

gayle morris  
**sweetland writing center**  
university of michigan

# Newsletter

WINTER 2006

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## DIRECTOR'S LETTER MARTHA VICINUS

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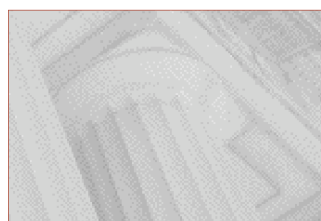
**T**his year's *Newsletter* proudly presents a cross-section of essays drawn from our successful "Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism: A Cross-Disciplinary Conference," held September 23-25, 2005. The essays demonstrate the range of ideas presented at the conference, which drew scholars from across the country, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand. Lisa Maruca (Wayne State) and Susan D. Blum (Notre Dame) tackle unique aspects of attitudes toward plagiarism. Maruca warns against seeing technology as a quick-fix (or quick villain) in uncovering plagiarism. Blum explores the contemporary use of allusion, recycling, and pastiche in popular culture as symptomatic of changing attitudes toward originality and imitation among student writers.

Students, from classes across campus, attended the conference. Carol Tell's special report documents her success in using the conference as a springboard for discussing with her students intellectual integrity, academic norms, and creative work. She also suggests ways for integrating the rich offerings of this university—a theme semester, conferences, creative writers, and other special events—into lower-division courses. Undergraduates in particular often feel reluctant to attend events that seem to demand expertise, even courage, to participate.

Our Sweetland Writing Center Fellows Seminar goes from strength to strength. We were especially proud to have three fellows among the 2004-2005 winners of the Rackham Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award: Keith Pecor (Fellow 2004),

Amit Ahuja (Fellow 2005), and Christopher Becker (Fellow 2006). Included here, Amit writes about the difficulties he faced teaching a writing-intensive First-Year Seminar in the Winter 2005 term. Since students often shared his own writing fears, he learned that writing, no matter what one's level of experience, can be a frightening and exhilarating experience.

We are delighted to have Jeremiah Chamberlin, also a Rackham winner, join our faculty, along with Dargie Anderson, an outstanding member of the New England Literature Program teaching staff. As readers of this newsletter will no doubt realize, the Sweetland faculty continue to be active in conferences across the country and highly regarded as writers and critics. ■



1139 Angell Hall  
734-764-0429  
[swcinfo@umich.edu](mailto:swcinfo@umich.edu)  
[www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/)

**Writing Workshop by Appointment**  
M,T,Th,F: 9am-5pm  
W: 9am-12:30pm and 2:30-5pm

**Peer Tutoring Center Walk-In**  
G219 Angell Hall  
Sunday-Thursday: 7-11pm

**Online Writing and Learning (OWL)**  
[www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/undergrads/  
support/owlform](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/undergrads/support/owlform)

# The Use of Campus Activ

**W**HEN I FIRST INFORMED STUDENTS in my First-Year Writing course that they would be attending Sweetland's conference, "Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism," the news was not met with great enthusiasm. Zeroing in on the word "plagiarism," students were resistant to thinking about plagiarism beyond what had been hammered into them in high school. They said they knew well of its evils, and they collectively rolled their eyes at having to discuss it again. For them, it was a topic that was as unambiguous as it was dull. One student wrote in her CTools discussion posting, "To be frank . . . I was slightly annoyed—plagiarism . . . here we go again."

We began by reading Malcolm Gladwell's *New Yorker* essay, "Something Borrowed" (as suggested by Sweetland conference organizers), so that, prior to attending the conference, students would be thinking about plagiarism outside of its usual academic context. Interestingly, students were more willing to discuss the issue as they became increasingly unsure about how to navigate its gray areas. One student put it this way: "I really wasn't too concerned about the subject. I mean I know that plagiarism is wrong; it's cheating, blah blah blah. But when we discussed it in class, I was a little sketchy; I felt like no matter what I wrote it would be copied from somewhere. . . . I mean, I use other people's ideas to make my own. Now is that plagiarism?" In response to these questions, we charted out the specifics of what constitutes academic plagiarism at the University, but students were more interested in the philosophical questions ("Is 'originality' possible?") than the practical applications ("How or when do I cite this source?").

While a few continued to voice anxiety about how to avoid plagiarism, others became conscious that their role as students was in many ways to "plagiarize" or to "mimic" the conventions of their academic disciplines and their professors; beyond a stylistic mimicry, wasn't the function of taking exams, they argued, to show that they had "mastered" the content of the course material? Doesn't "mastering" mean, in some ways, "copying"? By working through these questions, they were able to consider their new role in college: Where does "copying" end and critical thinking begin?

Students were then required to attend at least one session of the conference and write about that session in the CTools discussion site. They also prepared a small-group presentation around the conference session they

attended. For each presentation, students summarized the main points of the session, connected those points to topics we had addressed in class, and then asked one or two open-ended questions for the class to discuss.

Engaging with these themes prior to attending the conference was crucial; even those students who felt out of place in the conference setting were at least familiar with the content. They came back ready to make thematic ties to our class discussions. And they liked the sessions that went beyond issues of writing to the other arts. One student noted in her CTools posting, "Overall, the speakers brought up some unique ideas (or that seemed to be unique, speaking of originality) and made me think about imitation and plagiarism in ways that [I] hadn't before. . . . Musicians are constantly reinventing others' music to create their own in the same way that writers take pieces of others' writing to establish their own originality." In general, students felt relieved that their anxieties about originality and plagiarism were mirrored by the "experts"—from legal scholars to English professors—and that many times these experts also had no definitive answers.

Yet students wanted to focus on the conference experience overall. Student reactions varied. Some students felt intimidated. While I did not require that they attend sessions in groups, I did not discourage it either, and many chose to attend with classmates. Some picked the larger plenary sessions because they seemed "safer": "I liked the idea of a lot of people being there [as] opposed to a small, more intimate discussion." Another student noted with horror that he was the only student in his session. Others felt unsettled by the academic tone of the papers. One student stated that "The first presenter . . . made references to a lot of people I had never heard of, making it difficult to understand in the beginning. When the second presenter came up, however, I felt much more comfortable. He explained using a lot of interesting examples."

Students also wanted to comment on the format of the presentations. For many, this was their first academic conference, and without exception students were surprised—even shocked—when panelists read from their papers verbatim. They felt that these presenters were not as prepared or as knowledgeable about their subject as those who did not read.

Ultimately, students raised the question of audience: To what extent was the conference student-friendly? In answering (and they all answered differently, according

Carol Tell

# ities as Teaching Tools

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to the session they attended), they were able, perhaps for the first time, to examine their role in a broader academic community. I was impressed that these students were able to critique a session by analyzing its target audience and insisting that their own perspectives be taken into account. One student remarked that “The speakers seemed to be directing themselves more toward other English teachers, and kept referring to ‘how kids do things.’” She found this attitude patronizing. Another student described arriving early to her session, only to be asked by one of the speakers for help with the technology setup, which she found “annoying.”

Despite their critiques, most students enjoyed their sessions, and many were overwhelmingly enthusiastic. What seemed most valuable was not only the obvious—that students were able to explore the conference topics in greater depth—but that they were able to identify and connect with a broader community. By asking our undergraduates to attend events such as these, we encourage them to take part in the intellectual life here at the University and to show them that academic experiences exist well beyond the classroom. Given the number of writing events at the University, it is a waste not to send our students out to experience what is available to them. But integrating these events into the classroom can be challenging. Here are ideas that I have found useful.

## **Connect the event to a specific class assignment.**

Asking students to attend a reading or a lecture without making a connection to class makes the event seem random and arbitrary—a waste of time. Although you do not have to make the assignment the culminating one, I have had little success with asking students to write a full-length paper on a reading or a lecture. You should require that students do more than just attend; even follow-up summaries can feel like book reports if they are not fused into a larger, more meaningful assignment or discussion. For example, if students are required to use at least three outside sources for an argumentative writing assignment, you might ask for two textual sources and one outside

activity. This also emphasizes the idea that “research” does not only occur on the Web.

**Be flexible.** While it is not difficult to incorporate a conference such as Sweetland’s into the syllabus, we often hear about an ideal reading or performance long after our classes are underway. There is not much we can do except build some flexibility into the syllabus for opportunities that may arise unexpectedly. In the Lloyd Hall Scholars Program this Fall, we learned only a few weeks in advance that visiting writers Jonathan Franzen and Mark Doty would be able to speak to a few writing courses. Once we nailed down the dates, instructors juggled their schedules and distributed material to students prior to these visits.

**Address not only the content but the format of the activity.** When we ask students to attend a poetry reading, for example, we often assume that they are aware of the conventions of that reading. But students sometimes want to talk about what was new or difficult about the experience. Just as we ask students to analyze both the content and style of a text, we should encourage students to consider the substance of a reading *and* the format, and to examine the relationship between the two.

**It’s okay if it fails.** We have little control over how well received (or ultimately, how good) an event may be. Not all activities are undergraduate-friendly, though perhaps more should be. It often helps to give students a choice in what they attend.

One of the greatest rewards of asking my class to attend the Sweetland Conference was that its themes stayed with the class all semester. When we were exploring various adaptations, for example, students kept referring to our original questions about artistic inspiration. When students were preparing for and workshopping their own end-of-the-semester presentations, they advised one another to make greater use of technology and to avoid reading from their papers in an unbroken monotone. The student who originally felt she would be bored by the topic of plagiarism came to this conclusion: “Plagiarism is . . . all about integrity.” This question of integrity—really of intent—extends beyond how students approach their writing to how they immerse themselves in the life of the university: what they open themselves to and how they choose to learn. ■

**Carol Tell**

*Sweetland Writing Center*

*Director, Lloyd Hall Scholars Program*

# "DIFFICULT" READING. "BASIC" WRITING

**I**N FEBRUARY 2005, we presented the panel, "'Difficult' Reading, 'Basic' Writing: Three Approaches to Reading in a First-Year Writing Classroom," at the "Writing Research in the Making" conference at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Our aim was to examine the relationship between reading assignments and writing production in Sweetland's Writing Practicum, SWC 100, and in particular, to inquire into the effects of the "difficulty" of reading assignments on the thinking and writing skills students work to develop over a semester-long course.

In its broader conception, our panel entered the ongoing discussion in composition studies about the relation of reading and writing in the composition classroom. In comparing the outcomes of our different approaches to Writing Practicum, we created a framework to understand the cognitive strategies students use to cope with different kinds of difficult texts, to characterize students' use of these texts in their own writing, and to reflect on the instructor's role in a classroom in which the examined texts create tensions and challenges for students who do not perceive themselves as confident academic readers and writers.

Naomi's paper introduced the topic and addressed its often contentious political dimensions, noting that bringing together scholarship on the "difficult" and the "basic" can feel like navigating between the Scylla of elitism and the Charybdis of condescension. Mariolina Salvatori (2003) names this problem when she speaks of "difficulty" in writing classrooms as having constituted a kind of "Great Divide" between "'novice' or 'reluctant' learners," for whom difficulty is not considered "profitable" to address, on the one hand, and, on the other, "'consummate' and 'passionate' learners," whose management of difficulty becomes a sign of "sophistication and intelligence" (199). Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski (1999) and James Slevin (2002) offer alternative approaches here: the former by suggesting that students be taught to develop a "critical consciousness" (81) toward university discourse and their positioning within it, and the latter by redefining "difficulty" as something represented by the intellectual demands posed both by students *and* teachers.

In this scenario, student writing becomes not simply an occasion for a teacher's perplexity, but one kind of text among others, and the teacher may here become a reader among others, ceding the privileged position of interpretive authority. In regard both to their classmates' writing and to more conventionally "difficult" writing, then, students become authorized readers, reflecting upon the process of how writers and readers make meaning from words.

Margaret's section of Writing Practicum used student writing as its primary text in the form of workshops. The readings' status as drafts, rather than finished work, invited a level of response that published essays seem to disallow; students in this class felt a greater confidence in their ability to read and react to pieces that had not been publicly affirmed to be finished and perfect. The reading assigned in this class was, in fact, quite difficult—not difficult in the sense used by Slevin (2002) or Shaughnessy (1979), but difficult in the sense that student work asks a great deal from readers in its unfinishedness, in its uncertainty, in its red herrings and misleading gestures, in its failure to follow mechanical conventions, and in its adherence to formulas that might distort the author's purpose.

However, students did not experience this reading as difficult because they saw their own roles as readers and commentators clearly. The concept of "difficulty" turns out to be more complex than we had thought, and appears to us to hinge on the intersection between resistance and relevance. We tend to think of students' resistance to difficult readings as a sign of intellectual

immaturity, but it is this concept of resistance that we often use, unthinkingly, to define "difficulty." If difficulty is made out of resistance in some sense, and resistance can be lessened by a sense of relevance (a student's belief in the texts' importance), then maybe the most difficult readings, or the least, can be used to teach our students in different ways depending on how we encourage students to think of texts, but more importantly, how we offer them new ways to think of themselves as readers, writers, and thinkers.

Christine chose more conventionally "difficult" readings about the "good life" from writers such as Aristotle, Bentham, Sartre, Thoreau, Didion, and Dillard. Because the course was not a survey of Western philosophy or a Great Books course, Christine hoped that the structure and focus would unseat the notion of "given knowledge" or "received wisdom." Students were encouraged to think of these "great writers" as other voices in a centuries-long definitional argument, voices to be taken account of, voices that change the direction of the argument, but still single human voices, like theirs, wrestling with a question without an easy answer: "What is the best way to live?" Christine challenged students to think about this large and complicated topic because it encouraged conversation, analysis, application, abstraction, generalization, risk-taking, and differences of opinion. Teacher and students were positioned as co-inquirers and cooperators on these difficult texts.

Acknowledging and questioning the authority of these earlier voices and seeing their ideas as vulnerable to revision over time allowed students to experience the power of their own writing as a tool for making meaning from other texts and for creating new knowledge, putting reading and writing into a "conversational" relation, and, as Charles Bazerman (1980) writes, "[advancing] the sum total of the discourse" (658). Christine's paper

demonstrated that students can discover and claim their identities within the academic community when they enter a conversational relationship with texts previously thought inaccessible or irrelevant.

In the lively discussion that followed our panel, we answered both conceptual inquiries about how students' responses to difficulty were reflected in their writing, for example, as well as practical inquiries about methodologies, class readings and assignments, and the composition of our student body. Some of our audience members have kept in touch, asking us how to implement the ideas we discussed in their own writing courses. ■

**Margaret Dean, Christine Modey, Naomi Silver**  
Sweetland Writing Center

# Sweetland Writing Center Fellows Seminar

Amit Ahuja

## MUCH ADO ABOUT WRITING

**F**ROM THE OUTSET, teaching writing in a social science course appeared a fairly daunting proposition: I had to find a topic which could match my interest with that of my audience and, at the same time, allow me to focus on writing instruction. I research socially and economically excluded groups, so a course on the politics of the poor emerged as an obvious choice. My class, which I entitled "Poor People's Movements," centered on two key questions: How do socially and economically excluded groups resist oppression? and Why do attempts at organizing them succeed or fail?

For me to engage my students in what they were writing, I needed to insure that they were able to relate to the topic. This was in no measure a foregone conclusion, since most of the students who had registered for the class had not been in any prolonged contact with the poor, a reflection of how life has come to be organized in the United States today. To add to the challenge, my common sense on the poor had developed largely in India, and for the purpose of this course, I had to adapt it to an American milieu.

Early in the course, I detected the usual muted discomfort about being instructed by a blind person. Having taught for five semesters at the University,

I expect some of these concerns. To address them, I use the oldest trick in the book—get to know my students well. I learnt their names quickly. I familiarized myself with their voices even faster. I made sure that I met them frequently; office hours during weeks preceding papers were mandatory. Given the heavy writing load and relatively small size of the seminar, I worked closely with each of them.

That I was teaching writing despite being a non-native speaker of English made the situation even more flavorful. I alerted my class to the upsurge of interest in the English language across the world, including India, and reminded them that if we fall behind in the writing race, much more than software and call-center jobs will be getting outsourced. Soon offices will be outsourcing their memos, writers their novels, poets their verses, consumers their grievance letters, lawyers their arguments, the President his State of the Union address, and even lovers their sweet nothings. Learning to write well had to be a priority in their lives! It was a touch outrageous, but I was sure there was a message in there somewhere.

While teaching as a GSI, I often wondered about the instruction some of the weaker writers received in the early part of their university lives. But now that I was at the head of the training pipeline, could I do

the job any better? I developed cold feet. I wondered if I had the credentials for the task. I aspire to be a good writer, since most of what I research and think about is communicated through the written word. However, I don't fancy myself as one. In fact, while designing the course, I worked under the premise that writing is an ordeal for most people and, therefore, the more writing I assigned, the more opportunities I would have to work with my students on the problems they faced.

"Poor People's Movements" had two fundamental goals: to generate in students an appreciation for a set of ideas about the poor and for students to learn to express these ideas through different formats. The student papers I read, week after week, made it obvious that the two are not necessarily complimentary, a humbling lesson for someone writing his dissertation. ■

*Amit Ahuja is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science, writing his dissertation on the political parties of socially excluded groups. His work focuses on the parties of the Dalits (the former Untouchables) in India. In 2004, Amit won the Rackham Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award.*

## FALL 2005 SWEETLAND FELLOWS

### SENIOR FELLOWS

Catherine Brown  
*Romance Languages and Comparative Literature*

Nancy Rose Hunt  
*History*

Karin Martin  
*Sociology*

Priscilla Tucker  
*Museum of Zoology*

### JUNIOR FELLOWS

Alex Bates  
*Asian Languages*

Christopher Becker  
*Slavic/Linguistics*

Sayan Bhattacharyya  
*Comparative Literature*

Arran Caza  
*Psychology*

Beth Hahn  
*Natural Resources*

Marti Lybeck  
*History*

Debra Melican  
*Communications*

Heather Thomson  
*English and Education*



## ORIGINALITY, IMITATION, AND PLAGIARISM:

## A Cross-Disciplinary Conference on Writing

## SWEETLAND WRITING CENTER DIRECTOR MARTHA VICINUS' OPENING REMARKS

**A** HEARTY WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN and our conference, which promises to be an exciting opportunity to talk across many disciplines about crucial issues for today's world.

Just as no work of writing is born solely from the mind of a single imaginative genius, so too is no conference the work of one person. I begin by thanking my Planning Committee, who brought to this conference an extraordinary range of intellectual interests and skills—and that most valuable of traits for every planner—reliable and thoughtful responses to my queries: Associate Professor Anne Curzan, from the English Department and School of Education, is a specialist in historical linguistics and composition studies. She is currently Director of the English Department's First and Second Year Studies Program. Dr. Caroline Eisner,

the Associate Director of the Sweetland Writing Center, is a specialist in composition studies and 18th-century literature. She has been absolutely essential to my education in composition theory. Professor Edie Goldenberg, from the School of Public Policy and the Department of Political Science, is an expert in the field of journalism and politics and higher education policy-making. She was Dean of LSA for nine years. Professor Jessica Litman, from the Wayne State University School of Law, is a distinguished pioneer in the field of copyright law and Internet law. She lent the Hatcher Graduate Library her wonderful collection of artifacts for our conference exhibit. Two other essential members of our working team were Bethany Osborne, conference coordinator, and Laura Schuyler, Sweetland coordinator. Bethany has brought a wealth of conference-planning experience to her position. I have especially appreciated her active, intellectual engagement with our project. Hardly a week went by without a newspaper cutting from her about some aspect of our conference theme. Laura has

been responsible for so many tasks that it is impossible to enumerate them. Her consistent good humor and steady involvement in this project from its initial stages have been an inspiration to the entire Sweetland office, but especially to me. She has been the linchpin of this conference.

Of course, no conference can be launched without proper financial support. We have received financial support from the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; the Department of Communication Studies, the Howard R. Marsh Center for the Study of Journalistic Performance, the Harry B. and Helen F. Weber Endowment; and from the Departments of English and History, as well as the School of Information. Our greatest debt, however, is to John Sweetland, whose generosity and vision have been an inspiration to me and to the rest of us who work at Sweetland. When I first talked with John about this conference more than a year ago, he immediately understood why the subject was important, and why the Sweetland Writing Center should hold this major national conference.



*Martha Vicinus, Director, Sweetland;  
John Sweetland, Guest of Honor;  
Terrence McDonald, Dean of LSA, Michigan.*



(left to right) Carol Tell, Director, Lloyd Hall Scholars Program, and lecturer, Sweetland; Christine Modey, Sweetland; Caroline Eisner, Associate Director, Sweetland.



(left to right) Lynn Z. Bloom, English, University of Connecticut; Charles Bazerman, Gervitz Graduate School of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara; Jacqueline Jones Royster, Executive Dean, Colleges of the Arts and Sciences, Ohio State University.



(left to right) Mario Biagioli, History of Science, Harvard University; Edie Goldenberg, Political Science and Public Policy, Michigan.

I know that all of you are here for our speakers, so I will conclude with only a few brief remarks about the purposes of this conference. This event brings a fraught term, "plagiarism," into dialogue with its precursors, imitation and originality, in order to question the common-place definitions of each of these three words. We do so in order to create an opportunity to consider two parallel discourses that do not often speak to each other, namely the current troubled discussion about academic integrity and the urgent debate about "fair use" and intellectual property rights.

Within the university we rightly have a profound investment in responsible, independent intellectual work, lest we undermine the very nature of our profession. Stealing or buying the work of others undermines the credibility of the written word and damages the open and free exchange of ideas. Teachers across all fields are troubled by the ease with which students can buy papers through various Internet sites. We have had a recent rash of high profile plagiarism cases, ranging from the notorious Jayson Blair case at *The New York Times* to data fabrication in the biomedical field. Over the next three days, you will hear from

people directly involved in these and similar cases. The most common excuse among academics seems to be "my research assistant took poor notes," which strikes many of us as a version of "my dog ate my paper." How then do we conserve and inculcate a tradition of ethical research and writing standards, while also acknowledging and using effectively the opportunities provided by the new technology?

And will this new technology be sufficiently open and nimble for us to use? A handful of scholars, usually within the legal profession, have alerted readers to America's tradition of "fair use" in the exchange of ideas among its citizens. They are deeply concerned that we are losing access to works that, in the words of the original American copyright law, will "promote the progress of science and useful arts." Some of the key figures in this public debate are here this weekend. These cultural critics remind us that intellectual property and copyright laws do not give authors, musicians, publishers, agents, or corporations absolute control over all aspects of a work. They argue forcefully that we must fight for the free exchange of

ideas and of cultural artifacts, whether on the Internet or by more traditional means. Those who have followed the technological revolution closely have documented the efforts of large invested interests in preserving and even expanding traditional property rights. The closing down of Napster, and the policing of peer-to-peer music sharing are only the best known examples of this legal battle. More ominous efforts are underway to limit access to information printed from the Web without payment for each use. Countering these legal efforts is our long tradition of fair use, which includes the absolute need for creative work to build upon the work of others—to borrow, alter, allude to, and then to create something new and timely. How then do we take advantage of the creative opportunities of the Internet, while still giving due credit to the hard work of research and writing to that creature called an author? These and many more questions will be raised this weekend. ■

# PLAGIARISM AND COPYRIGHT:

## CONNECTIONS IN THE TURNITIN CULTURE

**W**HILE PLAGIARISM AND COPYRIGHT have long been considered twinned issues, little has been done to explicate this relationship beyond noting their common parent in our intellectual property conventions and warning students against violations in both realms. The fact that the former has been considered, for the most part, an educational violation, and the latter, a matter for lawyers to settle, tends to solidify the wall between them. Even legal scholars committed to improving overly restrictive copyright legislation, as I discovered when I presented on plagiarism at an international conference devoted to "New Directions in Copyright Law," fail to see the relevance, unless it concerns how to prosecute their own students for the infraction.

In my work, however, I have been arguing that plagiarism is much more than "merely academic." Instead, it is a cultural site through which the values of understanding, limiting, crediting, and fairly using intellectual property in a market economy are being negotiated. To be more specific, the recent fixation on plagiarism, especially in the popular media, must be placed in the context of our reactions to other forms of unauthorized copying: the recent strident condemnations are both an overlooked symptom and a ramification of the increasingly restrictive global culture of copyright. Indeed, rather than a separate issue, plagiarism, with its easy morality of right and wrong, might be seen as the propaganda wing of the corporate copyright wars.

Certainly the uproar over plagiarism parallels the tightening of copyright; both, of course, are reactions to the proliferation of cut-paste-and-download technologies. In the past few years, however, we have seen what can only be called a "moral panic" over plagiarism, a climate of alarm that has made it difficult to separate the reality from hyperbole and misinformation. This increased attention and inflated language help to create an environment of hyper-vigilance, which, as with moral panics in general, result in more incidents being discovered, reported, and labeled, without necessarily more occurring.

Spurred by this sense of anxiety, and buttressed by nervousness about the role of technology in education, faculty in the American academy have sought a one-size-fits-all solution that purports to assuage their fears of Napsterized students by providing academics with their own high-tech weapon. The infamous Turnitin.com, while certainly not the only company to take advantage of this, has been the most successful. The company's relentless marketing campaign promotes the need for such surveillance by pandering to (and helping proliferate) the plagiarism panic.

Because of their success, the Turnitin approach, based on a fear of and reliance on technology, is now structuring both the problem of and the solution to plagiarism, if not education itself. In one clever name, Turnitin.com conflates what is perhaps the most essential act of our current system of education, turning in work to be graded, with one more familiar to the realm of policing, the turning in of a criminal violator. At once, then, it

links the student (or any writer) with the criminal, a linkage sustained and reinforced by the implication that all prose produced by students and other authors is inherently suspect—otherwise, plagiarism detection services would not be necessary.

This view of the writer and of written texts creates, in turn, an environment of textual production in which every key phrase or language string is viewed as a potential act of piracy that must be traced. Language is thus always already someone's—or most likely someone *else's*—property. This "Turnitin culture" is supported by the technology itself, which transforms student writing into a piece of data in their acclaimed "proprietary databases." Ironically, even many opponents of this service, including those who advocate a more pedagogically sensitive approach to understanding student copying, play into this commodified understanding of textuality by arguing that Turnitin is in effect "stealing" the intellectual property of students. Either vision constructs writing as fundamentally, perhaps primarily, a commodity in a market economy, subject to the laws of intellectual property.

At the same time, the dictums imposed by the plagiarism services may indeed be stricter than those regulated by copyright lawyers. For example, a student who copies verbatim a paragraph from another work without the intent of selling his own might be protected under fair use, both because he is not impacting sales of the original document and because his use of another's words within a different context might be seen as a refashioning of the original. Within the Turnitin culture, however, the same student could, by this unsanctioned copying, fail an assignment, fail a course, be expelled from school, or have his/her degree rescinded. Please note that I am not suggesting that we should allow students to copy bits of others' texts into their own without attribution. We have specific educational aims in asking students to construct papers that develop their own opinions or document sources they use, and students should be graded on their ability to meet these goals. Nonetheless, I think we need to reflect on the atmosphere created by this "crime and punishment" approach, and not just for students. If this Turnitin culture, with its demand for a very pure form of originality and low, if not zero, tolerance for unattributed source use or derivation, extends beyond the academy through the sales of detection-type services to other domains, fair-use exemptions may be, in practice at least, eroded. Our increased vigilance over source use that results because of and as part of the plagiarism panic also works to actually increase the domain of copyright, extending its reach by working to limit fair use and to commercialize texts not usually considered part of the market economy. ■

### Lisa Maruca

*Associate Professor and Coordinator, Critical Literacies Division  
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Wayne State University*



# PERFORMANCE AND PASTICHE:

## THE NORM OF NON-ORIGINALITY

**T**HE CURRENT "PLAGUE" of plagiarism occurs in an educational and cultural context with which plagiarism is quite consistent. It is essential that educators make sense of these contexts; if we continue to attempt to enforce strict norms, we must at least understand how they challenge the ordinary values of our students.

Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972) revealed a 20th-century preoccupation with authenticity. Raised in that time, professors and administrators assume that original products derive from authentic beings, core selves unmediated by social demands. An authentic soul can be like no other, and its words (and art) must be entirely its own.

The 21st-century American self is rather different. This self is in part made of fragments of text—images, lines, plots—collected from the astonishing array of sources available (Internet, DVD, radio, TV, print). Without a sense of betrayal or immorality, this self finds it efficacious to learn what is required in changing circumstances. Without a sense of a single, unchanging self, the notion of owning an expression or viewpoint is foreign.

Guided by the notion of competition, marketplace, and the morality of success, students seek the script for their assorted activities. They need to know how to perform in Biology class with Professor Cell and how to write in Anthropology class with Professor Stickler, how to swear with their soccer teammates, and how to joke with their roommates. They accept that quotation and incorporation of influence are necessary for each role.

My conference paper reported on what students at a Midwestern university believe about their opportunities and obligations with regard to quotation. I investigated views of: 1) intertextuality, including views of downloading music; quoting from Internet sources; quoting favorite lines from films, TV shows, and jokes; and other aspects of intellectual property; and 2) the goals of college. I examined the moral considerations of 21st-century students as they face work assigned by their 20th-century elders.

Students largely find continual quotation from popular culture amusing and solidarity-building. It is never necessary to name the authors or composers; to do so indicates lack of shared knowledge, and one of the goals of such quotation is to emphasize shared experience. While students can talk the talk of "giving credit," there is little felt understanding of what is meant by this, when appreciation is shown by posting quotations in Instant-Messaging "away" messages, or using melodies as cell phone ring tones, or seeking information for various practical purposes. The very constrained attribution demanded by professors appears artificial and awkward to them.

If college consists largely of tasks to be completed, with the goal a grade or a degree, then the steps needed to complete the goal are merely a hindrance and an obstacle. The smart student is the one who knows how to get the task done; smartness is rewarded by success. In writing papers and taking tests, the goal is to finish the exercise, rather than to explore its complexities or contradictions. Many students are willing to perform the expected motions, not worrying about whether they are "sincere" or not, as long as their product meets the teacher's expectations. While some students consider the importance of integrity, for them it often means responding to the task rather than trying to produce something that comes directly from their own thoughts.

As Clifford Geertz has written, "Foreignness does not start at the water's edge but at the skin's" (1985). It is obvious that the difference between 20th-century professors and 21st-century students is profound and in need of further examination, beyond the narrow confines of "Is it plagiarism?" ■

**Susan D. Blum**

*Associate Professor*

*Department of Anthropology*

*University of Notre Dame*

## 23rd National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing Negotiating Authority in the Writing Center

November 10-12, 2006

**Call For Papers:** The Gayle Morris Sweetland Writing Center seeks proposals for 75-minute sessions that consider practical, historical, and theoretical aspects of the theme of authority in the writing center. We emphasize tutor-led, active presentations providing the opportunity for audience interaction and/or discussion. Applicants should submit a one-page proposal (250 words) and an abstract (50 words) no later than April 10, 2006. Proposals should include the type (workshop, panel, individual) and length of presentation, name, affiliation and email address of presenter(s), and title of the presentation. Send these materials as attachments to NCPTW06@umich.edu.

For more information:

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/ncptw>

# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND THE UM UNDERGRAD: ARE WE DOING WHAT WE SHOULD BE?

**O**N NOVEMBER 9, 2005, President Coleman's Ethics in Public Life Initiative sponsored a public forum entitled "Academic Integrity and the UM Undergrad: Are We Doing What We Should Be?" Attendees at the forum represented a cross-section of the University: undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and administrators. All were asked to participate in small group discussions of the ethical dilemmas present in three scenarios (see Table A). Participants also discussed whether there were steps the University could take to help students respond ethically to questions of academic integrity. The ensuing discussions were lively and engaging. What follows is a summary of these discussions.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CASE STUDIES

- A. You are working as part of a group on an assignment that will lead to a group paper and presentation. After a month of working on individual tasks, you are meeting to assemble the final documents. As you read over the materials prepared by one of your teammates, you begin to wonder whether she prepared this material herself.
- B. In a discussion about strategies to succeed in school, your housemate mentions that he emails a draft of every paper he writes to his mother, who is a great editor. He recommends that you find someone who could do the same for you.
- C. One of your close friends missed an exam, falsely claiming he was sick. The make-up exam is Friday, and he has asked to borrow all your notes from the class to assist him in preparing for the make-up exam.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What are the dilemmas presented by each case? What makes them moral or ethical dilemmas?
- How would you resolve these dilemmas? What options would you consider? What considerations would inform your decision?
- What are the implications of your decision for you? For your classmates? For your instructor(s)? For the University?
- What could UM do to help students respond ethically to these and other questions of academic integrity?

As participants considered each scenario, it became clear that the particulars mattered in framing likely responses. One that mattered greatly was friendship. Students talked about their reluctance to ruin friends' careers or jeopardize friendships. While they might not actively help a friend commit an unethical act, neither would they report it. Similarly, while they might suspect wrongdoing, they differed in their sense of obligation to confirm or confront such suspicions. Students also discussed the ethical implications of different degrees of action: sharing class notes but not specific information about a missed exam; doing "minor" editing but not rewriting someone else's paper.

A pervasive theme of these discussions was whether students have a positive obligation to report academic wrong-doing. Some groups considered if such an obligation should be part of University-wide policy. Participants differed in their perspectives. For example, many of the College of Engineering students in attendance were supportive of the reporting clause in the Engineering Honor Code. Students from elsewhere in the University did not feel that such a policy would be effective at an institution as large as UM. For some, a reluctance to report reflected uncertainty about the likely consequences. Others pointed out that reporting violations resulted in significant work, time, or stress for all involved and that there is often a negative connotation attached to people who make such reports.

Participants discussed their perceptions of who cheats. Many student participants felt that academic dishonesty on campus is primarily caused by serial-cheaters who have learned to game the system and get away with it (and not by desperate students who choose academic dishonesty as a last resort). This is exacerbated by the size of the University, where many students feel no one will notice if a student acts in an academically unethical way.

Participants discussed whose responsibility it is to foster ethics. Some students felt these situations were best handled among peers and clearly stated they would not involve the University. Others argued there were steps the University could take to help students respond more ethically. Specifically, some recommended that the University:

- Provide students a "safe space" where they can discuss ethical dilemmas.
- Encourage instructors to address academic integrity as part of their courses.
- Require ethics courses for students.
- Provide additional clarification about what is ethical academic behavior and more clearly delineate the consequences and penalties for unethical academic behavior. ■

## Deborah Meizlish

*Coordinator of Social Science Faculty Development  
Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)*

# FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

**Dargie Anderson** contributed an essay, "Double Tropism and Documentary: The Draw of the Other Place," to the Winter 2006 *Michigan Quarterly Review*. Dargie also co-hosted a panel on the intersections between creative writing and social justice for the 2006 University of Michigan Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium.

**Anne Berggren's** article, "Reading like a Woman," appeared in *Reading Sites: Social Difference and Reader Response*, published in 2004 by the Modern Language Association. In addition, Anne presented a paper entitled "My War against the Obligatory Thesis Statement; or What Happens When School Writing Meets Reality?" at the Michigan College English Association conference in October 2004.

**Jeremiah Chamberlin** was the recipient of the David and Linda Moscow Prize for Excellence in Teaching Composition last spring and was included in the 2005 edition of *Who's Who among American Teachers*. In October he was awarded an Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award from the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies. During the year he participated in several CRLT teaching seminars as a presenter, including working as a Practice Teaching Facilitator for CRLT's Graduate Student Instructor Teaching Orientation at the end of August. This Fall his short story, "Missionaries," was the runner up in *Swink Magazine's* annual fiction contest. And he was recently asked by the Interlochen Arts Academy to be a participant in their *Between the Lakes* Writing Symposium this coming April, where he will deliver a paper entitled "Orchard Fires and House Fires: The Responsibility of Writing about Place and the Past" on the relationship between research and imagination in historical novels.

**George Cooper** and three Sweetland peer tutors, Ashely Jardina, Andrea Vought, and Ben Taylor, presented at a joint meeting of the International Writing Center Association and the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing in October 2005. In addition, they presented at a meeting of the East Central Writing Center Association in April 2005. Their presentations at both conferences critiqued prevailing theories of peer tutoring methodology and practice.

**Margaret Dean's** novel, *The Time It Takes to Fall*, will be published by Simon and Schuster in January 2007. In February 2005, Margaret participated in a panel presentation, "'Difficult' Reading, 'Basic' Writing: Three Approaches to Reading in a First-Year Writing Classroom," at the "Writing Research in the

Making" conference. Margaret's paper, "Relevance versus Resistance: Redefining 'Difficulty' in the Writing Classroom," discussed applying the workshop model to Sweetland's Writing Practicum.

**Helen Fox** was a featured speaker and workshop leader at the University of Louisville in May 2004. Her talk and workshop focused on the racial climate on campus, integrating ESL students into mainstream composition classrooms, and incorporating conversations on race and nonviolence into curricula. Helen also spoke on similar themes at faculty development seminars at Loyola College of Maryland, Marquette University, and Washington State University. In addition, she presented a paper, "Promoting Conversations about Race and Racism," at the Peace and Social Justice Association Conference in San Francisco in 2004.

**Elizabeth Hutton's** essay, "The Example of Antonia White," appeared in the Spring 2005 *New England Review*. Her poem, "Dear One," was published in the Spring 2005 *Yale Review*, and her poem, "The Suspicion," appeared in the Fall 2005 edition of *Gulf Coast*.

**Matt Kelley** presented papers at the 2005 MELUS Society for the Study of Ethnic Literature 19th Annual Conference and the 2005 American Literature Association 16th Annual Conference. In October 2005, he was an invited speaker at the Jack Kerouac Conference on Beat Literature at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell. Matt published "Photography in Beat Culture" in *Beat Culture: Lifestyles, Icons and Impact*. In addition, he contributed "The Mob of Carefree Men and Boys: Vanity of Dulooz and Kerouac's Panoramic Consciousness" to *Upon Further Review: Sports in American Literature*. Matt also published "Pages Made Blank by Rain: Allen Grossman and the Signs of Obliteration" in *Sagetrieb: A Journal Devoted to Poets in the Imagist/Objectivist Tradition*. Most recently, Matt's essay, "The Shock of the New: Teaching *Get Your War On* and the Rhetoric of Civic Art," was accepted for inclusion in *MLA Options for Teaching the Graphic Novel*. This paper will be presented at the American Culture Association Conference in April 2006.

**Christine Modey** participated in a panel presentation, "'Difficult' Reading, 'Basic' Writing: Three Approaches to Reading in a First-Year Writing Classroom," at the "Writing Research in the Making" conference in February 2005. Christine's paper was entitled "Choosing Difficulty."

**Barbra Morris** was invited to provide a week-long series of lectures about American television programming in Germany in late 2005. Barbra gave lectures in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Waldfischbach, and offered additional workshops for teachers who attended the presentations, illustrating various techniques for thinking and writing about television programming. The June 2006 issue of the *Journal of British Television and Film* will include Barbra's article, "Come and Get It! Good Television News Criticism: American and British TV Comedy Versions." In Fall 2005, she delivered a paper, "A Focus Group Study of Students' Attitudes toward Plagiarism," at the Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism Conference, hosted by Sweetland.

**Patrick O'Keeffe** published a collection of novellas, *The Hill Road*, this past July in the US (Viking) and the UK (Bloomsbury). In January 2006, The New School awarded Patrick the Story Prize for his book.

**Alex Ralph** conducted three writing seminars for approximately 1,600 prospective BBA applicants at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business in 2005 and 2006. Crazy Wisdom Bookstore hosted a public reading from Alex's novel in April 2005. In September 2005, Alex chaired the panel "American Originals or American Imitators?" at the Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism conference, hosted by Sweetland.

**Naomi Silver's** articles, "Who Is Speaking? Recognizing Rhetorical Context" and "Writing in the Disciplines," appeared in the *Humanities Core Course Guide & Writer's Handbook*, published in 2004 by Pearson. Naomi presented "Writing to Empathize: Dialogue and Community in a Cross-Disciplinary Classroom" at the College Composition and Communication Conference in March 2004. She also served on the panel of "'Difficult' Reading, 'Basic' Writing: Three Approaches to Reading in a First-Year Writing Classroom" at the "Writing Research in the Making" conference in February 2005. In 2005, the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan awarded Naomi Teaching with Technology and Professional Development Grants.

**Carol Tell** presented "The Role of Research in Reinvention" at the Conference on Research Programs for Residential Communities at Cornell University in June 2005. In addition, Carol's article, "Considering Classroom Communities: Ciaran Carson and Paul Muldoon," appeared in *The Yearbook of English Studies: Irish Writing Since 1950*, published in 2005 by the Modern Humanities Research Association.

## CALLAWAY PRIZEWINNER

NAMED FOR MARY LOU CALLAWAY, a long-time community activist, reporter, and columnist, the Callaway Undergraduate Writing Prize has been awarded since 2001. In 2005, the prize went to Luke Meinzen, a December 2005 graduate from Overland Park, Kansas.

Playing on a well-known phrase from the *Wizard of Oz*, Meinzen titled his essay, "Not in Kansas Anymore." His Oz is no Emerald City, but is rather the Thai-Cambodian border town of Poipet, where the boundary is marked by a river, lethargic and muddy, and clogged with refuse and scum. "Poipet is oppressive," Meinzen wrote.

The events leading to his arrival in Poipet began over a casual conversation with his roommate, Mike, shouted over an unruly Friday-night sing-along to music of the '80s rock band Journey. His roommate asked if Meinzen was interested in starting an international service group. "Yeah, sure dude," Meinzen responded. "Pass me another beer."

"Mike's whim became a shared interest, as research on Cambodia reshaped my views on

development and inequality," Meinzen wrote. "Our shared interest became our mutual obsession, and organizing a month-long expedition transformed our views on time-management and sanity."

First there were just two, then four, and then 15; with a phone call to a contractor and \$8000 of fundraising, four weeks of summer vacation brought the college students face-up with a complicated culture and place.

Ratha, Vuthyr, and Chanto are a few of the kids that Meinzen and his cohort worked with through Community Outreach Services' Immanuel Children's Village. They giggled, exchanged elaborate handshakes, and uttered broken phrases of English and Khmer.

"*Na'nom!*" was accompanied by a little palm reaching for a snack of cookies and candy. "*Mao mao! Bok nyum!*" accompanied the children's mischief of keep-away upon their finding Meinzen's wallet untended.

Not all was fun and games. The heat was a smothering blanket. Youthful spirit was impeded

by Dengue Fever. Food was catch-as-catch-can. The border between Cambodia and Thailand was infected with mistrust. There were landmines.

The college students were in Poipet to work, building a two-room addition to the school: haggling with contractors, painting shutters, lacquering desks. Though construction was the centerpiece of their work, they taught English and Cantonese and learned overwhelming lessons about the effects of poverty and injustice.

"For 20 years, I lived easily, slept soundly, and worked comfortably with white folk in suburban Kansas," Meinzen wrote. "Then for 22 days, I lived, slept, and worked in the constant company of 14 University of Michigan students, over 100 children, and 30 construction workers in rural Cambodia. The next 20 years will bear the stamp of the cultural tornado that introduced me to a reality in which there are no ruby slippers." ■

**George Cooper**  
*Sweetland Writing Center*

## CALLAWAY UNDERGRADUATE WRITING PRIZE

Mary Lou Callaway was a long-time community activist, reporter, and columnist who died in 1999, at the age of 82.

The Callaway Writing Prize honors her memory and life-long commitment to civic activism. The prize is funded through the generous gift of the Contempo Communications Foundation for the Arts, whose founders are David and Joan Marshall, University of Michigan graduates and friends of Mary Lou Callaway for nearly 50 years.

The Callaway Writing Prize awards \$1,000 to its winner.

Any University of Michigan undergraduate who wishes to compete for the award may do so by submitting an original, eight- to ten-page, double-spaced essay about a community service experience. The essay should highlight the student's civic engagement and activism.

*Submit essay and application to:*

Darci Dore, Sweetland Writing Center  
1139 Angell Hall, 1003

All applications are due before April 19, 2006.

The winner will be announced in June.

For further information, inquire at the Sweetland Writing Center or contact Darci Dore via email at [ddore@umich.edu](mailto:ddore@umich.edu) or phone at 734-936-3140. The Callaway Writing Prize application is available on the web at <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/swc/undergrads/callaway>.