

Writing Instruction and Essay Awards Announced

May 7, 2018

The Writing Program Award Ceremony honors award-winning teachers and students at the end of each year. The celebration is a recognition of writing faculty at CWRU which includes full- and part-time lecturers, SAGES Fellows, English graduate student assistants, and other friends of writing at CWRU.

The English Department, SAGES, and the Writing Program are pleased to recognize this year's winners of teaching awards and student writing prizes.

The Jessica Melton Perry Award for Distinguished Teaching in Disciplinary & Professional Writing* recognizes outstanding instruction in writing in professional fields and/or disciplines other than English. This year's winner is Wanda Strychalski, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, and Statistics.



Nominated by one of her undergraduate mentees and research assistants, Dr. Strychalski emphasizes the connection between research skills and communication skills, and she encourages students to take ownership of their ideas and their work. By doing this, Dr. Strychalski assists students in *making and communicating* new knowledge in their fields—which is, without a doubt, a core goal of higher education.

In her student's own words: "During the editing process, Dr. Strychalski explained that we had to weave a cogent narrative that addressed the background of possible reviewers and demonstrated how the research fit into and filled gaps in those areas. We spent a few *weeks* reading and understanding papers in fields related in ours, so we could tie our research into what was already out there."

Rather than simply correcting the student's drafts, Dr. Strychalski offered instruction that guided the student through drafting and revising. She did this by explaining her feedback and inviting him to make the sometimes-multiple revisions himself. It is this commitment to student learning and this hands-on approach to mentorship that allows Dr. Strychalski, in a student's words, to transform "in-the-classroom writers into scientific writers who can write for professional audiences."

* The Jessica Melton Perry Award was established in 2009 by Edward S. Sadar, M.D. (ADL '64, SOM '68), & Melinda Melton Sadar (FSM '66) in honor of Melinda's mother, who worked in the Center for Documentation and Communication Research at Western Reserve University from the late 1950s into the late 1960s.

The SAGES Excellence in Writing Instruction Award recognizes outstanding commitment to and success in teaching academic writing to Case Western Reserve University undergraduates in SAGES. This year, the winner is **Cara Byrne**, a Lecturer in the Department of English.

One of Dr. Byrne's students praises her skills as a teacher and her dedication to "helping students become better writers." This student and others describe being impressed by "how much preparation, thoughtfulness, and time" Dr. Byrne puts into planning her courses and ensuring her students' success.

Another student describes Dr. Byrne's "almost scientific approach to writing essays," which balances precise instruction with "providing students the necessary room for creativity." Her feedback at all stages of the writing process, as one student characterizes it, "provides us valuable insight into just how important editing and the writing of multiple drafts can be." In the words of another, "Professor Byrne has a dedication to society, helping us not only to be better academic writers, but to care more about the world we live in, and to want to change the problems we see."

Dr. Byrne's teaching embodies the philosophy of the SAGES program – a seminar-approach to writing instruction that challenges students to be better communicators *and* better thinkers who ask urgent, sophisticated questions about the world.



Pictured left to right: Dr. Cara Byrne and Associate Dean Peter Whiting

The WRC Excellence in Consulting Award recognizes outstanding writing instruction for students of the University and exemplary service to the Writing Resource Center during the academic year. This year, the winner is **John Higgins**, Lecturer in the Department of English.

Dr. Higgins received numerous nominations from students who consulted with him at the WRC over the course of the year. His philosophy about consulting and the writing process emphasizes how excellent consulting can encourage the writer's agency and independence.

In his own words, Dr. Higgins explains, "the process of writing begins in various intellectual encounters that precede this moment – classroom discussions, reading, and even library and scientific research – and lingers on



Pictured: Dr. John Higgins

afterwards in the conversation between the draft of an essay and its various readers. With this goal in mind, I try as much as possible to structure Writing Center consultations as a conversation about the writing process and the ideas behind the paper, rather than as an editing session in which the consultant works to improve the drafted essay of the student. At the end of a session, I hope that students will feel more at ease with the writing process than when they began, that they will feel as though they have generated ideas in conversation with a reader, and finally that they will feel as though their development as a writer and a thinker continues after the session ends.”

The SAGES First and University Seminar Essay Prizes recognize the best writing that students produce in their First and University Seminars. These essays are chosen from those nominated by SAGES seminar leaders each semester.

The University Seminar Awards are judged in September – and recognized at the Celebration of Student Writing in December of each year. The winners for Academic Year 2016-2017 are:



Pictured left to right: Michael Neuhoff, Dina Benayad-Cherif, and Halle Rose

Dina Benayad-Cherif for the essay “**Investigating Women in Computer Science**”

Written for USNA 287P: Women and Science led by Barbara Burgess-Van Aken

Michael Neuhoff for the essay “**Post Early Modernism: A Humoral View of Barton Fink**” written for USSY 292U: Problems of Genre in Shakespeare and Film led by James Newlin

Halle Rose for the essay “**Adding Insult to Injury: How Physicians Fail Women in Pain**” written for USSO 234: Questions of Identity led by Gail Arnoff

The First Seminar Awards are judged in January and recognized at the Celebration of Student Writing in April each year. The winners for Academic Year 2017-2018 are:

Katherine Jordan for the essay “**Regretting Silence**” written for FSSY 135: The Rest is Silence led by Sarah Gridley

Hae Weon Lee for the essay “**Songs of Freedom? The National Anthem and Black Oppression**” written for FSSY 185F: Religious Belief in Secular Society led by Scott Dill

Meghan Parker for the essay “False Memory: Silence’s Work in ‘The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World’” written for FSSY 135: The Rest is Silence led by Sarah Gridley

All of these outstanding essays and information about the Essay Prizes and are available online at Writing@CWRU.