
STYLUS:

A JOURNAL OF FIRST- YEAR WRITING

VOLUME 1|ISSUE 1|WINTER 2010

Self-Evaluation of My Writing Process
Portrayed in Freshman Composition

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The Journal of the First-Year
Writing Program at the
University of Central Florida



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From the Editor

With a university as lively and bustling as ours here in Orlando, I think it's easy to lose track sometimes of the individual faces and voices in our diverse student population. When walking around campus, it's easy to notice merely a vast sea of students that must be navigated to reach the desired destination. When sitting in a lecture hall of a hundred or more students, it's easy to think only of our own individual goals, to forget or underestimate the creativity, diligence, and acumen that got those students where they are, and the dreams and goals that inspire them to get where they're going. It's easy, I think, to see the size of our school as an obstacle to be overcome, not an advantage to be embraced.

Those of us in the First-Year Writing Program, however, know different. Daily, Composition I and II instructors have the chance to interact with students on a more personal level, and that's something we don't take for granted. In my own experiences teaching, I'm consistently impressed by the insight and cleverness of our students, their capacity for surprising and original thought, their ability, when given the space and a receptive audience, to produce writing and ideas that truly advance knowledge or have the potential to effect real change. Of course, this shouldn't be surprising. The competition for acceptance into the University is increasingly vigorous, and it's a well-worn cliché that the students of today are our leaders of tomorrow. Yet nowhere does that cliché feel less maudlin and more true than in the first-year writing classroom.

It's my great pleasure, then, to introduce this inaugural issue of *Stylus: A Journal of First-Year Writing* and to have the opportunity to shine a spotlight on the work of five superbly talented young writers. All the essays that follow were produced in a first-year writing course, a class probably much like the one you're enrolled in right now. The work itself is diverse and varied, a reflection of the current breadth of our program. It'd be hard to pin down a single theme or focus for this issue, but, if anything, perhaps the writing here best encapsulates that very idea of idiosyncrasy itself, that our writing and our ideas are individual, truly unique, and maybe even a little quirky, and that, by analyzing and considering that very individuality, we learn something not only about ourselves, but about each other, too.

Whitney Brown, in her piece, "Self-Evaluation of My Writing Process Portrayed in Freshman Composition," starts us off with an autoethnography, a careful study of her own writing process. It's a form that many of you reading this might not be immediately familiar with, but that's okay. Brown's thoughtfulness in this essay makes her project easy to follow and exemplifies the sort of careful observation and analysis that is critical to such research, and her insights into her own process are both surprising and sure to be useful to students of all ages and experiences looking to reflect on their own writing processes.

In "My Writing Process and the Importance of Flow Writing," Zachary Talbot conducts his own self-analysis, albeit taking a different path than Brown. Talbot hones in a specific aspect of his writing process, what he terms as "flow writing," a process that he likens to method acting. His work on this subject is fascinating and should give even experienced writers something to think about.

Tyler Obarski, in “The Complexity of Language at Publix Supermarket Store #0258,” continues the exploration of language in another direction. Researching a grocery store might sound rather mundane, but Obarski’s ethnography is far from what we might expect. By carefully researching and considering how language actually functions in the store, Obarski describes the inner workings of this particular discourse community, prompting readers to consider the varied ways that language constructs meaning in any number of settings.

While Karina Garcia’s essay, “The Other Half of the Bracelet,” might look rather different from the first three pieces, the carefulness of the reflection and the quality of the writing is equally high. Here, Garcia uses her own story as an example of just how individuals really do become the writers they are, and the results are dramatically compelling.

In the final two essays of this issue, “Searching through a Game” and “Fixing Our Future,” Nicolas Oscheneek demonstrates the sort of individual thought and stylistic flourish we all strive for in our writing. The subject matter might be different, but Oscheneek’s clever take on *World of Warcraft* and Bright Futures, subjects we’re all likely familiar with, prove that, with careful consideration, reflection, and research, even familiar topics can sometimes surprise us.

Though I’m confident of the quality of these essays in our first issue, it wasn’t easy to narrow the pool of submissions down to six. There are many, many talented writers among us, with interesting thoughts and insights to offer if we just give them the chance. If you submitted work and weren’t accepted, thank you. While your writing might not appear here, I have no doubt that you’re continuing to produce excellent work elsewhere. And if you’re reading this for the first time in your composition class, consider submitting. Though it might not seem like it at times, your words and ideas really can go someplace, can touch somebody, can do something. And, here at *Stylus*, we would love to give you that opportunity.

-Matt Bryan