



WRITER'S BLOC: THE WP NEWSLETTER



PRIDE ON DISPLAY IN THE WRITERS' STUDIO

WHAT'S INSIDE

PUBLICATIONS AND
PRESENTATIONS - 2,3

AN ARTIST EMERGES - 3, 4

GREATEST HITS OF THE
SEMESTER - 5

TOP THREE
RECOMMENDATIONS - 6

DEIJ MAKING AN IMPACT
ON FOOD JUSTICE - 7

ORIGINAL POETRY - 8

IN MY CORNER
(COLLEAGUE SHOUT
OUTS) - 9

FRIENDLY FACES FROM
HOME (OUR PETS) - 10, 11

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS:

We're delighted to present the third issue of Writer's Bloc, which captures the strength of our community and the rich diversity of our interests and pursuits. This issue highlights some of our many accomplishments: publications, conference presentations, community engagement, and creative works celebrating perseverance, resistance, and self-care. You'll find celebrations of the bonds we have with each other (shout-outs to colleagues!) and with our animal companions (pet photos!) as well as poems, drawings, top-three lists, and news about DEIJ's Food Justice efforts. We also want to celebrate the joyous bloom of Pride flags popping up all over the program's offices, hallways, and windows.

Thank you to those who submitted to this newsletter, and to all of you for making the WP such a supportive, collegial, and creative community. We wish you a restful summer!

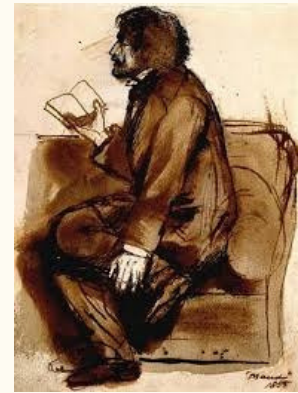
the Communications Committee

WRITING PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- ★ **Deborah Breen** and **Francis Issah** gave a microtalk about their teaching practices at the 2nd annual New Faculty on Tap symposium held on Wednesday, April 1, 2026. The program, organized by BU Faculty Development and the office of Faculty Affairs, was to celebrate the research and teaching of BU faculty hired within the past year. The title of Deb's talk was "Encountering the Archive: Student Experiential Learning in the BU Archives." Francis' talk was titled "Practicing Linguistic Justice through the Framework of Ubuntu."



- ★ **Michele Martinez** is attending two conferences in the coming months. The first occurred in April for the "Wicked Reading for Wicked Problems" conference at the University of Connecticut, Storrs. Michele led an interactive workshop entitled "Read, Re-Read, READ!: Teaching Strategies for the First-Year Writing Classroom." Michele is also fortunate to be presenting a paper at the "Tennyson 2026: Ecology, Landscape, Environment" conference to be held at Lincoln Bishop University, England, July 14-17. Her paper is called "'In my own dark garden ground': Garden Imperialism in Maud and J. M. Cameron's Photographic Illustrations."



- ★ **Stacy Mattingly** was a 2024-25 Fulbright U.S. Scholar to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where she has collaborated with writers for more than a decade. She joined the University of Sarajevo's Faculty of Philosophy and developed a creative writing workshop for students and a public conversation series with writers, editors, and translators from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the U.S. She published an essay about the experience in Literary Hub, "Words between Worlds: Creative Writing in Sarajevo."



Scan to access Stacy's essay!

- ★ **Rebecca Brookfield Kinraide, Michele Martinez, and Francis Issah** presented their work at the 21st Annual Conference on the Teaching of Writing held on April 23 and 24, 2026 at the University of Connecticut. The conference was on the theme "Wicked Reading for Wicked Problems." Rebecca's workshop was titled "Writing about 'Wicked Problems' in Science and Medicine with Sensitivity and Compassion." Michele led a workshop titled "Read, Re-Read, READ!: Teaching Strategies for the First-Year Writing Classroom" while Francis' paper was entitled "The Language of Ubuntu in the Classroom: Creating Change through Students' Writing."



WRITING PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS (*CONTINUED*)

★ At the 2026 CCCC Annual Convention, **Malavika Shetty** presented as part of a roundtable on "Wikipedia Engagement as Community-Centered Practice in Writing and Language Pedagogy" with Matthew Vetter, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Alexandra Krasova, University of Indianapolis, David Cregar, New York University, Jason Luther, Rowan University, Karrie Kaiser Lee, Purdue University, Jennifer K. Johnson, University of California Santa Barbara, and James P. Purdy, Duquesne University.

This roundtable provided examples of how to integrate Wikipedia-based assignments into language and writing pedagogy as community-centered practices. Panelists discussed how engaging students in contributing to Wikipedia enhances digital writing skills, fosters collaborative knowledge building, and builds critical information and AI literacy skills.



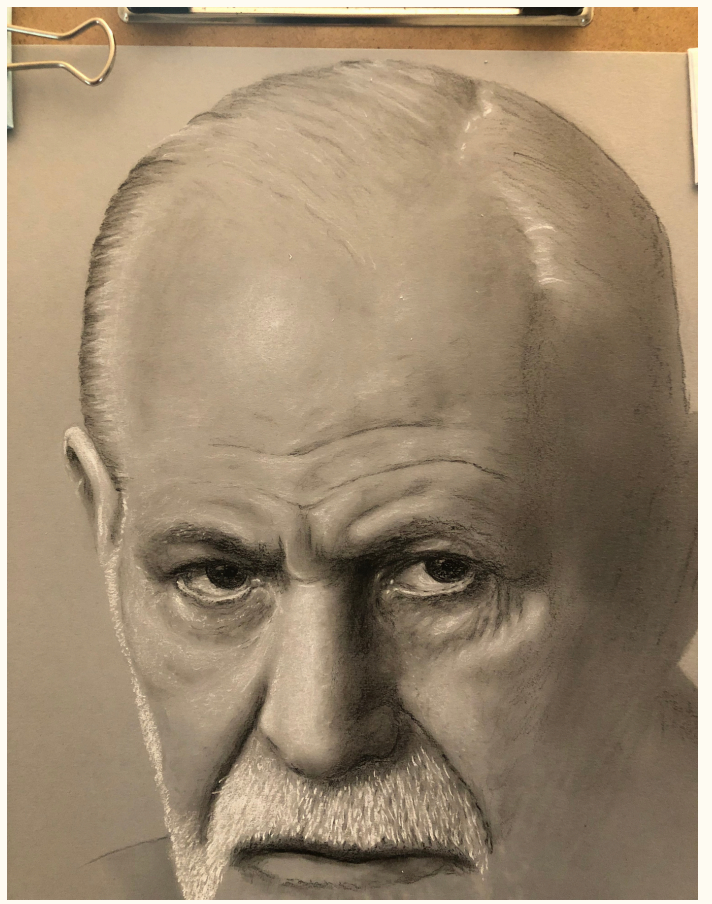
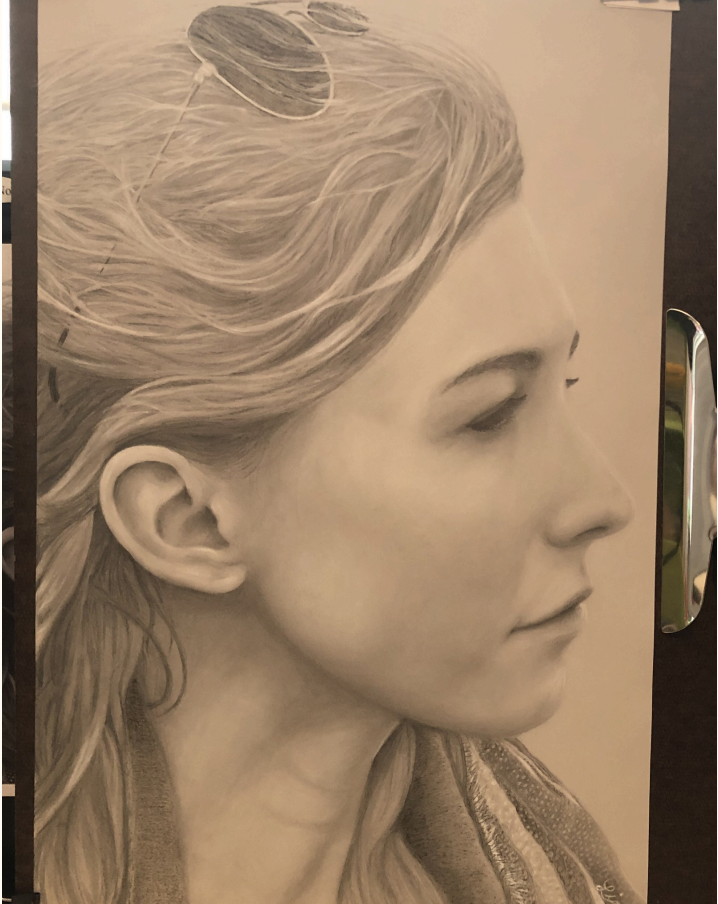
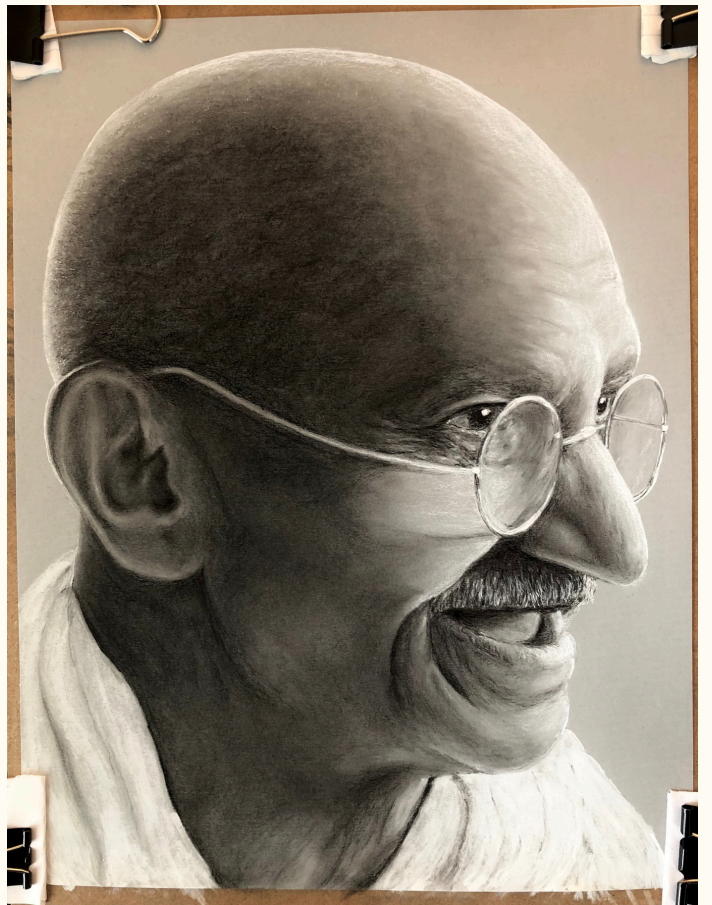
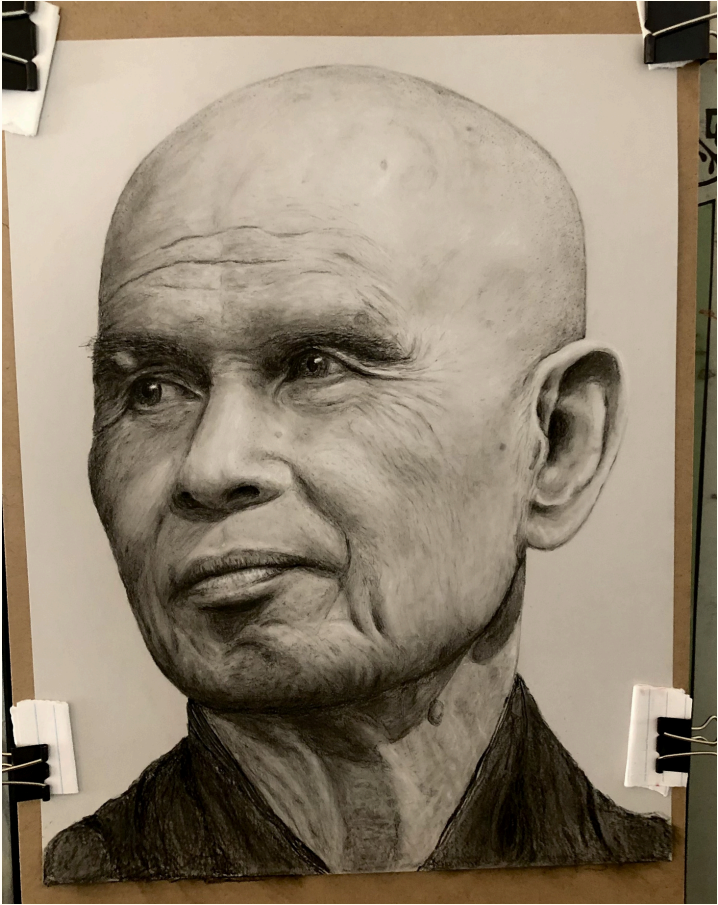
LIAM MEYER'S ARTWORK

When I saw that the Writer's Bloc editors were asking for artistic submissions connected to self-care, I decided to get over the discomfort I always face when showing off my sketches and ask if they would include some. You see, I frequently try to meditate but I absolutely suck at it, so instead I try to still my mind while drawing. And I usually draw people who inspire me, including those who first led me to try meditating—like the two bald guys seen here (Thich Nhat Hanh and Gandhi) whom I admire beyond words. The third is my wonderful wife Emily, a strong influence on everything I do.

I mostly work in charcoal, sometimes ink or graphite or all three. I would like to work in color but I'm a bit colorblind. I love the visual depth and subtle gradations you can get with charcoal if you are patient, and that brings me to another issue on everyone's minds: AI.

Drawing is very slow (at least for me), but like we tell our students it's the process that matters. And the fact that they are slow acts of real human labor gives them a kind of personal depth that I value now more than ever. It also lets me give them away to friends and loved ones, as I frequently do, knowing that regardless of whether or not the sketch is any good, it has an emotional value in itself. The last drawing you'll see here hopefully unites the two points I'm making: this sketch in progress of Freud—emerging slowly (scowling of course, and still smudgy) from the page—is a slightly tongue-in-cheek but still quite sincere gift to a person who has helped me maintain my mental health over the years. Maybe I should leave it unfinished? A reminder that self-care never ends, and a celebration of slow human imperfection over instant robotic exactitude?

See Liam's work on the following page.



GREATEST HITS OF THE SEMESTER

Short anecdotes from colleagues about new teaching hacks or one successful change they've made this semester.

★ Francis Issah: A community-building game

I was introduced to “Crumple and Shoot” by one of my professors in graduate school. Here’s how to play: Students read specific texts in preparation for the game, and I come to class with sheets of paper and a waste basket. I put students in groups of four or five and distribute the paper to them. After I ask questions based on the texts they’ve read (a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions), each group talks among themselves and writes down an answer. The group earns one point for answering a question correctly. Those who answered correctly get the chance to crumple their paper and shoot it into the waste basket for two points. They need to stand behind a drawn line to shoot. Each member of a group is free to shoot, and students take turns. I tally the score of each group on the board. In my experience, this competitive game promotes close reading of course texts along with community building and collaboration.

★ Jason Tandon: A reframing of an old course

One shift I made this semester was to more intentionally frame my WR 153: American Poetry seminar within a broader humanities context. I’ve had students engage with materials like Puritan theology, Nietzschean ideas about meta-narratives, modern painting, and the history of the Jim Crow South alongside the poems themselves. The goal has been to help them see poems as products of larger cultural, philosophical, and historical forces rather than isolated texts. While I’ve taken this approach in the past, this semester I’ve revised in-class exercises to make those connections more explicit, for example, asking students to study a painting and consider how its composition, tone, and themes can help frame a conversation about a specific poem. This has fed into a more open-ended, multimodal final project, where students are currently drawing connections across disciplines. I am hoping that this approach has expanded their sense of what poetic analysis can look like (what poetry “is”!) and encouraged more creative, invested work.

★ Malavika Shetty: Infographic as essay plan

Students in my WR 111 (Academic writing for ELL students) class write a thematic analysis essay based on the graphic novel *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi. Before they wrote the essay this semester, I asked the students to create and present a poster based on their chosen theme from the book. The essay infographic provided a wonderful way for the students to think deeply about the novel, its themes, and evidence before they tackled the thematic analysis essay. Writing the essay became so much easier and more intuitive for the students

★ Sarah Madsen Hardy: Using Anna Pansczyk’s “Across Disciplines” assignment sequence

Starting with a pandemic-era turn to labor-based grading, along with many of you, I’ve been emphasizing process over product more and more. The ease with which AI can generate a decent facsimile of most written products made me want to take it even further. That’s one of the reasons that I borrowed Anna Pansczyk’s “Across Disciplines” WR 153 assignment sequence this spring for a new class, “Disability Across Disciplines.” Using her approach, my students researched how writing and research works in art history, created an annotated bibliography that takes up a research question about disability in art history, then wrote a proposal for a project. After practicing together with art history, they did the same twice more--in a discipline they chose that’s familiar to them, then in another that is unfamiliar. After these three cycles of process work, they decided which of the three projects to do. Anna’s approach offers students autonomy, encourages them to take risks, and shows them exactly what transfer looks like. Process over product to the third power! I’m so grateful to Anna for generously sharing her course materials and answering my many questions.

TOP THREES FROM THE WP

Ashley Znideric's top three underrated British comedy movies ("A list so niche it was genuinely difficult to come up with 3 movies that met the criteria. So many British comedy movies are highly rated and deservedly so.")

1. Withnail & I : A cult classic. The touching tale of two failing actors, too drunk or high to function, they decide to reset with a getaway to the countryside. Queue hilarity as they navigate rural living and an eccentric relative.

2. Clockwise : This list wouldn't be complete without at least one member of Monty Python appearing. Clockwise focuses on a time-centric headteacher (principal) played by John Cleese, who has to deliver a speech at a conference. Can he make it to his destination in time, in this British version of Planes, Trains and Automobiles? You'll have to watch to find out.

3. Brazil : Truly an underrated, and unheard of, gem. From the mind of Terry Gilliam comes a dystopian vision of the future (one that bears some eerie resemblance of today). Staring Michael Palin and Robert DeNiro, the film centers on an administrator trying to correct a clerical error in the totalitarian government he works for.

Jessica Bozek's three books that will make you feel better about the world ("I am always looking for a novel that is just the right balance of serious & fun. Here are 3 that I've read in the last year or so & immediately wanted to pass along to my favorite reading friends, which is just about my highest praise.")

1. Remarkably Bright Creatures: Shelby Van Pelt (featuring an octopus narrator named Marcellus; read it before the Netflix adaptation later this spring!)

2. Greta & Valdin: Rebecca K. Reilly (quirky, queer, multiracial love story set in New Zealand)

3. The Wedding People: Allison Espach (lovely & smart, main character is an adjunct professor)

Michele Martinez's top three novels she read in 2026:

1. Kaveh Akbar, Martyrs! -- about the pain of being an Iranian citizen and U.S. immigrant during times of turmoil with the U.S. Queer love, maternal loss and yearning, as well as Persian poetry.

2. Kiran Desai, The Loneliness of Sunny and Sonia -- about two young people who seem destined for each other by their families and then not and then maybe? The novel is funny, tragic, mouth-watering (the food descriptions!), and visionary.

3. Ocean Vuong, The Emperor of Gladness -- an intergenerational, found family novel about poverty, depression, dementia, and ... joy in everyday life in and around Hartford, CT.

Regina Hansen's top three 1980s movies with a cult following of one:

1. The Changeling (1980) -- about a New York City-based composer who moves to a mansion in Seattle that he begins to believe is haunted. Stars George C. Scott and Trish Van Devere.

2. My Favorite Year (1982) -- about a young comedy writer in 1954 who has the chance to meet his acting idol, who's currently down on his luck. Stars Mark Linn-Baker and Peter O'Toole. The film was also adapted into a Broadway musical in 1992.

3. Local Hero (1983) -- about an American oil company representative who is sent to a village on the west coast of Scotland to purchase the land to build a new refinery. Stars Burt Lancaster, Peter Riegert, and Peter Capaldi. The film was also adapted into a musical in 2019.



MAKING AN IMPACT ON FOOD JUSTICE

This past fall, the DEIJ Committee focused on addressing food justice and insecurity in response to the defunding of SNAP benefits. We organized a food drive through the BU Food Pantry and we donated an incredible 95 pounds of food!

Building on this momentum to pursue tangible justice-focused action, this spring we organized our first group volunteer day at Community Servings in Jamaica Plain, an organization that provides medically tailored meals to individuals and families facing critical and chronic illnesses.

For a few hours, about 10 of us came together to chop, slice, peel veggies and herbs and label and package meals for neighbors in need. It was inspiring to come together as colleagues and make a tangible difference in our community beyond BU!



Before

AFTER



FRANCIS ISSAH - A LOVING MOTHER

"This is a poem I wrote to celebrate my mother, Theresa Braimah. She passed away last year at the age of 75. She was my elder sister and I's rock. As a single parent, she brought us up and gave us an education. Despite several challenges and tribulations that came her way, she never gave up on us and on life. She fought until the very end, when she could no longer fight."

Woman among all God's women,
The great iroko that refuses to break.
What shall we say of your acumen?
We might as go on without a brake.
You are strong and extra beautiful,
Both in youth alike and in age.
Your endurance makes you pow'ful,
And we fondly adore your parentage.
Not the moonless night of the Sahara
Prevents your shiny face been seen.
What can convey an unrestrained aura?
The world watches you with eyes keen.
Not a single effort of yours shown
Can be broomed or concealed forever.
The woman of plenty can not be lone,
Nor can she be mocked and slit ever.

Today is the day of God's choice.
A day specially befitting your status.
A beautiful day on which your poise
Provides thrill to the unborn fetus.
Today, seven decades ago you brought.
Born to be a shiny star to the rest.
And we gather to celebrate in thought.
You are an epitome of God's most best.
He chose your name, your name Theresa.
Theresa, fine Harvester name you carry.
As the farming season draws closer
To an end, posterity does not tarry.
Abundance is what your name means
And abundant splendor you show.
We are happy who are in our teens,
For your grand presence creates a row.

What shall we say, dear Mother?
Words can not tell all is to be said.
In the want of daddy you are father,
And you were sometimes our maid.
We value your tender loving care,
Yours is a memory never to be lost.

Yes, they are who will mock and dare
You, but it is clear are less than most.
So, enjoy this day as you still can,
A day set aside for your enjoyment.
Listen not to the taunts of feeble man,
But put your hope in His refreshment.
You' living testimony of life's beauty,
A beauty flawless and unsullied.
Your grace and humility is as pretty
As a new-born baby well unworried.



IN MY CORNER: COLLEAGUE APPRECIATION

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Writing Program,

I write this epistle with a lot of joy in my heart. I am joyous because of the beautiful soul I wish to celebrate. How time flies! Two months from now will be a year since I joined the Writing Program. I remember my campus visit like it was yesterday! Colleagues and leadership of the program were so welcoming and very supportive. I made so many friends on that day. One of them is Swati. After I agreed to join BU, I reached out to several of these friends (Swati, Courtney and Abir) to find out about life in Boston and the logistics of relocation. Swati was very helpful in this direction. She started an email chat for my cohort of new hires (Shweta, Lyana, Caitlin, and me) by putting us in touch with old folks in the program who, in their own individual capacities, were very helpful to my colleagues and I. I want to use this opportunity to say thank you to Courtney, Abir, Christina, Heather, Samantha, and Audrey, our wonderful Senior Staff Assistant. As new hires, we could ask any questions we wanted, and we received very helpful and insightful information from colleagues already in the program. When it was time for me to go hunting for residential accommodation for my family and I, Swati graciously offered to house me in her home at no cost while I conducted my search. Not knowing much about the Boston area, this act of selflessness and care really told me how kind and beautiful souls still walk this earth. I traveled from Detroit to Boston and spent four nights with Swati and her partner, Jay. I felt so much at home in their house: the food was nice, the conversations were great, Swati drove me around (there was a problem with my car rental when I arrived at Logan; another conversation to be had on another day), I had everything I needed, thanks to Swati and Jay. Swati provided me with all the information I needed to move around the different cities and suburbs asking about housing. The four days I spent in Boston were like magical holidays. Like a miracle, the very day I got back to Detroit (Friday, July 11, 2025), I received a phone call telling me my application had been approved for one of the residential facilities I visited in Worcester. I am grateful that I stayed in Swati's home. Thank you, Swati, for the beautiful soul you are and the help you offered to me when I needed it the most.

Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu,
Francis Issah.

Shout out to Ashley!

Last fall I was chatting with Ashley as I often do when I arrive, and somehow we got on the topic of weather. I was facing shoulder surgery but counting on climate change to save me from the shoveling I knew I would be unable to do. Ashley mentioned that Walmart had a sale on Ice Melt and that 100 pounds had been delivered to their house for free. I flew to my office and ordered 80 pounds of petsafe Ice Melt (I have a long driveway) all for the low, low cost of \$32.

Best guidance of the entire semester. Needless to say, there isn't a speck of the stuff left. Thank you, Ash!

- Melanie Smith

Shout out to Heather and Sarah!

Thank you to Heather Barrett for all her advocacy for LGBTQ+ folks in the past weeks. It's been a doozy of a semester and all her hard work has not gone unnoticed!

Thank you to Sarah, our fearless leader, for her kindness and responsiveness, digitally and in person! I know some colleagues at other schools who feel so distant from their directors, but Sarah always keeps us in the loop and has never been anything but approachable.

- Chase Culler

Shout out to Shweta and Suzanne!

Shout-outs and mad props to our Theater Now collaborators who, in addition to their work planning and teaching the course, gave all of our students insightful and on-point lessons. This year the course focused on productions from two family-driven dramatic play cycles: Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and *Lifted* from Mfoniso Udofio's Ufot Cycle. Shweta gave a clarifying lesson on universality and culturally specific theatrical reinterpretations and Suzanne shared her expertise on and passion for Greek entekhno music. Thanks to both of you for your insights and fun collaboration!

- Kevin and Brandy Barents

FRIENDLY FACES FROM HOME - PETS OF THE WRITING PROGRAM



Red and Adriatic

Dogs of Suzanne Westhues

These are our very loved rescue beagles: Red and Adriatic, named for the seas. Sometimes when Red gets the zoomies, he jumps over his brother, Adriatic. They are seven years old.



Tango and his peacock friends

Fish of Cara Bowman

This is "Tango," our betta fish. We've had him since September and he seems to be very happy in his planter fish tank. We even eat the radish sprouts that grow on top of his tank. He's a friendly fish who always swims up to say hi when we walk by his tank :)



Birdie

Dog of Jessica Bozek

Here is Birdie, whose best friend is Caitlin Dalton's dog Sprout. They recently attended each other's first birthday parties.



Gus, Roxy, and Beau

Granddogs of Robby Steinberg

Top left Gus from Westport, CT. Top right Roxy from D.C. (ten-year old picture; she recently passed away.) Bottom, Rescue dog Beau in L.A.



Zoe and Kira

Cats of Aleksandra Kasztalska

Zoe and Kira are waiting patiently for Aleks to finish commenting on student papers so that dinner is finally served



Oliver

Dog of Jamie Robertson

His name is Oliver (after the orphan, Oliver Twist). Luckily, and oddly, he has no anxiety issues. He loves all people and all dogs. When we got him, he was very underweight and a matted up mess. But even then, he seemed so happy! He's such an optimist.

FRIENDLY FACES FROM HOME - PETS OF THE WRITING PROGRAM



At 16 years and 7 pounds, she's the sweetest little old lady you'll ever meet-- but when she sits on my shoulder like this to help me grade she insists I maintain rigorous standards.

Zoey
Cat of Liam Meyer
AKA "ZoBo" when she's being silly, AKA "the Zoeydiac Killer when she's back on the 'nip"



Staying cool in the shade!

Izzy
Dog of Katja Davidoff



I offer laptop-warming services free of charge!

Cookie
Cat of Amy Bennett-Zendzian



Sprout
Dog of Caitlin Dalton



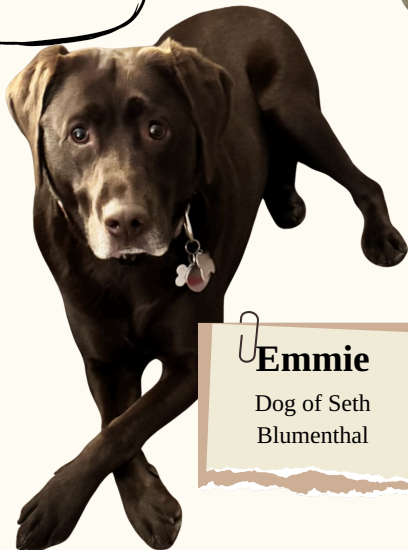
Yoffi
Dog of Ingrid Anderson

My full name is Tony Milanese Lee!



Tony
Dog of Marisa Milanese

I'm a good girl!



Emmie
Dog of Seth Blumenthal



*THANK YOU, COLLEAGUES, FOR YOUR MANY YEARS OF
DEDICATION TO THE WRITING PROGRAM.**

Celebrating 5 years: **Chase Culler, Daniel DiPaolo, and Daryl Morazzini.**

Celebrating 10 years: **Sam Sarkisian**

Celebrating 15 years: **Dean Simpson**

Celebrating 20 years: **Billy Giraldi, Rebecca Kinraide, and Holly Schaaf**

* These numbers are based on internal records within the Writing Program for when individuals first taught WR, and may not reflect university-wide records.

