

ENGLISH II

Section Moderator: Dr. Andrea Stover

Room: Inman Health Sciences 341

Time: 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Session Title: Student Perspectives on Academic Writing

7:00 – 7:20

“What Are We Going to Do With all of This Bullshit?”

Jason F. Hardy

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Andrea Stover

In his essay *On Bullshit*, Harry G. Frankfurt defines bullshit as a form of misrepresentation characterized by a blatant disregard for the truth in favor of expediency. It is the contention of this paper that student writing often falls into the category of bullshit because students often write with regard for little else than the evaluation they will receive on their writing.

Since writing is a means by which people present their identities, writing also constitutes those identities. When students, all too often encouraged by the academy’s systems of evaluation, engage in bullshit in their writing, they become conditioned to write without regard to their identities and therefore are in danger of compromising their identities. In order to stop the cycle of bullshit in student writing and thus prevent its harmful effects, the academy needs to make changes to both its systems of evaluation and its writing pedagogy as a whole.

This paper encourages the academy to consider alternative methods of evaluation, such as those developed by Peter Elbow, in order to break the cycle of bullshit. Furthermore, it presents the ideas of postcolonial theorists Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski regarding writing pedagogy that encourages students to develop a “critical consciousness” of what it means to write in order to suggest a way in which the academy can inform its students of the dangers of bullshit.

7:20 – 7:40

"To The Academy"

Will Hoekenga

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Andrea Stover

Will Hoekenga argues for the acceptance of personal writing as a form of academic writing, one which teachers should allow their students to use when writing within the context of the academy. The term “academic writing” refers only to actual writing done within the academy, not the preconceived definition of dull, boring writing that often comes to mind when thinking of the academy. “Personal writing,” within the context of this paper, refers to any writing reflecting something the writer is truly interested in on a personal level.

Through the introduction of research, as well as his own experience as a student of writing in the academy, Hoekenga illustrates the benefits of allowing students to use personal writing not just in English classes, but any type of class.

Hoekenga argues that personal writing gives students the opportunity to learn how to have control over their writing, something that is often absent in writing assignments in the academy. Through control, student writers can learn to have confidence in their writing, which leads to better writing.

7:40 – 8:00

“The Creativity of Academic Writing”

Allison Berwald

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Andrea Stover

Many students and teachers, both in higher education and secondary education, perceive academic writing and creative writing as distinct and separate. Creative writing consists of the student’s ideas, often presented in a nontraditional fashion, and academic writing consists of the mindless compilation and regurgitation of the ideas of others.

This misperception obscures the fact that true academic writing is creative, analytical, and inextricably connected to the writer’s self. As a product of the writer’s own thought, it inevitably involves his own beliefs, perspectives, and priorities, and it can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Unfortunately, many students think that academic writing is a meaningless exercise in grammar and organization rather than the product of their own critical thoughts. They think that only in assignments labeled “creative” can they express themselves and integrate their experiences and passions. They are often at a loss when given an assignment that is both academic and creative. Students learn how to write academically and creatively in separate assignments, but they need to learn how to make their academic writing creative, as all good writing is.

Professors and peer tutors can facilitate this process by using strategies that engage students with the creative process of academic writing, by sharing their insight and enthusiasm, and in this way the Academy can begin to dispel the myth of academic writing as the dull repetition of facts and instead engage students in critical thought and creative academic writing.