



Writing across the University of Alberta

WRITING ACROSS UNCERTAIN TIMES



Featuring work by Kevin Bouvier, Junhui Li, Feisal Sharif,
Reham Albakouni, Zhuoxin Wang, Sabrina Rivelazione,
Evan Martens, and Ishrath Khan

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Writing across the University of Alberta

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Writing across Uncertain Times

Welcome to Volume 3 of WAUA

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to present the third issue of *Writing across the University of Alberta* (WAUA) journal, which features undergraduate student writing from Writing Studies courses at the University of Alberta.

All works published in the third issue were produced during uncertain times when some classes were taught in person, whereas others were taught remotely, and there was a great deal of uncertainty for both students and instructors. Therefore, we decided to title our third issue “Writing across Uncertain Times.”

We received a great number of submissions for our third issue, and selecting texts was not an easy task. We want to thank all contributors for their fantastic work and for being available for editorial correspondence. We also like to thank Anita Parker for her hard work and dedication. Anita Parker served as an editor, and helped us with revision and editing, making publishing this volume much easier.

The third issue of WAUA features written works by **Kevin Bouvier, Junhui Li, Feisal Sharif, Reham Albakouni, Zhuoxin Wang, Sabrina Rivelazione, Evan Martens, and Ishrath Khan**. These contributions explore various topics and are presented in various genres. In addition, students whose works are included in the third issue come from various linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, we did our best to keep their authentic voices intact to showcase and enjoy the Englishes spoken around the world.

To those whose works were not selected for this issue, we encourage you to continue honing your writing style, and we hope you will consider submitting new pieces to WAUA in the future.

With the publication of our third issue behind us, we are now accepting submissions for our fourth issue, which we hope to publish in the Fall of 2023. Students interested in submitting their work will find information on how to do so here: <https://writingacrossuofa.ca/index.php/writingacrossuofa/about/submissions>.

We also seek volunteers to work as peer reviewers, designers, and copy editors. If you are interested, let us know at wauajournal@gmail.com.

Finally, we'd like to thank you, our readers, for choosing to read WAUA. We hope you will enjoy these lively and engaging written and visual compositions as much as we have.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bray, Anna Chilewska, Rigvi Kumar, and Anita Parker

Co-editors

December 2022

nikosis, kiwanêihtamin? tânita ohci kiya?

(My boy, are you lost? Do you forget where you come from?)

Kevin Bouvier¹

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Introduction

How have our lives been shaped by the words and languages around us? How have words created connection and meaning to our families and communities and the natural world around us? **Kevin Bouvier** explores these themes in the following literacy narrative based on his experiences growing up in Northern Saskatchewan. Kevin submitted this piece for *WRS 101 Exploring Writing* as part of his first year in the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program.

Keywords: Cree, Indigenous, language learning, language loss.



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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/>.

nêhiyâw napesis, kîwetinohk ohci kiya. I could still hear it clearly, one of the very first memories of kukom. It was at this moment that my identity was revealed to me while cradled in kukom's arms. I could feel the unconditional love coming from her round brown eyes as she gazed down on me, an unexplainable love that wrapped around my being and penetrated right into the heart. These words and the affection within them would change my whole life direction and send me on a journey to find that ***little Cree boy, who was from the northern bush.***

The soul and spirit that embodied kukom were truly a gift from Creator. She was a beautiful human, kind and full of love. Her heart was pure. kukom was an authentic ***nêhiyaw-iskwêw.*** Her face was full of a life lived in hardship, but also in love. Her hair was curled greyish white, almost like how Queen Elizabeth II wears it on the twenty-dollar bill. Her skin was warm and worn; she was no taller than five-and-a-half feet. Her voice was soft but had such effectiveness that no teaching would go unheard; I could still smell the tea and tobacco coming from her breath as she spoke. This was the collection of who was the ***Cree Woman*** that I loved so much. Caroline was the name she was given, but I never once addressed her with it; to me, she was always, and will always be, kukom.

My first early years were encompassed by kukom's teachings. Cree was my only language and was taught to me from birth. Everything I learned in those years was given to me in Cree, and everything I did revolved around the ***nêhiyaw miyo-pimâtisiwan.*** It was clear to kukom, and would be made clear to me, that this was going to be my life, the ***Cree traditional way of living.***

nikiskisin my first day of school. My teacher was a white lady from Southern Saskatchewan. She was a farm lady and was very kind. I remember her walking up to me and introducing herself, but from my ears' perspective, it was just a bunch of funny noises and a smiling face that greeted me. My initial reaction was to laugh because that's what my kukom and I would do when we heard anything other than Cree. I remember the teacher's face turning red, and she took me by the hand and led me to my desk; my journey with English had begun.

I quickly excelled at English as my school years progressed. I practiced every day, doing mounds and mounds of worksheets and routines, sounding out every word. I ordered books through the school, taking in anything and everything that I could get my hands on in English. There was no stopping me; everything else was secondary and forgotten! I got good grades and lots of attention for my newfound language. I participated in school plays, took on big speaking parts, and hosted many events so that I could practice speaking in public and

show off that I was becoming proficient. I had so much pride in myself, but it was at this point in my educational journey I noticed, what seemed to me at the time, something important was still missing. But what was it?

My high school years flew by, and I graduated in the spring of 1999 at the age of 15. I was young and had acquired a new language; it seemed to everyone I was off to great things. Armed with the language of the South, I would not have too many issues moving forward. Still, feeling something missing, I was off to Edmonton for my first job as an intern at the Royal Bank.

As I was saying my goodbyes to my family, I came to the most important person in my life, my kukom. As I hugged her, I felt a strange feeling, something I had never felt before. kukom's goodbye had a hesitation, a pause. As I stepped back to look at her, I saw some tears, and I asked, "kukom, what's wrong?" At first, she said nothing, but she would not let go of my arms. She took a deep breath and said, "**nikosis, kiwanêyihamin? tânita ohci kiya?**" I became defensive and hurt; kukom never spoke to me like that. She was always so proud of me, present at every event, and there for every award. I immediately answered, "NO! I am going to become something, kukom, something in the big city. I know who I am!" I left after that, feeling sad and scared because I never spoke to kukom like that. Why would she ask me, "**My boy, are you lost? Do you forget where you come from?**" Strong words from kukom, but they would prove effective.

I stayed in Edmonton for about six months, working, but in the back of my mind, kukom's words and her face constantly played, over and over. That feeling of something missing was back. It was early spring when I decided to go back home. I needed to put to rest the uneasy feelings and, most importantly, fix things with kukom.

After returning home and speaking to kukom, everything I felt and everything she felt became clear. kukom felt she was losing the little boy she raised—**nêhiyâw napesis, kîwetinohk ohci**. She invested everything she knew as a Cree person into me, and she saw it slipping away. All the time I spent learning and living the English language, I was losing my Cree language and life. It became secondary, almost not important. It was time for the **little Cree boy, who was from the northern bush**, to show himself again.

It was here that my career path changed. My life goals changed. I needed to find that little Cree boy again and give him his voice back. I have worked in the educational field since and have made it my mission as an **askiy-nêhiyawêwin okiskinohamakew** to teach everything kukom taught me to the children of my community. I run Cree Culture camps year-round, using the Cree Language as the foundation of my programming. Just like kukom, I have become a **teacher of the language of the land**.

Her legacy of living the ***nêhiyaw miyo-pimâtisiwan*** has survived; her investment in me came full circle. The ***Cree Way of Life*** will continue with the children of my community. kukom's words will be heard from the mouths of my children and grandchildren for generations to come.



ᓇᓇᓇ nohkᓄ (My Grandmother) Caroline Gardiner (1930–2003)

Letter to the Instructor

Junhui Li

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Introduction

In **Junhui Li**'s *WRS 101 Exploring Writing* class, students were invited to write an inkshed addressed to the instructor in which they could talk about how their writing has changed a bit over the term, what surprised them about the course, classmates or instructor, and what writing strategies they found helpful or useful. They were also invited to include an interesting detail about their hobbies, likes or dislikes. Junhui wrote the following letter to his instructor.

Keywords: cycling, learning, reflection, revision.



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How time flies; I can't believe it's already the last week of this course as I write this letter. I can still remember clearly the first time we met on Zoom; I was still quarantined in a hotel in Xiamen when we met each other. During these two short months, from time to time in our weekly class, we shared our recent experiences. This made me feel warm because I knew that you wanted to know more about me. Whenever you gave me advice about my writing, it felt more like a friend's advice than instruction from a teacher, and this made me feel at ease. Through your constant and patient guidance, I have really improved my writing. Although the changes may not have been dramatic or decisive, I still find myself more confident in writing and joining in discussions.

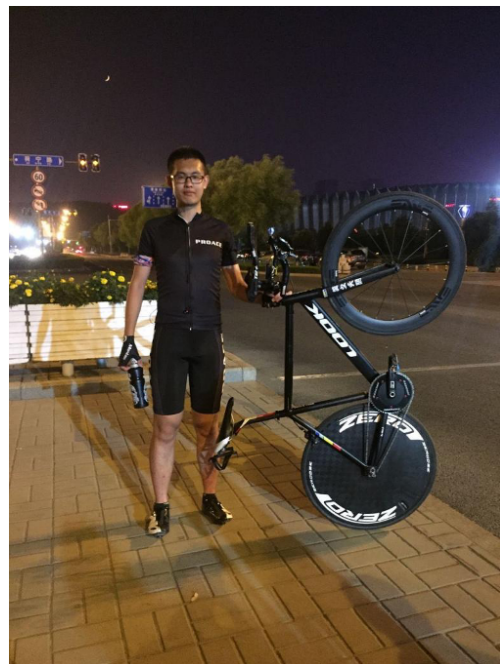
Although Writing Studies (WRS) 101 is a course about writing, the biggest thing I learned was not the writing aspect but the confidence. I can see from the design of the syllabus that you attached great importance to students' participation in class. It is no secret that at the early stage of the course, my motivation to actively participate in class activities was to get as many participation points as possible. Perhaps the temptation brought by 35% of the total score was stronger than my shyness or fear, and I gradually lost my inhibitions and spoke out what I thought. Two weeks into the course, I was no longer motivated by my grades but by my desire to share. This was the first time I realized I had changed. What's more, I can clearly see from this course how important revisions are. The first time I read "Shitty First Drafts" by Anne Lamott, I could hardly believe that professional writers also need to iterate on their first draft to get a better final draft. However, when I met with you about the first draft of Paper 1, I realized that Lamott was right because you suggested a large number of modifications. I revised my draft according to your suggestions, as well as to suggestions from our class tutor Crystal and other students. When I finally finished several revisions, the quality of my writing improved by leaps and bounds, and, to my surprise, I received an A-minus grade. Although my writing is still not perfect, I can see from this experience that even a C-minus piece of writing has the potential to become an A through revision.

When it comes to the course itself, I think weekly tutorials with Crystal, conferences with you, and student comments on each other's writing were very useful. This was a great opportunity for me to get advice from people with different knowledge backgrounds and different writing abilities. It is true that revision is a painful process, especially since it is difficult for me to discover my shortcomings, but the pain was greatly alleviated by help from you and others in the class.

What surprised me most in this course is about you. In the first class, you said you are from Poland, and your first language is not English. In the example of your Paper 1, if I

remember correctly, you mentioned that you were a poor English writer when you first began attending university. Your situation was almost the same as mine now, and it is hard to imagine how much writing training you went through to become who you are now. I don't think it's a miracle; it's a result of your effort, so maybe we international students can do as well as you in the future.

In the end, I want you to remember that I have the same hobby as you, which is cycling (although I'm so fat now that I'm out of breath after riding for a while). I started cycling in junior high school, initially just for commuting. In 2012 when fixed-gear bikes became popular among Chinese teenagers, I followed the trend and bought one. I joined a club called Grape Tree, which was founded by a famous track cyclist. Back then, I was full of enthusiasm and energy, went to informal competitions, and gradually made a lot of friends (even foreign ones, as I mentioned in Paper 1). I used to be so crazy about cycling that I even thought about giving up the chance to go to high school to become a professional cyclist, but finally, I gave up the idea after my parents scolded me. Of course, thanks to my parents, this was the right decision. Otherwise, I would never have had the opportunity to sit here and write this letter, or I would not be studying English at all. Here are some old photos of me that I wanted to share but never had a chance to show you. These are photos of me in high school when I was still in normal body shape.



Junhui and his bike

Ok, so this will be the end of my letter. I will return to Canada in September 2022, and I hope I can meet you on campus then. In addition, I will bring some Chinese tea for you to

try. If I remember correctly, you are also a tea drinker. I hope you stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic and have a happy day, every day!

Your student,

Junhui Li

2022/6/17

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Logos: The Question of Rhetoric

Feisal Sharif

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Introduction

Rhetorical appeals such as ethos, pathos, and logos are foundational concepts in Writing Studies courses. For this reason, we were delighted to read this succinct and insightful piece by **Feisal Sharif** about the appeal of logos. Feisal submitted this piece for a first-year Writing Studies course.

Keywords: evidential, fallacy, inferential, logos, rhetoric.



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Being rhetorical in common parlance has negative connotations associated with it. However, to the writer, being rhetorical is a tool that is essential to their toolkit. The natural question then is, “What type of tool is rhetoric?” The Greek philosopher Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Corbett 1-2). Rhetoric, to the writer, is the art of compelling the reader to be persuaded of the ideas espoused within the writing. Aristotle identified three main ways of persuading one’s audience: logos, ethos, and pathos. When a writer employs ethos, they are appealing to their credibility as it relates to the ideas they are communicating. In the case of pathos, the writer is appealing to the emotions, values, and beliefs of the audience. Lastly, when a writer is said to employ logos, they are appealing to the rationale and sense of their audience, and it is this rhetorical appeal we shall explore in greater detail.

The Appeal to the Mind

The term logos itself is Greek in its origin and has varying meanings, including *plea* and *reason* (Liddell and Scott). However, to appeal to logos is not to appeal to reason per se but to the reason of our audience. But why should a writer employ logos? It was Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, who famously defined humans by their rational faculty. Humans, Aristotle believed, were distinctly rational animals. Therefore, to appeal to our reason is to appeal to the essence of our species, and this consequently gives logos great persuasive force. How, then, is one to appeal to our reason? There are two main modes of logos: the inferential mode and the evidential mode.

The Inferential Mode

The inferential mode of logos is concerned with making valid conclusions (or inferences) from two or more premises. Aristotle further subdivided this category into two forms: deductive and inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is a type of logic where a conclusion results from two statements that are known to be true. The example below is a basic form of deductive reasoning.

Premise 1: Humans are rational animals.

Premise 2: Aristotle is a human.

Conclusion: Therefore, Aristotle is a rational animal.

Inductive reasoning is like deductive reasoning, but its conclusion follows with probability rather than with certainty. The example below is a basic form of inductive reasoning.

Premise 1: Most humans are rational beings.

Premise 2: Aristotle is human.

Conclusion: Therefore, Aristotle is a rational being.

If we examine the first premise, we notice that the premise does not universally apply to all humans; thus, its conclusion does not follow with certainty.

The Evidential Mode

The evidential mode is concerned strictly with providing supportive claims for an idea put forward by the writer. By way of example, supportive claims include statistical claims, facts, and anecdotes. Both the evidential mode and inferential mode taken together form the basic branches of the rhetorical appeal to reason.

Having now sufficiently explored the tool of logos, how can we use this knowledge to enhance our writing? How can we better appeal to the rationale of our audience?

Avoid Making Fallacies

The first recommendation to any writer appealing to reason is to avoid making invalid conclusions. Through the study of common fallacies, rhetoricians have been able to identify a multitude of fallacies that arise as a result of the general cognitive biases humans have. I shall introduce one common fallacy a writer can avoid to better appeal to the rationale of the audience: equivocation.

Equivocation is a form of fallacy where one word is used in two senses to draw a conclusion. Let us consider the example provided below.

Premise 1: (Only) man is a rational animal.

Premise 2: Julia is not a man.

Conclusion: Therefore, Julia is not rational.

Man, as used in the first premise, refers to humans in general; the second instance of man specifically refers to those who are male. Thus, the conclusion is a fallacy because the meaning of the term man does not sustain the same referent in the separate premises. By making an invalid reference, the writer's attempt to appeal to the rationale of their audience is hindered.

Use a Reliable Source

When making statistical claims in one's writing, using a reliable source for the information gives more credence to the claim made and thus better appeals to the reason of the audience. Using an unreliable source makes it more likely that the data is biased and thus

weakens the support of a claim. For example, if one wishes to make a claim about health statistics concerning matters like Covid-19, using a source like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ensures that the data drawn is less likely biased and thus gives more credence to the claim.

Are fallacies persuasive and thus a form of rhetorical appeal? I hypothesize that fallacies can, in fact, very much be persuasive. This is so because fallacies are a consequence of cognitive biases that can exist in the minds of the audience. If the audience is uninformed when it comes to identifying fallacies, it is likely that they will be persuaded and thus be moved by the ideas of the writer. If this is so, should writers employ fallacious arguments in their writing? The question is entirely prescriptive in nature and is an ethical consideration that must be brought to attention. If indeed the goal of a writer is to persuade the audience of their ideas and fallacious arguments allow for this, what are we to do? It seems that we have come full circle from our starting point of the negative connotations associated with rhetoric. Now we must create a system of justification where we can exclude unethical forms of rhetorical appeals while still upholding ethical ones. This question must be left to the moral philosophers and rhetoricians of our time. For us writers, we shall rely upon our intuitive moral compass in guiding our use of rhetorical appeals.

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Overcoming Writer's Block

Reham Albakouni¹

Writing Across the University of Alberta, 2022²
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Introduction

All writers get stuck at times. In this insightful quick reference guide, **Reham Albakouni** provides suggestions for writers who are suffering from staring at a blank page. This guide was submitted as part of the requirements for WRS 101.

Keywords: ideas, freewriting, reading, writer's block.



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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/>.

Do you know the plot, but you can't seem to get started? Or maybe you have an interesting beginning, but you're trying to get it perfect in your head before writing it down on paper. Are you afraid of being criticized by others? You're not alone! Every writer or creative person experiences this fear from time to time. The good news is that you've come to the right place. This guide will help you overcome the problem of writer's block and dive into your paper.

The first step is to know what kind of writer's block you have. Sometimes you have too many ideas, but you don't know where to start, so you start nowhere. This is called Too Many Ideas Syndrome (TMIS) (Jasheway, 2008). The name itself is overwhelming, but the solution is as simple as Jasheway describes to her students, "[A]t any party, there will be more women wearing black dresses than red ones—the red ones stand out and get attention. When faced with an overwhelming number of ideas, I try to evaluate them to see which one seems most like a red dress in a sea of black." All you need to do is to bring forward the best ideas and leave the others in the queue. You'll need them later.

Another kind of writer's block is not having an idea to write about. You stare at your blank page for hours and come up with nothing. The key here is to start writing anything that comes to your mind. Even if you think that your argument is weak or your idea is stupid, write it down and remember that you can always go back and fix it. According to Lamott (2005), "the only way [she] can get anything written at all is to write really, really shitty first drafts." No matter how hard you have tried or how long you have been stuck, just be patient and the world will give you the ideas you need and the words you want. The golden strategy that works for any kind of block is what author H. G. Wells famously said, "If you are in difficulties with a book, try the element of surprise: attack it at an hour when it isn't expecting it."

Recommendations for Students

W: Work on something else. After you've been stuck for a while, staring at your blank page, trying to force words to come, crumpling papers one after another, it's time to do something else! You need to feel productive again. Put your writing aside and go for a walk, solve a puzzle, wash the dishes, or do anything other than writing. Don't even think about your writing. Just let your subconscious do the work while you are distracted by another activity.

R: Read. The more you read, the better you write. If you don't have an idea to write about, read about the topic instead, and you'll get inspired by other writers' thoughts. If you have too many ideas but can't seem to pick the best ones, read anything, no matter what the

topic is. The point is to put yourself in the reader's shoes and see what attracts you most and what bores you. This will remind you to pay attention to your audience and think from their perspectives.

I: Imagine. When you make imagination your best friend, you'll have the capability to be creative. Imagination gives your brain the power it needs to make things up and form new ideas. Once you have a clear image in your head, it's easy to turn it into a story and put it down on paper.

T: Try free-writing. The idea of free writing is to write about any topic without any rules. Set a timer and start writing any word that comes to your mind without paying attention to spelling or grammar. Do not judge your ideas; just enjoy the process of writing. You won't like the result, but free writing can clear your mind. It's always easier to deal with a mess on paper than in your head.

E: Enhance your workspace. Find a place where you can be as productive as possible. Put on a comfy shirt, gather your writing tools, grab your favourite drink, and start writing. You will be surprised how your brain can respond in different environments.

Unanswered Questions

- What is the difference between writing anxiety and writer's block?
- If writer's block is a disease or a syndrome, is there any medication or cure for it?
- Can writer's block last for years?
- How can kids overcome writer's block?

Since understanding the problem is half the solution, you should think about the questions above and always find new questions.

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Writing is an Interactive Process

Zhuoxin Wang

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Introduction

Writing is a bridge that connects our minds to the world. **Zhuoxin Wang** explores how writing promotes interaction with life in general and with audiences in particular. This metacognitive reflection assignment asked students to reflect on what they had learned in WRS 101. Zhuoxin's piece reflects how writing is a social act—a lesson that we always hope to convey in Writing Studies courses.

Keywords: Aristotle, audience, feedback, writing process.



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Writing is the interaction between individual life, the objective world, and the process of constant interaction between self-mind. Interaction is the starting point of writing. Nowadays, with the internet and mobile phones, people compose text all the time, but they are getting away from actual writing. Writing isn't random posts on Twitter or Instagram that follow your mood; it is a process that needs to interact with life and initial and primary audiences.

Writing requires interaction with life. Most of our writing inspiration comes from life. When we interact with society, we also engage in the process of collecting writing content. According to Murray (2005), "Writers see the universal in the particular; they delight in anecdote and parable that reveals a larger story." In life, I find many gestures touching, such as the warm care of my family, the warm-hearted help from friends, and the kind smiles from passers-by. Many of these have been applied to my writing. As long as you have an optimistic attitude as you actively interact with life, inspiration for writing will be endless.

Writing requires interaction with an initial audience. Ami et al. (2020) say, "Writing is complex work, and the best writers rely on others for constructive feedback." Seeking feedback on your writing through peer review, course instructor comments, and writing centre appointments draws you into a writing practice community. This is because we may forget our readers as we write. We write from inside our heads and know what we mean, but the reader may find gaps in content or have difficulty following the logic or order of the ideas (Ami et al.). For an undergraduate student, the initial audience is professors and classmates. Feedback from your professors and classmates is indispensable as they show different perspectives and dimensions. Specifically, feedback from your classmates reveals their understanding and feelings about your draft. They can comment on your writing from their intuitive senses. As a course gets more in-depth, the professor's feedback will become more professional and comprehensive, especially when you sometimes make mistakes that your peers miss.

Writing requires interaction with a primary audience, which is beyond the initial audience of a single course. Aristotle advised that good rhetoricians will appeal to emotions to stir the audience to create the right kind of emotional conditions so that the audience will be persuaded by the speaker's argument (Ami et al., 2020). When you want to publish a final draft, your readership extends beyond your course professor and classmates; now, all teachers and students of the whole school may be primary readers. Interaction with primary readers becomes significant as the scope of readers increases. You need to consider the cultural background of the primary readers, that is, their understanding of technical terms,

and this will affect the depth of your writing. You also need to know the topics that the primary readers are interested in and sensitive issues, which will reduce the difficulty of your paper publishing. Therefore, it is essential to increase the interaction with primary readers.

Interaction is not always pretty because sometimes the feedback is harmful, and you will face a lot of criticism. This can hurt your motivation to write. As Ami et al. (2020) say, “Remembering that feedback is a gift that helps reduce that sting. Respond to feedback by thanking the person who gave it to you and carefully listening to (or reading) the advice.” When you get feedback, good or bad, be optimistic and increase your interaction with the person giving it to you. You can ask questions to the people who are providing your feedback or offer your ideas. It’s easy to have sparks of thought when discussing a problem, which can help you improve your writing. Still, if the feedback does not make sense or does not meet your course instructor's expectations, you may want to disregard it. You, as the author, are in control and can decide whether or not to implement the advice you get (Ami et al.). Don’t worry about feedback that is unhelpful; instead, enjoy interacting with your readers.

Writing is a process that requires constant interaction with life and readers. In this process, you can meet different people who can inspire you to spark new ideas. It is an exciting and meaningful process. Being grateful for positive interactions and being reflective when receiving negative feedback will improve your writing.

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What is the Most Effective Non-invasive Non-pharmacological Treatment Mechanism for Reducing Phantom Limb Pain in Amputees?

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Introduction

In WRS 102, students develop writing skills in various disciplines. For instance, students may focus on scientific writing for their work in this course. **Sabrina Rivelazione** chose to research a scientific question, asking what treatment possibilities are possible for those suffering from phantom limb pain. This assignment required reviewing peer-reviewed research articles and formulating a persuasive argument.

Keywords: mirror therapy, phantom limb pain, reflexology, treatment, visual feedback therapy.



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Phantom limb pain (PLP) is characterized by pain felt in non-existent extremities.⁴ Although present in those born without limbs, nearly 90% of amputees experience PLP.¹ Unfortunately, the causal mechanism of PLP is unknown, making it difficult to treat. Researchers are striving to find the most efficacious treatment, as 25% to 50% of patients report severe pain impairment reducing their quality of life.⁵ Currently, there is a long list of treatments, all with various degrees of success. These include pharmacological treatments, non-invasive non-pharmacological strategies (such as visual feedback, brain stimulation, reflexology, and hypnosis), and invasive surgical strategies.⁹ Recent studies have demonstrated that visual feedback therapies can revert cortical reorganization (a shifting of brain structure boundaries as a result of amputation); therefore, these treatments are promising for reducing PLP.^{7,9,12} Considering the uncertainty of effective treatment mechanisms for PLP, the question arises, what is the most effective, non-pharmacological, and non-invasive treatment mechanism for reducing phantom limb pain in amputees?

Visual Feedback Therapies for Phantom Limb Pain

Recent studies provide significant evidence of visual feedback therapies reducing PLP, specifically virtual/augmented reality therapy (VR/AR) and mirror therapy (MT).^{1,5,6,10,11} Modernized VR/AR therapies make use of computer-generated extremities, which provide functional, realistic, and intact visualizations of the affected limb.^{5,10,11} Currently, MT is considered superior to VR/AR due to its visual realism and simplicity. MT involves using a mirror to observe the reflection of an intact limb as it moves, which activates the brain's primary motor cortex. The sensorimotor cortex is organized so sensory information is directed away from the wrong part of the brain (the part connected to the amputated extremity), thus reducing pain.¹¹ Visually observing the reflected limb creates a sense of ownership, tricking the brain into assuming the painful sensory signals sent to the phantom limb have been accounted for through motor movement. This promotes MT's efficacy over VR/AR, as the reflected limb replacing the phantom limb is highly realistic compared to computer-generated extremities. Furthermore, research has demonstrated the real-life timing of MT's visual feedback contributes to PLP relief, as reducing time delays increases a sense of extremity ownership.¹¹ Since the invention of MT by Ramachandran et al. in 1995, this classic treatment has proved effective in many amputees.^{5,12} For instance, Chan et al. (2007) found 93% of their lower-extremity subjects responded to MT. When replicating the Chan et al. study, Finn et al. (2017) observed 89% of upper-extremity patients reporting declined PLP after a month; the daily time experiencing pain decreased from an average of 1022 minutes to 448 minutes, which illustrated the efficacy of MT.⁶

Despite MT's effectiveness, it requires an intact limb to operate and is therefore limited to unilateral amputees.^{5,11} Bilateral amputees require VR/AR to induce artificial visual feedback.^{1,10} The application of MT, VR, and AR therapies suggests kinaesthetic sensations of the phantom extremity reduce PLP.¹⁰ VR provides an entire virtual environment, whereas AR adds virtual elements to an existing environment.¹¹ Both tactics provide technological graphics representative of missing extremities. Participants in a study by Ambron et al. (2018) reported immediate, sizeable declines in PLP after a few one-hour VR sessions.¹ This study, along with many others, provides evidence of substantially quick reductions of PLP using adaptable VR techniques specified to unique patient characteristics.^{3,11} Researchers argue VR/AR therapies provide illusions of setting imaginary limbs to natural placements, away from biomechanically impossible (unnatural) positions, by deceiving the brain to believe the uncomfortable orientation is eliminated.¹¹ Additionally, transforming these therapies into gamification tactics motivates and engages patients to keep up their treatment, thus increasing their effectiveness. Overall, it seems VR/AR and MT therapies fill each other's gaps, making visual feedback therapies together to be quite promising for PLP reduction.

Visual Feedback Therapies Connected to Cortical Reorganization Theory

Visual feedback therapies are credited with reorganizing dysfunctional physical changes in the brain, and therefore appear to be highly valuable mechanisms for reducing PLP. One major theory connected to PLP is Cortical Reorganization Theory (CRT).^{9,10} The basis of this theory relates PLP onset to neuroplastic changes.^{9,11} Specifically, cortical reorganizations seem to occur in the somatosensory and motor cortices, with the degree of these dysfunctional arrangements relating to pain intensity.^{5,7,9,10} Essentially, the area of the brain connected to the missing limb (as per the brain's cortical map, which represents corresponding neurons to anatomical actions) is taken over by a neighbouring area. This activates neurons that previously interpreted motor and sensory input from the now non-existent extremity and thus initiates pain.⁵ Currently, visual feedback therapies are the main technique used to trigger sensations of phantom limb mobility and reverse these neuroplastic changes and reduce pain.^{5,7,10,11} As visual feedback dominates control over intersensory conflicts in comparison to other senses, it appears these therapies reset brain circuits of the missing extremity, getting them back on track and decreasing PLP.^{5,7,12}

Two recent studies have illustrated visual feedback therapies reducing cortical reorganization and PLP by manipulating brain structures back to their natural state.^{7,12} In one study by Thøgersen et al. (2020), individualized AR training reduced both PLP and cortical reorganization.¹² Seven patients underwent eight 45-minute sessions of AR therapy, with personalized phantom visualizations created with 3D-modeling software to enhance sensations of phantom limb ownership. Prior to and after the AR therapy, fMRI

neuroimaging scans were taken of a lip-pursing task to objectively measure cortical reorganizations. Results from the AR therapy found a significant 52% decrease of PLP, with post-treatment fMRI illustrating a significant cortical lip representation decrease and covariant PLP decline. Neuroimaging results indicated that lip representation reverted to its original place on the cortical map, thus supporting CRT.¹² Similarly, a second study by Foell et al. (2014) involved 11 subjects performing a similar lip-pursing task with fMRI scans done prior to and after four weeks of MT.⁷ Results showed a similar conclusion to the Thøgersen et al. study, where MT seemed to reverse cortical reorganizations in the primary somatosensory cortex. There was a 27% pain reduction, as activity in the inferior parietal cortex (the brain region involved in pain perception) decreased.⁷ Although these studies were limited by small samples, both experiments not only provide evidence for the effectiveness of visual feedback therapies but also demonstrate how PLP reduction is related to the CRT attribute. Therefore, results from both studies inevitably increase the credibility of visual feedback therapies as valuable treatment mechanisms.

Other Mechanisms for Phantom Limb Pain Reduction

Several researchers disagree with visual feedback as the most effective non-invasive, non-pharmacological treatment for PLP, believing other tactics are superior, such as non-invasive brain stimulation (NIBS) or reflexology.^{5,8,9} For instance, Kikkert et al. (2019) demonstrated that NIBS, specifically transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS), a treatment that delivers electric current to the brain, reduces PLP.⁸ The researchers instructed 15 unilateral upper-extremity patients to perform phantom hand movements during a 20-minute session of tDCS applied over the primary somatosensory and motor cortex. Neuroimaging, used during and after stimulation, evaluated the neural mechanisms of PLP relief. Results illustrated decreased PLP as a result of stimulation, and neuroimages showed reduced primary somatosensory and motor cortex hand activity after stimulation, correlating with pain relief. However, NIBS techniques have previously been shown to only alleviate pain in the short-term (less than 90 minutes), with longer-term effects yet to be explicitly tested.⁸

Brown and Lido (2008) proposed that reflexology (a treatment that applies pressure to the feet and hands) could self-treat PLP.^{2,9} They sent ten lower-extremity amputees into a five-phase, 30-week experiment. Patients recorded diaries regarding PLP duration and effects on sleep and life quality. The first two phases established individual pain patterns. The third phase consisted of weekly reflexology applied to the hands and remaining leg, followed by rest. The fourth phase implemented self-treatment teachings and more reflexology. The fifth (and final) phase involved asynchronous self-treatment.² Results showed relief from PLP symptoms, especially when reflexology was applied to the feet as compared to the hands. Unfortunately, most amputees find the feet difficult to reach, thus

limiting self-treatment. As reflexology is a newer mechanism, there is little research available, revealing a credibility gap for this treatment.² Both reflexology and NIBS have the potential to be efficacious PLP treatments; however, the lack of explicitly tested research on longer-term relief using NIBS, and the immense difficulty of self-application in reflexology, lowers the convenience and attainability of these tactics.

Conclusion

Based on research, it seems the most effective non-invasive, non-pharmacological treatment for PLP is neither MT nor VR/AR therapy, but the combination of the two; VR/AR and MT fulfill each other's limitations.^{1,3,5-7,9-12} MT adapts visual realism to phantom extremities, which is unattainable from VR/AR's computer-generated limbs.¹¹ However, VR/AR therapies are a more universal treatment, extending to bi- and poly amputees, and are not reliant on intact functional limbs.^{3,5,11} It seems logical that combining these therapies would solve individual treatment constraints and increase amputees' quality of life, as there is evidence both treatments reduce PLP as theorized by CRT.^{7,9,12} Although tactics such as NIBS and reflexology reduce PLP, the lack of evident long-term relief from NIBS and attainability issues of reflexology reduce their efficacy.^{2,8} Therefore, using VR/AR and MT visual feedback therapies in synergy would create the most effective, achievable, and long-lasting phantom limb pain reduction in amputees.

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The Elephant and Rider: Reflections on Impassivity in Professional Communication

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Introduction

In *WRS 210 Introduction to Professional Communication*, the students undertake a semester-long group project to develop a communication strategy and tactics for a local nonprofit organization. At the end of this community-service learning (CSL) project, the students write a metacognitive reflection on what they learned during the semester. **Evan Martens'** reflection explores his experience learning about the importance of pathos in professional communication.

Keywords: communication, CSL, interference, persuasion, professional communication.



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I once told myself, “Emotion has no place in serious communication.” “Sincerely,” I thought, “emotional rhetoric is weak rhetoric.” This mentality arose from my background in political science and philosophy. In these disciplines, furthering an argument on emotional grounds is seen as inauspicious, as if it were a way to hydrate a beached whale. I was shocked to find in professional communication, effective pathos is viewed in an entirely different light; it is seen as an asset that cultivates resonating impressions (Bray “Unit 4”). Soon, I turned away from professional communication as a whole, seeing it to be rife with manipulation and muddled irrationality. But my experience in the Community Service–Learning (CSL) project exposed a folly in this mindset. I have come to learn strong leadership is built upon a foundation of effective pathos, which can be bolstered by the so-called elephant–rider model of persuasion—an emerging way to conceptualize the goal of professional communication as both emotional and rational.

My CSL experience revealed eroding emotional consideration also erodes leadership efficacy. My direct leadership style, for example, stifled the group. Early on, I was dismissive of ideas, countering them with rationally calculated rebuttals. I do not fault myself for what ideas were dismissed, but for *how* they were dismissed. My delivery was often low–context, direct, and emotionally unyielding. I did not feel the consequences of this until two nights before the project was due; a group member approached me and expressed the view that the draft I had finished did not reflect their vision for the project. From my perspective, I had consulted them at every step; yet, here at the end, they were offering foundational (albeit excellent) ideas that I had not heard before. I was devastated. Instead of blaming that group member, I sought to apply Underwood’s communication model to analyze the breakdown (Bray “Unit 1”). The source (my group member) encoded messages throughout the term that were decoded by the receiver (myself). Vice versa, I encoded feedback that was decoded by my group member. I had to grasp that emotionality interferes in this process, and if my delivery had been too direct, even if I did not intend it to be, my message could have been decoded as dismissive or challenging. This communication interference was worsened by the fact that this group member was from a high–context culture, indicating either a tendency to reject directness on their part or a failure on mine to interpret their high–context criticism (Graves and Graves 193). In effect, my matter–of–fact tone was inconducive to fostering ideas; my group member was uncomfortable sharing their ideas with me for fear of being antagonized. And it exposed my failure to assess emotionality and its function of culture, which hindered my ability to effectively lead the group.

Recognition of this failure motivated me to revisit my conception of professional communication. Graves and Graves articulated the purpose of business communication as

persuasion (37). After CSL, I have come to realize that persuasion in a professional context is practically *sui generis*. To illustrate, consider Jonathon Haidt's elephant-rider metaphor; the elephant represents someone's emotional drive—their inclination, motivation, or bias—whereas the rider represents the rational brain (Pendleton). To persuade, you must appeal to someone's rider, but a rider will quickly lose control to an excited elephant. Academic settings generally deal with docile elephants because of the implicit set of expectations one has when they review an argument. But professional settings are far more encompassing, stylistic, and less predictable. When creating an advertisement, for example, contemplation must be made of the fact that the state of the audience's elephant is unpredictable, and a well-formed argument can be ruined by emotional predisposition (Graves and Graves 21). Thus, our group's social media posts during the CSL project needed to orient the elephant. We divided the workload so that I would write key messages and centre the rider, while another group member would create the posts. That group member selected colours, font, and imagery; when used tactfully, these elements can inspire feelings and establish credibility (Bray "Unit 7"). This process ran smoothly for the purposes of our group; however, in establishing this two-tiered model of professional persuasion, I realized I would need to develop both aspects (the message content and presentation) to succeed in future professional endeavours.

From realizing the salience of strong emotional consideration in professional communication, a problem emerged. How could I, a deadpan, emotionally relate to my audience? During CSL, I learned that this was the wrong question to ask. Instead of emotionally relating to someone, I need only to understand their emotions *in conceptu*. In other words, I need not disrupt my own elephant; I merely need to guide others' elephants. I can leverage concepts in the course to this end. In fact, I effectively employed a course technique when one of my CSL group mates did not complete their work by a deadline. At first, I wanted to directly tell them outright that they needed to get it done. I instead used a buffer statement. My approach was informed by research on positive and negative framing that suggests acceptance of a message is more closely associated with its degree of emotionality, not the content of the message itself (Rocklage). Having learned this, I sought to buffer my approach to the group member with goodwill statements. I first asked them how their week had been and how they were feeling about the assignment. This implicitly made my group mate have a positive disposition toward me, as predicted by the course technique (Graves and Graves 220). Unprompted, the group member told me why they did not meet this deadline and that they were working towards rectifying the situation. This was a eureka moment. Based on experience, I was fully expecting a confrontation, maybe even having to do their work for them. Instead, the moment passed graciously, and we both left with a smile.

What I have come to learn is that emotional consideration is inalienable from the concept of professional communication. By virtue of that fact, effective pathos is explicitly linked to success in the field. Further, those like me who generally view themselves as unempathetic have a chance to succeed in professional communications through recognition of the proposed elephant-rider model. My reflection on this further sparked my personal interest in parsing the difference between emotional *persuasion* and emotional *manipulation*, which is a broader conversation that may require an interdisciplinary approach. But what I wish to impart to you, the reader, is that you cannot ignore the elephant in the room.

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How Labels Both Impair and Nurture the Academic Performance of Gifted and Talented Students

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Introduction

In *WRS 102 Writing in the Disciplines*, students may write a reflective essay on a topic they had some personal experience with. The reflection was a starting point for their research: this was not a diary or personal journal, but an argumentative, academic essay. Students had to use their experience as evidence that supports, complicates, or conflicts with what the research says about the topic. **Ishrath Khan**'s essay explores what it means to be labelled a gifted or talented student—this piece deftly describes the conflicts these labels bring.

Keywords: academia, Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), influence, label, nurture, teaching.



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When you are told at the age of eleven that you are academically advanced compared to your classmates, you internalize that label and shape your academic self-concept on the basis of the expectations that come with it. From my primary to secondary schooling in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs, I was taught advanced content because teachers assumed my peers and I were above grade level due to our results on GATE screening tests. However, I believe that it was the label of Gifted and Talented Student (GATS) that propelled my academic performance, not the program style of GATE. For instance, I viewed myself as a high achiever because I was told by my teachers that I was self-disciplined and talented enough to accomplish anything I set my mind to. Moreover, my teachers fostered my academic performance by building a good rapport with me and creating a nurturing learning environment. I was excited to learn advanced content about the human body in my science classes and debate critical political issues in my social studies classes because I knew I was capable and well-equipped to do so. If you tell a student that they have the potential to achieve academic success and give them the means to do so, they are highly likely to fulfill these expectations (Elhoweris, 2008).

Whenever I failed to meet the expectations of a GATS, I would be excessively critical of myself and spiral into a pattern of overworking and burnout. Instead of being confident in my abilities as a student because of my GATE enrolment and the expectations others had of me, I was overwhelmed with self-doubt and felt the need to overcompensate. Because of experiences like these, I am able to critique GATE on the basis of my history in it. As a psychology major, I am now able to assess the consequences of the GATS label on my mental health and profile as a student. On account of my knowledge of psycho-sociological theories and concepts, I have a deeper understanding of how labels and expectations have both nurtured and impaired my academic performance because of my academic self-concept and my teachers' behaviours, respectively. How do labels and expectations influence a GATS' academic performance? I argue that the labels we put on GATS influence their academic self-concept and their teachers' behaviours, and this is what shapes their academic performance.

Impairment of Students' Academic Self-Concept

The GATS label distorted my academic self-concept, making me believe that I had to achieve certain grades or accolades in order to be a good student. I felt ashamed when I did not perform well compared to my classmates because I was not meeting the expectations of the label. On the other hand, when I did perform well, it was because I believed in my capacity to achieve my goals, which was due to the praise that came with the GATS label. Siegle et al. (2020) examined this effect in their study of perspectives of overachieving GATS,

deducing that when GATS have confidence in their skills, they have high levels of self-efficacy. The mixture of a fear of failure and a pattern of high academic performance plagues GATS with perfectionistic concerns (Grugan et al., 2021). The pressure of maintaining an academic standing and keeping up with the high-achieving students in my class made me obsess over having a flawless academic record. Consequently, when I did perform according to the expectations of my label as a GATS, I felt elated.

The downside of being labelled as a GATS appeared when I did not meet the expectations that came from myself and others. When I scored low on an exam or did not meet an academic goal, my self-confidence plummeted, and my academic self-concept wore down. Should a student's academic self-concept be solely based on test scores and awards? No. Rather it should be shaped by their self-growth in the learning process and optimal efforts to better themselves. Teachers and parents should foster a growth mindset within students. With a growth mindset, students will be comfortable with making mistakes, seeing it as part of the journey of conquering challenges (Wiley, 2020). Although I have come to accept that I do not need to meet the expectations of labels in order to have a strong academic sense of self, I wish I had done so earlier to avoid the negative impacts on my mental health.

Nurturing via Teachers' Behaviors

GATS are predicted to have high academic performance. Because teachers expect this, they make sure to facilitate the growth process (Peperkorn et al., 2020). Peperkorn et al. subsequently argued that GATS receive special treatment from their teachers in order to foster academic excellence; applying this method to all students would make a more equitable education system. My teachers always made an effort to build a rapport with me when I was in GATE, and this positive student-teacher relationship increased my academic performance. Teachers' positive expectations of their students are manifested in their behaviours towards them, as seen in the Pygmalion Effect (PE) (Rosenthal, 1981). After learning about the PE in my psychology courses, I made the connection between it and my experiences as a GATS. Under the influence of the PE, teachers create a warm social environment, give differentiated feedback, teach more advanced content, and give more opportunities to engage in class (Rosenthal, 1981). Teachers' positive expectations—that come from the GATS label—guide their behaviour toward gifted students.

Positive expectations shape gifted programming (Wiley, 2020). In order to accelerate GATS, teachers must ensure that advanced content is taught in a timely manner, alongside the administration of complex exams (Alodat et al., 2020). Teachers expect that GATS can handle a rigorous curriculum because they are above grade level, and the GATE program stimulates their potential (Siegle et al., 2020). My teachers would always expect high-quality

work and answers from my fellow GATS and me, making sure that we fix every flaw they pointed out. For this reason, I was primed to be the best student I could be. The benefit of this differentiated feedback is that it makes students more aware of their areas of strengths and weaknesses (Rosenthal, 1981).

The teaching strategies employed in GATE promoted my academic achievement. The rapport built between teachers and students was successful in creating a positive learning environment for myself and my fellow GATS. We were challenged and made to believe that we were high achievers, capable of grasping advanced concepts and accomplishing anything we set our minds to. Had my teachers not employed the PE, I would not have been able to perform as well academically. This is why I believe that the stratification of GATE programs and regular programs does not create an equitable learning environment for students and that equal attention and efforts should be invested in all students regardless of their labels. If all teachers treated their students the way GATS are treated, I believe that the net academic performance in schools would increase.

Conclusion

Fulfilling the expectations of a GATS did not leave me unscathed. With the bar set high, I often found myself losing balance as I tried to reach it. Did I internalize the GATS label and have an overall positive academic performance? Yes, and this benefited my academic career and opened doors for me. Was the bad toll on my mental health worth it? No, and I have yet to recover from these consequences. After reviewing the articles about the psychology behind GATE programming and reflecting on my history with it, I strongly recognize the influence of the GATS label and how it sets a precedent for students' academic self-concept and teachers' behaviours. As a university student, I am now more comfortable with my academic self-concept, and I am trying my best to develop healthy habits and adapt to my own definition of success. To me, it's not about having a certain transcript or receiving accolades; rather, it's about putting in one hundred percent of my effort and making peace with whatever outcome I get.

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