

# WRITE FREE OR DIE

Volume 8, Issue 1

The Newsletter of the UNH Writing Programs

Fall 2021

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## Turnitoff: Perils of Plagiarism Software

Meaghan Dittrich, PhD  
Director, University Writing Programs

*"Unless plagiarism is out-and-out cheating, like cutting and pasting an entire paper from the Internet or paying someone to write it, we should be cautious about reacting to plagiarism with the intent to punish. For much plagiarism, a better response is to just relax and let writers continue to practice the sophisticated skill of using sources."*

— Jennifer A. Mott-Smith

It's true that many faculty members are turning to software like Turnitin as an easy solution to detect plagiarism – even some students feel comforted by the fact that they can simply submit their work and the software will presumably detect any problems for them. But is that actually what the software does? Research might suggest otherwise. There are, in fact, many problems with using this type of plagiarism detection software, as outlined in several research studies, including the facetiously named chapter "Plagiarism Detection Services are Money Well Spent" by Stephanie Vie from Cheryl Ball and Drew Loewe's collection [Bad Ideas About Writing](#):

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### Future Tense: Upcoming Writing Across the Curriculum Events

**Fall Semester WAC Virtual Brown Bag: Monday, November 8 from 1:00-2:30pm via Zoom**

A round-table event for any faculty to share information and discuss writing in their courses. All faculty interested in discussing writing in their courses are welcome. Worth 1 CEITL Participation Point. Register at <https://www.unh.edu/cetl/unh-writing-program>.

**Spring 2022 Guest Speaker:** TBD (look for upcoming announcements on our [Events page](#)).

**Writing-Invested Faculty Retreat (June 6-8, 2022):** The annual Faculty retreat is back! We are scheduled to return to the Omni Mount Washington Hotel in 2022 for the next iteration of the WI faculty retreat. Priority will go to faculty teaching or planning to teach WI (Writing Intensive) courses, but all faculty who are interested in writing pedagogy are welcome to apply. The experience consists of a three-day offsite at the Mount Washington Hotel followed by three sessions at UNH in the following year. The salient goals of the retreat are to give faculty a fuller awareness of the principles underlying writing pedagogy and WI courses, equip them with practices to enhance their work with student writing, and to promote connections among writing-invested faculty. Contact [Meaghan.Dittrich@unh.edu](mailto:Meaghan.Dittrich@unh.edu) for information about applying (deadline to apply is March 1, 2022). See page 9 for Flyer.

*“Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void but out of chaos.”*  
*— Mary Shelly*

**WAC(ky) People**

**UNH Writing Program**

Meaghan Elliott, Director  
 Alicia Clark-Barnes, Associate Director  
 Nicole Cunningham-Frisbey, Associate Director

**Writing Committee:  
 College Representatives Term End**

**Paul**—Inchan Kim      **2024**  
 (Decision Sciences)  
**COLSA**—Davida      **2024**  
 Margolin (MCBS)  
**CEPS**—Robert Letscher      **2023**  
 (Earth Sciences)  
**COLA 1**—Josh Lauer      **2022**  
 (Communication)  
**COLA 2**—Michelle Gibbons **2023**  
 (Communication)  
**CHHS**— Lauren Ferguson **2022**  
 (Recreation Management and Policy)  
**UNHM**—C.C. Hendricks **2023**  
 (English, Director of First-Year Writing Program)

**Permanent Representatives:**

*Writing Program Director and Connors Writing Center Director:*

Meaghan Dittrich (Academic Affairs)

*Director of Composition:*

Cris Beemer\* (English)

*CEITL:*

Catherine Overson (Academic Affairs)

*Discovery Committee:*

Kathrine Aydelott (Dimond Library)

**Ex officio (non-voting):**

*Committee Secretary:*

Elizabeth Smith (Registrar)

\*Faculty Chair

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- It doesn't always detect unoriginal work.
- Sometimes it flags a student for a false detection (false flag). For instance, phrases that are commonplace or culturally idiomatic are not separated from "original thought" by the algorithms. (Let's remember that this software is still a computer and, as Les Perelman and Chris Anson write, "Humans make lousy machines" and vice versa).
- Students/faculty can come to feel "dependent" upon it, rather than learning the tools and techniques for textual attribution.
- Consider the ethics of companies like Turnitin profiting off student work, especially when students are "forced" to submit their papers as a class requirement. Universities must subscribe to this service, tens of thousands of dollars per year – if we all avoid it, we don't need the subscription and the money can be better used elsewhere (library resources, for instance).

The "plagiarism paranoia" that seems to be permeating the academic world isn't necessarily being helped by these profit-driven subscription services. Therefore, in hopes that we might avert our gaze from quick-fixes and a false sense of security, here are some (hopefully) digestible suggestions for faculty:

- Try to avoid plagiarism software if you can. There are some excellent readings about the perils of plagiarism detection software from varying perspectives - the graduate student perspective<sup>1</sup>, from the English Language Teacher's perspective<sup>2</sup>, and from the faculty perspective<sup>3</sup>, to name a few. If you *are* going to use plagiarism software, it's helpful to know how to use it and what its results are telling you, as these readings will illustrate.
- Know the difference between plagiarism (intentional vs. unintentional) and citation error and be sure to share these definitions with your students. Especially when the error is unintentional<sup>4</sup>, it's best to have a plan for how to turn the opportunity into a "teachable moment." Remember, they are still students and still new to many forms of citation and textual attribution. Many are not well-practiced in using sources as part of a conversation with their own work, especially when shifting between different disciplines or fields.

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- Know how to detect plagiarism yourself – so often we are better than we give ourselves credit for in having an “ear” for our students’ voices. We have gut feelings when we think a student’s work doesn’t sound like them. Kent State University has a great [handout on “Ways to Detect Plagiarism.”](#)
- Be aware of the many resources for faculty – for instance, the document [“Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices”](#) from the Council of Writing Program Administrators.
- Provide as many resources for your students as you can in as many ways as you can (on Canvas, in your syllabus, as handouts, as part of your assignment prompts, etc.). Don’t forget all the resources we have via the UNH [Library](#) or the UNH Writing website: <http://www.unh.edu/writing/resources>.
- Consider the various cultural backgrounds of your students (e.g., in some cultures, “textual reuse” is a sign of reverence).
- Build in writing as a process to your assignments in order to make plagiarism more difficult in the first place.



Of course, it’s difficult to cover all the context and nuance of plagiarism and citation in this small space. Rather, this is merely a brief teaser for a more comprehensive session we will be offering in the near future. For more details and specifics on plagiarism and teaching, please join us for a CEITL workshop about plagiarism on **January 12, 2022**. Participants will earn 1 CEITL point. Registration for the workshop will be available soon.

Watch for details: <https://www.unh.edu/cetl/january-teaching-workshops>

<sup>1</sup> Baker, R.K., Thornton, B., & Adams, M. (2008). An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Turnitin.com as a Tool for Reducing Plagiarism in Graduate Student Term Papers. *College Teaching Methods & Styles Journal (CTMS)*, 4(9), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.19030/ctms.v4i9.5564>

<sup>2</sup> Amin, M. Y. M. & Mohammadkarimi, E. (2019). “ELT Students’ attitudes toward the effectiveness the anti-plagiarism software, Turnitin,” *Applied Linguistics Research Journal*, 3(5): 63–75. <https://doi.org/10.14744/alrj.2019.66376>

<sup>3</sup> Sutherland-Smith, W., & Carr, R. (2005). Turnitin.com: Teachers’ Perspectives of Anti-Plagiarism Software in Raising Issues of Educational Integrity. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 2(3). <https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol2/iss3/10>

<sup>4</sup> See also page 32 of the [UNH Student Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities](#) policy on plagiarism.



Image taken from imgflip.com.



*“Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.”*

— T.S. Eliot

## Ask Perkins:

*Your teaching concerns addressed by our very own Perkins Cunningham-Frisbey*

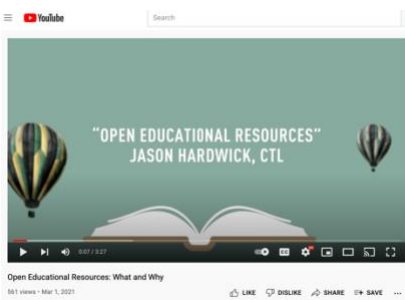
*As Transposed from Peep to Person by Nicole Cunningham-Frisbey, UNH Writing Programs*

*Dear Perkins, How can I determine what available Open Education Resource (OER) materials would be a good fit for my classroom needs and be free and accessible for my students' various learning needs?*

**--Marauding for Materials**

Dear Marauding for Materials,  
Greetings! I am your friendly neighborhood canary, always *trumpeting* my beak as a lover of all things writing. I study in the Composition PhD program along with my human and can't wait to *sing* the praises of OER! Glad to hear you are interested in using free materials in your curriculum. OERs meet a variety of classroom needs, and are some of the most accessible, affordable, and equitable pedagogical tools. They are flexible for you, too — whether incorporating a few OER sources into your current lesson plans or adopting one wholesale for your course. Also, just knowing how to use OER is another *feather* you can add in your teaching hat.

[OER Mythbusting](#) is an interactive website that dismantles several common myths about OER use. However, if you are pressed for time (or just a bit flighty), you can also view a very short video that discusses why you should consider using OER:



Evaluating the usefulness of OER sources is very similar to how we examine reliability in the scholarship we do in our fields. For textbook materials we want to look for accuracy in content by making sure the OER source is citing credible primary and secondary sources and the location of these citations is easy to access/locate. The content also needs to have the most updated verifiable information available in your discipline. Many OER textbooks will, in the introductory section, include a visible list of learning outcomes or course objectives the textbook can fulfill. Refer to this section to see how closely aligned these objectives are with your teaching objectives in your course.

Although OER textbooks are the most common teaching tools used and adapted by instructors, OER provides more than just digital replications of hardcopy textbooks. Using open-source videos that explore the same educational concept that a 20 page textbook chapter discusses is a great way to break up the monotony.

One resource named [Crash Course](#) offers well-designed short educational videos (15-30min) that cover a wide range of disciplinary topics in subjects like Physics, History, Literature, Math, Horticulture etc. Other rich-media educational material can be found using the [UNH Library OER webpage](#) under the OER Open Media tab where you will find a list of sources and materials like usable images, gifs, and audio files to create your own recorded educational content or you can have your students collaborate with you to

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create the content for an engaging learning experience.

There are several ways the UNH Library can help instructors decide what OER and Open-access sources will be helpful for an effective curriculum plan. First use the [Library's OER page](#) to browse the subject tab and locate sources relevant to your discipline. Depending on licensing, you can borrow or adapt comprehensive curriculum plans available from institutions like Yale and MIT, or you can decide to pick and choose a variety of sources that compliment your current teaching approach. If you want more guidance, consider [making an appointment with our OER librarian, Eleta Exline](#) (click "Make an Appointment"). Dr. Exline may even recommend you [consult with the subject librarian](#) for further discipline specific guidance. If you have time before teaching your next course for Spring or next fall,

consider following [@UNHLibrary](#) on Twitter, where they post frequent events that cover OER use, workshop sessions, and themes like Open Access Week/Month.

A great benefit about some of these established open-source materials is that so many people use them around the world in professional settings. Because of this real-world connection and job-market familiarity, assigning projects that encourage using OER and Open-Access materials provide students with additional transferable skills for job-market readiness when they graduate. As one last *perk*, these resources are *cheep cheep cheep!* as I like to sing....

For more information, please email Perkins at [Nicole.Frisbey@unh.edu](mailto:Nicole.Frisbey@unh.edu)



## The Grammar Box: Collective Nouns

Alicia Clark-Barnes, Associate Director, UNH Writing Program ([Alicia.Clark-Barnes@unh.edu](mailto:Alicia.Clark-Barnes@unh.edu))

Gather 'round, Wildcats! As "darkness falls across the land" and "the midnight hour is close at hand," we reflect on one of the scariest decisions in teaching: what to call your group of students. In days of yore, students were referred to as "boys and girls" or "ladies and gentlemen" with the eternally-hip relying on the more informal "you guys." But a quest for more inclusive language practices leads us to a new variety of collective nouns: Y'all, folks, people, gang will all do the trick but if they don't quite roll off the tongue, consider "Friends, Romans..." dominions, principalities, students? How about scientists, artists, writers, or scholars? Or future guardians of the galaxy? Breaking old habits may take some practice, but whether you have a class of marvels or monsters, everyone can benefit from a more thoughtful term of address. We hope you all find one that fits your field. For more options and why faculty should consider using them, see these resources from the [UNH Office of Community, Equity and Diversity](#). You may also enjoy this short [podcast](#) on the 1486 origins of many nouns of assemblage.

"Thriller," Michael Jackson, 1983. Songwriters: Rodney Lynn Temperton.



# Dangling Modifier: Using Padlet

Nicole Cunningham-Frisbey, Associate Director, University Writing Programs

Finding accessible digital platforms for writing practices that students can use to collaborate are rare finds on the internet. Even when found, what may be free today in beta stage may require an annual subscription fee tomorrow. Unfortunately, current available LMS have yet to address a form of digital discourse that mimics the nonlinear qualities that writing-as-reflection and writing-as-class-discussion does so well. The writing that often occurs in live-stream or face to face (f2f) settings provide a unique flare to how writing is utilized in coursework. This is especially true for when the instructor wants collaborative writing exercises from students that are productive and engaging. Currently a useful platform that is adaptable to f2f, synchronous, and asynchronous writing activities is [Padlet](#).

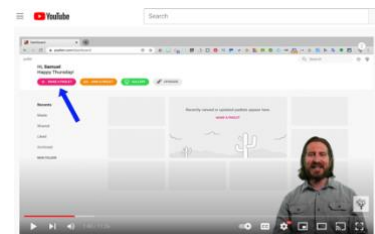
Padlet works in a similar fashion to Zoom's white board. The free version allows you to use several of its features similar to the ways some Google files can be shared and collaborated on. Padlet offers two free options once you log in: you can create a Padlet URL or join one already created. The Padlet 'wall' is where students can share content useful to classroom activities. For the teacher, it allows a variety of controls for moderating digital discussions that occur on the wall and represents writing as discourse in nonlinear fashion in the form of post-it looking speech bubbles. Here is a link to some visuals from Padlet:



Another great feature of Padlet is that the content shared on a wall created for class can be archived; once the sharing feature is turned off, the teacher can choose to archive the discussion or erase it. It can also be accessed offline as a pdf document.

Padlet is a great teaching tool for classroom discussions and low stakes writing exercises. For instance, if an instructor wants to set aside ten minutes before class ends a for quick writing session, they can ask students to access a Padlet Wall in order to post a response to a low stakes writing assignment such as, *What was the most interesting thing you learned in class today?* or *What was the most unclear/confusing part of our current discussion from today's lesson?* For group-based collaborative projects an instructor can assign students into groups of 3-5+ and can have them create their own adjacent "Wall" that connects to the "Classroom Wall" where they provide a cluster map or outline of their project's topic(s) and intended timeline that the instructor can provide feedback on along with their peers as a form of workshoping or peer review.

If you're interested in incorporating Padlet as a digital tool to use in class time discussion or class workshoping, there are several tutorials available on YouTube created by teachers for teachers that can help get you started, such as these:



For more information, email [Nicole.Frisbey@unh.edu](mailto:Nicole.Frisbey@unh.edu)

# Faculty Profile: Molly Campbell & Chrissy O’Keefe

Technical and Professional Writing: Teaching Writing as Problem-Solving

*Alicia Clark-Barnes, Assoc Dir UNH Writing Programs*

By the time they are seniors, many college students have mastered reflection papers, discussion posts, and their discipline’s citation style but they often have less experience with the documents and rhetorical moves required to write in the workplace. Molly Campbell is a Senior Lecturer in the English department and Chrissy O’Keefe is a Principal Lecturer in the English department. They are both members of the [WAC Faculty network](#) and together have over thirty years’ experience teaching Professional and Technical Writing to students in all majors looking to sharpen their skills.

But what is technical writing and how do these courses help students professionalize? Technical writing is not one style or type of document but encompasses the range of types of writing students will encounter in a workplace. Classes are typically held in the Technical Writing Studio in Hamilton Smith Hall. The room is designed to facilitate collaboration among writers with dedicated monitors for each writing group to work through projects together.

In the introductory course ENGL 502, students begin by interviewing a professional in their field about the writing they do on a daily basis. Students in this course also complete service-learning projects for local non-profits. These projects allow students to address real needs and respond to client feedback by creating technical documents that serve a concrete purpose outside of the classroom. These projects also give students practice in determining how to keep themselves

accountable to the class, the client, and each other. In 602, Advanced Technical Writing, there is an increased focus on genre analysis, visual literacy, and page design as students design websites and more extensive proposals. Both of these courses are open to all majors and can be taken on their own or as part of the [Technical writing and Public speaking](#) cognate or the [Text, Business Writing + Digital Studies major](#). A resume writing class is also typically offered over [J-Term](#).

Technical writing courses are also often comprised of a mix of sophomores, juniors, and seniors. According to Molly and Chrissy, the presence of juniors and seniors in 502 allows for those students to connect what they are learning in class to internships and to bring their internship experiences into the class. The course focuses on addressing multiple audiences, and ethical decision making quickly comes into play as students negotiate the new challenges that arise when applying academic concepts to workplace writing.

The writing itself can also be a challenge for students as rather than page minimums, they often work within page maximums. They also practice balancing clarity and complexity and gain experience translating jargon into plain language as they craft materials that are informative and accessible. Another area which may be new to students is how to apply citations to workplace documents. As they explore fair use practices, they learn that in-text citation is not common but sources are still credited. Molly notes that “citation becomes a live element versus the blob at the end of a

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paper,” particularly when students design texts for the web and weigh the benefits of in-text citation vs. hyperlinking at key moments. According to Chrissy, students also learn when and how to create their own materials rather than relying on pre-made components that may require licensing fees.

From infographics to slide decks, the projects associated with technical writing also move students beyond the essay as they expand their digital literacy skills. The deep engagement with the process and rhetoric of writing in their fields means that technical writing courses can help students succeed in the workplace but also in their major courses. Chrissy and Molly note that students often regret not having taken English 502 sooner. The multidisciplinary nature of the course has also led tech writing faculty to collaborate with faculty in Engineering, Computer Science, and Nutrition. You may have spotted great student work adorning the walls of Hamilton Smith and other locations around campus as part of the vinyl wall decals students dreamed up in the Technical Writing Studio and then brought to life in the Makerspace. Molly and Chrissy are always looking for new collaborators and urge interested faculty to reach out to them as they continue to build courses that immerse students in the writing of their fields while providing them with opportunities to be creative in a way that people don’t often associate with the idea of “technical.”



Molly Campbell



Chrissy O’Keefe



*“I think that novels that leave out technology misrepresent life as badly as Victorians misrepresented life by leaving out sex.” — Kurt Vonnegut Jr.*



# Popular Culture is Killing Writing

## Excerpted from *Bad Ideas About Writing*

<https://textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/badideasaboutwriting-book.pdf> (open source text)

One prevailing myth about popular culture is that it is easy or simple and that's why young people like it. It's true that some movies or video games or television programs are not all that challenging in content or form. The same can be said of many books, plays, and poems. Even as critics of popular culture find it easy to summon uncomplicated reverence for established media and genres... the reality is that there is no medium or genre in which every work is a masterpiece, and no medium or genre that cannot carry substantial intellectual insights. Young people talk to me and other researchers about being heavily invested in popular culture such as television series, comics, movies, and games that are complex, innovative, and engaging their minds. People who still think television is a vast wasteland aren't watching series such as *The Americans* or *Westworld*, with their complex characters and narrative structures. People who think all computer games are mindless and don't require thought haven't played the range of games I see students playing, which require diligence, creativity, and learning to complete... It is practice with reading and interpreting genres that has developed their skills in reading, movies, popular music, television, computer games, social media, and more. They read with ease, but not because the content is always easy.

Williams, Bronwyn. "Popular Culture is Killing Writing." *Bad Ideas About Writing*. Edited by Cheryl E Ball and Drew M Lowe. West Virginia University Libraries. 2017, pp 196

## Past Perfect: Director's Notes

Meaghan Dittrich, Director, University Writing Programs

### Online WI Courses, a Return to Policy:

In Writing Program news, during the Spring of 2020, instructors were faced – many for the first time – with migrating their entire course and its content online. Before the pandemic, Faculty Senate Motion #XVII-M12 stipulated that new online WI courses would require a proposal. COVID-19 necessitated a moratorium on that policy. However, as Fall semester 2021 has proven that some things *can* start shifting back to “normal,” the Writing Committee has recommended that the policy for new WI proposals be reinstated as of Spring 2022. Hope points us toward more “normal” and less instability.

### A few words about taking up the mantle:

Many will of course know that my predecessor, Ed Mueller, retired this past June after fourteen years as the Writing Program Director at UNH. I'm grateful for all the wisdom and mentorship that Ed has given me during my time as the Connors Writing Center director since 2017 and now that I step into his role I am humbled by the boots I am left to fill. Ed did many things to support the UNH community, its faculty, students, writers. I look forward to working with that community and building on his foundations, and I wish to thank the many folks whose welcome I have received since my transition into this role since July. My goals are simply to continue supporting the mission of the Writing Program at UNH and hopefully creating some new opportunities and collaborations along the way. My door is open. Let's get writing!

## Last Word

*“A story has no beginning or end: arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead.”*

— *Graham Greene*

# 2022 White Mountain Faculty Retreat

Open to ALL Faculty      Applications due March 1st

Sponsored by the UNH Writing  
Program through the  
generosity of the Dey Family  
Fund.

**The UNH Writing Program invites applications for the Writing-Invested Faculty retreat at Mount  
Washington June 6-8, 2022**

Writing-Invested faculty are faculty members interested in improving student writing in their courses. (Priority will be given to writing-intensive course faculty.) 10 participants will design or revise the writing elements of a course.

## **INCLUDES**

- **3-day lodging** at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel (participants may be accompanied by spouse/family)
- **Lunch for 3 days** (family welcome)
- **3 follow up sessions** at UNH (in August, December, and May) to discuss progress of your work and continue the discussion of improving student writing

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Learn current, research-based best practices to enhance student writing
- Understand and discuss the multiple roles of writing in the classroom
- Create assignments aligned with the core competencies of your course
- Discuss assessment and revision strategies
- Gain a network of writing-invested faculty colleagues at UNH

**Please send the following information to Meaghan Dittrich, Director of the UNH Writing Program ([meaghan.dittrich@unh.edu](mailto:meaghan.dittrich@unh.edu)), Dimond Library Room 329, by March 1, 2022:**

1. Name, Department, email/phone
2. Course(es) with writing (WI or other) that you have taught or plan to teach
3. Course you intend to develop or revise during the retreat
4. A brief statement about what you hope to bring away from the experience
5. A brief statement about what you hope to contribute to the experience of colleagues
6. A statement affirming your availability for both the June retreat and the August follow-on session at UNH (August date to be arranged based on collective availability)