

WRITING ACROSS CAMPUS

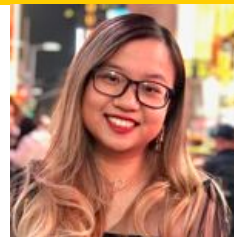


Teaching with writing across the University of Iowa



Faculty Spotlight

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Student Spotlight

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An Interview with Andres Carlstein

"This course combines all my interests and experiences, says Andres Carlstein.



The Historical Interview Assignment

One challenge instructors face in integrating writing into multidisciplinary courses is making writing relevant.



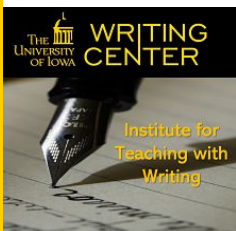
The Speaking Truth To Power Assignment

A conversation between Carl Follmer and Jaron Wilde, Tippie College of Business.



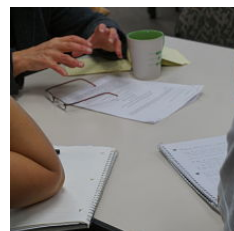
Teaching Writing in the Natural Sciences

Maurine Neiman, University of Iowa Professor of Biology, has a very pragmatic view of writing.



The Institute for Teaching with Writing

The first Institute for Teaching with Writing took place during the 2020-2021 winter break.



Teaching with Writing Instructor Resources

Instructors interested in teaching with writing have a number of different resources at the UI.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT	3
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT	5
INTERVIEW WITH ANDRES CARLSTEIN	7
THE HISTORICAL INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT	10
SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER	13
WRITING IN THE NATURAL SCIENCES	17
INSTITUTE FOR TEACHING WITH WRITING	21
TEACHING WITH WRITING INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES	22

Faculty Spotlight

By Mary Trachsel



[Mary L. Cohen](#) is an Associate Professor of Music Education at the University of Iowa with a joint appointment in the College of Education and the School of Music. She researches music-making and well-being, songwriting, and collaborative communities. She has been a member of the advisory board for the [University of Iowa Center for Human Rights](#) for over ten years.

Back in 2008, Mary Cohen was planning to launch the [Oakdale Community Choir](#). Drawing membership from the Oakdale Prison (officially known as Iowa Medical and Classification Center or IMCC) and the Iowa City area community, she wanted writing to play a role in the choir's development. With limited time for weekly rehearsals and with choir members often separated into sections, there was little opportunity for "inside" and "outside" singers to get to know one another, so Cohen implemented a weekly writing exchange and invited all choir members to participate. Each week she issued new writing invitations, many of them focused on elements of the musical selections choir members were learning, including lyrics, rhythms, tempos, and dynamics. Other prompts asked singers to reflect on their musical experiences and tastes, and some simply asked singers to report on their daily lives ("What was the best thing that happened to you this week?"). Inside and outside singers exchanged their responses to these weekly prompts and wrote back to one another, creating small-scale written conversations that helped choir members begin to know one another. Because Cohen collected and read these conversations before returning them to the original writers, the exercise helped her perceive and respond to both musical and social challenges and opportunities experienced by choir members.

Soon after the choir's inception, another kind of written participation spontaneously emerged: songwriting. Realizing that this was an expressive outlet choir members were eager to explore, Cohen inaugurated a songwriting workshop as an adjunct activity to the choir, and in the intervening years, inside and outside members of the choir have composed a total of 159 songs, 75 of which the choir has performed at its biennial concerts in the prison gymnasium and recorded on CDs made available to friends and families of choir members

The use of writing in the teaching of music and music education methods is something Dr. Cohen also practices in her work on campus as Associate Professor of Music and Section Head of Music Education. Following the example of her former mentor, Dr. James Daugherty of the University of Kansas, she has implemented a writing response system throughout Music Education classes, including the Introductory and Practicum courses as well as her Introduction to Research course. The system, called HAT, is designed to deepen students' engagement with course readings. As they read, students record three types of written response: H= huh? (a question about the reading indicating something they don't fully understand); A= aha! (an insight gleaned from the reading); and T=transfer (how an idea in the reading relates to something else).

Songwriting, too, plays a role in Cohen's on-campus instruction. Her General Music Methods class features a songwriting unit in which she provides instruction on how to teach songwriting. Everyone in the class is assigned to write songs (parody, new melody to existing lyrics, and an entirely original song). She also encourages Music Therapy and Music Education students in her Introduction to Research course to write songs to help with understanding and remembering content.

When helping music students learn the conventions of academic writing in her Introduction to Research course, Cohen adopts an incremental, process approach that scaffolds to a finished research prospectus. The process entails the completion of four research evaluation forms in which students summarize and critique published research findings, a research proposal, a sentence outline, draft and (multiple) revisions.

Convinced that writing can intensify and focus reflection, Cohen routinely uses reflective writing assignments to help students process readings, discussions and lived experiences. These kinds of assignments are a hallmark of all her classes, including the Peacebuilding course she has recently implemented as part of the University's [Liberal Arts Behind Bars \(LABB\) Program](#) at the Oakdale Prison.

Student Spotlight



Camellia Pham is a third-year student from Vietnam, double majoring in Comparative Literature and Chinese with a minor in Translation for Global Literacy. She tutors for the [Success in Rhetoric program \(SiR\)](#) and for the [Honors Writing Fellow Program](#). She also interns for the [Iowa Youth Writing Project](#) and on the communication squad, where she enjoys writing emails to writers around the world. She is interested in reading world/international literature and is currently working on her application for graduate school.

This piece is her response to an assignment to analyze her writing process for [Writing Theory and Practice](#), a course for new Honors Writing Fellows. Camellia writes in four languages: Vietnamese, Chinese, French, and English.

I often sit in front of my computer, on my apartment's Chesterfield, in the common learning room of the library, in the sketchy basement of Phillips Hall, under the deep shade of the evergreen trees at the Pentacrest lawn, for hours and hours, typing, deleting, and retyping. Writing has been a pleasure for me since even before I became aware of the possibility of pursuing writing as a career. But then I found myself staring at my first writing prompt in English over Lévi-Strauss's structuralism and classical myths, my second writing exercise in French on how to describe my coveted career, and my third writing exam in Chinese, a hypothetical scenario of studying abroad in China, getting sick, and calling the hospital to ask for treatment. It was a very exotic and arcane realm of a new language, and a new world that is not my mother tongue, throwing me off into different places, and pummeling me out of my complacency. I admitted to myself, I don't know where to start.

But I knew I had to start at some point, so I tried rummaging through the forest of the new, collecting everything that I could scabble to synthesize something of my own. I started with research before writing anything down. I was fascinated by how fleshing out inklings of ideas bewildered other writers and consumed them to the core. I wrote down ideas and key terms from other people, drew connections between them—which can be either a nod or a shake of the head, or can also be a nonchalant expression—and re-read the writing prompt. The process of researching usually took me more than several hours, or even days—therefore, I always tried to

start as early as I could. I was baffled that sometimes I concurred with what my sources said, and sometimes I did not. But even if I didn't agree with my sources, it was still worth the journey. Through that kind of "disagreement," when I re-read the writing prompt, it re-appeared, fresh, new, and untainted. I discovered a different angle on the topic that I had never thought about before.

Churning out ideas then came so naturally in the most liberating ways, that sometimes, unrestrained, I had to putter about with it on a piece of paper. I became interested in mind mapping and brainstorming from then on, as the hankering to write fled into my inner self's playground like a wild child—reckless, heedless, and daredevil. Diagramming and reconceptualizing my thoughts on paper were among the most efficient techniques I have learned in order to develop and organize ideas. I usually made my mind map extremely detailed and minute because I believe finishing off a structural outline will allow us to do up to 70% of our writing before we even begin. The writing process was very much smooth sailing with my writing layout. I usually did my whole writing in one sitting if I could.

Then comes the rigorous revising and editing process. Whether it is in Phillips Hall, on the lawn of Pentacrest, or in my apartment, I often sit in front of my computer for a long time: typing, deleting, and retyping, trying to get my words untangled, and unraveling my own infinitely layered thoughts that I have had a hard time articulating, let alone capturing. My first language is Vietnamese, so every time I write something in my second, third, and fourth language, I require another pair of eyes to look it over in a cursory way before I feel comfortable enough to submit. Needless to say, I sometimes do not achieve the kind of writing quality that I usually aim for; oftentimes, it foolishly slips out of my reach. But, as disheartening as writing is, it has enraptured me, and I can't seem to resist. Writing is so bizarre and vulnerable, that sometimes we just have to pour our hearts into pieces titled "draft zero," because we know they will mutate through drastic changes into something totally different in the final round. "How Do I Write?"—that is the most inexplicable yet enthralling question in my literary world.

Interview with Andres Carlstein

By Carol Severino



“This course combines all my interests and experiences,” says Andres Carlstein about Writing in Health and Human Physiology (HHP 3900), the course that he designed and has taught for five years. Over seven hundred HHP majors have learned multiple genres of scientific and professional writing, giving them the competitive edge they need for admission to graduate school and/or to launch their careers.

Former student Joseph MacDonald agrees that the course was a wonderful opportunity for him: “Scientific writing over the last century has had the rap of being incomprehensible and unclear to nonexperts –and it’s not because the material is complex. Knowing this, I leapt at the chance to improve my writing skills as a future science communicator.”

As a pre-med undergraduate at Penn State, Carlstein jumped through all the hoops to get into medical school. But when he took a motorcycle trip from New York to Argentina, his parents’ country of origin, and published a book about his trip, he realized that he wanted to be a writer, not a doctor. Before receiving his MFA in fiction here at the Writer’s Workshop, he worked as a technical writer, copyeditor, and head-hunter. He is presently working on a historical novel based on the true story of a kidnapping in Argentina in the 1800s.

Danny Khalastchi, Director of Iowa’s [Magid Center for Undergraduate Writing](#), hired Carlstein to design and teach courses in 2013. At first, he designed popular six-week, Quick Fix courses, including “Improve your Grammar” and “Get a Job.” Then Khalastchi suggested they come up with something bigger and more academic to take advantage of Andres’ science background. They designed a science writing course and pitched it to various science departments. Health and Human Physiology grabbed at the opportunity, seeing the potential for their students to develop their science and professional communication skills.

Investing in a writing course as an elective for their majors has definitely paid off for the Health and Human Physiology Department and many of their 2500 majors. The course fills up rapidly and some semesters, Carlstein has had to teach five 20-student sections! The course benefits HHP majors headed for any kind of graduate or professional school (med school, dental school, physician assistant and physical and occupational therapy programs, public health). They learn

to apply writing to many genres and tackle some important genres, such as how to write a personal statement or a popular science article, how to interview a scientist, and how to analyze and critique a published scientific paper.

Carlstein's favorite assignment in the course is the personal statement. "HHP students are bright and highly motivated, but they may never have written much about themselves," he notes. Carlstein enjoys watching them improve as they learn how to effectively represent themselves for admissions committees.

He explains the rationale behind the [assignment to interview a scientist](#): at first most readers care more about people than about scientific ideas or research. When they read good writing about a versatile and passionate person, they will then care more about their scientific work. Therefore, Carlstein has students ask about the scientist as a person before they ask about their research. Carlstein has taught the course so often that many HHP researchers have already been over-interviewed, so he has students choose scientists from Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, and Physics.

Scientific writing for readers of newspapers and news magazines teaches students to adapt their ideas and their language to appeal to the general non-scientist reader. The culminating assignment teaches students that scientists as well as journal editors are human and make mistakes. By modeling the process, Carlstein teaches students to read scientific papers critically, searching for errors of omission, logic, and structure. Finding flaws in science writing gives students confidence in their own critical abilities and brings science down from its pedestal.

Carlstein does informal written "meditations" with students to enhance their ability to access their unconscious creativity. He has students do a modified version of a thought exercise Marilyn Robinson has taught, in which students attempt to access their visualize and describe a "luminous" object from the past, say, a favorite toy or their grandmother's cookbook. A second exercise asks them to write about how they became interested in science. The third exercise combines the first two by asking how their luminous object connects to the reasons they are pursuing science. The next pair of exercises also has students connecting concepts. First, they write about who their scientist hero is, followed by what they see as a fundamental problem in science and then relate

them. All formal assignments are peer workshopped in small groups, but informal writing is usually just reviewed in pairs.

Clearly the course has had a positive impact on HHP majors. Says Carlstein's former student Rishika Avvari, "My professional writing skills have significantly improved since taking Carlstein's course. He showed us how to represent ourselves through cover letters, resumes, and personal statements in a strong, concise way, and it's been a handy skill to lean on in other areas of writing as well!"

The Historical Interview Assignment

By Robert Peck



Frank Durham is an associate professor in the School of Journalism. His research interests include journalism history and media framing analysis. He teaches courses in journalism history, strategic communication, and cultural satire and won the CLAS 2011-2012 Collegiate Teaching Award. He is a member of the University Faculty Senate, the University Faculty Council, and the Senate Committee on Academic Values, and a founding participant in the University Office of Teaching and Learning Committee's large lecture development program.

One challenge instructors may face in integrating writing into multidisciplinary or cross-disciplinary courses is making that writing relevant both as skill development and content development: how can instructors in diverse fields allow their students space to spend time on writing as a skill, while also keeping focus on the information load of their course and field? Professor Frank Durham of the University of Iowa has an answer in his adaptable [historical interview assignment](#).

A mock interview

Professor Durham conceived the assignment as part of his survey course on the history of journalism and mass communication. Durham wanted an assignment that would let students engage with the discipline and its major figures while also developing their writing in an imaginative way.

His assignment asks students to conceive an interview with a historical figure from the course. The person is (or was) real, as is the information students rely on—but the dialogue between student and “interviewee” is dreamed up completely by the student.

“The trick,” Durham says, “is to get them to make up plausible dialogue with this person.” He adds, “They really throw themselves into the assignment.”

Rooted in fact—and in the present

In his version of the paper, Durham asks students to follow a ten-question interviewing protocol to simulate realistic exchange with a historical person. Students can pick a character from any of the class's reading in the history of journalism, and are asked to base their Q&A on the factual background of the character's life as discussed in class.

However, the assignment also keeps students rooted in the present day by asking them to bring current events into the picture. In the assignment sheet, Durham asks the students to *...write an interview...based on an imaginary write-up of your subject's reaction to a news event from the past eight weeks. It is important to make a relevant connection between your subject and the news event, e.g. Frederick Douglass and a recent affirmative action case.*

Durham identifies a rich body of research materials and research goals for students as they begin work on the project. His assignment sheet specifies that biography—not autobiography—be the main tool students use to gather information, but emphasizes that finding specifics about the subject's views and life—such as their politics or personal circumstances—is vital to the work as well: *Because the goal of the imaginary part of the exercise is for you to demonstrate how well you understand this person, in your research you will be looking for indicators of your interviewee's political affiliation, what their main cultural concerns were, how they earned their money (what their financial concerns might be), and who they have important relationships with.*

Flexible structure

Durham notes that this writing assignment has broad applicability to virtually any course, provided that figures from the history of the field in question are subbed in for historical journalists. Every discipline has major figures and current debates—with this assignment, students can explore the history of their major's key people, dig more deeply into a particular subject or time period, or find roots in the past for a present-day conflict. It's easy to imagine using Durham's assignment in historical survey courses of all kinds, but also in courses where students don't often engage the past: lab or practicum courses rooted in current-day skills could be enriched by a version of this paper that asks students to take a brief dip into the origins of their practice, seeking to find out how a figure from the past would comment on advancements made in more recent years as a pathway into major changes to the field over time.

At the heart of it all, of course, is a creative assignment that will ask writers to bend their brains to dialogue, flexing communication muscles that aren't often brought to bear in an academic context. It's relevant work, but it's unusual, too—the paper gives students space to think about the actual practice of carefully composing writing to match a particular voice, making this paper an outstanding bridge between course content and hands-on writing skills practice.

Positive reception

Durham has found that students often respond very well to his imaginary interview assignment, remembering the paper well after the course ends.

"For years I'd be in line at a pizza place and a student would walk up and say 'let me tell you about my historical interview.'"

The historical interview assignment is an adaptable, multifaceted writing assignment ideal for a university community looking to bring writing into new and different classrooms—all without losing focus on core class content that will be enriched and deepened by creative engagement with the past.

Speaking Truth to Power

By Carl Follmer



A conversation with Jaron Wilde, Associate Professor of Accounting and Carl Follmer, Associate Director of the Accounting Writing Program.

Tell us a little about the course and the writing assignment.

Jaron: Advanced Tax is an undergraduate/Masters of Accountancy course that builds on accounting students' knowledge from their initial tax class and takes a deeper dive into the taxation of business entities. An implicit aim of the course, and the writing assignments in the course, is to prepare students for successful careers in accounting. The learning goal for the assignment is to help the students identify and thoughtfully consider now, while they are still in college, what they will do when they face ethical dilemmas in their future careers and to develop skills to communicate clearly in such situations.

Carl: Advanced Tax is one of the classes supported by the Accounting Writing Program, a curricular initiative that works with faculty to teach and hone communication skills (writing, presentation, visual) throughout a student's time in the Accounting major. There are multiple writing assignments in the course, but the one we're discussing here is what's become known as "[The Speaking Truth to Power](#)" assignment. In it, students are provided with this scenario: they are working in their dream job, but in the course of their duties have come across inconsistencies in the financial statements that suggest the CEO is manipulating corporate data to satisfy shareholders. The assignment requires students to write an email to the Chair of the Board of Directors, who happens to be a friend of the CEO, and delicately raise their concerns about the financial data.

What are the learning goals for this assignment?

Carl: There are other writing assignments in this course that assess course content, but this assignment really pushes students to think critically about an ethical dilemma. From a writing

perspective, students must be extremely thoughtful about their tone and the exact phrasing they are using to express their concerns. This assignment requires them to think of a typically informal mode of communication (email) as one that could have large ramifications. They are aware that a misstep in messaging could lead to retribution from management, which could harm their prospects at the company or in their career.

What kind of instruction and support have you built into the assignment?

Carl: We give them significant amounts of instruction and feedback for the other three writing assignments in the course, so for this one, we kind of let them loose to see how they incorporate that information and guidance independently. Students receive a rubric that identifies the specific communication aspects we're looking for (organization, tone, language precision, etc.). It is always interesting to see how students interpret the prompt. Many students are cautious about raising their concerns, but some really don't mind burning the bridge and threatening their employer – either by going to the SEC or to the press. It presents an excellent learning opportunity to encourage students to think about the ramifications of their message.

How do you motivate students to care about this writing assignment, to be invested in it, and to do their best work?

Jaron: We try to make the assignments real to them in two ways. First, for the speaking truth to power assignment, the students meet an actual whistleblower who shares his story with them in the class (virtually this year). His presence there makes the assignment much more personal. We also require students to work together, providing feedback to their group members who share incentives to do well on the writing assignments.

Carl: The real-life whistleblower's visit to class very much impresses upon the students the consequences for simply going along with a company's illegal accounting practices. Yes, the assignment associated with the ethics module is worth points in the course, but talking with someone who became trapped in his employer's crimes and served time in prison very much emphasizes the importance of engaging with ethical considerations now when the stakes are low.

How has the assignment evolved over time?

Carl: It was difficult from a grading standpoint – ethical concerns are inherently tricky to assess. We discovered that some students could write a successful whistleblower email even if they didn't take the course of action we had thought was best. The keys were tactfully raising the concern, brevity, and using a tone that indicated a concern for the company, the board member, and the author of the email. If students created emails that contained these elements, there were a number of possible recommendations they could make, not just the one I had been prepared for. All of this made the scoring process pretty arduous that first time. As with any assignment being introduced for the first time, we were kind of flying blind and it took some time to refine the rubric and feedback we provided, but the effort really paid off.

Describe some of the best papers you have received in response to this assignment.

Carl: Since we began this assignment, I've had conversations with several students who said they thought it might be the most important document they wrote during their time at Iowa. Even the ones who admitted to not being overly concerned with ethics found themselves considering things like tone and what information to include in the message. The best submissions get in, provide context, state their concern, and get out. The longer the message goes, the greater the chance the student will include a piece of information or make a statement that could have a negative impact.

What do struggling students find difficult?

Carl: Jaron has created a rich prompt complete with many details that are important for the student to understand the situation but are not necessarily wise to include in the whistleblower email message. For example, one of the assignment's details is that the recipient of the email (the Chairperson of the Board) is personal friends with the subject of the email (the CEO). So, I know an email is in trouble when students include phrasing that tacitly threatens/implicates the recipient, like "I know you are friends with the CEO, but it's important to put that relationship aside for the good of the company." Then, there are the students who step boldly into the void and threaten to go to the press with incriminating documentation, or who put deadlines or other forms of pressure on the Chairperson of the Board. Their courage is noteworthy, but is unlikely to result in their desired course of action.

Anything you're experimenting with related to writing in your teaching?

Jaron: One of the unique things we do in Advanced Tax (although it is not new) is require students to give feedback to each other that helps them develop as writers.

Carl: Jaron has been wonderful to work with and is always willing to try new things in the class. In addition to the memo and whistleblower email assignments, his students also work on team presentation skills and visual communication for a tax analytics data visualization assignment later in the semester.

Writing in the Natural Sciences

By Deirdre Egan



Professor of Biology Maurine Neiman has a very pragmatic view of writing. When I ask her if she has a writing process, she has to think for a minute. “I don’t need very particular conditions to write. If I have a couple of minutes, I just sit down and do it.” Writing is something she does every day, as part of her work, and she sees it primarily as a means of communicating her research to colleagues or the insights of science to the public. This is not to say she always finds it easy. She likes to write early in the day because, as she notes, “it can be a bit intimidating,” especially at the start of a project when facing a blank page. Nor does it mean that she doesn’t see writing as a creative process. She loves the precision and clarity of good scientific writing as well as the art of situating an experiment on snails (her model organism) in the bigger story of the evolution of two-sex species.

Clarity and context are two important themes of her graduate course Writing in the Natural Sciences. Created by [Steve Hendrix](#), Professor Emeritus of the Department of Biology, and based loosely on the Writer’s Workshop, it was initially envisioned as a place for interested students to share their dissertation proposals. It is now a required class for all [Biology graduate students](#) who workshop a substantial project — a dissertation proposal, a review, an article, or, occasionally, an undergraduate honors thesis — three times during the course of the semester, producing increasingly refined and updated drafts. Along with her coinstructor, [Assistant Professor of Biology Dan Summers](#), Neiman reads and comments on the three or four drafts discussed each week and sets clear parameters for the workshopping process. Most importantly, she asks students to be respectful and kind, and not to take criticism personally. She also encourages them to offer constructive comments that include explanations of problems and suggestions for how to correct them.

In addition to modelling a positive approach to feedback, Neiman shares her own writing strategies in class. She suggests starting with “the easiest kind of writing,” straightforward descriptions of methods and results, to build confidence and momentum. She also describes how she moves back and forward between reading and writing, making notes about useful information, and turning to

the literature to find support for her arguments. This, of course, is the mark of a writer who is an expert in her field, but it is also an important strategy for graduate students to learn as they often imagine that they can't start to write until they've read everything that's been published in their field. And while Neiman emphasizes the importance of grammar and clarity, she also acknowledges to her students that language and disciplinary conventions can seem arbitrary.

Neiman took over the course when Hendrix retired because of her interest in writing and her desire to pass on some of the skills she learned to her students. The course has, from the beginning, been interdisciplinary, open to all kinds of science students and Neiman has continued the push to bring in students from other departments. With a joint appointment in the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies, she has also expanded the content to include a focus on ethics and social justice, topics that are not usually a part of a biology curriculum. She argues that it is important that young scientists be equipped to see and engage with issues of access and inequity, such as paywalls that limit access to scientific literature, the uneven global distribution of the benefits of scientific research, and the continued underrepresentation of women and people of color in many fields.

The most difficult thing for Neiman about teaching a writing course is that developing strong writing skills takes time. One semester is just not long enough to see measurable improvements, something Neiman sometimes finds herself having to remind colleagues who grumble that they thought their students would emerge from her course with flawless projects. She also notes that students who arrive in science departments with strong writing skills have usually been reading and writing from a young age, which illustrates for her the impossibility of separating writing from its social context and the importance of being aware of how wealth and privilege give some students enormous advantages. But writing skills *do* improve with practice, she finds, and students are particularly engaged and motivated by the social justice issues she raises. "This is an area where I think the course has a big impact, just by raising awareness, and that is very satisfying."

In terms of doing more for students, Neiman points to the importance of lots of opportunities to write early in the college years, as was provided in the small, writing-intensive, liberal arts college she attended as an undergraduate student. But science faculty at the University of Iowa typically teach large undergraduate courses where there is not a lot of time or TA support for assigning writing. "As much as I think it is important, I don't often ask my undergraduate students to write in my classes because I don't have time to grade it." She notes that while she has been fortunate

enough to have the support of the Department of Biology and a series of "excellent coinstructors," there generally aren't a lot of incentives for science graduate students to take writing classes or to learn how to teach science writing. Advisors keep their students busy in the lab and encourage them to stick to required courses so they can graduate as soon as possible.



One graduate student who has resisted the pressure to stay in her lane and embraced opportunities to learn new skills is Krista Osadchuk. As a PhD student in the Department of Biology, Writing in the Natural Sciences was a required course, but she explains, with a laugh, that she would have taken it anyway. "It was the year that I decided to focus on writing." (In her first year of graduate school she decided to learn as much as she could about teaching, and in her second year she turned her attention to public speaking). Other than a couple of literature papers, she hadn't written a lot as an undergraduate student and she didn't feel prepared for the kind of writing she was asked to do in graduate school. "I didn't really understand what science writing was, or what it meant to write well, or how to structure a paper. I honestly didn't think structure mattered. I just thought I had to give people information." She quickly learned from her advisor that writing, even in the sciences, is a rhetorical exercise — "you have to tell a story, and convince your reader that your data and your interpretation of the data is correct" — a lesson that was reinforced in Neiman's course. But what she also learned in Writing in the Natural Sciences was an understanding of the writing process. "It was *so* beneficial to see how other people write and to get multiple sets of feedback on my own writing. I learned to appreciate that writing is a reiterative process and not to expect to get it right on the first try."

The following semester Osadchuk enrolled in [Writing in the Disciplines](#), an interdisciplinary graduate course taught by Megan Knight (Department of Rhetoric) and David Gooblar (Department of English). In addition to learning practical writing strategies, working with graduate students in the humanities and social sciences taught her to "take another step back" and explain her work in language accessible to non-scientists. This, she believes, helped her to develop a more narrative style than she would have otherwise, a style is less often seen in science. "People mostly seem to like it," she tells me with a grin. "They'll come up to me at conferences to let me know that their minds didn't wander because it felt like I was telling them a story!" A year later she decided she wanted more experience teaching writing and enrolled in [Teaching in a Writing Center](#), a practicum course that introduces graduate students to scholarship on writing pedagogy and trains them to

work in the Writing Center. For the last three years she has worked as a Writing Center tutor and served as a mentor for undergraduate Writing Fellows. Like Neiman, she emphasizes to students the importance of making notes while they're reading and encourages them to reverse outline their papers to help with structure. She enjoys the relationships she develops, and occasionally receives letters from grateful students who have been accepted to graduate school or finally submitted a dissertation. "I like the intimacy of one-on-one tutoring," she reflects. "It's been really helpful for my teaching, and for my own writing as well."

Institute for Teaching with Writing

The first Institute for Teaching with Writing took place during the 2020-2021 winter break. A series of four virtual two-hour workshops, it brought together fourteen faculty and two graduate students from fields as diverse as nursing, education, philosophy, international relations, and sociology to talk about how to incorporate more writing into their courses. Motivated by a collective love of language and desire to support the development of student writing skills, participants designed and workshopped formal and informal writing assignments, engaged in discussions about multimodal writing assignments, and heard about successful writing assignments from a panel of faculty from History, the College of Business, and Psychology. The Institute included a keynote talk by Brad Hughes, emeritus Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Institute was supported by the [Department of Rhetoric](#), the [Obermann Center](#) and the UI [Center for Teaching](#).

Teaching with Writing Instructor Resources

[Iowa Digital Learning and Engagement](#) works with instructors who are interested in teaching writing using digital platforms and multimodal assignments. It offers one-on-one consultations for faculty interested in creating or redesigning multimodal writing assignments (blogs, websites, podcasts...). Its [Media Tutoring Lab](#) provides technological and production support for students working on multimodal writing assignments inside and outside the classroom.

[The Writing Center](#) offers feedback on any kind of writing assignment and one-on-one consultations for instructors on any aspect of teaching writing.

[The Speaking Center](#) assists instructors interested in using speaking and presentation assignments to teach writing. It also offers one-on-one and small group tutoring for students working on speaking assignments.

[The Frank Business Communication Center](#) partners with Tippie College of Business faculty interested in developing writing and presentation assignments in their course curriculum. The Frank Center provides guidance in designing communication assessment rubrics and will create assignment-specific virtual workshops presented by our undergraduate peer tutors for inclusion on course ICON sites to help with student success on achieving communication learning objectives.

[The Accounting Writing Program](#) is a curricular initiative within the Department of Accounting in the Tippie College of Business and is closely aligned with the Frank Business Communication Center's mission. The program features writing, presentation, and/or visual communication assignments in every departmental undergraduate and Master's-level course, and provides students and faculty support with professional consultants to teach communication skills and assess student work.

[The Writing University Obermann Working Group](#) is an interdisciplinary group of faculty from across the University of Iowa who meet once a month to share research on writing pedagogy and develop ways to promote writing across the curriculum. In collaboration with the [Center for Teaching](#) and the [Rhetoric Centers](#), members also plan, organize and facilitate [Institute for Teaching with Writing](#) workshops which provide training in writing pedagogy for faculty interested in incorporating more writing into their courses.

The Writing Centers Consortium is a group of writing center and writing tutor administrators from across campus who meet once or twice a year to discuss issues related to supporting student writing and coordinate services.

[The Center for Teaching](#) offers a variety of programs for faculty and consultations on research-based instructional practices that support successful student learning.