

# Anglo-Canadian Contexts for Writing



Roger Graves, University of Alberta  
Heather Graves, University of Alberta



# History of Writing Instruction in Canada: 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- 19<sup>th</sup> c. Change in society and mission of universities (Nan Johnson, Henry Hubert)
- Rise of the professional classes: preachers, teachers, lawyers, etc.
- 1920-1970s: Idealism supplants rhetoric; literature supplants rhetoric; English Departments supplant classics
- 1990s: Writing programs (courses, writing centres/labs/tutorial sessions) found throughout universities (R. Graves 1994)

# 20<sup>th</sup> century definitions of writing



- Tended towards reductive concepts of writing, the activity of translating sophisticated thoughts into clear words
- Poor writing in post-secondary education was viewed as symptomatic of weak students needing remediation
- Solutions included writing tests, remedial classes with a strong grammar component, writing centres housed in student services. . .



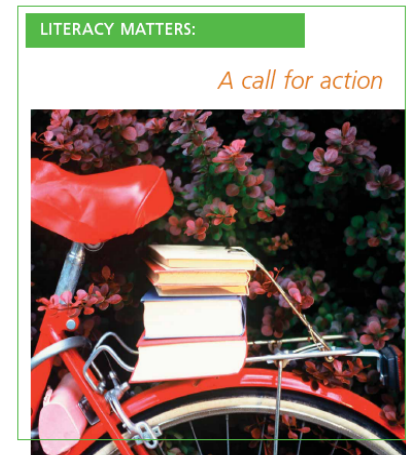
# Culture of Accountability

- Fordism, quality control, benchmarks
- Six Sigma
- ISO 9000
- Total Quality Management (kaizen: continuous improvement)
- Learning outcomes
- NSSE: National [US] Survey of Student Engagement



# Recent Statistics Provide Motivation

- “Between 11 to 14 per cent of Canadian-born university graduates aged 26 to 55 have inadequate prose literacy. . . roughly one tenth of Canadian-born university graduates do not have adequate prose literacy.” *Literacy Matters: A Call for Action* (p. 8)





# Cultural Movements Affect Education

- These trends in industry towards greater efficiency, continuous improvement, etc. extend to education
- In writing instruction these trends translate into a climate of assessment
- 20<sup>th</sup> century definitions of writing have changed
- No longer viewed as reductive or remedial

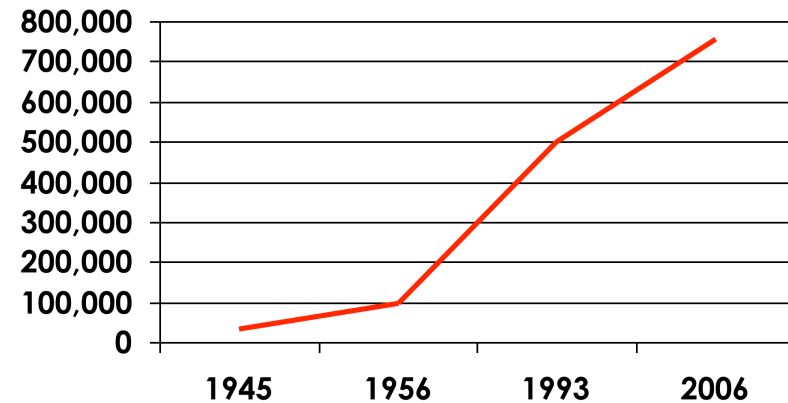


# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Developments in Writing Instruction

## 1. Increasing demand for higher education generally

- Participation rates up:  
Over 750,000 university  
students in Canada  
(Statistics Canada,  
November 2006);
- in 1945 there were 35,000  
students in all of Canada

University enrollments growing





# OCAV Guidelines include Writing

- Ontario Council of Academic Vice-presidents (OCAV) Degree Progress guidelines
- Item 4: Communication Skills
- “the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences”
- Defines writing in terms of argument, analysis (i.e., thought), and audience(s)





# National [US] Survey of Student Engagement

Broadly accepted measure in US and increasingly in Canada

Three questions specifically ask about writing

NSSE studies identify factors that improve student learning:

- Student interaction (peer groups)
- Student/teacher interactions
- Interdisciplinary links
- Scaffolding/bridging to previous knowledge



# OCAV and NSSE Influences

- Change how writing is conceptualized
- Focus on assessment (measuring outcomes of student learning)
- Exert pressure for change
- Institutions wishing to meet new standards must alter what they do and how they do it, especially regarding writing instruction



# Are institutions in Canada changing?

- Some yes, some no
- “Effective Writing Programs” (code for remedial, stop-gap measures) continue to limp along without much funding
- New kinds of writing programs are evolving, often alongside the effective writing programs



# Overview of writing instruction across Canada

Tania Smith:

- 17 degree programs; 21 certificates, cont. ed., community college programs
- Professional writing growing fast
- Centres proliferating; indicative of interdisciplinary nature of writing studies
- Some sample programs:



# Université de Sherbrooke



**UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE**  Chercher

**DÉPARTEMENT DES LETTRES ET COMMUNICATIONS**

Accueil Le département Programmes Baccalauréats Maîtrises et doctorats Certificats Mineures  
Microprogrammes Horaires Recherche Centre de langues GréIQ Dossiers pédagogiques Vie étudiante  
Personnel Ressources Nous joindre Babillard

**recherche** [rechercher] début 1606. Mail

FACULTÉ DES LETTRES ET SCIENCES HUMAINES

**Communication, rédaction et multimédia**

Le programme vise à former des professionnelles et des professionnels de la communication, de la rédaction et du multimédia polyvalents et aptes à assumer ou à prendre en charge toutes les étapes d'un projet : conception d'idées originales, recherche de documentation et analyse de contenu, rédaction selon le contexte de communication, mise en page en forme dédiée et diffusion sur de multiples supports (écrits ou électroniques).  
**(Régime régulier ou coopératif)**

**Personnel enseignant**

- ◆ [Céline Beaudet](#)
- ◆ [Denis Bélisle](#)
- ◆ [Julie Bonneau](#)
- ◆ [Hélène Cajolet-Laganière](#)
- ◆ [Karine Collette](#)
- ◆ [Caroline Dubois](#)
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- ◆ [Christian-Marie Pons](#)
- ◆ [Armande Saint-Jean](#)
- ◆ [Francois Yelle](#)

**CRM**  
COMMUNICATION  
RÉDACTION  
MULTIMÉDIA



# University of Toronto

15 Writing Centres spread across 3 campuses

2 academic programs:

- Writing and Rhetoric
- Professional Writing & Communication



## Writing Centres in Arts and Science, St. George

You are eligible to work with the writing centre at the college or campus where you are taking your course (NEW, SMC, TRN, UNI, or VIC), you may also take assignments from that college or campus.

- [Innis College Writing Centre](#), Innis College Room 322; book appointment
- [New College Writing Centre](#), Wilson Hall, Rooms 2045 and 2047; book appointment
- [St. Michael's College Writing Centre](#), Kelly Library, Rooms 230 and 231
- [Trinity College Writing Centre](#), Larkin Building, Room 302; book appointment
- [University College Writing Workshop](#), Laidlaw Library, Room 214; book appointment
- [Victoria College Writing Centre](#), Northrop Frye Hall, various locations; book appointment
- [Woodsworth College Academic Writing Centre](#), Woodsworth Room 214

If you are taking a course in **French** or **Philosophy**, you may be eligible to work with the [Philosophy Writing Centre](#) (926-2302) for information about its services for this academic year. The [Philosophy Writing Centre](#) also offers an appointment.

To find out about the free **group** workshops given by writing centres, ask at your writing centre.

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## Writing Centres at the Mississauga and Scarborough Campuses

- [Bob Gillespie Academic Skills Centre](#), Hazel McCallion Academic Learning Centre
- [U of T at Scarborough Writing Centre](#), Room 210C, Academic Resource Centre

Each year, UT Mississauga offers a full range of workshops and seminars. The U of T understands the demands of university level classes in science and the humanities.

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## Writing Centres in the Professional Faculties:

- Architecture Writing Program, 230 College Street; book appointments at 416-978-2828
- [Engineering Communication Centre](#), Sandford Fleming B670; book appointments at 416-978-2828
- [Health Sciences Writing Centre](#) (for students in Dentistry, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Medicine); you can now [ask questions](#) online too.
- [OISE Academic and Cultural Support Centre \(ACSC\)](#), Room 8-255, 25 Spadina Avenue

# U of Winnipeg Writing Centre



**Centre for Academic Writing**  
Major in Rhetoric and Communications

[UWinnipeg](#) [CAW Home](#) [AW Requirements](#) [AW Courses](#) [CAW Courses](#) [Major](#) [Joint Degree](#) [Faculty](#) [Tutoring Centre](#) [Links](#)

**Navigation Summary**

- Introduction
- CAW Courses
- AW Requiremets
- AW Courses
- Major
- UW/RRC Degree
- Centres - Lab

By words the mind is winged  
-- Aristophanes

Centre for Academic Writing Courses

**Current Year:** Fall, 2005 - Winter, 2006

Courses in the **Centre for Academic Writing (CAW)** teach writing as a means of discovering, developing, and revising ideas to help prepare students for success in academic studies and in subsequent careers. A number of CAW courses at the 2000-level or above are cross-listed with the Department of English and may be taken for credit toward a major in English, or counted toward any degree as electives.

**Degrees/Programs Offered**

- 3-Year BA in Rhetoric and Communications
- 4-Year BA in Rhetoric and Communications
- Joint Communications Degree/Diploma (JM/DC)

Students interested in either Rhetoric and Communications Major or the Joint Degree/Diploma program should contact the Centre for Academic Writing (786-9117) or view our web site for basic information. Students are also encouraged to seek advice for CAW faculty about appropriate courses.



# University of Saskatchewan College of Engineering



- D.K. Seaman Chair established “to enhance and expand the written and oral communication skills of practicing engineers” (MacLennan 199)
- Goal to redesign the required course for engineering undergraduates, “Oral and Written Communication”
- Replaced with GE300, a one-semester required course for in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> yr. engineering





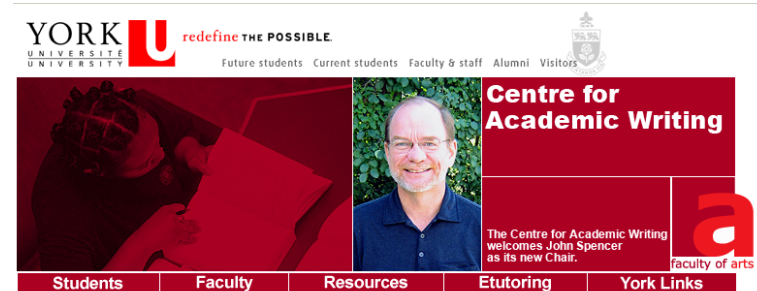


## Shift in course focus

- New course emphasized students developing rhetorical judgment
- “reflection-in-action” (Schon 1983): combines analysis of audience and context and exigence and purpose
- Future plans include writing courses and programs, including post-graduate programs

# Programs and courses proliferating

- Alberta, Winnipeg, Toronto, Western
- Growth across disciplines
- Focus on professional and discipline-specific writing
- Writing centres favoured as sites for growth—centres of teaching and research





# Future directions across the country

- Writing Studies emerging as a name for the field
- Research emerging and reaching critical mass

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Canadian Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Rhetoric and Writing. The logo on the left is a circular emblem with the text "ÉcRire WRiting" inside. The main header area contains the title "Canadian Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Rhetoric and Writing" and its French equivalent "Réseau canadien de recherches interdisciplinaires en rédaction". Below the header is a navigation menu with links for HOME, LOG IN, SITE MAP, CONTACT, and RHETWIKI. A search bar is located to the right of the navigation menu. The main content area features a welcome message: "Welcome to the Canadian Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Rhetoric and Writing!". On the right side, there is a "NEWS" section with a "Titre de la première nouvelle" and an RSS feed icon. A language selector is also visible, set to "English (Canada)".



# Professional organizations coordinating and growing

- CASDW (Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing)
- Inkshed (Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning)
- CSSR (Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric)
- CWCA (Canadian Writing Centre Association)



# Writing instruction: the next 25 years

- Hunt, based on his 25 years overseeing Inkshed, sees a mosaic of local initiatives
- Genre studies by Canadian scholars focus on writing learned as part of workplace activities
- WAC/WID should focus on developing similar activities within academia to support the learning of academic genres



# Writing instruction: the next 25 years

As Writing Studies grows as a field,

- increasing coordination between provincial systems of higher education
- critical mass of people teaching writing come together in professional groups, journals, conferences
- Funding lines up as assessment benchmarks arrive





# Writing instruction: the next 25 years

It will take all kinds of writing instruction to help the Net Generation develop as writers:

- tutors in writing centres
- internship learning
- academic writing classes
- discipline-specific writing opportunities



# Future of a Field?

Writing Studies courses, programs, and research

Growth of professional organizations

Increase in full-time employment positions

Tie-in to university mission statements