

Forwards, and to You

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Introduction

In this WRS class, students were asked to apply course concepts to writing they encountered outside of class. Eassah Agyemang's creative nonfiction piece focuses on the purpose and impact of texts that are found around the University of Alberta campus.

Keywords: exigence, feedback, ghost, writing



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² *Writing across the University of Alberta* (WAUA) publishes undergraduate student writing from writing studies courses and courses focused on writing studies practices and scholarship at the University of Alberta. You can find WAUA online at <https://writingacrossuofa.ca/>.

December 3, 2024, 5:27 PM — Home, Basement

I know that ghosts aren't real. There is no presence in the empty halls of the University that haunts me. The students I'll never know, the ones who inhabited those spaces, are more glimpses than specters. Glimpses of people I don't know anymore—who I'll never know because of my inability to move forward.

But I've learned something since then. A way to grab hold of a potential future, a way to move towards people. I'm thankful for student forums and my disdain for Shakespeare. It led me to take this class, which gave form to ideas causing fog in my mind. A class that gave my spirit the urge to move from a standstill. Because my time in this class was coming to an end, I saw it fit to act on that urge.

I decided to go for a walk.

December 1, 2024, 12:03 PM — Rutherford Library, 5th Floor

I feel right at home among all these books. What I love about them, what I love about art, I learned to define properly in this class.

I developed my "Golden Rule," where I state that "writing is when somebody feels ____ about something and expresses that in some way."

I love all the things I do because I like to pick up on the author's exigence. More important than technicality, than structure or style, is why a person is creating something. That reason, that genuine emotion trumps all aspects of writing. It makes art. Why, though, do I even think art is important in the first place?

December 1, 2024, 1:14 PM — Rutherford Library, 5th Floor

I've got my WRS work in front of me. I've been trying to figure out my answer to the question I asked myself an hour ago. Reading my papers 1, 2 and 3 repeatedly isn't getting me anywhere. In desperation, I start to read them subsequently.

I wrote my first paper to warn myself and others about the harm in not being able to connect with people.

I wrote my second about the first, and the strength of exigence in art.

My third, I proposed a study on feedback, trying to determine effective ways to help writers communicate.

I now have my answer and another contrived rule to boot.

Art is important because it allows us to connect with people. With my first two papers I explored writing, saying something. In my third I proposed a study to improve how we read. How we

listen. My course-long exigence was to connect; connection unintentionally became the focus of everything I wrote.

And there is no connection without the writer or reader. To fulfill my course-long exigence with this paper, I want my experience writing to give me the ability to connect.

December 1, 2024, 1:37 PM — Rutherford Library, 5th Floor

My Golden Rule can only describe half of connection. I'll use a "Silver Rule" (trite, I know) to give myself an idea of how to perform the second half.

December 1, 2024, 2:54 PM — Rutherford Library, 5th Floor

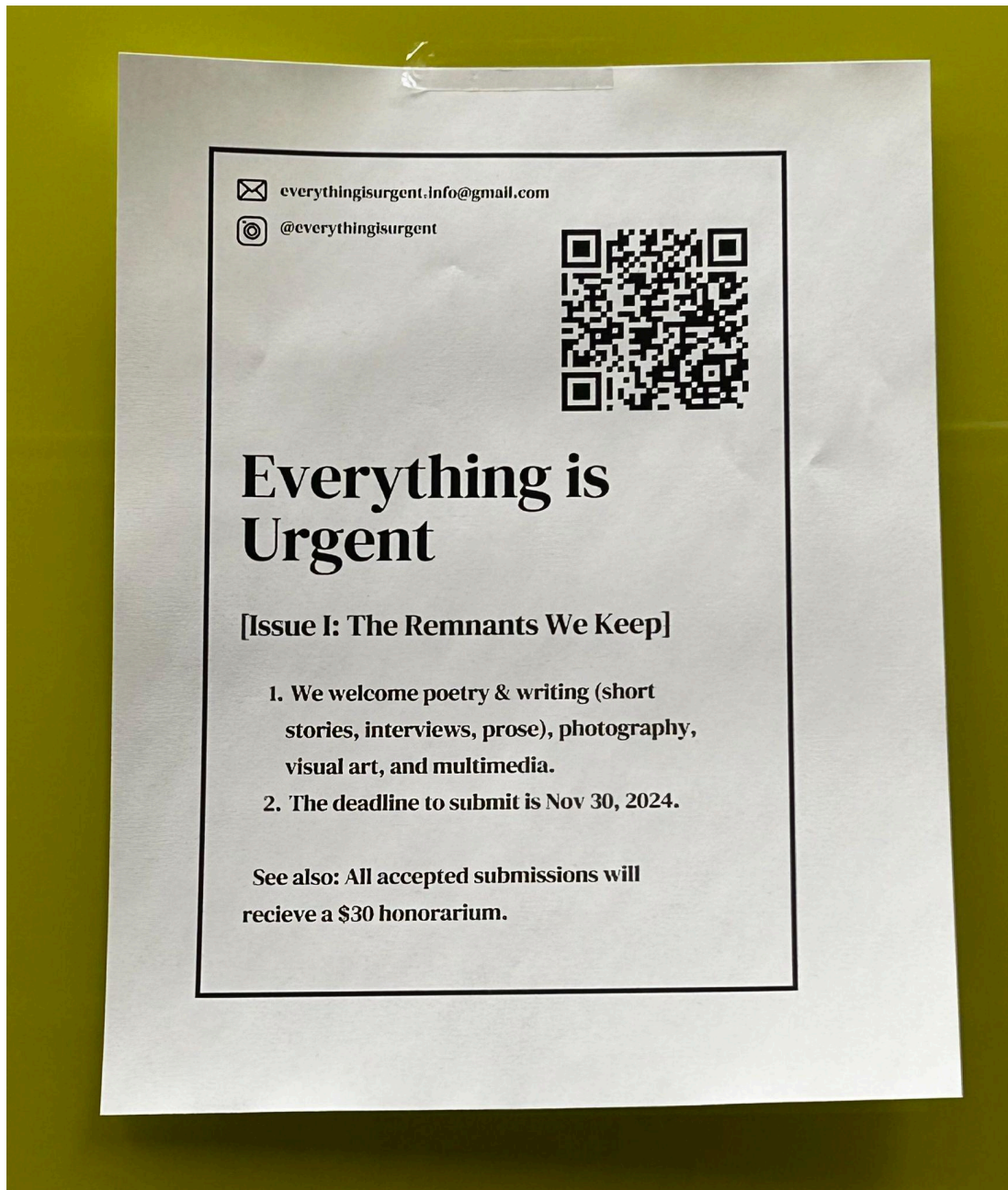
Okay. So reading is when:

- 1) You experience an expression. A book, song, anything. It's the polished final form of someone's exigence, the "some way" they expressed themselves.
- 2) You become "aware" of an expression. You pick up on the "something" they are expressing their thoughts on.
- 3) You understand the reason for the expression. Everything is stripped away but exigence. This is when writer and reader can connect. When something beyond words is exchanged between the two.

My goal is to connect with writing, with people, in the ways I can from now until I finish this paper.

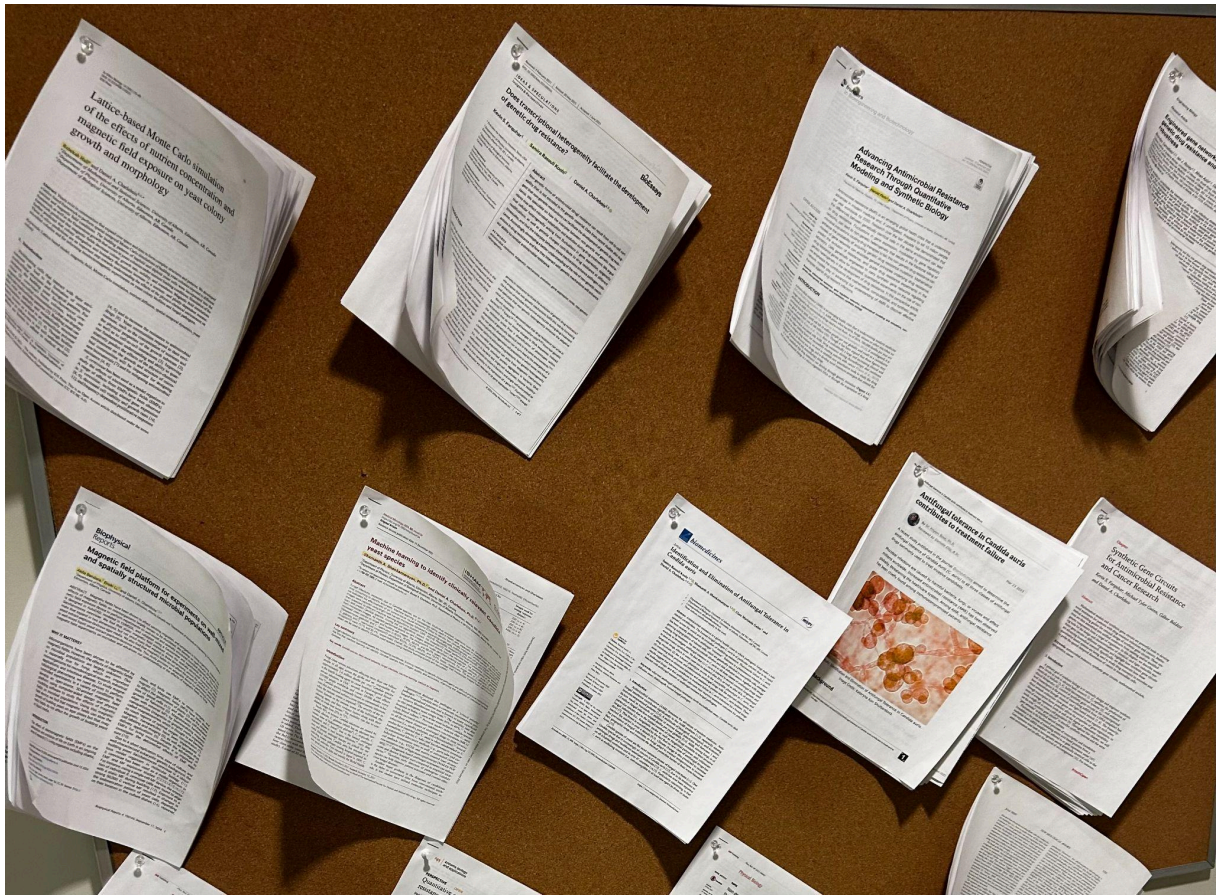
Precious Metals

December 1, 2024, 3:10 PM — Gunning-Lemieux Chemistry Centre, 1st Floor



A poster. It's looking for submissions to an art magazine, simple enough. But why? In this first issue there's a want to have a discussion about the past, and how we let it affect us. It says as much on their social media. I think the exigence here is found in the name of the project. Simply experiencing the expression led me to believe this thing's only goal was to inform possible submitters. But it's a call to action. "Everything is Urgent." It wants to create an environment where we frantically bring our ideas to life. Where saying something genuine takes priority over all else. I can only imagine the love for art the creator of this magazine has. Their reason is a want for us to care and create harder.

December 1, 2024, 3:51 PM — CCIS, 7th Floor



Academic papers. The expressions are facts, figures, and conclusions. The exigence? Can't be to make money; anyone who thinks that way about academia never survives long enough to publish. Their exigence is simply to show people what they know, what they think they've found out. We've been looking up at the stars and asking "why?" for centuries. That makes its way into the why of our writing. The reason here is curiosity. Nothing more, nothing less.



This is what you get when everything about writing is stripped away. The reason for these scribbles is to say “I’m here” and “I saw you too”. To write and read. To connect.

These derelict desks are worth their weight in gold.

December 3, 2024, 10:56 PM — Home, Basement

Looking over what I'd written, I was content. I've gone from filling the University's empty spaces with ghosts to experiencing the real stories of others that intersect here through writing.

But I'm here too,

With a story of my own to add.

December 3, 2024, 11:14PM — Home, Basement

We had our feedback session on each other's Paper 2 in class. Which meant we needed to read each other's Paper 1 first.

My situation the day this happened was not conducive to thoughtful feedback. I had a midterm less than 10 minutes after the end of WRS that day, and I was too antsy to even sit still. I sat down next to my partner, her paper "Don't Be Sad" in front of me. And I was late for my midterm that day.

I can't imagine how I must have looked, awkwardly sitting in the classroom chair, blinking back tears. I do know how I felt. "Don't be Sad" was about her self-imposed loneliness, about struggling to connect, and urging others to learn from her situation. Urging them to reach out and be honest with others. I became aware of her expression almost instantly. There was no need to try and dissect her rhetorical situation. I was her intended audience, and her exigence was my own. At that moment, I was sitting next to somebody who had the same reason for writing. It made me feel seen. It made me feel like it was worth writing my first paper on what I did. I had actually left class with enough time to make it to my exam. And instead of making a mad dash to the exam hall, I stood there, outside Tory. I stood there thinking about what I had just experienced. I stood some more to write it down. I stood there a while to dry my eyes.

And then I began to move.

Towards her, toward the other students here, towards anyone. With the things that I write and the things that I read,

I move forwards, and to you.

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