



WRITER'S BLOC: THE WP NEWSLETTER



THE CELEBRATION OF MULTILINGUAL WRITING

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS:

As we turn toward winter break, we're delighted to share the second issue of *Writer's Bloc*—a celebration of the creativity and generosity that shape our program. Across these pages, you'll find accomplishments large and small, moments of insight, and reminders of all the wonderful things we do as teachers, writers, colleagues, and human beings.

This issue showcases the variety of our work: poems, translations, book chapters, conference presentations, collaborative publications—after all, we are all writers!

We again give glimpses into the many ways instructors are experimenting in the classroom, guiding students through projects that deepen their engagement with the world around them (don't miss the experiential learning outings, or the collection of Monster Movie reviews!). In particular, our ongoing "Colleagues in Conversations" series, with conversations this issue on cultivating attention and imagining multispecies minds, makes for inspirational reading, providing insights into five colleagues' classroom practices and how much we can learn from one another.

Finally, you'll find union news, updates from the Writing Center, student accomplishments, and recaps of the past semester's events that continue to enrich our shared intellectual life.

Thanks to those who submitted this time around—and to all of you for the energy, thoughtfulness, and compassion you bring to this community. We wish you rest and joy in the weeks ahead.

the Communications Committee

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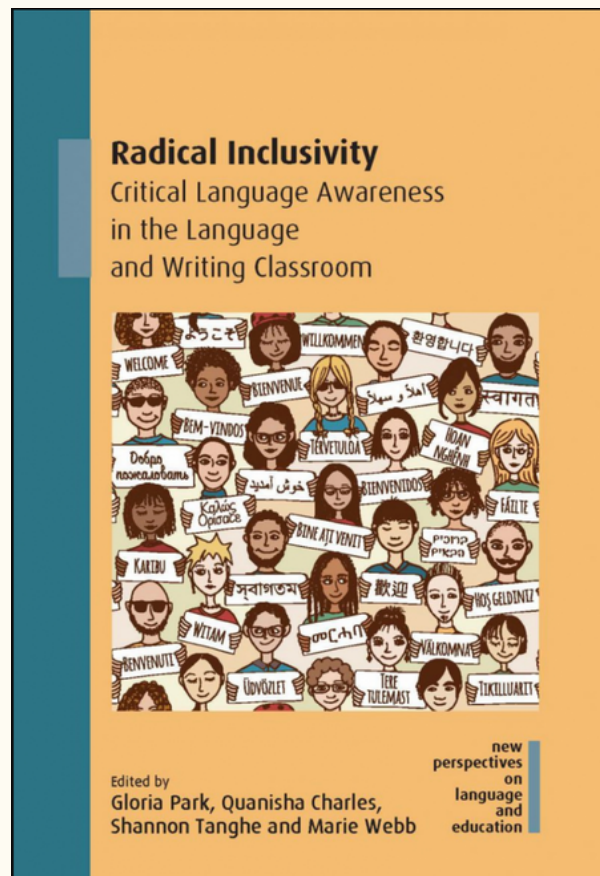
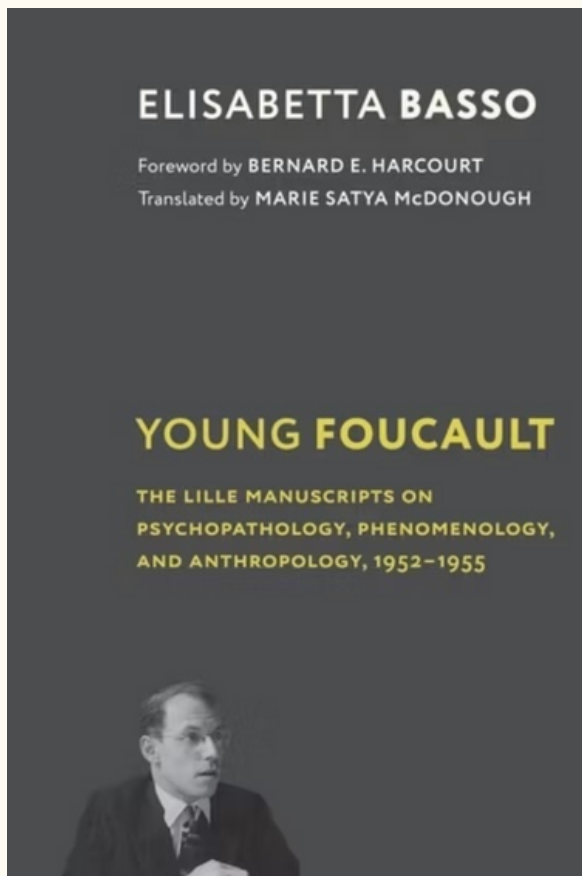
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WRITING PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS

- ★ Marie McDonough published a translation of an early manuscript by the philosopher Michel Foucault: *Binswanger and Existential Analysis*. In 2022, she also published a translation of a book that reflects on this period in Foucault's career: *Young Foucault: The Lille Manuscripts on Psychopathology, Phenomenology, and Anthropology, 1952–1955*, by Elisabetta Basso. Both books are available from Columbia University Press.
- ★ Abir Ward, Marie McDonough, Jessica Kent, Amy Bennett-Zendzian, and Carroll Beauvais co-authored a chapter on how they work with students with disabilities, visible and hidden, called "Partnering with Students with Disabilities: Informed Practices and Support Networks," in the edited collection *Radical Inclusivity: Critical Language Awareness in the Language and Writing Classroom*. The project began in 2022 when Amy and Marie ran a faculty seminar on disability and pedagogy. At the close of that seminar, Abir asked if colleagues wanted to keep talking, and four of them said yes. From there, the conversation grew: first into a presentation at the American University of Beirut, then into another at Computers and Writing, and now into this chapter, which blends theory with their own and students' lived experiences, offering pedagogical practices that meet students where they are.



Book Access:



Columbia University Press:
Michel Foucault's Binswanger
and Existential Analysis.



Multilingual Matters: Radical Inclusivity: Critical Language Awareness in the Language and Writing Classroom

PRESENTATION AT THE NORTHEAST VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION BY MICHELE MARTINEZ

Michele gave a talk at the Northeast Victorian Studies Association Conference (NVSA) held on April 5, 2025, at Boston University. "Julia Margaret Cameron and Twentieth-Century Idylls of Childcare" showcased the way women have made the day-to-day caring for children into a subject of art photography. The talk addressed Cameron's pioneering photos of her niece Julia Jackson Duckworth (later Stephen) and traced developments in the representation of caregiving in the photography of Nell Dorr, Carrie Mae Weems, and Sally Mann. Tina Campt's theory of "hapticity" offered a way to understand the complexity of feeling and experience represented in the photography, especially in portraits of caregivers who were grandparents or hired to care for the photographer's family.

SUMMER AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON WITH GAVIN BENKE

During the summer, Gavin was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Capitalism Studies (part of the Institute of Advanced Studies) at University College London. He used the fellowship to revise his book manuscript on a history of corporate futurism in the United States. The project is under contract with the University of Chicago Press.



ADOBE ACADEMIC INNOVATION SUMMIT

As many of you know, Boston University is an Adobe Creative Cloud campus, providing most faculty, staff, and undergraduate students with premium access to the full suite of Adobe Creative Cloud tools. Earlier this month, Aleksandra Kasztalska and Pary Fassihi were invited by the Adobe Higher Education team to represent BU, and participate in the Adobe Academic Innovation Summit, held at Arizona State University. This was an invitation-only summit that gathered senior leaders, curriculum innovators, and faculty from Adobe partner institutions to share strategies for advancing teaching, learning, and broader institutional priorities. The sessions offered an excellent opportunity to explore creative pedagogies, examine emerging digital tools, and connect with colleagues from other Creative Cloud campuses who are integrating Adobe technologies into teaching and learning.

Visit [this page](#) to read all about their journey in Phoenix, Arizona!

SALARIED LECTURERS' UNION UPDATE

Since May 29, your bargaining committee has met with representatives of the BU administration six times. That's slow by bargaining standards, but the administration hasn't offered other dates and doesn't seem eager to accelerate the pace. Two potential reasons: a) Our contract has been extended until the end of the year; b) BU is still bargaining with our sister union representing staff workers, and they'd prefer to address one contract at a time.

The most significant changes we've proposed include salary increases (along with a 6% cost-of-living adjustment to recoup what we lost to inflation over our current contract), longer contracts, an expansion of professional development leaves, and protections for international workers. The university hasn't responded to any of these proposals. As of this writing, we have a final bargaining date this semester (Thurs., Dec. 4), where we plan to introduce a new contract article that focuses on GenAI; the goal is to enhance job security and preserve our autonomy around integrating GenAI into our faculty work.

Questions? Concerns? Reach out to your stewards at any time: Seth Blumenthal, Sean Desilets, Marisa Milanese, and Max White.



FALL EVENTS IN THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center held a record number of events this semester - with record attendance! More than 150 students came to learn about a wide range of topics, including best practices for peer review, critical AI literacy, public speaking, and writing for self-care. Across those various events, Writing Center consultants and students worked (and sometimes even laughed) together as they compared AI-generated summaries, drew self-reflections, discussed effective forms of peer feedback, and gave impromptu speeches about the best way to start their day. Thanks to your generous efforts and the wonderful work of your dedicated students, these events succeeded in ensuring the Writing Center remains a lively place for robust and joyful discussions about the full range of experiences that make up the writing process.

The Writing Center looks forward to offering more workshops and events next semester – see you then!



COLLEAGUES IN CONVERSATION: STEPHANIE KOLBERG AND JESSICA BOZEK ON ATTENTION

This semester, three instructors taught new seminars on the topic of attention: Stephanie Kolberg (WR 151: Attention/Distraction) and Jessica Bozek and Marisa Milanese (WR 120: Attention, Please). Marisa interviewed the two about their experiences teaching this new topic.

Marisa Milanese: *What inspired this class topic?*

Stephanie Kolberg: I taught a class on time before—“Time and Tempo”—and this issue of attention and slowing down definitely came up a lot then. But honestly, I think it was a *New York Times* article that mentioned the Friends of Attention. I went to their website and read their manifesto, which was so interesting and kind of weird. It definitely connects to a lot of things that students and others seem to be concerned with now: We're not able to pay attention, and we're not able to focus as much. When the issue has come up in past classes students have had a lot to say about it. They feel bothered by an inability to focus and to sit still.

Jessica Bozek: I had read Jenny Odell's book (*How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*) and was really interested in so much of what she was saying. I had also started to get really frustrated by how much of our in-class work requires devices. Part of this is my fault. I teach a lot of texts that are online so that my students don't have to buy books. But the result is that we are all behind screens. I even found myself less engaged. When you (Marisa) proposed a completely tech-free class, that sold me on collaborating.

Marisa: *Highlights so far?*

Stephanie: We read an excerpt from *Flow* by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi. That's something that really resonates with students, especially when talking about sports and hobbies, and “getting in the zone,” in terms of concentration and immersion. We read an excerpt from *Slow Looking* by Shari Tishman, which is about methods of observation. That was related to our first assignment, where students had to sit and analyze a place for one full hour.

Actually, a piece that we do early on by James Truslow Adams (*The Tempo of Modern Life*), that was published in 1931, has a lot of parallels to the current moment. He's basically commenting on the fact that there are so many distractions floating around. The fear that we're not able to focus, that we can't pay attention, has been going on for a really, really long time, and much earlier than Adams' piece. This isn't a 21st-century phenomenon.

Jessica: The Wim Wenders movie *Perfect Days*. We required students to come to Geddes to watch it in person because it's important to see on a bigger screen. But I'm also convinced that many of them would not have made it through the film otherwise. There is no dialogue for the first 13 minutes. They were restless! At our next class meeting, they were really grappling with their restlessness. Some of them said that even while it was hard to watch, they couldn't stop seeing things differently after the film. One said he had never noticed the trees on campus, and when he was walking back to his dorm, he just started looking up at the trees. Another student said she had never noticed the facility workers or thought about the dining hall workers, and suddenly she was primed to appreciate all of the invisible labor that's happening on campus.

The other surprise, and this one is maybe not as positive: When we read Shoshana Zuboff's “Surveillance Capitalism and the Challenge of Collective Action,” I thought for sure they were going to be upset by the way in which their search behaviors and attention are surveilled and monetized. But they really weren't. I asked them: “How much of what you do in a day is because you want to do it or because it's for content?” And some of them said, “Well, can it be both? I mean, what if I just enjoy posting?” So the machinations of social media don't upset them in the way that they upset me.

Marisa: *Tell us about some interesting exercises you've assigned.*

Jessica: One exercise the students really seemed to love was based on a show at SFMOMA by the artist Ruth Asawa, who produced really beautiful contour drawings of flowers. She was also a gardener and community activist.

“... one of the benefits of this class and all of the slowing down activities is that the students seem more connected to one another.”

- Jessica Bozek

So I had students bring either flowers or plants, and we spent 20 minutes just drawing. Afterwards, we did a gallery walk and looked at everyone's pieces, and they seemed to enjoy really sinking into the process of drawing and then praising each other. We discovered so many of them are actually really great artists. It wasn't very rigorous, but one of the benefits of this class and all of the slowing down activities is that the students seem more connected to one another.

Stephanie: We do something called the Attention Archive. Four times throughout the semester, students have to find a scene in the world that's interesting and that somehow connects to a course reading. They take a picture, upload it to our Padlet course blog, and then write around 400 to 500 words, analyzing the scene and making connections to at least one course reading, including a couple of quotes. They've produced really interesting, thoughtful stuff. One student wrote about the process of untangling his headphones— about how his days are so busy that taking the time to untangle the headphones was an almost meditative break.

Marisa: *Since your classes focus on paying attention and slowing down, how does AI factor in?*

Stephanie: For students' Pecha Kucha oral presentations, I've permitted students to play around with using AI to produce images for their presentations, if they find that useful (properly citing their use of AI!). That's a case where AI could be useful because I want them to spend the bulk of their time focusing on their speech and practicing their delivery. That said, I am generally opposed to the use of AI. I just read a student paper discussing the ways that AI can hinder our ability to concentrate and focus. My class is trying to cultivate their ability to struggle through something, and AI is being sold as something that allows us to move more quickly. Moving quickly and efficiently should not always be the goal.

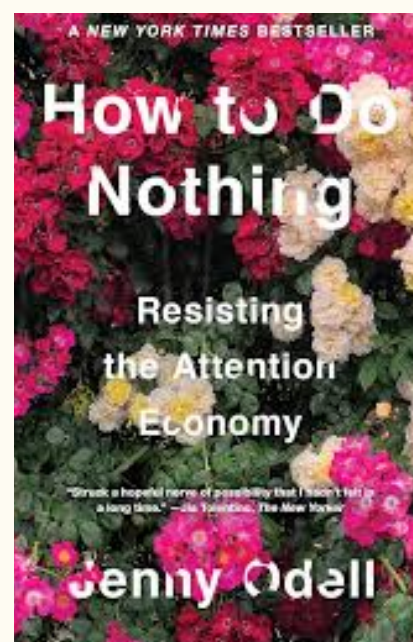
Jessica: I haven't had the time or interest to learn how to use AI responsibly. And in our classes, I can't think of a compelling reason that we wouldn't use this time to develop their critical thinking and human interaction skills. They have the rest of their lives to use AI.

Marisa: *Advice for the first time teaching a new topic?*

Stephanie: Assign less. The irony is that even though our focus is attention, distraction, and slowing down, I'm having a hard time slowing down because I think I've scheduled too much stuff. Especially with a new class, sometimes you're really excited about the topic and enthusiastic about all the things you want to do, but slow things down.

Jessica: I appreciate that sentiment, because I always feel like I'm barely a step ahead of them when I'm teaching a new class. You almost have to be prepared two classes in advance, because whatever you're assigning for a class, you have to be able to talk about the previous class.

Marisa: *This was so enlightening and fun— thank you, both!*



CELEBRATION OF STUDENT WRITING RECAP (SPRING 2025)



At the close of the spring 2025 semester, the Writing Program and Writing in the Disciplines hosted the first-of-its-kind Celebration of Student Writing. On the 17th floor of the CDS building, members of BU's writing community gathered to recognize the undergraduate students who exemplify the WP's core values of empathy, collaboration, critical inquiry, and creativity. A soundtrack and delicious food provided a convivial atmosphere that was highlighted by presentations by several students, representing the many ways in which students use writing, express themselves through language, or offer support to fellow writers.

Among the presentations were graduating Writing Center consultant Xiaoya Shao, who recounted her journey as a writer here at BU and the joys of offering writing support to fellow students, including those who share with her a multilingual identity. AI Affiliate Neeza Singh described the transformative experience of collaborating with WP faculty members Chris McVey and Max White to support fellow students in the AI-Intensive Writing and Research pilot courses. Simpson Writing Fellow Michael Iacobelli, who was unable to attend, spoke in a recorded video about the valuable mentoring opportunity he experienced in his work assisting fellow Economics students with their writing. Thalia Patiño Molano, an award-winner for

Deerfield, offered a heartfelt reflection following a viewing of her powerful video, created in Molly Monet-Viera's class, depicting a day-in-the-life of working-class immigrant and mother, Sandra Ramirez. Deerfield Award winner Adam Mhal read his poems, "Pen, Page, and Power," composed in Carroll Beauvais's writing seminar, and he discussed how writing helped him navigate the challenges of moving from an Arabic to an English-speaking academic community. Deerfield's Tony Wallace Award winner Ajani Hickling, who was introduced by their teacher Master Lecturer Holly Schaaf, read from their memoir, "Third Worlds," code-meshing Jamaican patois and standard English to express their shifting and unsettled identities. Our own David Shawn, Associate Director for Writing in the Disciplines, served as the evening's MC, smoothly guiding the program and introducing each presenter.

In addition to the presentations, this event brought together the diverse community of undergraduate writers here at BU: editors of the many student journals on campus; students receiving Alumni Awards; students involved in Deerfield; writing consultants and Simpson writing fellows; and the many faculty mentors who support our students' hard work and their many accomplishments. The Celebration was funded by the generous grant from Jennifer Simpson's Psalm 103 Foundation.

Mark your calendars: the next celebration for Spring 2026 will be held on Thursday, April 30th in the Howard Thurman Center event space. All members of the Writing Program are invited to join us!



THE CELEBRATION OF MULTILINGUAL WRITING (FALL 2025)

The second annual Celebration of Multilingual Writing built on the remarkable success of last year's kickoff event. Held once again in the Howard Thurman Center, the gathering brought together students, faculty, and staff to share their love of language and cultural expression. Students arrived early and eager to participate, saying hello in many different languages, crafting bracelets and love letters to their languages, rolling out play-dough flags, competing in a scavenger hunt, and reading each other's work, which was festively strewn about the event space.

Students also took turns stepping up to the microphone to perform poems, speeches, and even dances that were reflective of their languages and cultures. These performances ensured the Howard Thurman Center remained lively throughout the day, as did the wonderful efforts of partners from across campus, including Global Programs, the library, and CELOP. Dr. Abir Ward, the event committee, and the entire Writing Program look forward to continuing this strong tradition next year!



COLLEAGUES IN CONVERSATION: SHWETA KRISHNAN AND HOLLY SCHAAF DISCUSS MULTISPECIES MINDS

Moderated by Allison Blyler and Audrey Kurtz

Audrey Kurtz: *Could you introduce your multispecies course topic(s)?*

Shweta Krishnan: I'm teaching WR120 *Writing More Than Human Worlds*. What interests me about this course is, we live at a time when because of climate change and rapid militarization, the rapid boom of technology, it's become inevitable that we pay attention to what we're doing with the world as humans. So my class is about paying attention to the power relations between humans and their natural and technological landscapes.

Holly Connell Schaaf: I'm teaching *Boston Wildlife Now* and next semester *Multispecies Minds Now*. I've taught *Imagining Animal Minds* and *The World in a Pond*. These courses grow from spending time with other species, getting to know them, but also out of an initiative that Sarah (Madsen Hardy) and Gwen (Kordonowy), created called WRX. It let us experiment and ignited my love for experiential learning. I created *Imagining Animal Minds*. One other course type developed was *Mediated Integration*, which involved pairing an ELL120 and a non-ELL120. That was designed by (our colleague) Kim (Shuckra). Allison (Blyler) and I did *The World in a Pond* together as part of that. We loved our students' connections to each other and Hall's Pond.

Allison Blyler: *Do you have any thoughts about the connection between what you're teaching and greater missions of stewardship, advocacy, and activism?*

Shweta: I had this really satisfying meeting with a student. I thought she wanted to talk about the essay we're working on, but she wanted to talk about subtle politics in the readings, and (how it made her) question not just human-non-human relationships, but also how we dehumanize people because of the sort of violence we were talking about in class. For me, there is a direct relationship between multi-species studies and critical social justice, and it's not just a question of how we can bring justice to other species, but a deeper look at who gets to claim the category human, and how there are a lot of people who have been dehumanized and equated or placed in categories closer to the animal.

What's the sort of value we attach to these categories, and what does that say about our politics? How can we attend to those attitudes and advocate for changes in behavior, changes in value systems that shape not just the futures of non-humans, but rather a more just world for everyone, right?

Holly: Absolutely. One challenge in my multi-species classes for students is to think about how the oppressions of marginalized humans and other species interlock with each other. It's harder to make a human feel less-than by comparing them to another species if we refuse to see other species as inferior. I make clear, of course, that this isn't just manipulating symbols. That won't get everybody justice. I think by going more in-depth, students realize how challenging it is, but also become motivated to do difficult work to try to make it happen.

Audrey: *You both do something different with genre in your classrooms. Can you describe these alternative genre assignments?*

Shweta: The alternative genre in my class is a podcast. We started by analyzing a podcast, from the series *Imaginary Worlds*, on the movies from Studio Ghibli, so Hayao Miyazaki's imagining of the environment. One point the author makes is (that) Miyazaki's movies ask you to pause and look at the environment as it is just rolling by. There was a scene at a bus stop he focused on from the movie *My Neighbor Totoro*. It's a prolonged scene where the rain's falling. A frog goes by, and in the podcast, the author talks about how if it was a Western movie, the frog would have had a hula hoop, or something, and be trying to entertain the audience. But here, it does nothing except leap by, forcing you to look at the rain. We were analyzing that scene, you have the visual genre, where he can show that to us, and you have the audio medium, where you have to write what's happening in this scene, and focus on this long passage of time, but in a short time. For my students it was a new challenge to capture the complexity of what we have been writing about, these relationships between humans and the environment, and make their points in a focused way to an audience. Of course, I tell them that the point of doing this is for them to learn that this descriptive writing can make them better at academic writing, too.

"It's harder to make a human feel less-than by comparing them to another species if we refuse to see other species as inferior."
- Dr. Holly Connell Schaaf

Holly: When my students write scientifically, I tell them science is about imagination too. Even so, I love how writing in poetry and fiction lets them try to stretch human genres to imagine multispecies' perspectives. Genre is social action according to Miller's classic article. It's interesting for them to think about having multi-species social action, trying to attribute motives to other species. How can they play with form to portray that Boston Common squirrel they saw, what's the squirrel's perspective on their encounter?

Allison: *Do you have things you hope students take away from your courses that focus on multispecies or beyond-human perspectives?*

Shweta: Students said that ever since they've started writing with multispecies or cyborgian texts, they can't see their own lives the same way. Wherever they go, they find themselves thinking, "Oh, wait, here's a bird." Or, like, "What is this bird doing? Well, why is this on this wire? Who put this wire here?" Or even their own essays, some of them were like, "I go through this New York subway station all the time, and there are pigeons, which we categorize as pests, but how did pigeons become pests? Are we in their territory, or are they in ours?" Somebody wrote a similar essay about rats. It's about turning what you think you know upside down and looking at it from a different perspective. Once you start doing it, and if you enjoyed it, it's difficult to walk away and not do it. So that's part of the fun of teaching, to know that everything you teach is going to have a social life of its own that's beyond the control of this classroom.

Holly: I hope my students take something similar to what Shweta was describing, noticing that you're sharing the spaces with other people but also with other species who have different sensory experiences of the place, but who also, surprisingly, might have connections with how you interact with it. I love that my students notice how other species use human infrastructure for nonhuman purposes, so that although we can't ignore the power relations, students see that other species have agency and creativity. And potentially we can co-create with them. Music is great, but sometimes take your earbuds out, look up from your phone and you'll witness fascinating interactions that connect with your life in surprising ways.

Audrey: *What message do you have for colleagues who are contemplating how to integrate these ideas into their classrooms?*

Shweta: I was fascinated by what Holly said about co-creating. If folks wanted to focus on co-creating, I would love to brainstorm on what that might look like, to include multi-species collaborations in many of these wonderful topics people in the Program are teaching. But one lesson I have learned from being a scholar in multispecies and cyborgian worlds, is that the individual is a dangerous concept. It gives you this illusion of control that often you don't have. It's important to recognize the role dependency plays in our lives. It's not a weakness, to depend on, to collaborate with, and to co-create. It speaks to a different kind of strength, and I feel this Program leans in the direction of recognizing that, so it would be fantastic to see if there are ways to build more multispecies conversations in courses.

Holly: I'm definitely up for these conversations with colleagues. It's wonderful there's a spirit of collaboration in our Program. To connect to Shweta's idea about control, that's one thing I discuss with colleagues worried about incorporating experiential learning. But when students volunteer together, explore a site together, they bring special energy back into the classroom which sparks co-creation. We're offering experiences to our students and they can't explore all the interconnections during our courses, but as Shweta was saying, we can't know how these experiences might transform what they later co-create.



MONSTER MOVIE REVIEWS BY JILLIANNE LACESTE'S WR 120 STUDENTS



This class spends a lot of time learning how to analyze and write about visual imagery within the context of Medieval and Renaissance monstrosity. We also unpack the complex term “monster” and probe how definitions have remained or shifted since the Medieval era. To earn points towards the course’s contract grading policy, students created a series of graphic monster movie reviews. This activity invited them to exercise creativity, but also think about monstrosity across time periods and visual media.

-Jillianne Laceste



Scan the QR code or
access their movie
reviews [here!](#)

FROM ME TO YOU: COLLEAGUE APPRECIATION

Dear Writing Program,

I am writing this short letter to acknowledge that it was just one year ago when I genuinely felt like I would *not* be able to turn in my dossier for promotion to Senior Lecturer. My degenerative eye condition was weighing heavily, my Dad's health crisis was not something we could figure out at the time, and the results of the 2024 election positioned my teaching in such a way that I had never experienced before. I also acknowledged that I was likely overthinking the process and reached out to my esteemed colleagues Michele Martinez and Heather Barrett to generate an understanding of ways I could organize my materials. In addition, I was paired with Gwen Kordonowy, who created gentle guideposts and was a fantastic interlocutor. All three of these amazing humans also shared how their materials were a portal for justice and equity work, and the reading of their work gave me radical hope. Of course, I wanted to complete the process in the material sense! What they gave me was a courageous reminder that I was not alone in the struggle for liberation in the critical pedagogy sense. Fast forward one year later, I feel relieved, stronger, wiser, and a lot more sleepier! I have been taking time to deeply reflect, and I cannot tell you how many times I have paused and wanted to be in a position of expressing my gratitude for their time, kindness, and voice. I was grateful that the newsletter invited such shout-outs. Michele, Heather, and Gwen, thank you again.

Namaste,
Swati

IN-CLASS OUTINGS AND BEYOND: EXPANDING OUR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING HORIZONS

Holly Schaaf & Allison Blyler

With all we must cover in our courses, incorporating outings can seem daunting. But you don't have to send students far, depend on expensive venues, or make a major time investment yourself. Surprises can disrupt plans, yet change creates new creative possibilities for students.

No site could replace the biodiversity and history of Hall's Pond Sanctuary on which we focused a course we co-taught and have engaged with in many classes since. But this semester, boardwalk repairs closed Hall's. We experienced new horizons as Holly's students visited Magazine Beach and Allison's visited Charlesgate Park.

Magazine Beach

On September 9th my Intertwining Curious Minds Now students crossed BU bridge to Magazine Beach in Cambridge.

Magazine Beach holds free and low-cost events. It's ideal for pairing EL with contract grading - choosing places to focus major assignments on that have other possibilities students can explore toward A-/A grades. It was a joy reading students' reflections on their diverse experiences at Magazine Beach events . . .

Two athletes from different teams bonded at a gathering teaching mindfulness. One reflected on a friend from home's mental health and how she could support her.

Two international students connected through a birdwatching event, and one described how her mother, worried about her not experiencing nature in Beijing, was happy she met Boston birds.

Another student brought her dad to the Fall Equinox Nature in the City Festival. Both were amazed by a giant bird made of trash from the Charles River. They're now determined to create art from their hometown clean-ups to raise awareness about impacts of what residents consume.

Another student took a friend she met in a different class to an event teaching Bachata, a Dominican dance. She enjoyed discovering a new dance, and was surprised and moved when a four-step pattern in Bachata resembled hula from her native Hawai'i.

An Italian student also found the embodied nature of an event deeply stirring. He was inspired to attend the Eastern Medicine Singers Sunset Drum Circle by graffiti artists protesting the taking of land from Indigenous people. These protests were on an information board when we visited as a class. They have since been erased.



The question "What happened to the marshes?" tagged on this same board motivated another student to learn that Magazine Beach marshes were drained and filled like much of our city and that Belle Isle is Boston's last saltwater marsh. I encouraged him to visit. He now has three times.

Giving students opportunities to read places and experiences helps them engage more actively, diligently, and passionately with diverse texts and become newly invested in connections to home and to Boston.

Charlesgate Park

My Boston's Natural History Now classes visited Charlesgate Park, the "clasp" of the Emerald Necklace, on October 9th. I had to point out that it is a park, although it looks like an abandoned space under the Bowker Overpass.

Continued from page 12...



This site visit was part of the second unit, in which students craft argument-driven pieces based on William Cronon's 1995 essay "The Trouble with Wilderness." Using their own observations, they reckon with Cronon's concept of "dangerous dualism", in which the separation of urban and "wild" nature is considered environmentally misguided.

When we did this assignment with Hall's Pond as a central site, the students began with one of the wildest spots the city has to offer as a case study. I was worried they wouldn't see Charlesgate as a place worth writing about. But they tapped into its complex character—from the duckweed in the Muddy River to the calls of Canada geese and the sound of an impromptu trumpet concert under the overpass.

One student, an athlete, described the park as a place of motion that connects to the rhythms of campus life: schedules, games, work and play. Another expressed hope for Charlesgate to be re-greened through collaborative effort: "I've learned how Boston can be transformed through dedication and support from the surrounding community."

Responses like these, and the way students interacted with the site, prompted me to think about the richness of close-to-campus places: Students can experience Charlesgate as it is, but also see it as an opportunity for stewardship, a place we might not even recognize as a destination, but that is nonetheless deserving of our attention.

QUEEN ANNE'S LACE

By Diana Rose Lynch

Written for Jennifer Martelli - Revere girl, Boston poet, mentor, friend.

is the poet of the battlefields
seeded wild,
young roots
speaks blood, speaks loss
through lace filled mouths
snapped stems
black dot, only one eye, sees all.

The winds sear,
torch her leaves
strip her
of her tender knitted smile.

The sickle comes down
nubs of brittle brush,
what used to be
stares up
at the empty lemon sky.



CARRIE BENNETT SHARES A POEM FROM HER COLLECTION

Published in October of 2024, *The Mouth Is Also a Compass* by Carrie Bennett explores survival and hope amidst ecological ruin.



Chapter 1:
[How To Survive Subzero
Temperatures]

Remember that you come from deer,
that your hands were once hooves,
that you ate only green, that you lifted
your head and saw a rifle, that you
lifted your head and saw white
frost-flowers veining the ground, that
your body was all movement.

Now a dragonfly lives in your mouth.

Now you must collect large rocks to
make a circle.

Now you must sit inside the rock
circle all day as the cold accumulates.

Place your burden here.

Thank you, colleagues, for your incredible contributions to Writer's Bloc.

Warm wishes for the holiday season ahead!

