

Electronic Communication: Politeness, Power and Privacy

Heather Graves, English and Film
Studies (EFS)

Roger Graves, EFS and Writing
Across the Curriculum

WebMail

facebook



Heather Graves

Associate Professor,
English & Film Studies

Specializations:

- Business communication
- Technical communication
- Rhetoric of Science
- Academic writing for graduate students:
SSHRC-funded project and new course (2009)



Roger Graves



<http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/index.html>



[U of A](#)

[Centre 4 Writers](#)

[Webmail](#)

[EFS](#)

[Writing Initiatives](#)

Selected Recent Presentations

[Anglo-Canadian Contexts for Writing](#)

IUFM Poitou-Charentes, November 12, 2008

[Write your future: Arts Career Day](#)

University of Alberta, November 1, 2008

[The Shift to Visuals and Visual Design in Writing Instruction](#)

Grant MacEwen College, October 27, 2008

[Teaching Writing: A Primer for Graduate Students](#)

University of Alberta, October 21, 2008

[Top Ten Ways to Improve Your Writing](#)

University of Alberta, October 14, 2008

[Marking Essays: Designing Rubrics that Work](#)

University of Alberta, October 3, 2008

[The Power of Persuasion](#)

University of Alberta, September 10 and 30, 2008

[Huron University College/University of Western Ontario Writing Project: Writing through the curriculum](#)

Wilfrid Laurier University, August 27, 2008

I'm new to the University of Alberta, having come from the University of Western Ontario where I was Director of the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. In my new position here I'll be working with faculty and students across the university as part of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. I will also be working with students and faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies.

I am the author, co-author, or editor of four books and 29 articles, including *Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities*. My current research interests include the development of doctoral student writing, writing assignments across disciplinary fields, and rhetorical approaches to text encoding. Currently I serve as co-Vice-President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW) and a member of the Executive Board of the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Literacy (CASLL/Inkshed).

Books

A Strategic Guide to Technical Communication
With Heather Graves. Peterborough: Broadview, 2007.



The Brief Design Handbook, Canadian Edition

Centre for Writers



Writing Initiatives
University of Alberta



Centre for Writers

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Home > Home

12/15/2008 7:16:18 PM

Publications:



A Strategic Guide To
Technical Communication
By Heather Graves
And Roger Graves
Broadview Press
2007

Welcome to Centre for Writers

We offer **free** one-on-one writing coaching and support to all students, instructors and staff at the University of Alberta - in any faculty or at any level of study.

Our writing coaches are available to assist clients with higher order concerns in their writing, such as thesis formation, organization an idea development, as well as more specific details, like grammar and documentation style. Clients can bring in any writing project at any stage of development: essays, lab reports, creative pieces, scholarly articles, thesis drafts, application letters - and more. Our coaches will also help students read instructor comments on already-graded papers. ESL and EAL students are welcome!

<http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/>

Writing Across the Curriculum

I work with faculty members to increase the ability of students to write well using these kinds of strategies:

- Writing assignments in courses (formal, graded writing)
- Writing to learn (informal writing)
- Writing in the disciplines (special rules for writing in your academic area)
- Writing intensive courses (curriculum designation)

<http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/WAC/>



Writing Initiatives
University of Alberta



Writing Across the Curriculum

Home WAC Resources

Home > Home



The plan

- Electronic communication types
- Tone in emails
- Subject lines
- Privacy: CC and BCC

Electronic Communication



U of A Centre 4 Writers Webmail EFS

Selected Recent Presentations

[Human Ecology WAC Presentation](#)
University of Alberta, January 13, 2009

[Writing Across the Rehabilitation Medicine Curriculum](#)

University of Alberta, December 16, 2008

[Anglo-Canadian Contexts for Writing](#)

IUFM Poitou-Charentes, November 12, 2008

[Write your Future: Arts Career Day](#)

University of Alberta, November 1, 2008

[The Shift to Visuals and Visual Design in Writing Instruction](#)

Grant MacEwen College, October 27, 2008

[Teaching Writing: A Primer for Graduate Students](#)

University of Alberta, October 21, 2008

[Enhancing Student Learning in Introductory Biology: Phase I of the First Year Biology Literacy Initiative](#), International Society for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference, Edmonton, AB

October 16-19, 2008

With Ken Meadows, Tom Haffe, and Linda Dunn of the University of Western Ontario, Canada

Roger is now friends with Grace Brodie, 2:36pm - Comment

Roger commented on his own posted item, 3:58pm

Dec 31

[Totem pole shots](#)

4 photos

I'm new to the L the Program in new position in Curriculum Initi Studies.

I am the author, Universites. My assignments at President of the Canadian Association for the St Executive Board of the Canadian Association for

Books

[A Strategic Guide to Technical Communication With Heather Graves, Peterborough: Broadview, 2007.](#)

[The Brief Penguin Handbook, Canadian Edition With Lester Faigley and Heather Graves. Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2007.](#)

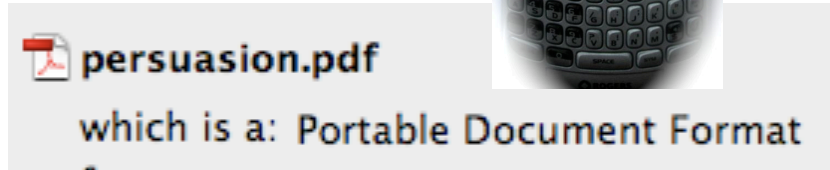
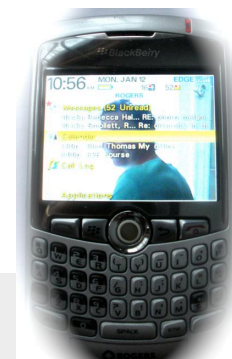
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Username: [input]

Password: [input]

Language: English (Canadian) [v]

Login [lock]



Activity report: Centre for Writers (C4W) and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)
Roger Graves, December, 2008

Centre for Writers

Activities

development of our new web site: <http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/> was developed by Becky Halliday. (samples will be brought to the

was organized by Becky Halliday; about half of the staff attended; some holidays (our plan in April is to have it just before the end of classes) ng to the week after classes ended, but usage was low rature and dividers: we re-organized the layout of the C4W to put r and to get some space between tutorial areas it: two new graduate students enrolled in EDSE 501; 7 undergraduate graduate paid tutors now number 12; overall, we have 23 coaches this d for the permanent director and corresponded with potential applicant

as house, Feb 25 10:2

Chat with Erin Graves

from **Erin Graves** <erinbgraves@gmail.com> [hide details](#) 12/2/08 [Reply](#)

to **roger.graves1@gmail.com**

date Tue, Dec 2, 2008 at 4:04 PM

subject Chat with Erin Graves

mailed-by gmail.com

3:25 PM **Erin:** did you get a chance to read over the thing i sent you last night??

3:26 PM **me:** i just saw it now--want me to read it now?

3:27 PM **Erin:** if you have the time... i'd just like to know what you think more than anything

3:28 PM **me:** ok give me a few minutes

Erin: so even if you don't have time to edit, could you read it for general suggestions? thanks!

facebook Home Profile Friends



View Photos of Me (1)

Edit My Profile

Write something about yourself.

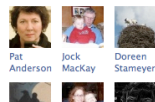
Information

Current City:
Edmonton, AB

Friends

21 friends

See All



Rog

Wai

U

Wf

Jan 6

Jan 5

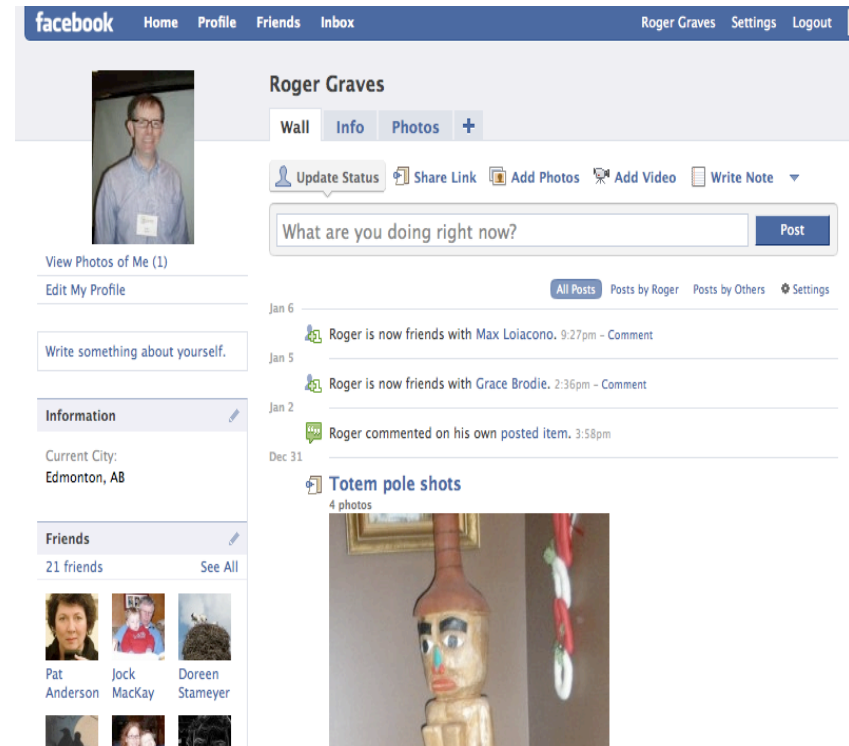
Jan 2

Dec 31

System Po

Facebook

- Social networking
- Informal language
- Personal pictures



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook profile for Roger Graves. The profile page includes a navigation bar at the top with the Facebook logo and links for Home, Profile, Friends, and Inbox. The user's name, Roger Graves, is displayed prominently. Below the name are tabs for Wall, Info, and Photos. A status update area is visible with a text input field containing "What are you doing right now?" and a "Post" button. The profile picture shows a man with glasses. The "Information" section lists the current city as Edmonton, AB. The "Friends" section shows 21 friends, with three friends listed: Pat Anderson, Jock MacKay, and Doreen Stameyer. The "Wall" section displays a list of activity, including friend requests and comments, with dates ranging from Dec 31 to Jan 6. A photo post titled "Totem pole shots" is visible, showing a wooden totem pole figure.

Web pages, web logs

- Less formal than print outlets
- Allow for (demand?) new forms of writing
- Accept a wider range of vocabulary and topics



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How the Mainstream Media Really Work, Part Fifteen

By **TODD BABIAK** 01-05-2009 [COMMENTS\(2\)](#) [THAT INTERNET THING](#)

The boss of the newsroom approaches with something for the writer to sign. It is an entry form for the National Newspaper Awards, the Canadian version of the Pulitzer Prize. Only really, really Canadian.

Writer: I don't know why I'm doing this. It's a waste of money.


Boss: Just [expletive] do it.


Writer: If you're not writing about something that happened in Toronto, or a really snooty column about architecture in a lesser city, or a human crisis in Bogotá... I guess all crises are human. Anyway, it's a total —

IM Chat

- Punctuation rules relaxed
- Short exchanges

Chat with Erin Graves

☆ from  **Erin Graves** <erinbgraves@gmail.com> [hide details](#) 12/2/08 [Reply](#)

to  roger.graves1@gmail.com

date Tue, Dec 2, 2008 at 4:04 PM

subject Chat with Erin Graves

mailed-by gmail.com

3:25 PM **Erin:** did you get a chance to read over the thing i sent you last night??

3:26 PM **me:** i just saw it now--want me to read it now?

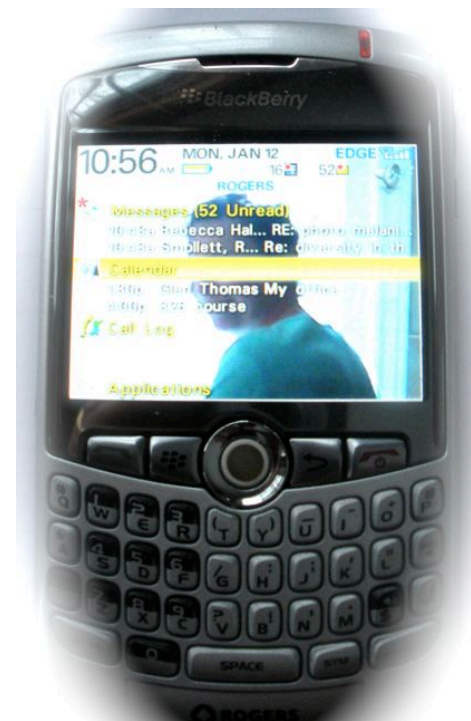
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Erin: so even if you don't have time to edit, could you read it for general suggestions?
thanks!

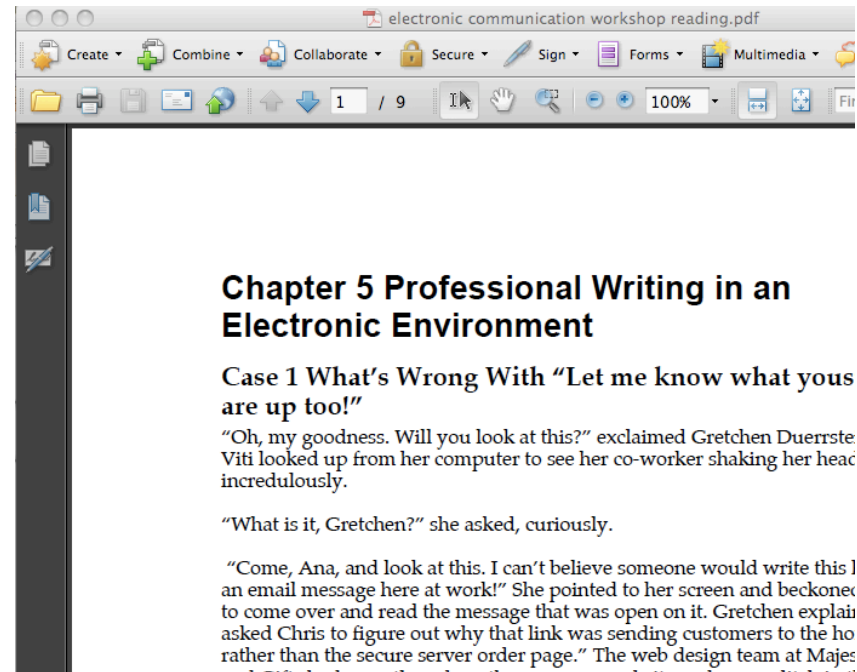
Portable devices

- More immediate delivery and response
- Shorter subject lines
- Attachments harder to read if available
- Responses shorter because of keyboard



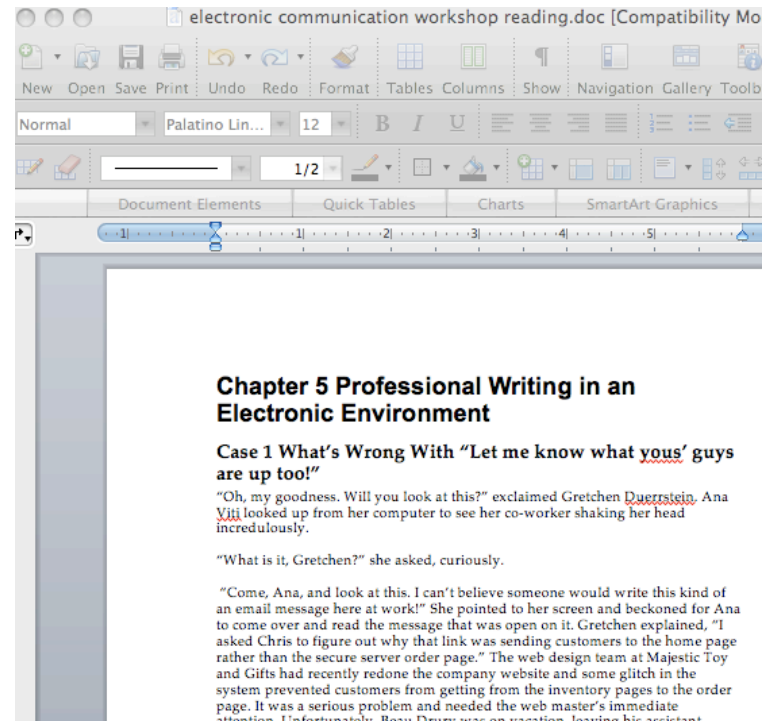
.PDFs

- Can be opened by most computers
- Consistent display format
- Print well
- Can be posted and downloaded from websites



.Doc files

- Allow others to collaborate or edit the source file
- Can be emailed and posted on web sites
- Depend on the recipient having a compatible version of Word



Email

- Now used primarily for professional purposes
- Relatively quick
- Can be used for file sharing and distribution
- Images can be embedded
- Some email clients now thread messages



Server

Username

Password

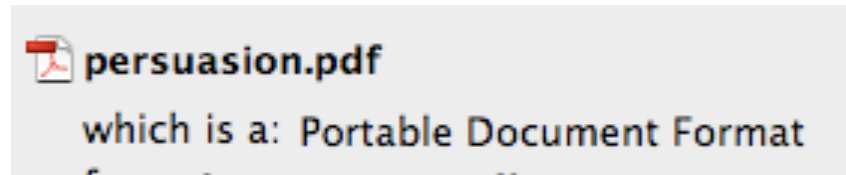
Language

Typical combinations



Server
 Username
 Password
 Language

+



+

Activity report: Centre for Writers (C4W) and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

Roger Graves, December, 2008

Centre for Writers

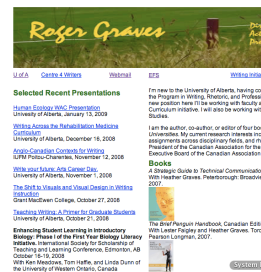
Activities

- [Melania Rucinski](#) led the development of our new web site: <http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/>
- A new promotional card was developed by [Becky Halliday](#) (samples will be brought to the meeting)
- Staff end of term party was organized by [Becky Halliday](#); about half of the staff attended; some had already left for the holidays (our plan in April is to have it just before the end of classes)
- We extended our tutoring to the week after classes ended, but usage was low
- We are ordering new furniture and dividers: we re-organized the layout of the C4W to put Becky closer to the door and to get some space between tutorial areas
- Enrollment/recruitment: two new graduate students enrolled in EDSE 501; 7 undergraduate students in 325; undergraduate paid tutors now number 12; overall, we have 23 coaches this term
- I helped publicize the ad for the permanent director and corresponded with potential applicant

Coming up

- Tentative date for Open house Feb. 25, 10, 2

+



Selected Recent Presentations

- [Human Ecology: The Presentation](#)
University of Alberta, January 13, 2008
- [Writing Across the Curriculum: Medicine](#)
CUTS/SAIT
University of Alberta, December 18, 2008
- [Roger Graves: Curricula for Writing](#)
LITM Public-Chairman, November 12, 2008
- [Writing Across the Curriculum](#)
University of Alberta, November 1, 2008
- [The 2008 to 2010 Visual Arts Visual Design in Writing](#)
University of Alberta, October 27, 2008
- [Teaching Writing: A Primer for Graduate Students](#)
University of Alberta, October 27, 2008
- [Encouraging Student Learning in Introductory Biology: Phases of the First Year Biology Course](#)
Biology, International Council on Scientific and Technical Education, October 16-18, 2008
- [Reading and Writing Curriculum: Introduction](#)
WAC/OWE/Medical, Tom Hefner, and Linda Dean of the University of Western Ontario, Canada

I am the author, co-author, or editor of four books: *University of Alberta: A History*, *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Handbook for Faculty and Students*, *Teaching Writing: A Primer for Graduate Students*, and *Encouraging Student Learning in Introductory Biology: Phases of the First Year Biology Course*. I am also the author of *Reading and Writing Curriculum: Introduction*. I am also the author of *Reading and Writing Curriculum: Introduction*.



Power

How can we use these communication technologies appropriately? Powerfully?

- Tone
- Formality
- Privacy



Tone

Create tone through

- Sentence structure
- Phrasing
- Word choice



5 rules for tone

1. Avoid the imperative.
2. Use hedges.
3. Use modal auxiliary verbs (would, could)
4. Respond to greetings appropriately.
5. Build goodwill in message openings and closings.



Tone: Formality

Problem

- Straight-from-the-lip, stream-of-consciousness responses rarely observe formal tones

Solution

- Proofread, pause, and ponder
- Develop ideas in your messages to provide context and qualifiers for your statements



Tone: exercises

- Individually, do Exercise 1 on the handout, Managing Tone in Written Communication
- In groups, share your answers
- Identify one answer to read aloud to the entire group



Power and Privacy

Electronic communications can be

- Widely distributed
- Quickly shared
- Copied effortlessly
- Forwarded indiscriminately

To ensure privacy, use paper, phone, or in-person communication.



CC: and

CC = carbon copy, the new technology of the 1800s for sharing copies of documents

Use cc: for

- people indirectly affected by the content of the message
- Signalling to the recipient that others are also being informed of the content of the message



BCC:

BCC = blind carbon copy

Use BCC to

- Protect the identity of others you are sending the message to so that their email address is not spread widely
- Avoid filling up the top of an email message with email addresses and pushing the message off the screen



Subject lines

- Use subject lines
- When the subject changes, change the subject line
- Readers sort by subject line
- No subject line? Your email may be deleted unread. . .



Tips for writing subject lines

- Use no more than 50 characters
- Place important information at the start
- Make your first word count
- Make subject lines self-explanatory
- Avoid words that trigger spam filters



Use 50 characters

- Most email subject lines display 60 characters
- Beyond that number, the information is cut off
- Blackberries and other handheld email devices show fewer than 50 characters



Place important info at the start

- Don't place important details where they will be cut off in the subject line
- Let readers know right away what the main point of your message is
- In short messages, don't put the whole message in the subject line; otherwise readers waste their time opening the message



Make your first word count

- Your first word should be descriptive and informative
- Avoid using articles or pronouns (an, the, your, my) as the first word
- Begin with a word that carries information



Make subject lines explanatory

- Subject lines appear out of context in a list
- Make subject lines comprehensible on their own
- Include enough information that the subject line makes sense



Avoid triggering spam filters

- Certain words attract the attention of spam filters
- Words such as free, guaranteed, and approved and formatting such as all caps or exclamation marks trigger spam filters
- Avoid words that may sort your message to the spam file
- Not everyone checks spam folders regularly for missing messages so yours could be lost



Subject lines: Exercises

- Individually, write a subject line for each email message
- Share these amongst the group at your table
- Nominate one answer for each to read aloud to the entire group



Putting it all together: Exercise 3

- Write Chris Maxwell's email
- Share these with the group at your table



5 email rules to live by

1. Email is as public as eating in the SUB food court at noon.
2. Humour travels as well as a 6 month-old colicky baby.
3. When a message reaches you that makes you angry or defensive, go on a Timmy's run and appreciate the long line-up.
4. Use standard edited English (or French) when writing email in a professional or business setting—save the IM talk for your kids.
5. Before you hit send, proofread.



Thank you and good luck!

- Look for our series of articles on this topic in *Campus Computing@* an insert in *Folio*