

Editor's Introduction

by Michael J. Cripps

The selections in this journal represent some of the best research writing by undergraduates at the early stages of their college education. The essays were written by students in the Writing Program's Research in the Disciplines (355:201) and College Writing and Research (355:301) courses. These courses introduce (mainly) second semester freshmen and sophomores to library and internet research, and prepare them to develop independent arguments that engage some of the scholarship relevant to their particular research projects. The work included in this journal demonstrates the kind of work students actually do in the Writing Program's research writing courses. Aside from relatively minor revisions, the papers that appear here are the papers that were submitted to the students' instructors at the end of the term. And they are outstanding representations of undergraduate academic writing.

This volume of [Dialogues@RU](#) includes an interesting range of papers on various topics. Three of the essays were written in sections of College Writing and Research, a Writing Program research writing course primarily designed to meet the writing needs of students who transfer into Rutgers University from another college. Most of the included essays draw flexibly on sources from multiple disciplines and speak to important contemporary social issues. Several of the essays speak to issues of public policy and political action. Two papers examine the social and

political implications of art and photography. Two of the essays explore autobiography. Two of the papers explore problems of public space and the environment. Two papers address issues of gender, identity, and cultural translation. Three essays address elements of health and healthcare in the United States. And one essay concerns itself with issues of spirituality in the twenty-first century.

The range of essays included in Dialogues@RU only begins to hint at the variety of projects submitted by students in all colleges at Rutgers University. This set of student contributions speaks volumes about the variety of writing possibilities in the Writing Program's research writing courses, and reveals just how much latitude students have in designing their own research projects when they enroll in a section of Research in the Disciplines or College Writing and Research. The final section of Dialogues@RU includes brief biographies of the contributors that show the close relationship between the individual projects and the students' personal or professional interests and goals.

Elliot Aronow's (Rutgers College) essay uses the Situationist International, a leftist art movement influential in May 1968 revolts in Paris, as a starting point from which to explore relationships between avant-garde forms of art and both radical art and radical politics. Isaac B. Daniel's (Cook College) essay draws on environmental rights, urban life, and the problem of the commons to develop an argument about the importance of such government initiatives as New Jersey's Green Acres program to the preservation of urban open space. Christopher J. Flor (Rutgers College) brings together sociological theories of religion and German idealism in a way that helps him make sense of spiritual movements as diverse as the Beat

Generation and what he calls the New Age wave. Lisa Giberson's (Douglass College) essay articulates the position that an identification with Shakespeare's "The Rape of Lucrece," enables Maya Angelou to rediscover her voice after a rape threatens to silence her. Megan Johnson (University College) explores the impact of health maintenance organizations on the nursing profession and the relationship between doctors and nurses. Soo Hee Kwon (Livingston College) examines the appropriateness and educational value of exhibiting lynching photographs in museums and other public venues. Jon Laor's (School of Pharmacy) contribution is a very interesting companion to Johnson's essay in that Laor explores what he sees as the real differences between doctors and nurses that lie beneath cultural stereotypes about the two professions. Joanna H. Martinez's (Douglass College) uses feminist theory to make sense of Eva Hoffman's autobiography in ways that shed light on the problems of cultural translation for women who immigrate to the United States. And Nicole L. Warren (University College) examines the problem of environmental degradation and its relationship to impoverished urban areas in ways that contribute to our understanding of environmental racism.

Journals of undergraduate writing often present student work that has been heavily edited by editorial committees. We could have followed these models and coached the students to revise and reorganize their contributions within strict guidelines. For a number of reasons, we rejected this approach in favor of one that presents actual student writing. First, we believe these essays are so strong that they stand on their own. Second, intervening in student work to polish the occasional rough

edges creates an artificial sense of the kind of work students actually do. Finally, this approach would have put us at odds with our own teaching philosophy. We take very seriously our mission to prepare students for independent research and writing, and intervening in these essays would have compromised this aim. We celebrate these essays because they reveal the intellectual strengths of Rutgers students and the importance of ongoing development.

These essays are a call to action because they show the level of analytic sophistication freshmen and sophomores are capable of producing in their research and writing. When freshmen are capable of developing and supporting extended analytic essays of the sort that appear in Dialogues@RU, we do not challenge our students if we do not encourage them to write more (and more often). While the essays that appear in this journal are outstanding contributions by very competent students, these students will need to continue to be challenged as they move through their programs of study if they are to realize their potential.

Rutgers University already encourages students to conduct research and engage in academic writing. Honors students have the opportunity to engage in a significant research and writing project as they write their honors theses. And some students have the opportunity to conduct research and write up their results in papers that eventually appear in print. For example, Gregory Herzog (Senior Advisor for Undergraduate Education) edits The Rutgers Scholar (<http://rutgersscholar.rutgers.edu>), an electronic journal of undergraduate research that publishes important work by advanced undergraduates in the humanities, the sciences, the social sciences, and engineering. Writing

opportunities like those that produce papers published in The Rutgers Scholar are a very important part of an undergraduate's education at a major research university. For the most part, however, they are rare opportunities that occur only at the conclusion of an undergraduate education. Too often, students find it possible to complete a course of study with little significant writing beyond the freshman year.

Dialogues@RU, in laying bare the kind of research and writing students do in the Writing Program, demonstrates to the university community the writing capabilities and strengths of our undergraduates. But Dialogues@RU also raises a question. Does the typical Rutgers education help students build on these writing achievements? This journal will only be completely successful if it promotes the inclusion of research and writing assignments in more courses across the Rutgers undergraduate curriculum. To this end, undergraduates writing extended research papers in any 100, 200, or 300 level course across the university will be eligible to submit their work for possible publication in subsequent volumes of Dialogues@RU. We hope administrators and teachers alike will encourage students in their colleges, academic departments, and courses to submit their significant writing projects for possible inclusion in the second volume of Dialogues@RU.