

The University Writer

Lions, Tigers, and Rhetoric

Getting to Know Western States Rhetoric & Literacy Conference Keynote Speaker, Debra Hawhee

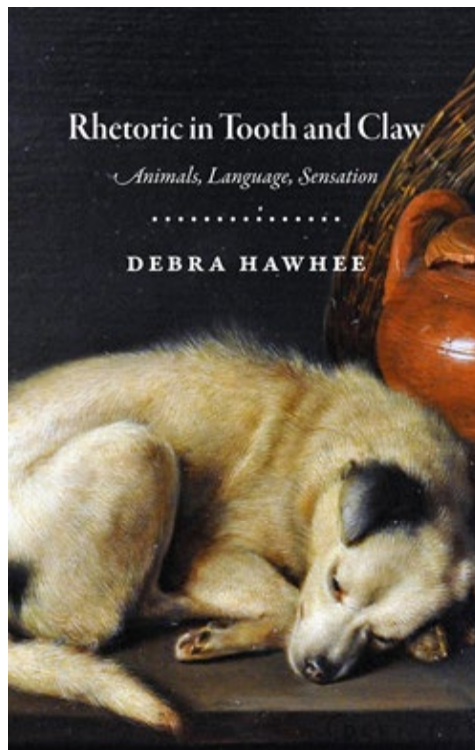
“That anger ceases toward those who humble themselves is evident even in the case of dogs, who do not bite those sitting down.” With this quote from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Debra Hawhee began her keynote address at the annual Western States Rhetoric & Literacy (WSRL) Conference.

Hawhee, a Professor of English at Penn State University, is also the proud owner of a whippet named Zadie and a highly respected voice in Rhetorical studies. Her work often runs to the eclectic, and in her book *Rhetoric in Tooth & Claw*, Hawhee dives deep into ancient rhetorical thought, revealing that the study of rhetoric once overlapped with animal studies.

Because of Hawhee’s unconventional approach to Writing & Rhetoric, the conference, which took place during the last weekend of October, featured sessions with titles such as: “Tastes Like Rhetoric: Food Memoir and Food Media,” “Speculative Animals,” and “Plant Sense / Plant Seeing.”

At first, the unusual approach to the event theme seemed a bit of a gamble for conference organizer,

Professor Maureen Mathison. But Mathison says it was worth the risk, and as she introduced Hawhee she said “we hoped, if we built it, you [Hawhee] would come.”



Rhetoric in Tooth & Claw: Animals, Language, Sensation, Debra Hawhee (UIC Press, 2016)

Not unlike the movie *Field of Dreams*, the plan seems to have worked, as both Hawhee and hundreds of researchers from across the country came to attend an event designed to appeal specifically to

the distinct rhetorical interests of the keynote speaker.

For students just entering Writing & Rhetoric, Hawhee recommends “finding those questions that obsess you, that nag at you. That’s always been what I’ve done, you know,” she says. “I’ll notice a connection that other people don’t notice and then try to make the case to other people — because that’s the challenge: getting other people obsessed with it!”

In other words, if you build it, they will come! To learn more about the WSRL conference or upcoming sites and events, please visit <https://writing.utah.edu/wsrl-conference.php>

- Izzy Fernandez

When Learning is Doing

Students connect college to real world in New Writing Internship

“I did that.” If three words could perfectly capture the ideal college experience, those may be it. Emily Beck can say them with confidence.

A transfer student from Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) and recent University of Utah graduate, Emily has earned B.A. degrees in Writing and Rhetoric Studies and English. However, she’s also done

something few undergrads have: she has designed a college course.

The course came about through an internship with Assistant Professor Christie Toth in which Emily, alongside a group of fellow transfer students, developed a course for prospective transfer students. The course, WRTG 3020: Write 4 U (ENGL 2900 at SLCC), allows students to explore writing in their major of interest and to receive upper-division writing credit at the U—all at SLCC tuition rates.

Emily and her peers built the class, went through the administrative process of getting it into the

class catalog, and even presented their work at the 2016 Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) West conference in Las Vegas.

Emily credits her internship with solidifying her ambition to be a writing professor. “I learned things that I wouldn’t have been able to otherwise. Designing a course in Canvas, presenting at a conference—I did that!” Emily also says she was able to glimpse the day-to-day, glamorous (and not so glamorous) components of the working academic life. She laughs recalling the various meetings with Writing

and Rhetoric Studies and SLCC’s English Department—but says she wouldn’t trade the experience for any other.

She tells other undergrads: “Do it. Take any opportunity that you can. My experience has solidified my career choice and allowed me to place real value on my degree.”

Students interested in the Write 4 U Course, or an internship opportunity, can contact Christie Toth at christie.toth@utah.edu or program advisor Lisa Shaw at lisa.shaw@utah.edu.

-Jarrod Barben

Senior Seminar Puts Writing to Work

What better way to synthesize a degree than write the handbook future students will use?

Writing and Rhetoric majors are asked often “what is rhetoric?” and “what exactly do you study in your major?” and even “what jobs can you get with a writing degree?” Professor Maureen Mathison, former department chair, along with students of the fall 2017 Senior Seminar have set out to answer just those questions.



The Fall 2017 Senior Seminar Class. *Back row (L-R):* Jase Marshall, Megan Tyler, Kayaunna Swartzmiller, Rebecca Baker, Truong Pham *Front row:* Professor Maureen Mathison, Emily Beck, Alexandria DeGrauw

“Our students have all taken different paths here,” Mathison explains “I wanted them to graduate with a document they could put in their portfolio, something that would help synthesize what they’ve learned over

the last four years.”

Fall 2017 is the second time Senior Seminar has been offered, but the course is now a graduation requirement. In Spring 2017, the course was launched by Associate Professor Christie Toth. Chair, Jay Jordon is teaching the course this Spring (2018), and Mathison explains that each professor will put their own stamp on the course.

In Mathison’s class, the handbook includes several pieces, including a Writing and Rhetoric Studies definition and a list of “marketable skills” that students can expect to learn over the course of study. These include traditional writing techniques such as analysis and research, but also skills in critical thinking, document design, and collaborative work. Additionally, Senior Seminar students have included interviews with previous graduates to provide potential students with tangible examples of career paths after graduation.

But the project is more than useful information for future writing students—it’s a real learning opportunity. These students are involved in the creation of the handbook from start to finish—working on research and content development, as well as graphics and document design.

“Our goal is to create something that is going to make people pause, pay attention, and think,” says Mathison. “Technology allows us the capability to create these representations, not just verbally, but visually and

sonically, allowing people to engage more deeply with our texts.”

The new Writing and Rhetoric Handbook is expected to be ready for distribution in Fall 2018. To learn

Writing Center’s E-tutoring Debuts

New service very popular with students

The University of Utah has a large student population, with nearly thirty-two thousand enrollees in Fall ‘17. The size of the student body contributes to our campus diversity—as well as the energy of the MUSS on Saturdays in the fall. But it also leads to a few problems, including long commutes, trouble finding parking and lengthy wait times for student services.

The University Writing Center is just one such service that students sometimes struggle to use because of enormous demand. But a new service, e-tutoring may be changing the way students interact with writing tutors.

E-tutoring is an online platform that allows students to submit their work electronically to one of the peer tutors at the Writing Center. After a thorough review, the paper is sent back (usually) with a list of recommended changes.

Shortly after she arrived three years ago, Writing Center Director Annie McMurtrey saw the Writing Center’s hours (9am-7pm M-H) simply wouldn’t be enough for students with full-time jobs on top of school work. She also saw the benefit of an e-tutoring service, especially for those students who commute some distance to the U.

“It used to be that when a student went to the Writing Center they had to sign up online or in-person, then physically come in with a copy of their paper,” she says. This made appointments an exercise in social anxiety as well as a challenge for campus commuters. But after proposing an eTutoring service, McMurtrey was quickly given the title of Institutional Coordinator, basically putting her in charge of the entire program. In the year since the service started, e-tutors have helped some 798 students, most of them (90%) for writing, and so far students have loved it, rating the service a 3.6 out of 4.

more about the Senior Seminar, please visit the course catalogue online or contact to Lisa Shaw, the Writing and Rhetoric Advisor, at lisa.shaw@utah.edu.

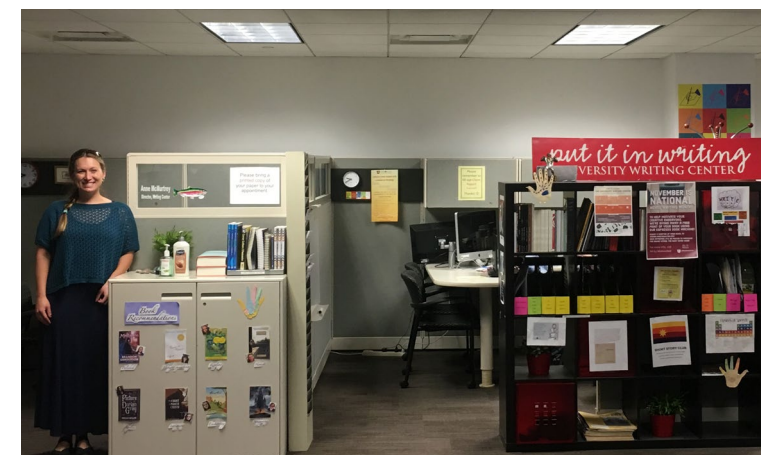
- Helen Lindamood

“The University has been really supportive of E-tutoring,” McMurtrey says. “After I was made director of E-tutoring one of my bosses immediately wrote me a check to fund it! Usually there’s a lot of bureaucracy, but I think they saw a need for this.”

Among the 40 consortium members of the eTutoring service there exist a range of topics, from Mathematics to American Sign Language. The University Writing Center is just one of many departments

in real-time, which allows students to ask questions while their work is reviewed, and although the Writing Center does not operate the same way, a submitted paper takes only about two days to review. That’s stunningly fast!

In the future, McMurtrey hopes to get University of Utah instructors on board to lead students to this powerful new tool, and maybe even have tutors of their own in subjects like Math, Chemistry, and American Sign Language.

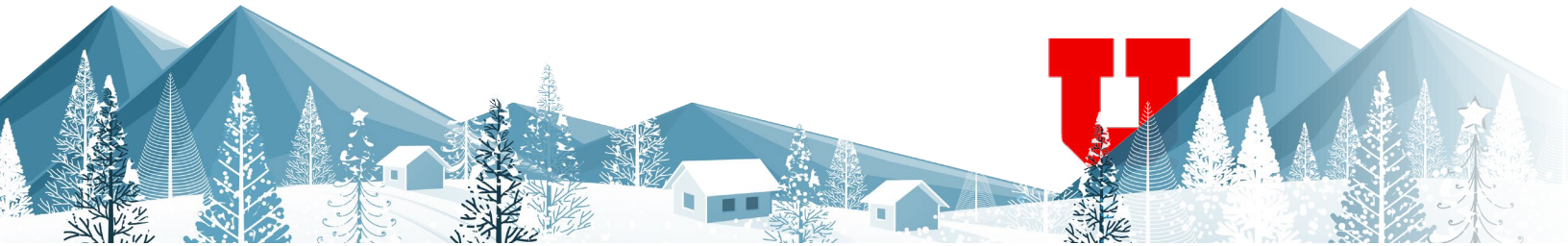


Writing Center Director, Annie McMurtrey hopes to soon expand e-tutoring at the U.

involved in E-tutoring, and due to the sheer number of universities that contribute there is almost always a tutor ready to handle any questions, on nearly any subject. Most of the tutoring that happens goes on

To learn more about the U’s Writing Center or eTutoring services, please visit the [site here](#) or stop by the offices on the second floor of the Marriott Library, across from the Reserve Desk.

- Steven Morgan



New Faculty Joins Writing at the U

Romeo Garcia brings his passion to research and teaching

Concluding his first semester as Assistant Professor of Writing & Rhetoric Studies, Romeo Garcia is thrilled to be part of the U—and pleased thus far with the University’s support for diversity. Originally from south



Asst. Professor, Romeo Garcia joins Writing at the U

Texas, Professor Garcia has a Master’s from Texas A&M and a PhD in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric from Syracuse University. His proudest accomplishment was getting his PhD from such a prestigious school. “My grandma wasn’t able to see me get my PhD,” he says, “but I feel I still got to fulfill a hope of hers.”

Having finished teaching Intro to Rhetoric and Intermediate Writing this fall, Garcia is eager for the spring when he will teach Writing and Cultural Rhetorics (WR TG 4050). The course will feature work by contemporary Latinx authors such as Américo Paredes, José Eduardo Limón, Gloria E. Anzaldúa, and Norma E. Cantú. He also looks forward to sharing the experiences and

meaning-making practices of South Texas with his students—and plans to introduce them to the histories of colonization, current colonial tendencies, and the Mexican-American plight.

Romeo’s research ties his passion for diversity to a focus on the practice and philosophy of listening. Currently writing an article on the ecology of supremacy, he says “if my students learn one thing from me, I hope it’s to not accept the inequalities in society and institutions—but to critically respond to pressing issues. I hope to teach them to be able to assess the situation, evaluate it, and respond appropriately.”

To learn more about Professor Garcia’s spring classes, please visit the course catalog or the Writing Department’s home page at <https://writing.utah.edu/>.

-Tia Parry

