

he Student Writing Anthology 2010-2011

University of Massachusetts Amherst Writing Program

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Learning Solutions

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INTRODUCTION

Last year, the 33rd edition of the UMass Amherst Writing Program's Student Writing Anthology broadened both its goals and content en route to realizing our ultimate vision: to make this book a campus-wide resource, used at every level, as an integral part of the University's effort to both celebrate and improve student writing on campus. In past editions, we had imagined our largest audience to be students enrolled in our First Year Writing courses (Englwrit 111, 112, and 112H), and we primarily published texts from the first three units of College Writing, blended with essays from our Basic Writing course, Englwrit 111. Essays were not identified by course or unit.

Last year we began by rebuilding the book to include separate and clearly identifiable sections for essays from each unit of *Basic Writing* and adding selections from Unit IV of *College Writing*. But the most ambitious and important change came by requesting submissions from the representatives of more than 70 Junior Year Writing courses. We divided the book into three sections and clearly identified the goals of the texts that emerged from each unit of our First Year courses and the texts published from Junior Year Writing courses. It was an experiment, but one I believed in for a very long time: to showcase various genres of academic writing; to open a window to a wide range of perspectives on a wide range of topics; and to illustrate the range of stylistics open to academic writers in the 21st century.

Prompted by the tripling of the number of texts submitted this year, I am prepared to say that this new venture is on its way to realizing its goals. Junior Year Writing instructors submitted three times the number of texts we received last year, making selection highly competitive. Teachers in our 111 and 112 classes discussed how beneficial the Junior Year texts had been in their teaching. Various calls and requests from Junior Year Writing instructors indicated that they too wanted to make use of the texts that were published. And Du Bois Library called, requesting copies.

This year marks our 34th edition of *The Student Writing Anthology*, and the book promises to be our most exciting edition to date. The contributions from *Basic Writing*, a complex course that fulfills a diversity requirement because of its emphasis on issues of U.S. linguistic diversity, always offer crucial insights into this increasingly important issue. Students read and write about the numerous literacies through which they negotiate their worlds, as they examine how these literacies contribute to identity construction. The excellent writing from this course asks us to consider how various efforts to normalize these multiple literacies lead to the oppression of some identities and discourse communities at the expense of others. Such essential considerations of language, education, culture, and the values of our society should engage all of us.

Our section devoted to *College Writing* has also been expanded; as with last year's edition, we have included examples of texts from our fourth unit, called "TBA" because each of our teachers composes a unique project based on his or her personal strengths and interests. Many extraordinary projects emerge from Unit Four, and often include collaborative writing, experimental approaches to academic writing, and publishing texts for specific purposes and audiences. Often, collaboratively written and edited books are created for community outreach as well as college audiences. These TBA assignments are as diverse and intellectually stimulating as the teachers and students who create them—and again, their content and style reach across disciplines and class level.

This year we have added yet another unit from *College Writing*—our fifth paper, called "The Final Reflection." Throughout the course, students reflect on various aspects of their drafting, revision process, and the final product of their work. In the "Final Reflection," which takes the place of a final exam, students look back over the whole body of work they have produced in the course, consider their struggles and successes, then synthesize into one paper what they have learned about writing, their writing process, and what they believe lies ahead of them in their journeys as writers. These papers offer sound advice and insight to any writer. They are so insightful and entertaining, I could barely restrain myself from sharing them with my current students.

Our Junior Year section has also expanded, not so much in terms of the number of essays, but in the variety of genres, the differing lengths of the texts, and the multiplicity of lessons these texts teach us about writing. More detail about these selections will come in the introduction to the Junior Year Writing section.

I remember last year, as I read through the final page proofs for this year's book, feeling amazed at the polish and depth of thought of these young writers. It struck me that many of the texts would not look out of place in an anthology of works by professional authors, and I felt that in some ways, calling the work "student writing" was inappropriate. But taken from another perspective, the fact that it is thinking and writing produced by authors still relatively young, with so many more opportunities to develop their talents, makes the reading that much more enjoyable and, at times, astonishing.

We invite our readers to discover the many rhetorical choices available to us in academic writing and to learn from the wealth of ideas and experiences that emerge from each writer's personal context. Finally, we hope our readers will enjoy the excellent work produced by our UMass Amherst students.

Patricia Zukowski Chair, Anthology Committee

Assistant Director University Writing Program

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to so many people who made this book possible: the First Year Writing instructors who contributed their students' excellent texts to the Anthology (far too many names to recognize here) and all the students who so eagerly agreed to share their work so that others might learn from it; the Junior Year professors and lecturers who shared our vision for this book and worked so hard to make the Junior Year Writing section a reality: Mitch Boucher, Lindsay Demers, Beth Jakob, Betsy Krause, Sarah Malone, Deb McCutcheon, and John Stifler. Their enthusiasm for this project and their willingness to do whatever needed to be done were constant reminders to me of how I am fortunate to work at an institution filled with people who care deeply about students, their learning, their success, and, in particular, their writing. The efforts of our Anthology Committee members were extraordinary. Since September of 2009 until the end of the academic year, they have been fully engaged in every task that it takes to put even this small book together. Every week they diligently picked up a new packet of 25-40 papers, read them intensively and attentively, and scored and commented on each one. They met every Friday afternoon to thoughtfully, thoroughly, and spiritedly discuss each text that had been submitted to us. They also helped with the long and tedious process of editing and putting the book together, then graciously kept offering to do more if needed. These volunteer graduate student committee members— Sarah Boyer, Sarah Magin, Kate Marantz, and Samantha Nataro—showed graciousness and dedication throughout the entire process. Our sixth member of the committee, Deirdre Vinyard, Deputy Director of the Writing Program, also deserves special recognition. She not only served on the Anthology Committee but also chaired a separate Basic Writing committee that selected and edited all the essays from that course.

Not one step of this process would have gone as smoothly as it did without the extremely competent, dedicated, and enthusiastic assistance of our support staff: Cara Cusson and Summer Ellis. From transcribing ALL the information from the release forms into a spreadsheet, to Xeroxing the essays and creating reading packets for each committee member, to recording all scores and decisions, these young undergraduate women were as professional as any permanent staff member. Special thanks also goes to David Fleming, Director of the Writing Program, for sharing and supporting the vision for this text and finding the time in his unfathomable workload to contribute whatever was needed—from sage advice to help with proofreading text. Finally, I wish to thank Pearson Custom Publishing for agreeing to publish this anthology and bundle it with our second UMass Amherst custom edition of Lester Faigley's Penguin Handbook, a required text in first-year courses; through this agreement, all of our first-year students have access to this valuable learning resource—also a required text in both Basic and College Writing. I also thank Pearson Custom Publishing for sending us Wendy Nelson as our liaison: her enthusiasm, her supportive words, and her consummate professionalism have brought much joy to the project and lifted me up when the weight of tasks seemed overwhelming.

Patricia Zukowski Chair, Anthology Committee

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PART I BASIC WRITING



Part I

Preface

This collection of essays represents some of the excellent writing done by students in the Basic Writing course (English Writing 111) during 2009. Basic Writing here at the University of Massachusetts is a prerequisite for College Writing for some students and also grants US Diversity credit. In this course, students read and write about the myriad literacies by which and through which they negotiate their worlds and how these literacies contribute to identity construction. In unit I, students explore the idea of multiple literacies and discourse communities, focusing their writing on a literacy with which they have experience. In unit II, they read texts which examine literacies from an academic perspective and then apply this lens to a home literacy. In unit III, the class examines literacies of power and how certain groups and institutions are supported and normalized by the language society forwards. In unit IV, students examine educational literacies and how schools work to validate or deny certain literacies, identities, and discourse communities at the expense of others. The essays in this anthology represent important critical work on a topic of increasing importance to the students in this class, and indeed to us all.