Vertical Integration and Flipped Classrooms

We hear both of these terms often these days. Both terms apply to environments that foster student learning. “Vertical integration” means that students (ideally, both undergraduate and graduate students) collaborate with faculty on a research project, creating an apprenticeship experience. Students learn research methods by actually doing research under expert guidance. A “flipped classroom” is one where material is covered without a traditional lecture and the classroom is, instead, a place to grapple, interpret, and think.

These practices, which are so good for students, are also good for faculty. One of the more obvious benefits for faculty is advancing research and teaching at the same time. In the case of “flipped” classes, there is also an increased satisfaction from guiding students through higher order learning rather than witnessing the passive reception afforded by a lecture.

In the Thompson Writing Program, we have learned that when writing is the collaborative project or the focus of a flipped classroom, the benefits for faculty are especially striking. We guide students in approaching writing as a process, not as a product. Those of us who have led workshops on the research and writing process have discovered that opening up this process for others enables us to reflect on our own practice. When TWP faculty share with graduate instructors how to teach writing to undergraduates, we model how to learn from feedback and how to make use of the learning community in which one finds one’s self. We guard against old-fashioned default modes of teaching when we instruct others that even writing a syllabus can be writing done in community.

The ultimate flipped classroom is one where we offer our own writing as a focus of discussion. I have used my own published work as one model of scholarly writing, and I often share my drafts in progress with first-year students. They see the messiness of a monograph underway, captured in my notes to myself in the text, including bold reminders to “fix this” or the despairing “yuck” that betrays my frustration. I have seen students gain confidence from the example of a professor’s struggle and learn to trust their own responses to a piece of prose when the professor invites critique. I, meanwhile, become more accepting and patient with my own struggles and imperfections when I share them... and my writing improves.

This semester I will teach a revised version of an essay my students responded to last year. As my own graduate mentor once said, “You never teach as much as you learn.” In the TWP, we are lucky to be continually reminded of that fact.

BRANCHES OF THE TWP

- Writing 101: Academic Writing
- Writing in the Disciplines
- The Writing Studio

The TWP also conducts outreach with Duke faculty and students through workshops and conference experiences. Another TWP initiative supports international students with resources for non-native English speakers.
On March 24th, eight Duke undergraduates will present to a public audience at *Tell Your Story*, an intimate evening of personal narratives on the theme of “uncertainty.” The storytellers will use no notes or slides, but rely upon the strength of their voice and presence to simply and bravely share experiences from their individual paths.

Sponsored by the Language, Arts + Media Program (LAMP) and the Thompson Writing Program, *Tell Your Story* makes visible the range of personal stories that make up our larger Duke community and highlights the intellectual work it takes to make sense of experiences and convey them in a way that moves others. The art of personal storytelling for a live audience includes an oral component that harkens back to the generations-old tradition of sitting around a campfire. In telling stories to each other in such a way, we create a space to connect meaningfully through experiences that were lived apart.

This semester, LAMP is exploring personal narrative as a rhetorical strategy for making sense of experience and as a means of communicating ideas to broader publics. By creating a space for people to share their stories in a public campus forum, we invite our community to consider the composing and sharing of stories as both an important individual exercise and a scholarly enterprise that sheds light on what we value.

For this initiative, LAMP and the Thompson Writing Program have partnered with Jeff Polish, Founding and Executive Director of *The Monti*, a nonprofit organization with the mission of creating community
Story continued

“Their story, yours and mine—it’s what we all carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them.”
— William Carlos Williams

through the telling of stories. Polish, an expert in storytelling craft, has worked with storytellers in the Triangle area for the past seven years.

On January 22, Duke students had the opportunity to attend a workshop on how to choose their best stories and tell them well. Afterward, they were invited to submit story pitches. Eight undergraduates were selected to work one-on-one with Polish to craft and hone their personal narratives for a culminating storytelling event. Storytellers include a young Muslim struggling with identity and assimilation, a student learning to live with severe depression and anxiety, and a sophomore tracing an interest in public policy back to a high school job as a server in the hometown diner.

The time is right for paying explicit and strategic attention to telling stories and to reclaim storytelling as both an intellectual art and personal reflection enterprise. In addition to longstanding feminist arguments for valuing the personal chronicles of individuals’ lived experiences as both critical lens and evidence of material life, cognitive researchers have demonstrated the brain’s unique responsiveness to narrative structures. Rhetorical theorists explore not only how narrators reflect on their experiences, but also how stories work to inform, foster identification, inspire, and motivate change in listeners.

In recent years, storytelling has seen a resurgence because the means of circulating stories is rapidly expanding thanks to widespread access to digital video, podcasts, and blogs. Hybrid forms of storytelling that involve a central speaker in conversation with self and others—like public radio’s This American Life, the Moth Radio Hour, Radio Lab, Serial, and Snap Judgment—are edited and shaped towards a set of realizations, points of understanding, and arguments. These hybrid forms are examples of the ways storytelling in its many forms searches for the strongest, most thoughtful, and most persuasive means by which to communicate.

We invite you to join us on March 24 at 7:30 in the Nelson Music Room in East Duke 201 to hear extraordinary stories of uncertainty like those previewed above. Come see for yourself how stories can move an audience and even inspire us to consider our own.

— William Carlos Williams
Vicki Russell stepped down as Founding Director of the Writing Studio on December 31, 2014. Vicki first taught at Duke in the fall of 1996 as an adjunct instructor in first-year writing. She was tapped early on to help build and administer the first Writing-in-the-Disciplines programming at Duke. As a result, she came to the attention of then-Dean Robert Thompson, who envisioned a more robust and complete writing program. In 2000, Dean Thompson asked Vicki to launch Duke’s writing center. “It was challenging, but also exciting, to build something that had not existed,” Vicki relates. Like any scholar, she began with research: What kind of writing center would best fit Duke students’ needs? Despite careful planning, she was surprised at how quickly the Writing Studio took off: “There was an unmet need!”

Among the notable successes of the Studio is the fact that, from the beginning, about 50% of the one-on-one tutor appointments have been used by first-year students. This enables them to be well-launched in their writing lives at Duke and to draw on that support throughout their time here. Vicki is also proud of the programming she developed specifically for international students – some of the first academic support for them at Duke.

Under Vicki’s direction, the Writing Studio has become an increasingly vital resource for writers in both the Duke and Durham communities. It grew to encompass a course in literacy and tutoring (Education 255) that trains undergraduates to be peer tutors embedded in Writing 101 classes. Meanwhile, professional tutors who work in the Studio also support public school student writers at the Durham Public Library.

In addition, Vicki herself modeled for the TWP’s Lecturing Fellows how to integrate service-learning into writing courses. She also took on leadership roles as a consultant to other university writing centers, including the American University of Beirut. In 2005, she co-Chaired the annual conference of the Southeastern Writing Center Association.

Vicki continued to be a pioneer when she became the first faculty member from the TWP to lecture at Duke-Kunshan University. There, she taught a course that she also helped imagine and define: Writing Across Cultures. Thanks to Vicki’s energetic work, this first-ever writing course at the new university was also a service-learning course, which placed class members in the nearby Canadian International School. Like her previous endeavors, her teaching at DKU worked to build many kinds of community, not only a community of writers.

In retirement, Vicki will remain in an advisory role in support of the TWP’s partnership with DKU. Her wealth of experience and depth of passion will continue to be invaluable to the Thompson Writing Program.
The TWP had an exceptionally busy October in 2014!

The “Writing Is Like…” exhibit opened on October 9 in Perkins Library. It included the 16 most creative responses to last year’s National Day on Writing prompt, which asked the Duke community to describe writing through simile. Read the full story behind the exhibit on the Duke Libraries blog.

On October 20, the Writing Studio celebrated the National Day on Writing by collecting opinions from around campus on the future of writing. Given recent trends in social media, all responses had to be submitted in 140 characters or less!

October 24 saw the annual colloquium for Deliberations: A Journal of First-Year Writing at Duke University. The eight student authors presented posters on their Writing 101 final projects while visitors in town for Duke’s Family Weekend asked questions about the research. You can browse an electronic copy of the journal at the TWP website.

On October 31, a panel of experts came together to explore how stories help communicate ideas in the 21st century. The event, called Story as Evidence: Communicating Science, was co-sponsored by the Language, Arts and Media Program (LAMP), the Thompson Writing Program, and the Trent Center for Bioethics, Humanities, and History of Medicine. Videos of the discussions are available on the LAMP@TWP website.

Undergraduate Writing Workshop Series

These workshops are designed for undergraduate writers only. Register here for one of our workshops!

Quick Revision Strategies for Academic Papers:
March 5, Thursday, 4:00-5:00 PM, Perkins 218
So you’ve written a draft! Now what? Learn a variety of quick revision strategies you can apply to your draft to make your paper even stronger.

Read Faster, Read Better: Critical Reading Strategies:
March 26, Thursday, 4:00-5:00 PM, Perkins 118
In this workshop, we will cover basic strategies for reading texts with greater speed and comprehension. More importantly, we will look at ways to decipher the meaning embedded in the texts you read and critically evaluate those meanings.

Decoding Science: Tips for Reading a Scientific Journal Article:
April 1, Wednesday, 6:00-7:00 PM, Perkins 218
Scientific journal articles are essential reading in the many different fields in the sciences, from Ecology to Mechanical Engineering. Learn some methods for reading scientific journal articles quickly and effectively.

Writing a Winning Personal Statement for Medical School:
April 9, Thursday, 4:00-5:00 PM, Perkins 118
Creating an effective personal statement poses particular challenges for writers. This workshop provides tips and strategies to help you craft an essay that presents yourself, your values, skills, and experiences effectively to an admissions committee.

We also offer an ESL workshop series. Find all the details at the Writing Studio website.
The Thompson Writing Program is committed to using writing as a way to forge partnerships with the Durham community. From the Duke-Durham Writes Studio, a literacy-based collaboration with Durham K-12 schools, to the Duke-Ronald McDonald House of Durham Family Story Project, a narrative medicine project for pre-health sophomores, TWP faculty support the many ways in which Duke prioritizes engaged scholarship.

Each semester, select Writing 101 courses also provide Duke undergraduates with the opportunity to engage meaningfully with community partners. These partnerships, centered on writing, dovetail the intellectual and thematic inquiry of a particular Writing 101 section, enabling students to actively strengthen their writing through civic engagement.

Some Writing 101 courses include an official designation for Service Learning, while others integrate civic engagement through other means. Past Writing 101 projects featuring civic engagement have achieved a broad range of outcomes:

- Gathered oral histories and journal reflections from local nonprofit activists
- Volunteered with Durham community support organizations
- Created a documentary about ESL education
- Curated an exhibit for the Museum of Durham History Hub
- Tutored ESL students in Durham Public Schools
- Recorded the stories of local people living in poverty
- Socialized abused and neglected animals
- Researched the history of Mexican migration with public school students
- Created environmental education posters for the NC Botanical Garden
- Explored undocumented life in America with high school students of immigrant backgrounds
- Published stories about Durham activists with the Pauli Murray Project
- Enhanced a sense of self, family, and community through photography

Here a few more detailed examples from the list above:

**Created a documentary about ESL education**

Is the US becoming a multilingual society? Undergraduates worked with students speaking English as a Second Language (ESL) in a Durham high school. Together, they created a documentary about the high school students’ experiences with ESL education in US public schools. — “Multilingualism in the US,” Instructor: Dr. Nicolas Eilbaum, Spring 2014

**Socialized abused and neglected animals**

This course explored both historic and current topics regarding pets from a wide variety of disciplines and perspectives. Students were asked to volunteer approximately 20 hours at the Animal Protection Society of Durham over the course of the semester. First, students learned to socialize dogs or cats, many of whom had severe abuse and neglect in their backgrounds. Treating their volunteer hours as interspecies ethnographic data, students chose a research project topic; these ranged from the proposed use of shelter cats as hospital therapy pets to the exploration of cultural differences in pet-human relationships in China and the US. — “The Pet Connection,” Instructor: Dr. Nan Mullenneaux, Fall 2013

**Created environmental education posters for the NC Botanical Garden**

In this course, students examined the use of texts in nature center materials as means to inform, inspire, and incite. This analysis prepared them to create original nature center material: a poster on a threatened plant community in North Carolina. This group project allowed students to work with the guidance of local conservation scientists to create a professional environmental education poster which was displayed at the North Carolina Botanical Garden in Chapel Hill. — “From Woods to Words,” Instructor: Dr. Nicolette Cagle, Spring 2012

**Published stories about Durham activists with the Pauli Murray Project**

What motivates people to engage with their communities? For their final project, students in this class collaborated with the Pauli Murray Project to identify, interview, craft, and publish digital stories about Durham activists, many of whose stories had not yet been told. — “Who Cares and Why? Understanding Civic Engagement,” Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Ahern-Dodson, Spring 2011
Join the Thompson Writing Program’s Director of Outreach Jennifer Ahern-Dodson as she talks with faculty writers across disciplines about their writing lives. What does it look like when they sit down to write? What sustains them in large projects? When do they find the most joy in their work?

We are all writers. This series aims to build a scholarly writing community and to provide resources and opportunities for us to learn from each other. Earlier this semester, we featured faculty writers Julie Reynolds and Robert Thompson, who spoke about how they collaborate on writing projects.

This series is sponsored by the Thompson Writing Program and the Forum for Scholars and Publics. For more information about scholarly writing communities, please visit the Faculty Write Program website.

March 27, 10:00-11:00; Perkins 217
11:30 - 1:00 - Scholarly Writing Workshop: Sustaining Momentum in Large Writing Projects and The Pleasure of Producing Good Sentences. Light lunch provided. Registration required. Respond to writing program@duke.edu

Monique Dufour (Science and Technology Studies, Virginia Tech) and Aaron Sachs (Historian, Cornell University)

Monique Dufour is a visiting assistant professor in the department of science and technology studies at Virginia Tech, where she also directs the medicine and society minor. Before her doctoral work, she directed the University Writing Program. Her dissertation, Reading for Health: Bibliotherapy and the Medicalized Humanities, 1930-1965 (December 2014), is a cultural history of bibliotherapy, or “the treatment of patients through selective reading.”

Aaron Sachs is currently investigating the cultural and experiential dimensions of modernity through a study of Herman Melville and the 20th-century urban theorist Lewis Mumford. Both of these writers explored the trauma of radically transformed environments and environmental relations. Dr. Sachs serves as the faculty sponsor of a radical underground organization at Cornell called Historians Are Writers, which brings together graduate students who believe that academic writing can be moving on a deeply human level.

April 10, 12:00-1:00; Friedl 225
Join us at 11:45 for a light lunch. Registration required. Respond to writing program@duke.edu

Beverly McIver (Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Duke)

Beverly McIver grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina and received her BA in Painting and Drawing at North Carolina Central University and her MFA at Pennsylvania State University. McIver is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, among them a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Anonymous Was a Woman Foundation Fellowship, and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award. Her paintings are in corporate and museum collections around the country, including the permanent collection of the North Carolina Museum of Art. She recently joined Duke’s Art, Art History & Visual Studies department.

May 1, 12:00-1:00; Old Chemistry 011
Join us at 11:45 for a light lunch. Registration required. Respond to writing program@duke.edu

Laurie Patton (Religion / Dean of Trinity College of Arts & Sciences, Duke; President-elect, Middlebury College)

Laurie Patton is an accomplished scholar and the author or editor of nine books on South Asian history, culture, and religion. In addition, she has translated the classical Sanskrit text, The Bhagavad Gita, and has published two books of poetry. Dr. Patton has lectured widely on interfaith issues, religion, and public life, and consulted with White House offices on faith-based initiatives as well as on civic engagement.
In rows from top of stairs to bottom: (1) Adam Boyette and Daniel Ahlquist; (2) Julie Tuttle, Jesse Summers, Peter Pihos, and Aria Chernik; (3) Mara Kaufman, James Berkey, Katya Wesolowski, Jay Summach, and Joshua Davis; (4) Amanda Pullum, Kristen Neuschel, and Tara Kelly; (5) Brenda Baletti, Benjamin Gatling, and Cary Moskovitz; (6) Sachelle Ford, Rene Caputo, Matt Whitt, and Nicolas Elbaum; (7) Jennifer Ansley, Denise Comer, and Aftab Jassal; Not Pictured: Jennifer Ahern-Dodson, David Font, Nan Mullenneaux, Edward Pimiento, Marcia Rego, Lee Anne Reilly, Vicki Russell, stef shuster, Lindsey Smith, Mark Ulett, and Saiba Varma