



a journal of first-year writing

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**Don't Panic: A Hitchhiker's Guide to  
My Literacy**  
*LUCAS PASQUALIN*

**Exploiting the American Dream: The  
Political Rhetoric of Julian Castro**  
*KATELYN VAN DE WATER*

**Using Rhetorical Strategies to  
Examine War Protest**  
*RADHARANY DIAZ*

**Where's the Beef? Communicating  
Vegetarianism in Mainstream  
America**  
*ALLISON WALTER*

**Canines and Their Companions:  
Unleashing the Chains of  
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## *From the Editor*

Douglas Adams, the 2012 presidential election, Vietnam, vegetarians, and dog parks—what do these all have in common, and why will you be reading about them all (and, of course, much more) in this particular issue of *Stylus*? While the subjects of the five outstanding student projects published in this issue are wildly diverse, I think you'll find they're linked by a common question that's at the heart of them all: just how is it that individuals learn to adapt the ways they communicate for given situations, and how does that, in turn, lead to not only effective communication, but the ability to actually *shape* the situations themselves? As college students in a first-year writing class, that should be a question that resonates with the current work you're doing. Part of the challenge of writing in the university is figuring out just what "writing in the university" means. What is it these new writing situations call for? What's expected (hint: it's not just the five-paragraph essay), and how can you learn those expectations? How do you need to change your approach from situation to situation? These are big (but important) questions, ones that go beyond the scope of this single issue of *Stylus*. I hope, though, that the following five student projects will at least give you a little food for thought as you continue exploring these questions with your classmates and on your own.

First up is Lucas Pasqualin's "Don't Panic: A Hitchhiker's Guide to My Literacy." If you've ever read *Harry Potter* or *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, there's likely something in Pasqualin's essay that you can relate to. And if you're beginning to encounter strange new terms like literacy sponsors and multiliteracies in your writing class, Pasqualin's thought-provoking series of narratives will provide you with a number of compelling examples to consider. His essay vividly brings to life how a variety of encounters with different types of literacy can inform one individual's attitudes and beliefs about writing.

Next is Katelyn Van de Water's rhetorical analysis, "Exploiting the American Dream: The Political Rhetoric of Julian Castro." You might remember San Antonio mayor Julian Castro's speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2012; if not, you should watch it before reading Van de Water's thoughtful analysis (a video of the speech can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jx3m7jk1CY>). You might be asked to consider how rhetors respond to rhetorical situations in your composition class. If so, Van de Water's careful breakdown of not just what Castro said, but *why* he chose to say it that way might give you some ideas for how one rhetor took advantage of a national stage to tell a story meant to shape the ongoing debate about two presidential candidates.

The third student project here should also help you understand and think about rhetorical situations. Radharany Diaz's "Using Rhetorical Strategies to Examine War Protest" might look a little different from some of the essays we normally publish in *Stylus* (it's a Tumblr blog and an accompanying video), but I think you'll find her work to be no less insightful. Her blog posts on

rhetorical situations should be particularly helpful as you work to figure out what some of the scholars you're reading in class have to say about rhetoric. If reading Keith Grant-Davie's "Rhetorical Situations and Their Constituents" left you unsure of how to actually apply these concepts, Diaz's video should give you some ideas. Like Van de Water, Diaz shows us how individuals not only respond to rhetorical situations, but shape them through their own contributions.

The last two essays in this issue represent the culmination of student research projects in ENC 1102. First is Allison Walter's "Where's the Beef? Communicating Vegetarianism in Mainstream America." Walter covers a subject that you likely haven't thought too much about, unless, that is, you're a vegetarian. Through her research, Walter explores how vegetarians frequently have to navigate complex rhetorical situations in trying to explain their non-mainstream behavior to others. Walter's case studies offer a fascinating look at this everyday communication from the perspectives of both vegetarians and those around them. If you ever took for granted how simple it was talking about meals with your families and friends, Walter's article might get you to think again.

Last but not least is Julia Nguyen's "Canines and Their Companions: Unleashing the Chains of Sponsorship." Take a look at this essay if you're a pet owner, dog lover, or just interested in learning a little more about the notion of literacy sponsorship. Nguyen's research grows out of an ethnography of Fleet Peoples Park in Winter Park, FL, which inspired her (as a non-pet owner growing up) to ask just what it was that allowed all of these dog owners to come together at this site. This leads to a tracing of the sponsorship of knowledge about pet owning as well as a consideration of the possible consequences of those sponsorships. If you're thinking about literacies in your own life, you might be especially interested in Nguyen's review of literature in the first few pages of her article.

If nothing else, I think the five essays published in this issue serve to remind us that "good writing" is not some single, monolithic thing. Instead, writers adapt the way they communicate in order to shape the situations they find themselves in. At the same time—as both Pasqualin's and Nguyen's essays, especially, remind us—writers themselves are shaped by their experiences communicating in these situations: the skills and practices we pick up in one situation can be translated to another. So, while something like writing in the university might seem initially intimidating, we can perhaps find comfort in the understanding that all those different experiences and encounters we've had with writing can, in fact, usefully inform our work in these new and sometimes seemingly strange situations, especially if we can become aware of those connections.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Stylus* and find it to be helpful in your investigations of writing and rhetoric. We also hope that you'll consider submitting your own work for publication in the journal; at one time or another, all of the students published here were sitting in a composition class, just like you. To read about their experiences (and, sometimes, struggles) along the way from receiving an assignment to being published, be sure to take a look at the writer's statements accompanying each essay. I doubt that writing is easy for anyone; instead, we are all always learning. If nothing else, I hope the wonderful student writing you read in this issue will encourage you to consider embracing that very process.

-Matt Bryan