

The Newsletter

New Texts, Exciting Start: Writing Program launches three new books

By Patricia Zukowski, Assistant Director

It took a full-court press involving all members of the Writing Program administrative staff and a dedicated group of our graduate Teaching Associates to produce the three new texts now being used in our First Year Writing classes. *Other Words*, the latest incarnation of the venerable *Text Wrestling Book*, was under construction for two years. The result is a multi-media text including 32 essays by some of the foremost writers of our time, on some of the most pressing issues of the day, as well as photographs, comics, and experimental prose. An added benefit of this publication is that the royalties all come back to the Writing Program to fund special projects and other educational initiatives to benefit our students.

The Curriculum Committee focused its work last year on the new *Handbook* for use in both our *Basic* and *College Writing* courses. This new custom edition of the well-known *Penguin Handbook* provides students with a wealth of information on the writing process, researching, grammar, and style, and also includes information on four documentation systems (MLA, APA, CMS, and CSE). This comprehensive guide supplements the curriculum in *Basic* and *College Writing* and should also prove to be a valuable resource for students throughout their careers at UMass, and particularly in their Junior Year Writing courses.

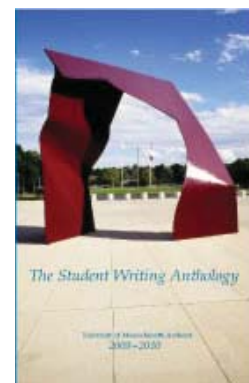
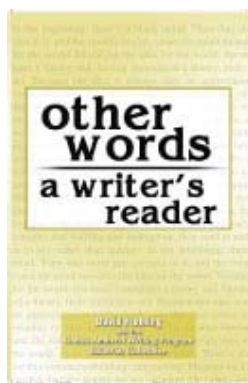
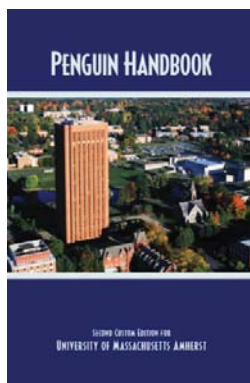
Finally, the 33rd edition of *The Student Writing Anthology* underwent its biggest revision since 2005, the year it moved from an in-house to a professionally published text. Our new book has expanded considerably. It now includes a separate section of essays from our *Basic Writing* course,



Gale Thompson (left) and Amanda Waugh, new Teaching Associates in the Writing Program, during our week-long orientation in August 2009. This fall, the Writing Program welcomed 27 new TOs.

the addition of collaborative, experimental, and community-outreach texts from Unit 4 of our *College Writing* course, and, most notably, texts from Junior Year Writing courses. These changes have created an extremely strong book, and we are looking forward to adding more excellent examples of different academic genres in our future editions. Over time, we hope to make this book a campus-wide resource, used at every level, to support the University's effort to celebrate and improve student writing at UMass.

Kudos to all who dedicated themselves to enriching our Writing Program teaching resources!



Great Writer/Great Teacher

Winner of Iowa Prize brings wisdom to UMass classrooms

By Deirdre Vinyard, Deputy Director

Zach Savich is not only a great writer—he’s a great teacher. Savich, winner of the 2008 Iowa Poetry Prize and MFA candidate in creative writing for poetry, applies his talent to the UMass Writing Program classroom, where each semester for the last year and a half he has been inspiring first year composition students.

As an acclaimed poet, Savich obviously brings a great deal of writing talent with him to UMass—he was most recently at the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop from which he received an MFA. But Savich also brings with him a long interest in the teaching of writing. At Iowa he taught creative writing classes and first year composition, both at the university and at the local community college near Iowa City. Savich also inspired students abroad, teaching creative writing in Wellington, New Zealand as well as in Rome, where he conducted classes for American study-abroad students through the University of Washington.

UMass has certainly benefitted from Savich’s extensive teaching experience. In his classes he shares the challenges all writers face as they begin new writing projects,



Zach Savich, winner of the 2008 Iowa Poetry Prize, currently teaches *College Writing*.

striving for fresh takes on their work. What makes a writer, he says, is not that he starts the writing process having the right words, but that he “knows how to find them.” In class, Savich works on teaching his students the techniques needed to “find” the words they are looking for as they push their ideas forward.

Savich can be found teaching, writing, and reading from his award winning book *Full Catastrophe Living* in and around Amherst.

News From Junior Year Writing

Writing and the Law: A Profile of Judy Holmes, Junior Year Writing Interim Director

By David Fleming, Director

When Judy Holmes talks to her students about writing, she does so from a position of deep experience: as a teacher, a lawyer, an historian, and a human being who has seen first-hand the ways that language and power interact in our society. From 1976, when she received her law degree, to 1988, when she moved to Massachusetts to pursue a Ph.D. in U. S. political history, she worked on the front lines of law and politics. She was the principal organizer of the first Women in the Law Conference, an original member of the Feminist Law Collective, and a founder of the Resistance Law Office, where her clients included community activists and political prisoners.

She now combines that practical experience with the view of an historian. At UMass, she teaches courses in *Torture, Terrorism, and the Law*; *20th Century Political Trials*; and *The Death Penalty in America*. But she is best known to most of us as the longtime teacher of Junior Year Writing in the Legal Studies Department, an active member of the University Writing Committee, and, now, interim director of Junior Year Writing for the whole campus. Although she doesn’t think of herself

as a “writer” per se, she recognizes the “huge part” that writing has played in her life as a lawyer and an historian. And in her teaching, she tries especially to prepare students for the rigor of academic writing. In Legal Studies 450, which she has lately organized around the theme of global warming and the law, her students learn to think, talk, and write about complex legal issues. For example, they read both majority and dissenting opinions in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Massachusetts v. EPA* and write papers analyzing the arguments used. In later assignments, they move towards developing their own arguments.

The approach seems to work. One of Judy’s former students, Tarra Louis-Charles, recently wrote that, before taking Legal Studies 450, she thought her writing skills were weak. But she found the drafting process helpful and the encouragement of the instructor inspiring. Tarra later won 2nd place in the Writing Program’s Best Text Contest. “I consider that moment . . . one of my biggest achievements,” Tarra wrote. She is now thinking of a career in journalism, where she hopes to give voice to young women of Haitian background like herself. Judy was thrilled with the testimonial but attributes her own success as a teacher to the inspiration she receives from students like Tarra and other writing teachers at UMass Amherst.

Celebrate Undergraduate Writing! The 2009 Celebration of Writing

By Peggy Woods, Assistant Director
Heidi Terault, Office Manager

A creative documentary on Amherst, a bookmaking booth, graphic novels, and handmade art books were some of the highlights at the Writing Program's Celebration of Writing Festival held on May 13, 2009. This annual event showcased the work done by students enrolled in the First Year Writing courses (EnglWrit 111 & 112), the experimental writing workshop series, and Junior Year Writing courses.

Dean Joel Martin of Humanities and Fine Arts opened the festival by connecting the importance of writing across the university. Our keynote speaker, Huffington Post blogger, former *Wall Street Journal* reporter, and novelist Claudia Ricci engaged the audience in our theme, "Writing the Future Now," by discussing her work, views, and experience as a writer in the ever changing, fast paced digital world.

Throughout the day, attendees viewed publications and multi-media projects by students in *College* and *Basic Writing*, listened to songs written by students in the *American Lyrics* workshop, attended readings by students in both *Queer Writing* and *Lost in Translation* experimental writing classes and viewed digital stories created by students in *Telling it Straight*, *Telling it Slant*, *Telling it Digital*.



Displays of Student Writing at the 2009
Celebration of Writing

Writing Program Staff

David Fleming, Director
Judy Holmes, Director for Junior Year Writing
Haivan Hoang, Director of the Writing Center
Deirdre Vinyard, Deputy Director
Peggy Woods, Assistant Director
Patricia Zukowski, Assistant Director
Heidi Terault, Office Manager
Becky Blajda, Receptionist
Leslie Bradshaw, Technology Coordinator

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Winners of the Writing Program's annual Best Text Contest, student writers selected for inclusion in the 2009-2010 *Student Anthology*, and students who completed a year long Writing Center tutoring course were also honored at the celebration.

This year's fifth annual Celebration of Writing will be held on May 5, 2010 in Goodell 604. Centered on the theme "Words Near and Far," exhibits will include work from six new Experimental Writing Workshops ranging from sports writing to constructing museum exhibits as well as publications and multi-media work from students in *Basic Writing*, *College Writing* and Junior Year Writing. Mark your calendars!

Student Writing in the World: Glossy publications make it real

By Peggy Woods, Assistant Director

In 2005, when graduate instructor Corry Colonna (PhD English) asked for a small amount of funding to create a high quality, magazine-like collection of his *College Writing* student essays, he had no idea that he would be revolutionizing the student publication process at the Writing Program. But four years later, Corry's concept for professionalizing the look and feel of the class publication has become a staple of the program.

Corry's class published *The UnOfficial Guide to UMass Amherst: The Not Quite Comprehensive Guide for Students By Students*. Creating this guide enabled students to work collaboratively through all the steps of developing a publication, and then the funds provided by the Writing Program allowed the guide to be printed as a "real" book—perfect bound with a glossy cover. This new kind of student publication spread like wildfire. Now many instructors are creating a range of publications from end-of-the-year "best of" class anthologies, to collections of music and film reviews, to publications centered on a specific aspect of UMass, to collections centered on a specific social issue. Some instructors have taken the "real" writing situation even further by creating publications whose purpose is to enact some form of change, such as graduate instructor Andrea Lawlor's class publication of letters to President-Elect Obama. Likewise, graduate instructor Mark Koyama's *College Writing* course, comprised of students enrolled in a Residential Academic Program centered on community service and social justice, used their publication to inform our state legislators what the effects of the budget cuts will be for local social service agencies. These student magazines are funded through royalties earned through the publication of Writing Program text books.

Displays of all these publications and much more are located in the Writing Program's Resource Room (308 Bartlett), in the display cabinet on the third floor of Bartlett Hall, and at the annual Celebration of Writing.



First Year Writing Program Teaching Staff Fall 2009

Every year the Writing Program employs close to one hundred graduate TOs to teach *Basic* and *College Writing*. TOs are selected in a highly competitive process and go through a year-long intensive training program with an added year-and-a-half of close supervision and mentoring.

The Writing Center: A Resource for All! Every Writer Needs a Reader

The Writing Center is a free tutoring service for all UMass Amherst writers: students, staff, and faculty. It's located in the Learning Commons on the lower level of Du Bois Library, and is open 49 hours a week: M-W, 10-9; Th, 10-6; F, 10-2; Su, 2-6.

Writers meet with trained tutors for 45-minute sessions, getting feedback and advice on their writing projects. Most of the tutors are undergraduate students who have completed a year-long, six-credit course on the theory and practice of writing tutoring. The Center is directed by Prof. Haivan Hoang from English with two graduate Assistant Directors: Chris DiBiase and Lisha Storey.

Last year, the Center held nearly 3,000 tutoring sessions with UMass Amherst students. See <http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/> for more information.

For instructors: the Writing Center is happy to send a trained tutor to your class to give a 10-15 minute presentation on the Center for your students.

The University Writing Committee 2009-10

- Elizabeth Porto, ISOM (chair)
- Madeleine Charney, Library
- Steven Brewer, Biology
- Ingrid Holm, ESL Program
- Judith Holmes, Legal Studies
- Holly Lawrence, ISOM
- Sigrid Schmalzer, History
- David Fleming, English
- Stephen Olbrys Gencarella, Communication
- Matt Ouellett, Center for Teaching
- Ernest May, Music
- Heidi Bauer-Clapp, graduate student
- Rand Nashi, undergraduate student

For more information, see http://www.umass.edu/senate/committees/univ_writing.html.