From the Center:
Announcements and Instructional Resources from the Simpson Writing Across the Curriculum program

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Our First Issue
The Simpson Writing Across the Curriculum (SWAC) program has been looking for a way to let faculty and administrators know what we are doing without filling email inboxes. You will receive monthly notes From the Center. We chose this name for a variety of reasons. Writing is central to learning. Writing is central to the ECC. The Simpson Writing Center is central to SWAC’s services for faculty and students, and we are centrally located in Dunn Library.

October Events
10/06: Late Night Against Procrastination
10/07: Drawing
10/13 – 17: Homecoming Decorations
10/15: Writers’ Studio, 4:00 PM in SWC
10/20: National Day on Writing

SWAC Update
The Simpson Writing Center (SWC) is the student service arm of SWAC. Staff in the SWC have been very busy this semester. Senior Consultants have already met with more than 50 writers; Writing Fellows have held 156 consultations with SC students; and SWAC staff have conducted 21 workshops. Thank you for inviting us into your classrooms and trusting us to work with your students.

Sr. Consultant Spotlight—
Jessica Routier is a second-year Writing Consultant who plans to graduate in May. SWC surveys show that writers believe she is “kind,” “smart,” and “tremendously helpful.

Jessica is part of what makes the SWC a great resource.

Thank you, Jessica!

SWAC 2014 Program Initiatives
This semester, SWAC is launching several new student programs.

The Simpson Plagiarism Prevention tutorial was released in September.

SWAC conducted a student writing workshop series focusing on four key differences between high school writing and college writing.

Beginning October 8, SWAC will offer a monthly Writers’ Studio. Students work from 4:00 PM until 5:00 PM in a directed peer review setting on in-progress writing. Registration is required.

SWAC staff design and conduct writing workshops for individual classes throughout the year, and Beth Beggs is always happy to discuss writing assignments with faculty.

For more information on these programs, contact Beth Beggs.

Thank you for supporting the SWAC program. With your help and trust, it will continue to grow over the next few years.
In-depth—

In each issue of From the Center, the “In-depth” column will address a single issue of writing or writing instruction.

Help for the “I can’t get started” or “I’m stuck” writer

We have all heard from writers with writers’ block. Most of us have also found ourselves staring at a blank screen or page as a deadline approaches. If you missed the link embedded in this column’s title, please take a minute to view the linked video.

Last week, the Texas A & M University writing center uploaded Can’t Write This. Their release is timely because this is the point in the semester when writers are beginning to encounter the dreaded writers’ block.

Whether the problem is unarticulated (but really good) ideas, boredom with the topic, confusion about the assignment, or simply the fear of failure, we should be prepared to offer some suggestions.

Professional Writers

Professional writers like Maya Angelou, and Barbara Kingsolver, have all complained of the temporary inability to compose. Because their success depended on writing, these and other writers learned to develop practices that help the words begin to flow.

Angelou combatted writers’ block through writing every day: “What I try to do is write. I may write for two weeks ‘the cat sat on the mat, that is that, not a rat.’ And it might be just the most boring and awful stuff. But I try. When I’m writing, I write” (Angelou qtd. in Temple).

Kingsolver asserts that writers’ block is merely an issue of mindset. She states: “I learned to produce whether I wanted to or not. It would be easy to say oh, I have writer’s block, oh, I have to wait for my muse. I don’t. Chain that muse to your desk and get the job done” (Kingsolver qtd. in Temple).

Practical Suggestions

Because the causes and cures of writers’ block are as varied as our writers, instructors need a toolbox full of practices that will help writers transfer thoughts to the screen or page.

The Purdue OWL, known for its vast number of resources and accessibility, devotes an entire page to suggestions for curing writers’ block.

Another resource, A Little Thing Called 750 Words, is a secure site that encourages regular writing. The site can generate daily email productivity reminders to those writers who produce daily writing.

Grammar Girl’s Quick and Dirty Tips is another great writing resource. Dozens of tips appear as audio podcasts and in transcript form. Here, Grammar Girl presents ten sure-fire tips for beating writers’ block.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that writers can beat writers’ block, often by simply reconsidering the project from a new perspective.

What are your best tips for writers’ block? Share your tips in next month’s From the Center by sending them to Beth Beggs.

Works Cited


Seeking Writing Consultants

Fall 2014 will be the last semester for several of our Sr. Writing Consultants. This means that the Simpson Writing Center will be hiring new consultants for spring 2015. The ideal candidates will be strong writers who are patient and diplomatic. Please send your recommendations to Beth Beggs.