

**TWO-YEAR
COLLEGE
ENGLISH
ASSOCIATION—
SOUTHWEST
REGION**

**SPRING 2020
CONTENT:**

Letter from the
TYCA-SW Chair
D. Brian Anderson

2020 Conference
Updates

TYCA-SW Members
Speak: Coping during
COVID-19

Strategies for
Teaching Essays:
Advice from
Students

Time's Up! Confront-
ing Toxic Masculinity
in British Literature I

About TYCA-SW

TYCA-SW
Leadership 2019

A Welcome Letter from the Chair of TYCA— Southwest

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

During the recent and still-unfolding pandemic crisis, as many Americans have found themselves isolating at home and dealing with other challenges, higher education has largely carried on, albeit in much-altered form. Though the situation was approached differently at universities than it was at community colleges, most schools tried to provide some continuity and ability for students to finish the semester. Much of this effort was focused on transitioning to online learning, and that, too, came with many challenges for students and teachers alike, depending on their experiences with technology and online learning platforms.

Not all students were able to finish the semester successfully, but higher education as a whole was successful in allowing this one facet of life to continue, giving us some sense of continuity and allowing students the opportunity to finish a part of their journeys.

As a teacher of English, I was proud to help in this effort and proud to see how my students met the challenges. Language and literacy have always been particularly valuable in providing continuity and low-cost learning and reflective opportunities. Thoreau lived in relative solitude, and he used much of that time to read and write about his inner thoughts and observations, in part reflecting on the societal forces that drive consumption and materialism.



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English courses still have few needs beyond what is required to read and write, to think and reflect. Technology helps, especially during times of crisis, but the basic technology of writing remains paramount.

Although we are saddened by the postponement of our annual conference, I look forward to seeing how we make use of the opportunity for some online exchanges in the meantime, and I look forward to continuing to communicate with all of you through email and in the online environment.

D. Brian Anderson
Chair, TYCA-SW

2020 Conference Update

In a summer meeting, the TYCA-SW Executive Committee voted to postpone the 2020 conference to October 2021 and instead offer free online professional development seminars for TYCA-SW members. For everyone's health and safety, we could not justify asking members to gather, nor could we ask our membership to shoulder the economic burden of conference attendance when travel funding and employment are so unsure.

But we couldn't imagine a year without meeting and because we recognize the need to learn and build from each other, even while socially distanced, ***we'd like to invite TYCA-SW members to join us virtually on 16 and 23 October 2020*** led by Janet Zadina (see the next page for more information about her incredible work) and special TYCA-SW members doing important work in the classroom. More information will follow on our website: <http://tycasw.org/wp/>

While we will miss the excitement and learning provided by a conference, we are glad to offer this opportunity as we do our best to remain safe and continue teaching in this unprecedented time in higher education. We look forward to learning with everyone in October.

Toni McMillen and Sarah R. Fish, Coordinators
TYCA-SW 2020 Professional Development Series

The first ever TYCA-SW Professional Development Series presents



Janet Zadina

**“Addressing Faculty
Anxiety, Stress, and
Trauma: Recover, Renew,
and Rewire”**

In this two-part workshop you will learn science and strategies about how stress affects you and what you can do about it.

16 October: In Module 1 you will learn why your brain feels foggy and why you aren't performing optimally. You will learn about your two nervous systems, the fight/flight one and the rest/digest one and how to switch your physiology into the calming nervous system. You will acquire strategies to recover, including calming down quickly and practices that you can do to inhibit the fight/flight response that impairs mental and physical health.

23 October: In Module 2 you will focus on renew and rewiring. It isn't enough just to stop stress every time it occurs; you want to build in resilience to it occurring. Learn lifestyle practices that will renew your mind/brain/body, making you less prone to experience high stress and to stop it faster. Learn about the process of burnout and where and how you can stop that process.

See what science recommends and experience multiple ways to create these pathways as you engage in activities together and find what works for you individually.

For more information about Zadina's work, check out her website:

<http://www.brainresearch.us/>

For more information about registration, see the TYCA-SW website for more details or contact tyca.southwest@gmail.com.

TYCA-SW Members Speak: Coping during COVID-19

The TYCA-SW newsletter editorial team asked members to share uplifting messages as a way to find hope in what may seem bleaker moments in teaching. The pandemic has forced our teaching situations to adapt (probably more quickly than we would have liked) and continues to change, sometimes by the minute, what we will be doing in the fall. It was important for the editorial team to set aside a space for us to build each other up. If you have something you'd like to add to our post-October newsletter, please send it in.

Toni McMillen
Professor of English
Collin College, McKinney

Mr. Rogers once said, in times of crisis "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." This past Spring, we were challenged as professors to answer a unique call to educate students knowing their lives had just been disrupted. "Social distancing" and learning online possibly meant more

isolation for some of our already anxious students. As educators, we felt the reality of loss and grief that we all would face with a new normal.

However, it did not take long to find the helpers. We had technical support working twenty-four hours a day, our colleges began working on plans to support students and faculty, professors networked, and community members made masks. These are just some of the amazing helpful acts of kindness that happened.

As my house was full with my son and my husband also on Zoom, I spent a semester teaching from my back yard to sound of a mocking bird and seeing the beautiful sky change with all of the hues nature provides. Considering myself blessed, I saw my students in their homes with their two-year olds and their fur babies, witnessing their challenges and successes. Our students opened up more about their struggles, and students supported one another. There was beautiful cooperative mind shift that that only happens in times of crisis. There was a reconsideration of perspectives and more focus on how education connects people. While there was a pandemic going on, students still engaged in learning, life continued, and we all became a bit more empathetic.

While I and my fellow teachers mourn the loss of the way life was and the loss of life in our country, it is reassuring to see kind helpers, dedicated students, and magical teaching moments continue to exist.

Erin Beaver
Professor of English
Colorado Mountain College

The pandemic has forced educators to think differently about our work lives: about what we teach, how we teach, and who we are teaching. We also have had to rethink our connections with colleagues. My conversations with my colleagues are still abundant, but they are now primarily by phone and punctuated by phrases

like “can you hold on a second?” and “just a moment...” and “I’m sorry...” as I’m frequently interrupted by my small children’s demands for attention. I have struggled to understand my professional self in these pandemic times, where the lines between my many selves are blurred by the unclear boundaries.

In April, when it became apparent that this next year would not lead us “back to normal,” I wanted to develop some structural support for my colleagues and me—something that would help us feel rooted in shaking ground. I shared a loosely formed short course idea with biology faculty colleague, Dr. Kimberly Harding, and she thought it might work. In May/June, we developed a five-week curriculum for faculty seeking support and reflective conversation. We called it *Teaching & Learning from a Distance: A Peer Engagement Program*.

The course started mid-July, and the five weeks collaborating with my colleagues has been transformative for them and for me. We have discussed effective teaching practices, but more importantly, we have identified ways to adapt and recognize our gifts as educators in the pandemic. One of my colleagues wrote this of her course experience: “I gained a sense of camaraderie with other instructors, many new ideas and tools...and your feedback and encouragement was the one thing that kept me from giving up and withdrawing from teaching this fall.” Another wrote, “I plan to transcend my need for creating that perfect lesson or lab and focus more on engaging students. This course has been instrumental in helping change this mindset and to be more human than teacher.”

As we enter the academic year, I, too, seek to be human more than teacher, and I will continue to connect with colleagues near and far to do just that. I hope you do, too!

Article content continued on the next page ...

Bruce Martin
Professor of English
Lone Star College-North Harris

Though we all feel the pressure and impressions of the pandemic, I appreciate my professional colleagues across the nation, relying and sharing constructive ideologies and curriculum theories. This is *our* time for community colleges: our academic training has prepared us to connect to our communities more than we ever have; our commitment for our community's students in their realities; and our opportunity to restart our interdependence with our professionalism.

When I started my graduate work in Composition Studies, Tamara Fish reminded us, "We are our students." She was reminding us as professionals, we often practice the same behavior that we sometimes criticize our students, but in different vocabularies. Right now, we have been reminded that our students' strengths are our strengths; their flexibility is our flexibility; their hope of the future is our hope.

Additional resources from our national affiliates:

["CCCC and CWPA Joint Statement in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic"](#)

Danah Hashem, "[Building Student Relationships Online](#)"

Linda Larson, "[\(Online\) Learning from My Mistakes](#),

National Council of Teachers of English, [Resources for Online Learning](#)

TYCA-SW seeks ongoing submissions for publication in the newsletter. Articles should be no longer than 500 words, and creative works should be no longer than 800 words.

Submissions can be sent to Sarah Fish at sfish@collin.edu or Toni McMillen at tmcmillen@collin.edu.

Congratulations!



At the Fall 2019 conference, we awarded Leigh Ann Moore (Alvin College, left), Rajakumari Chekuri (Laredo College, left middle) the Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award and Toni McMillen (Collin College, right) the Robert W. Wylie Service award. Also pictured, Michael Berberich (Awards Committee, right middle).

If you know of a TYCA-SW member deserving of recognition in these areas, check out the award descriptions on page 12 and contact the current Executive Committee Awards coordinators.

The TYCA-SW newsletter editorial team is committed to sharing student voices with their permission and providing a publication venue for students. If you would like to work with students to create a newsletter article like our past student work, please reach out to the newsletter editorial team.

Strategies for Teaching Essays: Advice from Students

Authors: Jumaane Britton, Eric Gutierrez, Alex Heleski, Julia Hernandez, Alison Meija, Michelle Morales-Almanza, Anjali Pokhrel, Kanza Qarshi, Dylan Reed, Joshua Stephen Spowart, Garret William Turner, Melanie Valdez, Kaylin Woo, three anonymous students, and Dr. Sarah Fish (for editing)

In Fall 2019, a group of co-requisite students focused their attention on one driving question: What is an essay? They learned about the history of the essay, as an emerging form belittled for being a lesser kind of writing and eventually as a form defined by the five-paragraph model. They learned how nebulous “essay” is and that each use of “essay” for assignments would require understanding how someone used that term.

This article shares their advice for how professors might better help students navigate an essay assignment, how we might help them bridge what they think about essays and what we want, and how we might help them in the process of creating their own work.

Step 1: Explain How You Define “Essay”

One thing that a professor should know is that they should be clear about their expectations. A student should know what they need to put into their essay to earn full credit. During this semester, we have learned that each professor has different expectations and can be more of a stickler than others. But if we have a clear understanding of what needs to be done, it is easier on the student and professor. Students can learn and adapt better when things are clearly stated and there is nothing to assume when completing an assignment. This also allows the students to grasp how much work needs to get done and how they should span out the work to prevent procrastination. All in all, if professors are clear on what they want: it makes it easier to grade, and there are no recurring questions from students, or misinterpretation of the assignment.

Step 2: Provide Specific Instructions for Writing

Because essays have different requirements depending on the writing situation, we need professors to provide ways for us to understand what we’re doing. Without clear, detailed instructions, our work wouldn’t be efficient because we would not be clear about our task. If we have our goals, we can be more specific in our writing, and we can make fewer mistakes. Professors can offer detailed assignment sheets, but it helps to go over expectations in class and ask us what questions we have for clarification more than one time.

Continued on the next page
Fall 2020 TYCA-SW Newsletter Fall 8

Step 3: Teach Us How to Consider an Audience

To help us develop our essays, we need to learn more about the audience in writing situations. A writer should get to know their audience to see what type of people he/she would be working with so that it will help the author to better understand them. If our audience is only the professor, we still want to know more about expectations for formatting, content, and language. And if we're writing for another audience, we want to have conversations with you about what we can adapt and chance to match our audience with specific examples. To make a message stronger and more relatable, we need to our writing styles to acknowledge specific readers in the area and differ from an article written on the same topic for the general public.

Step 4: Teach Us How to Develop Content

We know professors are not looking for us to ramble on in essays and they want us to stay focused and write all that we can without providing fluff. But when professors tend to grade students on grammar and punctuation rather than the process and the content, we lose focus on content because we spend more time on mechanics. When we create an essay, we need professors to focus more on the writing process and the overall content. We need guidance for how to stick closely to an outline all while providing the necessary points and topics to complete the overall prompt. Guide us through how you would develop a paragraph, connect paragraphs together, and what an essay's content would look like to you.

Step 5: Teach Us the Preferred Formatting

We believe that formatting is very important when it comes to writing essays as we have to make our points clear to intended audience. Formatting creates a good visual representation and structure to the essay. We write an essay for our focused audiences to convince them, but formatting requirements can differ from professor to professor. Formatting helps us to put our paper together, so we need professors to go over formatting ideas more than once. It would also help if we had time in class for each essay to review formatting expectations before turning in the assignment.

Suggested Readings

- Adorno, Thomas. "The Essay as Form." *Notes to Literature, Volume I*. Translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen, Columbia UP, 1991, pp. 3-24.
- Kirklighter, Cristina. *Traversing the Democratic Borders of the Essay*, State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Lynch, Paul. "The Sixth Paragraph: A Re-Vision of the Essay." *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, vol. 2, edited by Charles Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, Parlor Press, 2011, pp. 286-301.
- Mack, Peter. "Rhetoric and the Essay." *Rhetoric Society*, vol. 23, no. 2, Spring 1993, pp. 41-49.

Time's Up! Confronting Toxic Masculinity in British Literature I

Authors: Christopher Krejci, Ph.D. (christopher.krejci@templejc.edu),
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Department of English and Foreign Languages, Temple College

Meeting students where they are entails recognition of discourses that construe contemporary life. Discourses related to gender disparity and toxic masculinity have taken center stage, as demonstrated by the Time's Up movement. Putting contemporary discourses into conversation with the past can encourage critical thinking in a British Literature survey course. As James M. Lang suggests in the Introduction to [*Teaching the Literature Survey*](#) (2018), learning increases when students draw connections between course material and their lived experience (2). Teaching British literature against the backdrop of the Time's Up movement means creating explicit opportunities for students to put discourses related to gender disparity and toxic masculinity into conversation with canonical texts.

Confronting Toxic Masculinity in *Beowulf*

Reading canonical texts from the perspective of often-overlooked female characters allows students to challenge narratives grounded in discourses that perpetuate gender disparity. When teaching medieval literature, Kimberly George encourages students to question interpretations of stories that privilege male heroes at the expense of female characters. Drawing on Stephen Greenblatt's [*The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve*](#) (2017), George asks students to analyze paintings of Adam and Eve to drive discussion of female archetypes. Studying images that depict Adam and Eve as equally accountable for their transgression alongside those that depict Eve as the sole transgressor helps students notice the way in which narrative can be manipulated to privilege those in power. George then points students to *Beowulf*, asking them to use the Anglo-Saxon warrior code, which accounts for Beowulf's rise to power, as a framework for analyzing the actions of Grendel's mother. Is Grendel's mother a monster, George asks, or is she considered monstrous because she fights like a man?

Confronting Toxic Masculinity in *Othello*

Identifying examples of toxic masculinity in canonical texts encourages students to see the highly destructive effects. When teaching Renaissance literature, Beverly Van Note encourages students to consider the way in which behaviors associated with men and women during the period were valued differently. Inspired by manuals like [*The English Gentleman*](#) (1630) and [*The English Gentlewoman*](#) (1631) by Richard

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Braithwaite, Van Note asks students to notice the gendered nature of reputation in *Othello*. Van Note divides students into groups to complete a close reading of an assigned speech. Based on their reading, students compile a list of gendered behaviors. Van Note then shares a definition of toxic masculinity and challenges students to develop arguments about the atmosphere of toxic masculinity that pervades the play. What is the cost of toxic masculinity, Van Notes asks, for the characters or for us today?

Confronting Toxic Masculinity in *The Way of the World*

Calling out the repressive nature of the male gaze in canonical texts helps students see toxic tropes. When teaching Restoration literature, Christopher Krejci challenges students to analyze relationships between the public sphere, gender, and power.

Sharing ideas about how to engage literary studies with contemporary issues, colleagues at Temple College (Texas) showcase how they bring *Time's Up* into Brit Lit I.

Referencing the way in which Simon Schama diagnoses the Restoration in [*A History of Britain*](#) (2010) as a period afflicted with "scopophilia," Krejci draws connections between the culture of looking and gendered mannerisms as he leads students through a performance of the 17th-century bow and curtsy. Krejci then turns students' attention to *The Way of the World* to illustrate the politics of looking on the Restoration stage. Working

in pairs, students translate key scenes into emojis. Rendering the dialogue pictographically helps students notice that even though female characters speak their mind, they are not subjects with agency to look, but objects to be looked (and laughed) at. Who has the power to look, Krejci asks, and what are the consequences of objectification?

Works Cited

Brathwaite, Richard. *The English Gentleman*. London, 1630. *Early English Books Online*.

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Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve: The Story that Created Us*. Norton, 2017.

Lang, James M. Introduction. *Teaching the Literature Survey Course*, edited by Gwynn Dujardin, et al. West Virginia UP, 2018, pp. 1-8.

Shama, Simon. *A History of Britain*, vol. 3, special ed., BBC, 2010. 6 vols.

About TYCA-SW

In 1966, the founding members of the Southwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College (SRCE), the original name of TYCA-SW, met in San Antonio, Texas.

Since then, the Conference has met yearly in each one of the six states making up the Southwest Region: in Denver, Little Rock, Bossier City, Hobbs, Oklahoma City, and in various cities in Texas, including Amarillo, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Fort Worth, Galveston, Laredo, and Waco.

Members enjoy not only the professional growth of attending the annual conferences but also the personal interaction with old and new friends that sparks enthusiasm, confidence, and solidarity.

Programs feature speakers of regional and national reputation. Host colleges traditionally schedule recreational activities that showcase their cities, such as a walk around the San Antonio Riverwalk or a hiking trail through the mountains and scenic routes of Colorado.

Visit TYCASW.ORG for more information.

SHOW APPRECIATION

NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE FOR TYCA-SW AWARDS 2021

Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award

The Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award is presented at the annual TYCA-SW conference. It honors the memory of Susan Faulkner, professor and coordinator of the English Department at Cedar Valley College in the Dallas County Community College District in Texas. Susan loved teaching, learning, the English language, TYCA-SW, and her grandchildren most of all. We urge you to nominate a friend or colleague who merits special recognition for his or her hard work and inspired teaching. Send your nominee's name and a brief description of his or her outstanding work. In addition, you may include brief comments from this individual's students and peers, if possible.

Robert W. Wylie Service Award

Each year TYCA-SW honors one person for outstanding contributions made to the profession through long-term service. The Wylie Award is our highest distinction. To nominate a colleague for this award, send the nominee's name and a description of his or her contributions to the profession. You may include comments from others in your nomination as well. Include the information listed below on this form along with any supporting documents.

Go to tycasw.org to nominate a colleague for the Robert W. Wylie Service Award and Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award. Nominees must be paid members of TYCA-SW.

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Fall 2020 TYCA-SW Newsletter Fall 13