ISU Writing Program: A Focus On the Practices of Writing Research (2.1)

Our Grassroots Approach to Writing Research

The goals of the ISU Writing Program are best understood through our “Grassroots Writing Research” philosophy. Our aims are to investigate literate activity through a range of different kinds of projects.

- **Writing and Reading** about Writing Research is a key activity in our program. Our primary venue for grassroots writing research (both reading it and producing it) is our Grassroots Writing Research Journal. The journal is published twice each year. It includes articles by citizen writing researchers (which included high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, professional and writing research scholars). Teachers and students in our program have opportunities to write for the journal, but publication is open to writing researchers everywhere.

- **Talking** about Writing Research happens in our classes, of course, and in all kinds of activities that our teachers engage in as part of their professional development.
  - However, we specifically talk about Writing Research as part of our Visiting Speakers Series (well-known scholars in Writing Studies visit campus each year).
  - Our Annual Writing Research Colloquium Series invites authors and researchers speak about their work to an audience of students and instructors, as well as other members of our ISU community.
  - Our Let’s CHAT Podcast Series brings together students and instructors to talk about issues of writing research that are important to our community. Topics can be related to specific theories or ideas we are exploring, different teaching strategies we employ, and conversations about the ways we understand and take up different concepts and ideas related to writing and literacy.

- **Enacting** Writing Research means engaging actively and thoughtfully in everyday lived experience where writing matters. Our teachers and students create multiple opportunities to enact practical writing research—which involves thinking through and observing how writing works in daily life.
  - Through our Undergraduate Writing Research Scholarship, we also provide an opportunity for undergraduate scholars (students from ISU and other institutions are eligible) to engage in a year-long Writing Research project. Scholars publish their work in our Grassroots Writing Research Journal and also participate in our annual Writing Research Colloquium.
  - In addition, our Half-Mile Project brings together students and residents of our Bloomington-Normal Community to talk about how writing is produced and used in the daily lives of our Bloomington-Normal residents.

- **Collecting** Writing Research is an activity that happens as part of the publication of our journal, but this activity is supported by our Grassroots Literate Activity Database, which is a project that collects details about particular writing activities as they are experienced by groups and individuals.
The Grassroots Writing Research Journal

The Grassroots Writing Research Journal is produced twice each year by the Writing Program at Illinois State University. The print issue of each journal is used as a primary text in two of ISU’s undergraduate general education writing courses. Digital versions of previous issues are available online. The title of the journal reflects our aspirations—to present writing research by different authors and in a wide range of different topics, forms, and media. The journal solicits authors from within and outside of our institutions and other academic institutions. We’ve published faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, high school students and non-students—all Writing Researchers. We encourage authors to share not only what they’ve learned about writing, but how they learned it. Thus, each new volume brings together a diverse collection of articles that all enact some form of writing research from a variety of authors. Authors can learn more about publishing on our websites, which offers both back issues of the journal and a range of different guides for researching and writing for the journal.

More information about the Journal can be found on our program website (www.isuwriting.com).

The ISU Writing Program Visiting Speaker Series

The ISU Writing Program’s annual Grassroots Writing Research Visiting Speaker Series brings nationally recognized scholars in writing research to campus for 2–3 day visits, during which they present their current research, run workshops and discussion sessions, and talk with both graduate and undergraduate students about writing. Now a well-established part of our Writing Program, the Series reflects our ongoing endeavors to promote discussions about writing research, in and beyond the classroom and in and beyond ISU. Although the scholars’ presentations are not available to the public, our instructors are able to access archived presentations to share with their students in Writing Program courses.

Past Visiting Scholars

- Paul Prior, Professor of English, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Kevin Roozen, Associate Professor of Rhetoric & Composition, Auburn University

2012–2013 Visiting Scholar

Ann Johns, Faculty Emerita, Department of Rhetoric & Writing Studies, San Diego State University

Campus Visit: January 30–31, 2013
Dr. Johns has been teaching since her early 20s, beginning with a middle school in Chicago and then a high school in Kenya. Soon after she moved to San Diego, she began teaching in community colleges and as a part-time instructor at San Diego State. When she completed her Ph.D. (1979), she was offered a tenure-track position at SDSU in two departments: Academic Skills (now Rhetoric and Writing Studies) and Linguistics and Oriental Languages. She is the recipient of two Senior Fulbright grants, at the University of Limpopo in South Africa (2007) and the Antonine University in Beirut (2009). Though officially retired, Dr. Johns continues to teach, work on curriculum projects in the U.S. and abroad, and write articles and book chapters about English for Special Purposes, genre, and teaching composition.
Research Talk (Wednesday, January 30th, 2013, 7–8:30PM – Stevenson Hall 133)
“Genre, Activity Theory, and the Common Core Standards” In this presentation, Dr. Johns discussed the implementation of the Common Core Standards (CCS) across different states nationally, and the impact of these standards on the ways that reading and writing are taught and assessed. She also addressed some of the implications of CCS for university-level writing and reading instruction. Her discussion was of particular interest to pre-service or in-service K-12 instructors, but was also useful for Writing Program instructors who work with incoming first-year students, because we wanted to address and create bridges for students’ knowledge and learning experiences in First Year Writing and a better understanding of the implications of CCS is important for this work.

2013–14 Visiting Scholar

Anis Bawarshi, Professor & Director of Expository Writing, University of Washington

Campus Visit: October 21–22, 2013
Dr. Bawarshi teaches courses in composition theory and pedagogy, rhetorical genre theory, discourse analysis, rhetoric, and knowledge transfer. He is Series Co-Editor for Reference Guides to Rhetoric and Composition and Program Profiles and Co-Editor for Composition Forum. He also serves on the editorial board for College Composition and Communication. His publications include Genre: A Historical, Theoretical, and Pedagogical Introduction (co-authored with Mary Jo Reiff); Genre and the Invention of the Writer; Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres (coauthored with Amy J. Devitt and Mary Jo Reiff), A Closer Look: The Writer’s Reader (co-authored with Sidney I. Dobrin); and articles and book chapters on genre, uptake, invention, and knowledge transfer in composition. His current work focuses on knowledge transfer, genre uptake and materiality, and the performance of public genres. He is co-editing a book that examines genre and the performance of publics as well as a book collection that profiles writing program ecologies.

Research Talk (Monday, October 21st, 2013, 7–8:30PM – Stevenson Hall 401)
“Accounting For Genre Performances: Why Uptake Matters”
During this presentation, Dr. Bawarshi discussed genre uptake. Over the past 25 years, scholarship in rhetorical genre studies has contributed a great deal to our understanding of how genres mediate social activities, providing insight into how systems of related genres coordinate ways of knowing and doing within recurring situations. From this scholarship has emerged a view of genres as both social (typified, recognizable, and consequential ways of organizing texts, activities, and social reality) and cognitive phenomena (involved phenomenologically in how we recognize, encounter, and make sense of situations). Yet genre research has not accounted as fully for what Anne Freadman has called genre uptake—the taking up or performance of genres in moments of interaction and innovation. Genre uptake is informed by genre knowledge but also by one’s sense of self, one’s memory of prior uptakes, as well as by other affective, embodied, and material factors that make uptakes, while to some extent habitual, also momentary and unpredictable. A focus on genre uptake allows us to account more fully for the dynamics of agency and the contingent, impromptu, multi-directional performances of genre—and their implications for genre research and teaching.

2014–15 Visiting Scholar

Jodi Shipka, Associate Professor of English, University of Maryland Baltimore County

Campus Visit: October 8–10, 2014
Jody Shipka is an Associate Professor of English, teaching courses in the Communication and
Technology track. She received her B.A. in English from Loyola University Chicago and her Ph.D. in English / Writing Studies from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her research and teaching interests include mediated activity theory, histories of Rhetoric and Composition, multimodal discourses, digital rhetorics, and play theory. Shipka is the author of Toward A Composition Made Whole and the Editor of Play! A Collection of Toy Camera Photographs. Her work has appeared in College Composition and Communication, Computers and Composition, Enculturation, Kairos, Text and Talk, and Writing Selves / Writing Societies, as well as other edited collections.

**Writing Research Colloquium**

Every spring, the ISU Writing Program hosts the annual Grassroots Writing Research Colloquium. The Colloquium promotes student research in the study of writing practices and features presentations from and discussions with our Undergraduate Writing Research Fellows and published Grassroots Writing Research Journal authors. Speakers discuss their approaches to writing research, sharing their experiences of creating and reflecting on the lives of their Grassroots articles, processes that continue long after the articles are published.

**Inaugural Colloquium**
**Thursday, April 26, 2012 ~ 2–5PM**
**Stevenson Hall 401**

- **JoeyLauren Jiracek,** 2012 Grassroots Scholar
  “The Trend of the Pen: A Brief Study of the Writing Habits of ISU Freshmen”

- **Brandon Stark,** 2012 Grassroots Scholar
  “Why I Love Screenplay Writing”

- **Miles Maggio,** 2012 Grassroots Scholar
  “Memoir and Self-Discovery”

**2nd Colloquium**
**Monday, February 25, 2013 ~ 7–8:30PM**
**Stevenson Hall 133**

- **Abbie O’Ryan,** 2012–13 Grassroots Scholar
  “CHAT: Four of One Hundred and Forty Characters”

- **Lisa Phillips,** Grassroots Author (Issue 3.2 – Spring 2013)
  “Writing with Tattoo Ink: Composing that Gets Under the Skin”
  Read [Phillips’ Grassroots article.](#)

- **Evan Nave,** Grassroots Author (Issue 3.2 – Spring 2013)
  “In Search of SOL: Graffiti and the Formation of A Writing Identity”
  Read [Nave’s Grassroots article.](#)

- **Hilary Selznick,** Grassroots Author (Issue 2.1 – Fall 2011 and Issue 2.2 – Spring 2012)
  “Researching One in Six Million”
  Read [Selznick’s Grassroots article.](#)
Starting with our 3rd Colloquium, the 2014 Colloquium, we’ve created digital resources documenting the speakers’ presentations.

**ISU Writing Program Podcast Series: Let’s CHAT!**

Our Let’s CHAT podcast series was named for one of our key program concepts, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Our program differs from many general education writing programs in our active use of current research and theory in Writing Studies (and related fields that research learning and literacy), as well as our own Citizen Writing Research. We use research in genre studies and CHAT, research on learning transfer and cognition, as well as other kinds of research and theory. But in our efforts to engage with theory and research, we’re trying to move beyond just learning about it. We want to enact it: To observe its traces in our daily literate practices and to incorporate what we are learning into our personal knowledge as literate citizens. Our podcast series helps to bring together interested members of our community to talk about praxis—how the theories and research we read can make their way into our daily practice as writers, and as people who need to share our knowledge with others.

Podcast tapings are open to the public and Q&A and discussion sessions follow each podcast.

**Undergraduate Writing Research Fellowship Program**

(formerly known as the Undergraduate Scholarship)

The ISU Writing Program sponsors an undergraduate fellowship program to promote student research in the study of writing practices. There are up to two fellowships available each academic year. These fellowships provide a $500.00 stipend to an undergraduate student at any level attending any higher education institution. Fellowship participants have the opportunity to create a research study investigating writing practices, present their research at our annual Grassroots Writing Research Colloquium, and compose an article for the Grassroots Writing Research Journal, our program’s in-house publication.

The current call for fellowship applications can be found at 2014-15CallforFellowshipApplications.

**Vanessa Garcia, 2013–14 Scholar**

“Sketch Comedy and Writing Make A Great Pear: Punny, Isn’t It?!?” (forthcoming)

**Kylie Wojciechowski, 2013–14 Scholar**

“Some Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Writing” (forthcoming)

**Abbie O’Ryan, 2012–13 Scholar**

“CHAT: Four of One Hundred and Forty Characters” (GWRJ 5.1 Fall 2014)

**JoeyLauren Jiracek, 2012 Scholar**

“The Trend of the Pen: A Study of the Writing Attitudes and Habits of ISU Freshmen” (GWRJ 4.1 Fall 2013)

Read Jiracek’s Grassroots article.

**Miles Maggio, 2012 Scholar**

“The Memoir As Inquiry to Self Discovery”
(GWRJ 4.1 Fall 2013)
Read Maggio’s Grassroots article.

Brandon Stark, 2012 Scholar
“Screenplay Writing: The Art of Writing Films”
(GWRJ 4.1 Fall 2013)
Read Stark’s Grassroots article.

The Half-Mile Project

The Half-Mile Project represents our latest work in inspiring writing research with and around the ISU Campus Community.

The Grassroots Literate Activity Database

The Grassroots Literate Activity Database was created by the Writing Program at ISU as a resource to help individuals examine their writing experiences, in order to understand how the acquisition of knowledge and skills in one writing experience may apply to another writing experience and document their learning of these important skills.

The GLAD is an open database that researchers (of all kinds) can use to better understand what people actually do when they engage in different kinds of writing and composing in their daily lives. Participants share details about some different kinds of writing situations, either by filling out an online survey or through face-to-face meetings with one of our researchers.