded a special Writing Center gift. Eternal glory will also be yours.

### A HAIKU

*writing and coffee  
and nice tutors who help me  
where writing happens  
~B.H.*