

# THE WRITE EDUCATION



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THE WRITE PROGRAM AT TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

## The WRITE Studio by Tee Graham

One of the best resources available to undergraduate students at TSU is the WRITE Studio in Jackson Hall. I was introduced to the WRITE Studio during fall 2011 and have since become a regular patron, utilizing its services at least three times a week. Equipped with personal computers, laptops, writing books (including MLA handbooks), and accommodations suitable for individual or group study with an atmosphere conducive to learning, the WRITE Studio is the perfect place to brainstorm ideas for composition projects, structure/edit a research paper, or obtain feedback on the first draft of a writing assignment.

As an English major, I have

personally benefitted from the invaluable advice and suggestions of the astute and proficient staff. The office coordinator, Ms. Kay Gaines, has provided words of wisdom using warmth, wit, and a dash of southern charm. Dr. Morgan-Curtis, who always responds promptly to e-mail requests for appointments, has helped me refine essays for scholarship applications, recommended new authors and literary works, and directed me through the graduate application process. The tutors, Ms. April Benson and Ms. Rebecca Bornac, have both applied their literary expertise to critical essays I have written. On a vital term paper, Ms. Bornac suggested that I include an element I had not considered. I



English major Theresa "Tee" Graham hard at work in the WRITE Studio

implemented her recommendation and received an "A" on that vital assignment.

## Tutors Available!

During fall semester 2011, students in participating programs began making their way into the study and workspace available in 220 Jackson Hall. The inviting space was designed just for the students.

Spring semester 2012, the



WRITE Studio averaged 29 visits per week with a total of 387 student

visits from February 1-May 25th.

Students came for the atmosphere conducive to writing and kept returning because of the resources and support available.

With more tutoring appointments available, we look forward to even greater growth for fall 2012 and beyond!

### Inside this issue:

Learning the WRITE Stuff!	2
WRITE Program Presents . . .	3
Prepping for Year 3	3
History Program Sponsors Writing Award	3
Writing in History at TSU	4

### Special points of interest:

- WRITE Studio introduces WRITE Associates.
- WRITE Program continues Faculty Development.
- WRITE Program moves into its 3rd year strong.

## Learning the WRITE Stuff!

by Michael Catanzaro



Michael Catanzaro, PhD  
Assistant Professor of English

**“As educators attempt to keep up with the changing technologies, the WRITE Program offers seminars and workshops to aid faculty members . . .”**



Keys to success!

Although most teachers recognize the need to utilize technology to enhance their classroom experience, the process of updating pedagogical approaches oftentimes seems intimidating and overwhelming. This process has become more complicated with an increasing number of students in the classroom and an expectation that instructors will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by e-mail, cellular phone, or some other technological application. Students have become demanding in expecting immediate responses to inquiries, oftentimes sent in the wee hours of the morning. Even though many faculty members already receive assignments by e-mail, there is a greater fear that the system will fail and all their efforts will have been in vain.

As educators attempt to keep up with the changing technologies, the WRITE Program offers seminars and workshops to aid faculty members in their transition to the inevitable embrace of technological advances that will, after a learning curve, help professors become more efficient as they utilize technological resources and establish technological guidelines that will enhance their professional lives. Although the WRITE Program is perceived as a resource for participating majors, many faculty members are aware that it also provides a forum for sharing insights. On October 12, 2011, Dr. Joel Dark, Associate Professor of History, presented an overview on creating Macros (keyboard shortcuts) for

responses to digital drafts. Many professors already grade essays online using a comment feature found in Microsoft Word and recognize that it is really a simple process that affords them opportunities not only to present responses that are easy to read but also to maintain permanent records of graded material. They already know how to place the keyboard cursor in the desired location, select “new comment,” and type a comment or message to the student. Some faculty members have already created a file with standard responses that they cut and paste into the comment box. Although this process can be time consuming, there is a general consensus that, in the long run, the grading process is easier.

Realizing that most professors who grade essays repeat consistent responses, Dr. Dark demonstrated how easy it is to assign a comment to a specific key on a computer keyboard by utilizing the Macro feature available in Microsoft Word. Each instructor has the freedom to assign any comment to a specific key. Some entries are very easy to imagine such as the combination of the “Alt” and “F” keys to place a comment that reads: Fragment or “Alt” and “C” keys to place a comment that reads: Comma Splice. Comments can be long or short. The people creating them have the ability to create comments that are meaningful to them and to their students. It is even possible to assign standard “overall” comments to a particular key. Some key assignments

are practical such as setting up the F2 key to create a blank comment that will allow instructors to enter a message quickly without going through the Microsoft Word program to get to the “new comment” feature. Although some instructors may think this Macro method is too rigid with an implication that all essays conform to a “cookie cutter” model with standard responses, it is worth mentioning that after the comment is entered it is still possible to add onto the comment or to personalize it to create a better fit for a specific situation. Dr. Dark even revealed how simple it is to include a Macro rubric, when returning graded material with comments, that provides students with greater insights of how their grades were determined.

As a means to function in modern society, it is necessary to continue to change with the technological advances. Although some embrace the changes quickly, there are still a few of us who are challenged by the changes that are expected to improve performance. Those who are skeptical or more hesitant to embrace change have found the WRITE Program staff to be understanding and patient as they explain how change can be beneficial and improve not only individual performance for teachers but also the quality of education in general.

## WRITE Program Presents . . .

This year, the WRITE Program took its “show on the road” (figuratively speaking). Program Director Samantha Morgan-Curtis gave presentations on the writing process, research, and documentation to upper-division students in Human Performance & Sport Sciences, Psychology, and History.

Dr. Morgan-Curtis introduced students to the

resources available for their use via the WRITE website and in the WRITE Studio.

Students had questions about academic integrity, proofreading, and editing. Overall, students were enthusiastic about the resources available.

Working with the faculty in these programs, Dr. Morgan-Curtis is already procuring additional resources to support writing

in the disciplines.

These presentations will continue for fall 2012 as other WRITE Associates become involved in creating and making these presentations.

Any faculty member teaching in a participating program should contact Dr. Morgan-Curtis at [write@tnstate.edu](mailto:write@tnstate.edu) for more information or to discuss a possible presentation.



Students focus on documentation.

## Prepping for Year 3

The WRITE Program is already looking toward and planning for the 2012-2013 year as we move into the upper-division courses of our participating programs. For fall 2012, faculty teaching upper-division courses in the participating programs will begin their training for using ePortfolio with their students.

Fall 2012 marks the be-

ginning of the third year of WRITE Program implementation as the incoming class of 2010 moves into the junior year. WRITE’s timeline called for a gradual implementation to bring a new year of students onboard for each of the first three years.

This fall will mark the first time that all aspects of the WRITE Program will

be underway and fully operational. This midway point will also see additional assessment as WRITE is already planning for its 5th year report.

**“The WRITE Program is already looking toward and planning for the 2012-2013 year . . .”**

## History Program Sponsors Writing Award

In support of the WRITE Program ePortfolio implementation, history faculty members created a student writing award. Ms. Maria C. Witherspoon, a rising junior in the TSU Biology program, has won first place in the University’s Sophomore History ePortfolio Writing Prize Competition, receiving an award stipend of \$100. “This is a blessing,” she said of the hon-

or, “and I am thankful.”

Ms. Witherspoon was awarded the prize for her essay on the Scotsboro Boys, which examined the famous civil rights case in terms of race, class, gender, and Southern culture.

The Sophomore History Writing Prize is the latest in an impressive list of distinctions for Ms. Witherspoon, who is a mem-

ber of the National Society of College Scholars, the American Medical Student Association, and the Meharry Medical School B.S./M.D. as well as the TSU Honors Program.

Second Place went to Takisha Young-Arthur in Africana Studies for her work on women mill workers.

See [tnstate.edu/history/historysurvey.aspx](http://tnstate.edu/history/historysurvey.aspx) for



Maria Witherspoon

more details.



[HTTP://WWW.TNSTATE.EDU/WRITE](http://www.tnstate.edu/write)

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The WRITE (Write→Reflect→Integrate→Transfer→Excel) Program is Tennessee State University's Writing in the Disciplines initiative designed to promote and reinforce writing skills systematically throughout a student's course of study. The WRITE Program is committed to assisting students in participating majors to achieve their full potential as communicators in their disciplines and vocational fields.



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## Writing in History at TSU



Spring 2012 History Senior Project Presentations occurred on Friday, May 4, 2012.

History students' program of study culminates in their capstone course. History Senior Project is above all process-oriented. In its focus on applied research methods, education as a life-long "journey," and the importance of excellence in writing, the course prepares students to leave TSU for graduate and professional careers in history, law, education, public administration, nursing, business and all destinations in between. The History Senior Project culminates in a research paper that represents

an undertaking that involves rigorous reading, annotating, and writing. It utilizes critical writing, intensive primary and secondary source research, and analytical skills honed in the early weeks of the course and across a student's progression throughout the history program.

The final project and accompanying presentation represent the culmination of several years of labor, drudgery, and dreams that these students have put into their college careers. The student presentations demonstrate what the students have learned as history majors over the course of many years of taking classes, writing papers, and enduring exams. Accordingly, this is a capstone course. It was designed (and has been modified) by Drs. Sheri Browne and Michael Bertrand. Each semester of teaching the course has been a learning experience, and not only for the students participating.

Each student chooses a topic of interest and develops a thesis question. The student then locates twenty-five (or more) pag-

es of primary source material (autobiography, letters, diaries, speeches, congressional testimony, and the like) which she or he will utilize to help answer his/her question. The student then annotates the documents as a means to understand the context in which they were produced. All annotations must utilize correct format based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*. At the same time that they are "getting to know" their documents, students also are reading the scholarship attendant to their topics. By the time the process is complete, students have written a research paper that produces a thesis, in other words, an answer to their earlier question. The research paper includes an introduction that provides historical context and a conclusion that places the student's ideas in a thesis statement within the context of the historical literature in the field. Students may also include pictures and appendices as appropriate. An annotated bibliography is also required.