

Review of *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing, Volume 4*

Edited by Dana Driscoll, Megan Heise, Mary Stewart, and Matthew Vetter, 2022. Parlor Press/The WAC Clearinghouse. [ISBN: 978-1-64317-270-5 (paperback), 978-1-64317-271-2 (PDF, free download); 978-1-64317-272-9 (EPUB, free download): www.writingspaces.org. 343 pages.]

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Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing released its fourth volume in 2022. The *Writing Spaces* series, a collection of essays written by teachers for students, offers open-access resources designed to help readers teach and learn about writing. Each essay is written as a stand-alone text that can support longitudinal writing development, from learning in foundational writing courses to upper-level disciplinary classes. *Writing Spaces* texts are designed to make literacy resources more accessible. Early volumes focus on the foundational writing classroom, but since *Volume 1* was published in 2010, the series has progressively broadened its scope. Specifically, the editorial team has established a dedication to community building through anti-racist publishing and research practices. *Volume 4* takes major strides towards this goal by orienting texts within WAC/WID conversations and including more nuanced discussions of social factors that impact literacy development. In stark contrast to its previous volumes, most of the essays in the new fourth volume are collaboratively written, which impacts the representation of positionalities.

Overall, these essays strengthen the series through important conversations about linguistic diversity and accessibility, expanding knowledge about technology use such as digital collaboration and social media, contributing pedagogical techniques such as grading and feedback, and discussing theoretical frames and research methods such as genre theory and primary data analysis. Students and teachers alike will benefit from working through foundational concepts in modern contexts in Dana Driscoll, Megan Heise, Mary Stewart, and Matthew Vetter's fourth installment of the *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing* series.

Each chapter features an overview, student-facing prose, and teacher resources like activity ideas and discussion questions. This makes the text both accessible for students who are learning more independently as well as useful for teachers who are trying to develop classroom learning activities. The descriptive titles and abstracts help students understand what the chapters will be about, even if they are less familiar with writing studies terms. Instructors at all career stages may turn to this text, from new teachers who need help designing a lesson plan to seasoned teachers who want to update their strategies.

Because the overall text takes a more WAC-based approach, *Volume 4* does not rely on a preset classroom context, like first-year writing, and instead offers opportunities for readers to apply the readings to their own situations. For example, Sara P. Alvarez, Amy J. Wan, and Eunjeong Lee share their stories and invite readers to see themselves reflected in the text. In "Workin' Languages: Who We Are Matters in Our Writing," they write: "In our K-to-Ph.D. schooling experiences, the three of us have identified a number of situations that taught us to believe that the full extent of our voices did

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not belong, matter, or 'fit' in 'academic or formal' writing settings" (p. 3). They then teach students how to find confidence in their voices, assess rhetorical situations, and build community. In closing, they provide a list of discussion questions and the idea of a project asking students to consider the role of writing in their communities. They also specifically address teachers with a call to critically examine beliefs about academic language and assessment practices. This introductory chapter sets the tone and outline for subsequent chapters that encourage students and teachers alike to investigate language practices and mold writing strategies to best fit their purposes.

Students are encouraged to develop habits of awareness that support their writing across the curriculum. Conversations like Cassie Hemstrom and Kathy Anders's chapter, "Creating, Using, and Sharing Information in Research Communities" helps students think about where they access information and implement their learning strategies in academic activities. They effectively explain Swalesian theory of discourse communities through the example of learning how to start a podcast. Kara Tazack situates navigating new rhetorical situations by contrasting situations in which neon sneakers would be more or less appropriate than a business suit in "The Importance of Transfer in Your First Year Writing Course." Students learn to develop metacognition about the different spaces they encounter and are encouraged to feel confident in their abilities to recontextualize their knowledge and learn more.

Students learn not only about themselves but others through several chapters that focus on the collaborative nature of writing and research. Essays like "Writing with Your Peers" by Raquel Corona, Kami Day, and Michele Eodice and "Technologies of Trust: Creating Networks of Goodwill for Collaboration" by Lance Cummings, Becka Jackson, and Moriah Yancey help students think through the best ways to work with others. Authors Sarah Seeley, Kelly Xu, and Matthew Chen demonstrate this: Seeley is Xu and Chen's former professor. Xu and Chen both reflect on working with others in new-to-them scientific discourse communities in "Read the Room! Navigating Social Contexts and Written Texts." These kinds of essays affirm the challenges of learning about new discourses and the opportunities for personal and professional growth by working through tough situations.

Several chapters demonstrate writing strategies that can be implemented in the various discursive situations students encounter. For example, "Make Your 'Move': Writing in Genres" by Brad Jacobson, Madelyn Pawlowski, and Christine M. Tardy helps students consider analytical strategies for navigating new texts. They conduct a genre analysis of student absence emails and show how people respond to the same rhetorical situation, missing class, in a myriad of ways, and walk students through identifying how they might respond themselves. There are several chapters dedicated to helping students work with research and integrating sources into their writing, such as "Effectively and Efficiently Reading the Credibility of Online Sources" by Ellen Carillo and Alice Horning, "How to Analyze Data in a Primary Research Study" by Melody Denny and Lindsay Clark, and "At Work in the Archives: Place-Based Research and Writing" by Lynée Lewis Gaillet and Jessica Rose. Ann N. Amicucci encourages students in "Four Things Social Media Can Teach You about College Writing—and One Thing It Can't" to draw upon writing strategies they use frequently, like creating social media posts, and applying those moves in academic writing.

These essays are centered around providing students with new tools—as well as helping them recognize tools they already have—to be successful across a wide range of writing situations they will encounter in academic writing. These chapters may also be particularly useful to disciplinary teachers of writing emphasis courses who want to help students develop specific skills related to course content.

Conversations about writing knowledge are supplemented by essays focused on writing skills. Both "What's That Supposed to Mean? Using Feedback on Your Writing" by Jillian Grauman and "What Are We Being Graded On?" by Jeremy Levine help students learn how to be more successful students of

writing. The concluding chapter, “Find the Best Tools for the Job: Experimenting with Writing Workflows” by Derek Van Ittersum and Tim Lockridge encourages students to take all their learning experiences about writing, from procedural knowledge to assessments of their writing to the candle scent and playlist that are most inspiring, and tailor those pieces of knowledge to identifying the strategies that will most effectively support their writing. These essays support students’ autonomy in their writing development.

Justice-centric conversations weave throughout the essays. Rachel Donegan talks about the importance of disability studies in “The Rhetorical Possibilities of Access.” Mara Lee Grayson uses “Writing toward Racial Literacy” to showcase the challenges and opportunities of challenging racism through writing. “Beyond Language Difference in Writing: Investigating Complex and Equitable Language Practices” provides Cristina Sánchez-Martín’s examples of ceviche, tacos, sushi, and croissants to demonstrate how frequently we translanguage and encourage acceptance of linguistic diversity. In “Public Writing for Social Change,” Ashley J. Holmes highlights writing as a tool of activism and helps students find venues for their writing outside of the classroom. These chapters in particular affirm the editors’ commitment to socially-just texts.

One of *Writing Spaces*’ greatest strengths will likely also be one of its biggest challenges. Many of the authors use quite contemporary examples, especially when pointing to digital technologies. This provides readers who use the text close to the publication date an easy access point for learning about, for example, the best software for collaborative writing, or connecting to, for example, the design of a meme. However, as this text ages, so, too, will its examples. A strength of the *Writing Spaces* project overall is how frequently volumes have been published. This trend helps abate worries that the *Writing Spaces* series will become outdated. Furthermore, topics like theoretical frameworks, research methods, and writing processes are more established and less likely to change significantly. In this regard, the text is more durable. Still, readers will benefit the most from *Volume 4* by reading it sooner rather than later.

Readers can access the full text through the *Writing Spaces* website, www.writingspaces.org, where it features *Volume 4* and all previous volumes. All volumes are also available through the WAC Clearinghouse. Both sites have free PDF versions. The publisher, Parlor Press, sells print copies. The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press both have free e-pub versions. The digital text is easiest to use when downloaded into a PDF reader or as an e-pub so that users can access the clickable table of contents. If viewed through a web browser, this option is not available, so it requires a lot of scrolling to navigate the various chapters.

Students should become familiar with *Writing Spaces* early in their academic writing journey. It helps students develop foundational knowledge of writing and research processes and gives lots of examples that students can experiment with. This text becomes a WAC/WID tool when students carry it with them into disciplinary writing situations and refer back to the questions and content posed in each of the chapters as they encounter new writing contexts. To that end, this series is only as useful as student readers are familiar enough with foundational writing studies terms to understand the text and are as dedicated to their development as writers to routinely use it as they discover unique writing spaces.

Writing teachers will help support student use of this text by introducing it to students in writing courses and helping students learn how to use the text independently in other academic writing contexts. Writing teachers will likely only need to skim through the chapter to get an overview of the text’s main points. Teachers will benefit most from the Teacher Resources at the end of each chapter. The *Writing Spaces* website also has supplemental materials (i.e., essay sequences, sample syllabi, and an archive of activities and assignments). Teachers may use this text when designing a whole

course or when they need inspiration for a lesson. *Volume 4* is also helpful for keeping teachers apprised of current conversations and practices in writing praxis.

Although *Writing Spaces* is designed for students, the inclusion of teacher-facing text (frequently in the Overview at the beginning of each chapter and always in the Teacher Resources section at the end of each chapter) makes this text feel more like a teacher edition of a textbook than one made explicitly for students. Perhaps creating a student edition of the text that excludes the pedagogical strategies would make this textbook more student friendly. A less costly option might be creating an appendix with the teacher resources so there is greater separation between the different types of text. Whereas previous volumes have included introductions from the editors, *Volume 4* does not. Returning this practice to future volumes may help clarify the audience and purpose of the text, especially for students.

The greatest strength of *Volume 4* is that it highlights that writers at all stages struggle through the writing process and literacy development. The authors collectively inform readers that they, too, are developing as writers and revising their work and writing philosophies. For example, in the Jacobson, Pawlowski, and Tardy chapter on genre, they identify Pawlowski as a professor of writing who encountered a new type of text she needed to create and discuss emotions of nervousness, stress, and confidence as she learned how to write her report. This move positions experts and students on the same playing field; at the end of the day, we are all still learners. Moreover, we are all navigating our past, present, and future of literacy, working through our identity as language users. *Volume 4* helps close the gap between writing scholars, teachers, and students from all different kinds of backgrounds, plainly identifying each of these groups as mutual members in the community of writers. *Writing Spaces* humanizes the teaching and learning of writing.

Volume 4 furthers the *Writing Spaces* legacy as a multi-purpose, freely available learning tool. By branching out into more widely reaching topics that students can think about throughout their academic experiences, it furthers the idea that writing is a cross-disciplinary activity, a skill that is ongoingly practiced and developed, and a means through which people can grow and share ideas. The inclusion of social topics creates a timely text that forefronts the ongoing struggles for language-based justice. Each reader is called to reflect upon their own experiences with language, writing, and learning and consider how they will meaningfully implement their knowledge through text. *Writing Spaces, Volume 4* situates writing as a shared experience and invites readers into the discourse community of academic writers, encouraging members to actively participate in shaping the community's future.

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