

Pacific View

Fostering Safe Space: A Lesson in Language

by Barbara Williamson

This year, the theme of TYCA, to be held at the Doubletree in Spokane, October 12-13, is Politics and Pedagogy in the Classroom. Such a theme speaks loudly to the concerns of writing teachers who, as witnesses to students' emerging voices, often encounter nettlesome political issues in the papers that they read. One of the most controversial of these issues emerging out of recent media and political firestorms is civil rights for gay people. Spokane Falls Community College found itself at the forefront of this debate when a 2005 campus climate survey indicated a full quarter of our student population did not think SFCC valued gay and lesbian students, while fewer still believed we valued transgender students.

In an effort to address concerns about this perceived climate, and recognizing Washington State's commitment to fair access for all students, the Multicultural Diversity Steering Committee recently hosted a workshop focused on issues of sexuality and gender identity. Sixty faculty, staff, and administrators came together for a four and a half hour workshop to look at the climate for GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) students on our campus. Participants brought their concerns and frustrations about dealing with these controversial, often polarizing topics. Speakers addressed the history of GSAs (gay/straight alliances) on campuses and the shifting lexicon surrounding sexuality issues, as well as the power of language. Participants were given packets of information, including a glossary to define terms and a resource guide to national and local GLBT and GLBT-friendly organizations. Participants then took part in a gender fluidity exercise as well as brainstormed strategies for combating specific classroom and campus situations.



For instance, one scenario asked for strategies if one were to hear a student say to her friends "that's so gay" while walking to the cafeteria, while another asked what one might do if a boss made a blatantly homophobic remark.

The highlight of the afternoon occurred when current and former SFCC students stood and talked about their experiences of being GLBT at SFCC. As a result of this testimony, participants drafted action plans that SFCC could put in place to make the campus safer for all students. Those plans have been forwarded to the appropriate committees. Already the Facilities and Grounds Committee agenda includes discussion of gender neutral bathrooms, a problem the students addressed in their remarks. At the end of the workshop, participants were invited to sign up for the Safe Zone Project, an initiative that includes placing a student-designed Safe Zone sticker in a visible place so all campus community members will recognize SFCC's commitment to a safe educational space and so that a student in trouble will know where to turn. Those signing up for this voluntary Safe Zone Project also reaffirmed their commitment to being advocates for all students on our campus.

While we do not expect—nor would we want—everyone to view issues the same way, as a public institution, we must concern ourselves with the climate established for all of our students, both in and out of the classroom. Because we work with students who face these on-going issues, these conversations must continue. Thankfully, TYCA's 2007 theme gives us a way to continue these vital discussions about how to address the needs of diverse students while still respecting and honoring diverse viewpoints. Hope to see you there!

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TYCA Pacific Northwest 2007 Conference

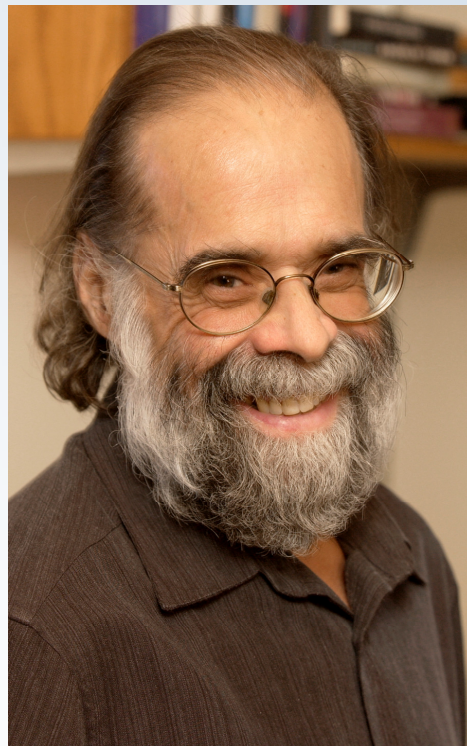
Pedagogy and Politics: Citizenship in the Classroom and the Community College

Please join us at the 2007 TYCA Pacific Northwest Conference. It will be held at Spokane Community College in Spokane, Washington on October 12-13. We are looking forward to welcoming you with thought-provoking speakers, tasty meals, plenty of wine, and much more.

As instructors, we realize the role we play in educating our students about their local, national, and global communities, and we find ourselves discussing matters of politics, religion, and academic freedom with them and with each other. We will consider these ideas through the conference theme, **Pedagogy and Politics: Citizenship in the Classroom and the Community College**. You are invited to submit presentation proposals on topics that address issues such as, but not limited to, community, citizenship, service learning, politics, discipline, and employment. Please send abstracts of 100 words or less via email to Betsy Lawrence at blawrence@scc.spokane.edu, or visit our website, <http://tyca-pnw.org>, to download a proposal form. The proposal deadline is Friday, June 15, 2007.

This year, a full registration waiver will be available for up to twenty adjuncts who are attending the fall TYCA conference for the first time. Registrants must send a check, which will be returned to them at the conference if they meet all requirements. For more details, please see the registration form at <http://tyca-pnw.org>.

We are pleased to have Dr. Victor Villanueva as our keynote speaker for the conference. Dr. Villanueva is an Edward R. Meyer Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts at Washington State University, where he has been Director of Composition, Department Chair, and Associate Dean. He is a former chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communications. His publications have been recognized by two national awards. In 1999, he was named Rhetorician of the Year. Among his other honors have been two teaching awards and designation by the students as the English department's most supportive faculty member. He has authored or edited five books and nearly forty articles or chapters in books, and he has delivered over ninety public speeches throughout the country. His concern is with the connections between language and racism. His conference presentation, "When Racism Enters Writing," will focus on the rhetorics of the new racism, and as such, will speak directly to the conference's focus on pedagogy and politics.



Dr. Victor Villanueva



The Fairfield Inn, Spokane

A block of rooms has been reserved at the **Fairfield Inn**, located approximately 10 minutes from the SCC campus. Shuttle service to and from the conference will be provided. The Fairfield sits on the edge of downtown Spokane, adjacent to the new Convention Center and blocks away from Riverfront Park, the Centennial Trail, and dozens of restaurants and shopping in the downtown area. The hotel features a complimentary continental breakfast, indoor pool and Jacuzzi, and free high-speed internet. All rooms are nonsmoking.

The conference room rate, prior to September 19, 2007, is \$104.00 for single or double occupancy. To make reservations, call the hotel at (509) 747-9131 and provide them with our group code: **SFCC**. For more details about the hotel, visit their website at

<http://marriott.com/hotels/travel/gegfi-fairfield-inn-spokane-downtown/>

This year's conference promises to be an intellectually stimulating, enjoyable experience—an opportunity to spend time with colleagues and, in the spirit of the conference theme, discuss our pedagogy and our politics with one another. In addition to Dr. Villanueva, we will be joined once again by Paul Bodmer, Senior Program Officer for Higher Education, NCTE. You won't want to miss these speakers or Friday's plans for a great night of dinner and entertainment. We'll be enjoying a fabulous Italian meal catered by a local company, and the dinner will be held in SCC's Hagan Foundation Center for the Humanities. And we'll wrap up the evening with karaoke! Please join us on October 12-13 for a weekend of collegiality and fun.



Lisa S. Ede

TYCA-PNW

Outstanding Teacher Award

In recognition of Lisa S. Ede's leadership and contribution to outstanding teaching throughout our region, we would like to recognize and encourage two-year college teachers in our region who exemplify innovation and creativity in the teaching of English, who have demonstrated outstanding teaching strategies that motivate students to excellence, and/or who have made a contribution to the field of English instruction at the two-year college level through professional development, publications, or service.

The Award

Two individuals (one full-time and one adjunct) will each receive a \$500 award and will be recognized for outstanding teaching and/or scholarship. The award winners will be selected by the TYCA - PNW Board, and they will be recognized at the annual conference luncheon. Nominees are encouraged to attend the conference. (Previous winners and TYCA-PNW Board members are not eligible for the award.)

To nominate, please visit

<http://tyca-pnw.org>

Regional Executive Board

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News from National By Eva Payne

Capturing the essence of the New York Conference of College Composition and Communication in March 2007 includes being able to picture *The Color Purple* as a musical and expands to the aroma of a Rueben Sandwich large enough to serve a family of four.

The conference was a feast for the eyes and appetite as well as for the ears and spirit. Dorothy Allison's compelling writing—fiction, poetry, and essays—foreshadows her incredible ability to keep an audience of listeners spellbound, too. Her well-attended session was an inspiration and a delightful surprise of laughter and tears. Allison's statement, "one of the strengths I derive from my class background is that I am accustomed to contempt," resonates with me as a community college instructor. Many of the students who populate my classrooms come from academic circumstances where little has been expected and even less offered. Her inspiring life story reminded me of how much difference the gift of words makes in a life—to those who are using them and to those who are teaching folks to use them.

The NCTE Headquarters report from Kent Williamson helped focus our attention on issues that are common across the country. Kent's report included the recommendations to the Higher Education Act starting with "every student deserves highly qualified teachers who are well-prepared in both content knowledge and diverse instructional approaches." While this particular recommendation is focused more on K-12, it has implications for college-level hiring practices too.

Other critical NCTE recommendations include a definition of "scientifically based" research, the multiple literacies necessary for 21st Century students (fuller details available at the NCTE website), and the notion that "alternative teacher preparation programs" be equal to traditional preparation.

The last of these recommendations includes the critical need to "enhance graduation rates and prepare students for success at the next academic level." The continuing discussion of what that preparation means includes, both locally and nationally, a definition of what skills and knowledge comprise college-level writing. It is a discussion informed by Howard Tinberg's timely book, *What Is "College-Level" Writing?* In Oregon, the State Legislature recently mandated higher standards for graduation from high school—and our population of developmental students at the community college is growing. These are clear signals that more alignment is needed.

The next Conference on College Composition and Communication will take place in New Orleans April 2 – 5, and the theme is Writing Realities, Changing Realities. More immediately, I look forward to returning to Spokane for the Northwest Regional Conference on October 12-13.

Conference Collegiality by Alexis Nelson

It's impossible to talk about the 4Cs without resorting to some cliché about the pleasure of connection to one's colleagues. For me, that pleasure is four-fold: First, it's enjoying the company on the town and out of town of my SFCC colleagues—Barbara, Bradley and Heather. We'd grab a quick bite between sessions and share ideas about using somebody else's presentation to improve our composition program; additionally, we attended Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*, emerging into the afternoon sun overwhelmed by the performance instead of drowning in the quotidian. Second, it's rooming with my TYCA-PNW buddy Eva in two hotels (adventures in both), talking about our programs, our lives, and issues that affect teaching. Third, it's connecting with the people who bind me to the profession: with Jeff Sommers, Sharon Mitchler and Greg Shafer, giving a panel to encourage submissions to *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*; chatting up Paul Bodmer at Tavern on the Green; attending TYCA Talks to see old comrades; or getting up ungodly early Saturday for the TYCA Breakfast. And fourth, it's appreciating the steady artisans of our craft, the people whose work I've been reading for decades: Peter Elbow, who won the 2007 Exemplar Award and Gerald Graf who continues to demystify academic culture for students. I admired again his clarity and his liberatory ambition, teaching students the rhetorical moves of academic discourse. And the dividend pleasure is hearing voices I've not yet read but can look forward to: Akua Duku Anokye whose chair's address reminded us of our elders' wisdom—that we're known by the company we keep, and Jaime Mejía who asks that everybody, not just first generation Chicano/a college students, come out of the safe houses of identity and meet at the crossroads of ambiguity. For the two year college, the conference was an ongoing pleasure, a challenge, and an affirmation of our distinctive labor.



A Note from the Chairs



Risë Quay

As composition teachers, we are asking our students to begin to think critically about their own work, and it is natural to extend this critical thinking to the world outside of the classroom.

It's easy to be cynical about the political process these days. With scandals from Watergate to Monica Lewinsky to the current troubles embroiling the Bush administration, it's hard to remember a time when we could trust and believe in our government and our leaders. Compound this with the increasing economic and political power of a minority of elites and corporations, and the outcry of "one person, one vote" begins to sound a little like a sad joke, perpetrated by the few to keep the many happy and deluded. It is understandable why tenured instructors might want to retreat from this irascible dialogue into the secure realm of the classroom, dealing with organization instead of the United Nations and commas instead of Congress.

It does seem to us that educators have a duty to engage students as citizens, not to indoctrinate them to a particular point of view, but to demonstrate that engagement with critical issues is fruitful, worthwhile, and valuable to themselves and to their communities. We need not

keep current events or politics at the center of our courses, but there is no reason to shy away from discussing them either.

This engagement is particularly important at the community college where we are bringing education and critical literacy skills to students who might not have the opportunity otherwise. At the community college, we are investing in the dignity and worth of each individual, we are creating an educated populace and an educated electorate, and we are deeply involved in the work of democracy, developing citizens who can think critically about the important issues facing our world today.

Community college students, by and large, are hungry – hungry for knowledge, hungry for achievement, hungry for the world, and we have the opportunity to give that to them. If we can engage them as citizens, then we have the opportunity to create a more engaged political process, which will extend out from our peripheral classrooms and into the center of our democracy. Regardless of funding cuts and political plays that involve our "bottom line," the community college remains the last and best place for many of our students to change their circumstances.



Samm Erickson

Practical Matters TYCA Blog: Colleague Connections

By Bradley Bleck, Spokane Falls CC

Last night, and it doesn't really matter exactly when last night was, I surfed over to the TYCA-PNW blog site and saw there were 20 visitors perusing some part or another of the site. In the days following last fall's conference, there were as many as thirty-seven visitors on the site when I dropped by. Thirty-seven! Depending upon when one drops by the site, there might be just a few, or quite a few, people reading and writing, but mostly reading, what is there. People are looking at our site at almost all hours of the day.

While the sort of traffic described above isn't going to excite the likes of YouTube or Google, it shows that we have been able to generate interest in our web/blog site; people seek it out and look at and for what's there. Some of them even post original blogs and respond to the blogs posted by others. This, to revert to a Martha Stewart cliché, is a good thing. What's not so good, however, is the dearth of people who actually log on to the site, post material and respond to the information and ideas there. What makes any site worth visiting is the hope of finding something new, which can be additional comments, blogs or other information. The more new and worthwhile material visitors to the site find on each visit, the more likely they are to return, and the more valuable our site as a communications and community building tool.

As the new webtender, I'm hoping we, as an organization, can increase not just traffic, but the posting of blogs, forums and comments. To that end, I've been revamping the overall "look and feel" of the site. The biggest change is promoting individual blogs to the front page. We might consider this a "user-centered" change, promoting the actions of our users to prominence. Despite the "promotion" of member blogs to the front page, the uppermost portion of the page will remain reserved for announcements of particular importance to the membership, such as conference information, TYCA national news and the like.

My hope is that TYCA-PNW members will feel greater encouragement to start their own discussion threads and having those discussions promoted to the site's front page will give them greater prominence. If you don't feel so bold as to have your blog posted to the front page, before you click the "submit" button, simply uncheck the "promote to front page" box, and your submission will be posted only to your personal blog within the blog.

This year, we've had blog postings regarding last fall's conference and issues of general concern to members, such as the role of grammar drills in the teaching of writing. I'm looking forward to more of this (and I hope you are too), so I have more to read and think about. It would be nice to see more of us responding to these writings and writers because these writers, in many ways, are no different than our students in their appreciation of feedback and discussion based on what they write.

The left side of the page will be used for navigational links for the major elements of the site. Below that is a list of links to blogs of relevance. If you know of or have one you think we should add to that blog-roll, let me know and I'll take care of it.



Similarly the right side of the page contains links to recent blogs, forums and responses posted within the site. This enables visitors to quickly see what is being discussed and if any new comments have been made since their last visit. The middle of the page will be taken up by member blogs.

Each month I'll do what I can to find some particular event or activity that is relevant to the teaching of English in two-year colleges, be it anything such as pedagogy, politics, composition, or literature. As with the blog-roll, I need help with this feature. If you know of something that is month-long, such as Black History Month (February) or National Poetry Month (April) that has relevance to the teaching of English in the two-year college of your choice, please let me know, and I'll do my best to feature it for all to see.

The TYCA-PNW blog is your blog. Please help me make it worthwhile to you and the work you do. Visit, log-on, read, write and comment. Click on the "Make this blog better!" link in the upper-right hand corner, and tell me what needs doing. Just as is the rest of our organization, the blog is only as good as what we contribute to it. Keep on blogging for a free world!

When you visit the site, scroll down so you can see below the log-in box, and you'll see how many people are logged in or poking around the site. If you don't have an account, click on the "create account" link and sign up! While anyone can browse the whole of the site with or without an account, only those with an account who are logged in can access attached files, such as those provided by one of fall's conference presenters.

Living History

by Christie Anderson

I don't know
what it's like to be Black,
to be in brown skin
with a dark history.

I don't know what it's like
to come from slaves,
Africa, across an ocean
to crowds of whites,
me, my hands freed
to be tied to the earth,
an earth I don't know.

I don't know what it's like to be Black,
to run and run,
hide, hope,
wonder if.
I don't know
what it's like
to wander,
search for home,
to carve
out a small piece,
only to watch it
burn on an earth not mine.

I don't know what it's like
to live crowded
in a tenement, share
a bathroom with my neighbor,
to be excluded
from a home
in the suburbs,
water my own grass,
plant flowers,
sweet woodruff, feverfew, sweet cicely,
in my garden. I don't know
what it's like
to live on earth not mine.

My mother tells me about Dr. King, marching arm in arm,
and Malcolm X, yelling, fist held high. She tells me
how she hurt to watch the news, see the fire hoses
turned on my people, the night sticks bruising
brown bodies, blood and spit spilling
from protesting mouths. Her cheeks hot,
a sigh, a kind of collective guilt,
anger and truth ascends
in her cigarette smoke, swirls
through her gray curls
into me.
I say, "it's over."

* * *

It's not.
Only in my garden.

Pacific View is published twice a year in the spring and fall by Spokane Falls Community College in conjunction with TYCA-PNW Association, an affiliate of NCTE.

All rights and title are reserved, but feel free to share contents with colleagues.

Submissions— We encourage submissions for four of our columns:

"Practical Matters," which gives specific classroom activities;

"Student Talk," which provides a student perspective on learning;

"Guest Spotlight," which addresses thoughts on theory or philosophy of teaching; and

"Poetry," a place where colleagues and students can exhibit their creative side.

Submissions should be 300-500 words sent electronically in an attached document form, preferably Word. Be sure to include your school affiliation, along with your name, address, phone, and email. Co Editors: Lori Monnastes lorim@spokanefalls.edu and Laura Read, laurar@spokanefalls.edu

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