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About UAB Alumni Emily (Em) Wiginton

Nora Krall

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MEMORANDUM

Volume 6 Issue 1

MEMORANDUM

Volume 6, Issue 1

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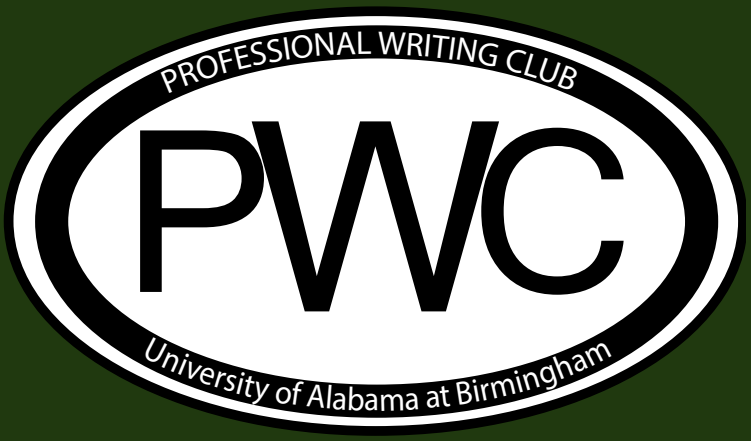
Inside this Issue

2	Release Notes....
3	UAB MakerSpace: A PW Haven
5	The Art of Prof. Writing
7	Writing Advice from a PW Storyteller
9	Content Mills: A Talk
11	About UAB Alumni Emily (Em) Wiginton
14	Professional Writing Within Creative Writing
17	Loose Lips Sink Ships
19	Becoming a Global Professional Writer



Release Notes ...

Welcome to the sixth volume of MEMORANDUM. This special issue was written and designed by members of the UAB Professional Writing Club, with additional content provided by students in the Professional Writing Program at UAB.

In this issue, the contributors continue to ask: What is professional writing and what do professional writers actually do? In an attempt to provide some answers, the contributors explored the artistic side of professional writing, the pros and cons of content mills, propaganda, the makers movement at UAB, how to become a global professional writer, and how creative writers use professional writing. Also included is an interview with alum Emily (Em) Wiginton, who describes how UAB's Professional Writing Program helped make the post-graduation transition a little easier and impacts the work she does for the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Research Evidence in Sexual and Reproductive Health.

As always, I need to thank a number of people who helped make this publication a reality. First and foremost, thank you to the students who struggled through the steps necessary to complete the publication. Everything included in this issue—including the text, layout, fonts, and logos—was student selected and produced. To those students, as I always say, "Thank you for playing along and for trusting in the process." You should be proud of your work and the document you helped produce. Second, thank you to the UAB English Department for continuing to support this wonderful opportunity. This publication would not be possible without the technology investment and the cost associated with printing the magazine.

In closing, if you are an alum or student in the UAB Professional Writing Program, please send me email. We would love to include your story in our next issue.

Until next time,
Dr. B.

UAB MakerSpace: A PW Haven

By Bailey McKay

As the master procrastinator that I am, it is no surprise that I was scrambling on campus to finish a project. The project required the use of Adobe Illustrator, and it was a series of unfortunate events to find access to the software. Our class lab was closed, the Media Commons had not opened for the semester, Sterne Library computer's did not have it, and my free trial had expired. Whether it was fate or my own curiosity, I landed in the UAB MakerSpace!

What is the Makerspace?

The MakerSpace is an area on the first floor of the Sterne Library that focuses on 3D printing and Virtual Reality. The space itself exemplifies alternative learning with its colorful, open floor plan and sticky note decor. Although funded and operated by UAB's Engineering Department, The Makerspace is open to and encouraged to reach any field.

When entering the MakerSpace, I was warmly welcomed by Grant Walkup,the Creative Director, and Tarek Midani, the Virtual Reality Coordinator.

They reinforced their mission statement of “Creating Opportunities” by stating that the MakerSpace is “A place designed for creating, entrepreneurship, validating ideas, and receiving feedback from other creators”.

How is PW, Engineering, and the MakerSpace all connected?

Grant helped me export a document from Illustrator to InDesign, convert a IDML document to a PDF printable copy, and showed me a few fun things about the software. While the MakerSpace uses advanced technology, they use some of the same software that professional writers use such as Photoshop, InDesign, and other Adobe Create programs.

Through talking with the staff, I had a realization that some of the skills required from these engineers are also required for professional writers.

From 3D printing to producing a digital document, all projects start with a goal and an audience. These types of projects also rely on a well developed conceptual design, visual rhetoric, peer feedback, and revising. In addition, Tarek gives an example of how he has seen the two fields collide. He mentions that some of the content seen with virtual reality equipment has derived from short stories created by English majors. This is a prime example of how skills from the two unlikely fields can be meshed together to create something bigger than themselves.

How to Get involved with the MakerSpace?

The MakerSpace does not require any sort of appointment, and their doors are open Monday through Friday from 10-6. Grant and other staff members encourage students of all majors to stop in and explore. The staff is more than welcome to answer any questions and even let you play with some of the equipment such as the Oculus Rift (similar to VR goggles).

The MakerSpace can be found on Facebook and Instagram

@uabmakerspace or their website www.uab.edu/makerspace/.

Additionally, MakerSpace participates in open events such as 3D pumpkin carving, movie screenings, the SideWalk Film Festival, and the“Maker’s Market” where creators showcase their work.

In other words, take advantage of this space, learn from the resourceful staff, and expand your knowledge!

The Art of Prof. Writing

By Mallorie Turner

The term "professional writing" can invite a myriad of ideas questioning what the field is about. Many often imagine a person sitting at an ill-lit desk, penning legal documents for long periods of time. This was my exact perception of professional writing when I first applied for the concentration as an English major. When I declared my professional writing concentration, I could feel my identity as an artist start to regress. As much as I was infatuated with the formalities of business writing, I could not help but see this prospective career as a threat to my identity as a creative. I soon learned that there is more to this field than that, both visually and rhetorically and the artist in me still had a chance to strive.

Creating Documents

If you have been a student in one of UAB's professional writing courses, specifically, Developing Digital Documents, you would know that students are taught to use the same publishing technologies as major businesses. One of these is Adobe InDesign which is used to create letterheads, business cards, and other public documents. An assignment required students to create a document that would be used by an actual client. Students were required to have this document be user-friendly, adhere to the proper writing conventions, as well as make their project visually pleasing. Those who have used this software can tell stories of its bugginess, not to mention the fear of misspelled words in the absence of a spellcheck function. Though a tedious digital environment to use, InDesign has always proven its usefulness to the design-focused professional writer.

In a creative aspect, InDesign gives the user free range to design a project starting from its formatting down to its color scheme. If someone were interested in designing a magazine using their school's colors, they would have absolute control over the project's end result. He or she is given creative control over how they would like their idea to be seen by the world. Design is a professional writer's best friend in this regard.

Good Design

Imagine finding out that there was more to fonts than just fun lettering. Fonts have an emotive quality that sets the tone of a project's design; professional writers have to make conscious decisions about the fonts they use within a document. These decisions stem much further from whether it is more fitting to use Times New Roman or Papyrus. A font's case, weight, width, and style each factor into how receptive an audience is to a document. Typographic design is as important to a document as the meanings behind the text itself. The wispy elegance of a script font will likely not have the right impact for a business document in contrast to the stoic formality of a sans serif font.

Professional writing requires a person to attain mastery of the proper tools and concepts in order for their work to be marketable. A painter would not be offered much revenue if he or she dabbled in realism yet was ignorant of the underlying structure of the human form. If a professional writer has no grasp of rhetoric or basic document design, they will not survive as a creator. There is, however, no actual penalty for not adhering to some design conventions. Though there is freedom for creativity in a professional writing career, consumers will always look for professionalism in a person's work.

The Art of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is an art in itself. Philosophers like Aristotle took pride in knowing the heuristics of persuasive diction. Students in professional writing look to these philosophers to learn the rhetoric to be used in business settings. Visual Rhetoric, a professional writing elective, intends to teach students the importance of how words and images can unite to create a persuasive message. Professional writers therefore learn that documents are only impactful if well-prepared and rhetorically sound in composition.

Conclusion

Taking professional writing classes has shown me that I am in a creatively stimulating field where both my rhetorical and artistic skills are cultivated. As a writer, I actively search for more ways to influence readers with my words. Professional writing has given me new opportunities to do so when I use my skills to write and design documents. With the support of the UAB English Department faculty, I know that I can make my mark with both my writing and my skills in document design.

Writing Advice from a PW Storyteller

By Laura Jane Crocker

Professional writers are often labelled as having a certain skillset. Usually, this would imply a background in document design, technical writing, or editing, among other things. However, there are plenty of ways that creative writers may find themselves in a career that requires professional writing. Making this transition may not be as uncommon as one would think, and for Brett Bralley, a writer on UAB's University Relations team, focusing on professional writing has led to a successful career that combines her creative background with practical communication skills.

Bralley studied journalism at the University of Alabama, and her career eventually led her to UAB. She works specifically on the content team, which is in charge of creating and editing copy for university initiatives. "I write a wide variety of content," Bralley explains, "sometimes it is shorter, dynamic copy for a brochure or a website landing page. And sometimes it's an in-depth feature for UAB Magazine. All of it is focused on telling the stories of students, faculty,

staff, and friends of UAB." Although the art of storytelling is more frequently attributed to creative writing, professional writers like Bralley are often tasked with achieving this goal with a smaller word count, focused target audiences, and design in mind.

With the fresh perspective that creative writing brings, Bralley has been able to approach the challenges of a professional writing career from a new angle. "My background in journalism prepared me for almost every aspect of this job. I learned editorial judgement, story structure, how to interview sources, how to always consider my reader, the importance of accuracy and attention to detail, and – of course – how to tell a story in meaningful, effective way," she says. Together, Bralley and the content team at UAB's University Relations are able to employ a diverse set of skills that are fundamental to professional writing.

As opposed to writing professions that focus on churning out content, Bralley is often tasked with considering the design. Depending on the project, the layout or design may be created around the copy that has been written, or the content may need to fit a design, and that's where Bralley must use her judgement to create captivating copy. "Good writing can be all for naught if the design isn't there. The presentation of the work has the power to entice the reader and make them want to dive into your content. A clean, legible font, a lovely layout, and the right medium for sharing your work is paramount to creating quality content," Bralley says.

But the process is not as rigid as one might think. Often, professional writers like Bralley must be in touch with their creative side to ensure that content is engaging for their audience – and this requires being adaptable. She explains, "A fun part of my job is that I'm doing all kinds of writing, so I get to exercise all sorts of skills. When I'm writing for a professional audience, whether by crafting an internal newsletter or putting together an email for a source, I think about the most informative and simple way to connect. I want to keep it engaging, but I also want to get the point across quickly."

When asked if she had any recommendations for young professional writers, Bralley says, "Write as much as you can! Build your portfolio with a variety of work. Take classes or workshops to learn new skills. Connect with a mentor who can give you advice and help you along. When someone edits your work, review those edits and see how you can improve. The more you work at it, the better writer you can be! And when it comes time to show off your work, don't be shy."

Content Mills: A Talk

By Jessica LeSueur

Let's say there was a bulletin board in the English Department at UAB where small writing jobs could be posted, and anyone could take them and would receive a small amount of money to complete them. That doesn't sound so bad, right? Now imagine if that board could be filled with jobs from anyone and there was no regulation on the pay scale. UAB takes a service fee for using their board to find and complete these jobs leaving you with a very small amount as profit. And to top it off, to get any jobs you must set a rate so low yourself that you end up converting your time and experience into pocket change. That's a content mill.

Finding Writing Jobs Online

If you've ever been curious what jobs are out there that you could start with now, you might have come across Upwork, Fiverr, Contently, Textbroker, Hubpages, and a number of other similar sites. Some are free, but others require the user to pay a monthly fee to even access the job board. The jobs vary from writing a product description, ghostwriting posts on someone's blog, technical writing, and more creative writing by ghostwriting chapters of a novel. These sites look like they offer a large number of jobs that you could accept and receive compensation for your work, but there is such a heavy volume of job seekers that vary in skill and experience, that you must fight to sell yourself as the highest quality/lowest cost writer that specializes in the content being written. Of course in a market like this, you will be disappointed if you go there looking for smaller jobs to gain experience and build your portfolio or even just to make some quick cash on the side.

But I've read so many blogs about them

These blogs are written like any other blog. The blogger makes money from page views, advertisement plugs in the text, and the ads on the sides that are targeted to you through cookies. They write about something they think people are interested in reading, and how to write freelance online is a topic that is heavily searched for. Some tips are good, such as choosing a niche to develop your skills in, but some are more generic and, sprinkled with motivation and

optimism for the fledgling writer, become misleading and gloss over the less favorable aspects of places like content mills.

But it says this person makes a $1000 a week

There are some users that are advertised to have made a full-time job of these sites, but it usually leaves out how many jobs they've had to complete to reach this overall total. There are some people that work at these nonstop for very low rates, which isn't what you should have to do as a writer. Rates that are as low as one cent a word would leave you at under $10.00 for an article like this one and take more than is profitable in that time to write. Since you can advertise your own rate, one that would better reflect your skills won't get you the jobs since there is always going to be someone willing to do it for less. A company outsourcing its advertising instead of employing a specialist full time in it is not going to care for paying high rates if they can get decent material for low ones.

How do I know it's not a good place to work

When you see places like this and wonder if it could be a good place to look for work, I employ you to run what I call, the Facebook test. If you describe it and it ends up sounding like one of those pyramid schemes that everyone's mom seem to be into working for nowadays, then it probably isn't a good place to find work. Anything like, "It says this person makes hundreds of dollars a week just in a few hours of working in their spare time," or "On this one I can write any article I want and keep earning money based on the views," is a good test to see. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

I have no experience, so what should I do instead

Start by talking to the PW professors here at UAB and get suggestions from them in how to build your experience and portfolio, and on ways to make money from your writing when you are still in school or are just out of it. Taking professional writing classes is a great way to build your skills and add pieces to your portfolio and look at clubs and opportunities in your area to gain experience too, like the Professional Writing Club. There are internships and part time jobs at several different companies in the Birmingham area that can be found through HireABlazer which would provide a lot more workable and profitable experience than wasting your time doing lots of jobs for little pay.

About UAB Alumni Emily (Em) Wiginton

By Nora Krall

Emily (Em) Wiginton graduated from UAB in 2017 with a degree in English with a concentration in Professional Writing. Emily was raised on a farm in rural Alabama and spent her college years working at the public radio station 90.3 WBHM. During her time at UAB, she was also President of the Professional Writing Club. Post graduation, Emily is located in North Carolina at UNC Chapel Hill and lives with her partner and their cat Jiji. Emily is a queer writer, artist, and communicator who loves traveling, Korean food, and video games.

What made you want to major in PW?

I initially went into Professional Writing because I was interested in a practical application of English, but also because I was terrified to talk to anyone. As an incoming freshman, I thought that Professional Writing sounded like a field that wouldn't require a lot of communication with other people, but boy, was I wrong. PW ended up making me a much stronger communicator-- and a better writer to boot.

How is your degree useful to you?

A lot of my job involves sharing and explaining critical information between Women's Health organizations across the globe, and PW really helped me learn how to consider my audience when communicating to certain groups. I also self-publish autobiographical comic zines on the side, and learning how to use software like Illustrator and InDesign to design and print my own materials is still something I use literally every day.

Professional Writing equipped me with the skills I needed to find a job pretty quickly after college, as well as the skills to pursue the things I wanted to do outside of a professional setting. Above all, however, PW helped me grow into a confident and effective communicator and leader. Professional writing is curriculum that teaches people how to write for certain audiences, interface with contemporary discourses, and find work in a complicated job market which is more vital than ever, and I'm thankful that it was part of my education.

What was your goal after you graduated from UAB and how did English/PW help you get there?

My goal after graduation was basically just to get a job—any job. A lot of PW focuses heavily on professional development, so by the time I graduated, I had a fully developed LinkedIn, a gorgeous resume, and a working knowledge of how to apply for positions/market myself in the industry using sites like Indeed. I also learned how to make a web-based portfolio (emilyrosewiginton.wordpress.com) through my PW classes, and having a website really gave me an edge in interviews.

What was your thesis on?

For my thesis, I created a sample email newsletter for the UAB-based PW publication, Memorandum, along with a user guide that could be used in both print and PDF formats. The user guide ended up being something I took to job interviews with me as an example of my skillset—people really like it when you have a tangible example of work you've done, especially one that combines writing, design, and self-publishing.

How did you get to UNC?

I got into UNC by working a few temp jobs when I first moved here. I can't

stress enough what a useful tool this was for breaking into the job market. The best advice I can give for recent grads is to apply to as many temp pools as you can get your hands on. There are tons out there, especially around Universities, and often for communications and writing-related positions. I was at the Department of Music here at UNC, then landed a permanent position at the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Research Evidence in Sexual and Reproductive Health (WHO CC for short).

What are you doing at UNC now?

Here at the WHO CC, my official job title is Public Communications Coordinator, which means that I'm not only the front-facing person for our offices, but also serve as a connecting point between us and other Women's Health Organizations around the world. We work to develop programs that apply implementation science to Women's Health research, with a larger goal of ensuring reproductive health and justice for all. It's challenging work, but honestly a dream job for me. As a queer, gender-nonconforming woman, I have a huge passion for reproductive justice in a global health context, and am so grateful to be working in a position that directly contributes to that.

What do you want to do in the future?

My dream for the future is admittedly little less career/ academia-focused. I mentioned earlier that I illustrate and self-publish comics in my spare time, and I'd love to get more serious about that while still maintaining a day job similar to what I do now. I'm so grateful to have such an amazing career, but my real joys in life come from making art, traveling with my partner, and pursuing my hobbies. However, I feel super fortunate that I can work in a position that matches up with my political and ethical convictions.

Emily's professional writing degree has propelled her into the job market seamlessly and with it, she acquired her dream job. The skills that the professional writing concentration offers while simultaneously teaching effective communication is something that is necessary for most every major and vital to any job. Emily's work post graduation is proof of the effective professional communication skills at work and has made the transition into the job market a rather easy one. A degree in professional writing post graduation creates a skill set that is useful and relevant in any job.

PW Within Creative Writing: An Interview with Tina Braziel

By Sam Baine

The field of writing offers a multitude of career directions for English students to choose from, but it is the intersection of such directions that make a writing career so interesting. Professional writing may conjure up ideas of strict rules, offering no freedom of control, and be seen as vastly different from any type of creative writing. UAB alumna with a Masters in English, Tina Braziel knows that isn't exactly the case, as an overlap between the two work to balance each other out in her career field. After attaining her M.A., Braziel taught at UAB as an instructor of English for a total of seven years, but "wanted more time to write and more instruction," and decided to get her M.F.A, as well.

Between her degrees, it was the Ada Long Creative Writing Workshop that really drew her back to UAB, as "it is what [she is] most interested in doing—teaching creative writing and opening doors for students" who may not have otherwise gotten such an opportunity. She now works as the director of the three-week long Workshop, which offers a rare opportunity for high schoolers to work closely with published writers—something she has been involved with since its inception.

As an intensive summer program aimed at those potentially interested in creative writing as a career field, Braziel must reach out to students through many different outlets "in any way to get the word out," like crafting an online presence, drafting letters and informational cards to teachers, and posting on bulletin boards, emailing, or calling. So, while the focus of her career may lie in creative writing, she uses aspects of professional writing to represent her ideas. Braziel also uses document design aspects common within professional writing "to make clear what is advertised [and] what the classes will offer." This is especially useful when building a creative platform, as there can be no creative publication without the traditional markers of technical writing like web designing and copyediting.

She must also use professional skills to make contact with "different people for different things," like engaging and recruiting those not even thinking of going to college, keeping in touch with other faculty members to expand upon enrichment activities, or contacting guest speakers and field trip sites for the

workshop. Her work isn't finished with the end of the workshop, though, as she begins prepping for the next one: drafting donation and thank you letters or sending out copies of The Writer's Block. Her use of professional writing helps her to accurately portray the creative program's purpose and to solidify the details and logistics so everything runs smoothly.

Outside of the workshop setting, professional writing has benefitted her creative pursuits, as it lets her pursue writing by managing her time and funds to do so; she uses the same learned techniques--like drafting, critiquing, and revising--to promote her own work. Her poetry has been published in many acclaimed journals and her first poetry chapbook was published by Porkbelly Press in 2016. While originally at UAB, she didn't think that technical skills would be so closely connected to any creative work, but it is just that intersection which makes her creative pieces possible.

Braziel was recently announced as the winner of the 2017 Philip Levine Prize for Poetry through the Fresno State Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing, which awards her with the publication of her debut full-length book, "Known by Salt," through Anhinga Press in January. Although, she says, "the process of getting to that point takes more than just creative skill." Through the ordeal of submitting--and revising and resubmitting--manuscripts, cover letters, and pitch letters, creative writing doesn't get to just speak for itself. Writers must do a lot of additional stuff "to develop a creative style while honing writing skills," whether that be applying for residencies and fellowships, accurately marketing yourself, or pitching and doing readings for your publication.

There is a fine line to balance, as you still want to be creative while portraying the technical skills necessary to work with multiple genres and platforms. Braziel says thinking of professional writing as communication between actual, individual people will give some creative control, as writing is never one size fits all: "you may be using the same exact sentences in every single one but there are probably some paragraphs you want to make more personal to that specific group." The process of doing that helped her to develop and hone a personal professional language, a valuable skill Braziel highly advises for other writers, which accounts for minor tweaks or revisions to fit all types of work within a specific instance.

Loose Lips Sink Ships

By Hunter Freeman

A factory worker flexes her bicep under a rolled sleeve, her face equal parts proud and brave. Bold type. Primary colors. Energetic illustrations.

For many, these are the familiar images of propaganda, a hallmark of a bygone era where the war of ideas rivaled, and even supplanted, the war of arms. Propaganda is any message that aims to promote a cause or point of view. These posters set the guidelines for society, encouraging citizens to serve, to ration, to fill the factories, to buy war bonds, and the list goes on.

Despite its notoriety, it can be easy to dismiss propaganda as a thing of the past. Given the highly politicized climate contemporary audiences find themselves in, and considering the new communication roles that modern professional writers are filling, it is important to keep one central idea upfront in the minds of Americans: Propaganda is not dead.

How Propaganda Has Changed

As with all forms of communication, propaganda has shifted with the advent of new technology. Now, messages can be shared to thousands and even millions of people through digital mediums like social media, aggregate websites, streaming services, and media production companies.

In its heyday, propaganda had a recognizable style to it, a cartoonish appeal and primary colors that begged to be looked out. Now, it appears in more subtle versions like a sensationalized (or outright false) headline, a partisan-sponsored YouTube ad, or an innocent-looking meme on Facebook.

Modern-Day Examples

There are an infinite number of examples of modern day propaganda, both liberal and conservative, American and foreign, domestic and international. The US intelligence community has released multiple reports about Russian operatives using social media to create messages intended to influence US elections.

But not all propaganda is created equal. With the distribution and ease-of-access to broadcast technology, many media companies do this same type of ideological influence with partisan politics. Just by looking at some article and

video titles, the point becomes self-evident. Listed below are several headlines taken from both conservative and liberal media groups:

- "Phil Robertson: What Liberals Did to Kavanaugh Is SATANIC to the Core," *CRTV*
- "An NRA-Sponsored Band Played At The Las Vegas Music Festival Right Before The Shooting," *Occupy Democrats*
- "Trump Administration Is Considering New Rules to Flat Out Deny Transgender Identity," *Slate*

This is the state of the war of ideas. These titles are not blatant in their intention. They are not flashy. They are not decorated with colorful drawings on huge displays. They are not sponsored by governmental organizations. But with the new ways people share information, propaganda does not have to be.

PW's Role in Propaganda

Behind each of the examples above is a person who selectively chose words and a thumbnail to fit the message they were creating. The authors wrote their article or script with a call to action in mind. And picking up the torch, each of these professional writers submitted their message into the public discourse to influence those that come across it.

Professional writers are trained in communication. Even the Professional Writing program here at the University of Alabama in Birmingham teaches students all the facets essential to effective propaganda. Students learn how to make a message visually and logically appealing, consider an audience, and write with purpose.

With the proliferation of broadcast technology, capability and motivation are the only obstacles now that prevent people from abusing a powerful voice. And so, students in the Professional Writing program are a safety pin away from controlling the masses and destroying the world.

The Big Takeaway

Today's professional writing students are the next at the helm. Propaganda is not just flyers on a wall or a banner on a website. It is not just colorful pictures that are emotionally provocative. It is not just writing that mobilizes an audience. But it can be. Which means those that would wield these tools must be aware of their power.

Becoming a Global Professional Writer

By: Skylar Summers

"Despacito" topped the charts, the Korean pop band BTS is being compared to The Beatles, and foreign filmmaking is on the rise. What does this have to do with professional writing, or even English, one could ask? Well, a lot more than one might think. Here, we take a look at how mastering the arts of editing and technology and universal themes are generated to target mass audiences, and the effect these campaigns can have on the global sphere. It's an accumulated tipping point, and, as English enthusiasts, our ultimate goal is to create, to contribute to, or to study these major climactic points that define our society on a global and historical scale. As professional writers, we can learn from these sources in order to globalize our own projects and passions.

By interviewing a non-native English speaker from a nation with ever-influencing pop culture, a sociologist to weigh in on the subject, and somebody who has a more indifferent stance on the rise of new influences shaping America.

I learned from my interviews that the crucial backdrop for any global sensation is technology: learning how to design, market, and broadcast the ultimate product being sold. In professional writing, a student does just this. By analyzing font types, color schemes, and details that draw in audiences, professional writers learn skills used by major companies to attain globalization.

Jay, a UAB student born in South Korea, told me that he believed its expressive stylistic choices, technicality, and overall luxuriousness presented in K-pop music videos that allow a foreigner to escape into a world that isn't their own, and professional writers also learn this skill. If our goal is to entertain, we learn not only how to relate, but how most cleverly to present our work in way that will inspire a sense of awe in our viewers, and to make them truly interested in what we are presenting.

Next, I spoke to Dr. Szaflarski, a sociologist and professor at UAB. She explained how this phenomenon isn't new, yet with the rise of new technology, its prevalence is truly shaping our culture. According to human ecology theory,

technology allows for this rise of new "tipping points" or the factor that allows for a product to become successful to a large group of people. She went on to discuss contemporary theory, or the thought that language and communication helps to spread these new innovations. Therefore, professional writers learn valuable skills in dealing with phenomena that's embedded not only into American society, but modern society as a whole. This even puts analytical professional writers at the forefront of creators who can release culturally sensitive products in the midst of a digital age that makes issues like cultural appropriation more prevalent. With an advanced knowledge of both what to use to gain viewership, and how to use these tools to create positive global reactions, professional writers learn skills essential to the modern world.

Ashley, the final UAB student I interviewed shed some light on my next topic: how does the English language tie into all of this? Globalization and language tie heavily into one another, as language is the most common way to convey thought and becoming proficient at analyzing and displaying themes is the goal of any writer, editor, marketer, or (you guessed it) global sensation, whether that be a musical artist, a filmmaker, or a series creator.

We analyze texts such as novels and poetry with longstanding significance in many of our required English classes, and a common denominator are themes that shape and continue to shape generations. Ashley mentioned that themes like love and the universal appeal of certain features being deemed "attractive" allow this type of cultural diffusion to soar. If one learns how to proficiently analyze longstanding values, themes, and cultural norms (as one does in an English class), they learn many tools that could make them successful in nearly any field that requires creativity, expression, or "selling" an idea.

In short, globalization and cultural diffusion are very real aspects of our lives in the 21st century. Individuals are either exposed to globalized products, market them, or both. This is why it's crucial to understand not only what a piece of media is, but how it has used effects such as new technology, editing according to universal themes, and power of language to attract massive global audiences. Professional writing encompasses these aspects and more, and is therefore rising in prominence as a viable path of study. So, next time you listen to listen to "Despacito" or watch Pokémon, perhaps you'll notice how these phenomena appeal to their audiences, and through professional writing, this understanding could grow even deeper.

Professional Writing Rhetoric Composition

SPRING 2019 COURSE OFFERINGS

EH 304

Editing in Professional Contexts (Ryan)

The two overarching goals of EH 304 are to teach students strategies for 1) recognizing and assessing editorial influences on a given document, whether an advertisement, a newspaper column, a magazine article, a textbook, a web site, or any other text that communicates, and 2) strengthening reading and writing skills for participation in professional and academic contexts. Some of the specifics we will address in the course include: levels of editing; editorial decision-making strategies; factors influencing reader preferences; specifics of editorial style; practice editing visual and verbal communication of ideas.

EH 315

Introduction to Professional Writing (Wells)

In English 315, students explore professional writing as a discipline and learn how to compose professional documents common to the workplace. These documents include instructions, proposals, memos, résumés, slide presentations, blogs, brochures, newsletters, and more. Students will take each of these documents through processes of invention, audience analysis, document design, drafting, revision and editing. Further, students will not only learn writing genres and practical skills, but will also think about the rhetoric and ethics of professional writing and information design.

EH 404/504

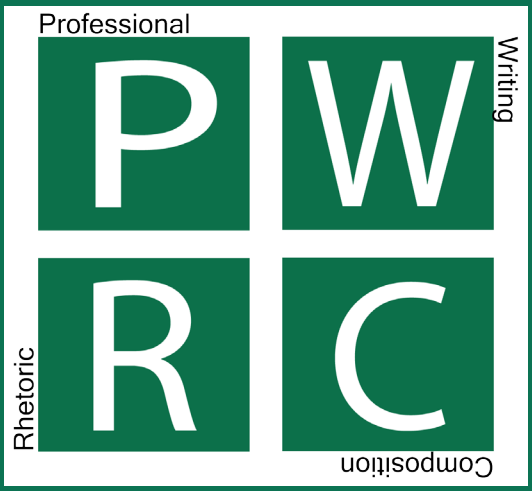
Technical Writing (McComiskey)

Technical writing is like breathing: we see it all the time, and we do it all the time, but we don't really think about it very much. Technical writing basically drives business and industry, and, even in an economic recession, effective communicators are highly valued. Register for EH 404/504 Technical Writing and explore effective strategies for writing letters, memos, manuals, proposals, and reports. Other topics will include ethics, style, revision, collaboration, audience, purpose, persuasion, and research. No experience with technology is required for this course.

EH 456/556

Visual Rhetoric (McComiskey)

Words have conventional meanings: we all agree that the letters d-o-g will refer to a domesticated canine. Images have conventional meanings, too: we all agree that diamonds signify wealth, that tattered clothes signify poverty, that the color red signifies passion in some contexts and danger in other contexts. The choice of what image to place next to a block of text is a rhetorical one, based on the audience and purpose of the document. Register for EH 456/556 Visual Rhetoric and explore how words and images combine to create persuasive messages.



BA The UAB English Department offers an undergraduate concentration within the English major in Professional Writing. The concentration is designed for English majors who are interested in non-fiction writing for corporate and public life. English majors who complete the concentration might pursue a variety of career options that require advanced writing skills, in areas such as technical writing, publishing, teaching, editing, and business. To learn more about the Professional Writing Major, visit: https://www.uab.edu/cas/english/professional-writing/professional-writing-major

MA Ideal for students who wish to pursue careers as teachers of writing or as professional writers and/or editors, the concentration in rhetoric and composition focuses on the art and craft of teaching, on the many roles of writing in business and industry, and on the history and practices of public discourse itself—from political rhetoric and the rhetoric of advertising to the complex uses of language and imagery in contemporary magazine and internet publications. To learn more about UAB's Graduate Program in English, visit: https://www.uab.edu/cas/english/graduate-program