



Writing Back in Times of Crisis

March 29, 2025

University of Massachusetts Boston

Schedule at-a-Glance:

8:00 – 9:00 am WELCOME BREAKFAST & REGISTRATION

9:00 – 10:15 am CONCURRENT SESSION A

10:30 – 11:45 am CONCURRENT SESSION B

12:00 – 1:15 pm CONCURRENT SESSION C

1:30-3:00 pm KEYNOTE & LUNCHEON

Parking Validation:

If you parked in the Campus Center Garage, Lot D, or the West Garage, please see the registration desk for a pre-paid parking voucher. You will need to scan the ticket you collected when parking, then scan the voucher to exit. (Unfortunately, we are unable to reimburse parking paid through the Passport Parking app.)

WiFi Access

Network: UMB-Guest

Password: UMBIT@YourServiceDesk

8:30 – 9:00 AM WELCOME & BREAKFAST

Check-In & Registration: University Hall, 1st floor Atrium

Coffee, Tea, & Breakfast: University Hall, 2nd floor, Beacon Café

9:00 – 10:15 AM CONCURRENT SESSION A

A.1—Re-Visioning Writing: AI, Writing Center, and Journalism (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4120) | Chair Mary Laughlin

(Re)Considering Writing Pedagogy in the Age of AI

Mary Laughlin, Fairfield University

This individual presentation focuses on generative AI as a kairotic moment demanding urgent pedagogical consideration. The speaker will explore the affordances and limitations of classroom documents in responsibly situating AI within writing processes and broader considerations, including environmental impacts, deep fakes, and copyright considerations.

Visualizing Tensions in the Writing Center

Isabelle Lundin, Northeastern University

We offer findings from interviews with 26 writing center users in a 2x2 matrix, a visualization tool illuminating nuances and tensions among perspectives, to better understand how students perceive our writing center. We argue 2x2 matrices provide opportunities for writing center practitioners to turn potential crises into productive problem solving.

Crisis as Kairos for Student Journalism

Jamie Remillard, Worcester State University

Times of crisis can function as kairotic occasions for student journalism. Writing back in times of crisis can mean engaging in the deeply collaborative, purposeful, ethos-driven, problem-solving rhetorical action that is student journalism.

A.2—Meeting the Moment: Institutional Research about Anti-racist Grading and Feedback. What Now? (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4130) | Chair: Matt Noonan

Matt Noonan, Fi Stewart-Taylor, Sarah Finn, Abbie DeCamp, & Tom Akbari, Northeastern University

This roundtable presents research on anti-racist grading and feedback practices at Northeastern University. Key findings from student surveys will be shared, framed by the current political climate and institutional responses. Workshop participants will discuss how their own writing classroom practices (grading, assessment, equity, diversity, and linguistic justice) “meet the moment.”

A.3—From Remediation to Empowerment: Ethical Curricular Reform for Multilingual Writers (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4140) | Chair: Hadi Banat

Hadi Banat, Teddy Chocos Dimitrakopoulos, Carol Chandler-Rourke, University of Massachusetts Boston

This talk focuses on an ESL curriculum restructuring initiative at a research-intensive institution in the Northeast committed to ethnic and racial diversity. It replaces remedial prerequisites with a community-based co-requisite model, empowering multilingual students to build language proficiency, writing skills, confidence, and intercultural competence while fostering inclusivity in academic spaces.

A.4—Rewriting Peer Review: Practices for Navigating Inclusion and Innovation (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4160) | Chair: Timothy Oleksiak

Conor McMahon, Ciaran Olmstead, & Sumaiya Akter, University of Massachusetts Boston

This panel proposes three different practices of peer review in order to respond to the crises of the proliferation of generative AI, institutional resistance against diversity initiatives, and the impact of exclusionary policies.

A.5—WORKSHOP: Writing as a Tool for Thinking: An Alternative to Argumentation (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4190)

Brian Zimmerman, Boston College

Argument is everywhere. It's time for an alternative in the writing classroom. This workshop will give you practice with a model of analysis that is easy to learn and hard to master and invite you to discuss how you might apply it in your next writing course.

10:30 – 11:45 AM CONCURRENT SESSION B

B.1—Listen Up: Rhetorical Listening, Sound Composition, & Voices of Counterstories (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4120) | Chair: Timothy Oleksiak

Teaching (with) Cultural Logics

Timothy Oleksiak, University of Massachusetts Boston

A pedagogical approach to teaching rhetorical listening that grounds making good trouble into the working with and across difference.

Sounding Human: The Humanizing Power of Composition in the Mode of Sound

Danah Hashem, University of Massachusetts Boston

This presentation explores the humanizing potential of sound as a mode of composition. Highlighting its physicality, relationality, and cultural inclusivity, it argues that audio composition practices foster empathy, resist dehumanization, and promote diverse literacy traditions. Through sound, creators and audiences connect in embodied, communal experiences, challenging disconnection and celebrating shared humanity.

Centering Counterstory and Voice in Times of Crisis

Kelly L. Wheeler, Curry College

Counterstories (Martinez 2020) illuminate the relationship between the power of language, literacy, and identity explicitly and implicitly. This presentation reflects on the use of counterstories in First-Year Writing and how counterstories allowed students to deal with critical issues within current political, social, or economic structures of the United States.

B.2—WORKSHOP: Compassionate Grading in Challenging Times: An Overview of Alternative Grading Methods (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4130) | Chair: Dan Messier

Dan Messier, Brittany Peterson, & Susan Field, University of Massachusetts Boston

Traditional grading can intensify various crises of learning, such as motivation, marginalization, and burnout. This has led to increased interest in alternative grading methodologies. This workshop will guide participants through discussions of and experimentation with various alternative grading strategies to encourage reflexivity about their own grading practices.

B.3—WAC/WID Perspectives on Writing to Learn in Challenging Times (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4140) | Chair: Katie Almeida Spencer

Writing Among Crises: Writing to Learn as Critical Practice

Katie Almeida Spencer & Ian Drinkwater, University of Massachusetts Boston

This multidisciplinary panel considers how "writing to learn" can both facilitate "writing in the disciplines" and, especially, foster students' critical perspectives on the broader ethical contexts of disciplinary knowledge and practice.

“Hot Dogs, Yes, Dogs, No”: How Narration Can Clarify STEM Writing while Bridging Global Divides

Anne Dropick, Yale University

This presentation will examine how, for both L1 and L2 speakers of English, applying narrative structure and techniques to writing in the sciences results in more accessible prose. This strategy helps create a new understanding of the material for scientists as well as for their readers. This presentation will also reflect on how the speaker's professional experience has contributed to developing pedagogical methods for Writing in the Disciplines.

B.4—WORKSHOP: Writing to Heal: A Writing Program Workshop (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4160)

Kat Gonso, Boston College

Laurie Edwards, Northeastern University

In this interactive workshop, instructors will learn about writing-to-heel practices and how to incorporate them into any writing class. Using personal experience, student examples, and current research on expressive writing, we'll explore the question, "How can we cultivate inclusive writing classrooms where all students are supported in sharing vulnerable content?"

12:00 – 1:15 PM CONCURRENT SESSION C

C.1—Flourishing: Happiness, Slowing Down, and Apologies (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4120) | Chair: Lee Hodge

Human Flourishing as Rhetorical Frame: A Novel Response to Crisis

Matthew Ortoleva, Worcester State University

What might human flourishing as a rhetorical frame do for us as we try to write our way out of crises? I will explore human flourishing as a rhetorical frame and three particular tools for promoting flourishing and how they might be adapted to writing practices: reflection, immersion, and expression.

Let's Do Less

Samantha Wallace, Babson College

Brouillette's assessment—the feminization of work; “time poverty”; and the “love discount”—defines the current state of labor within the academy. I offer doing less to combat the constant pressure to do more. Attention can be a practice and a politics. Ultimately, doing less *is* doing more.

Teaching Rhetoric in a Parasocial Age: Celebrity Apologies as Rhetorical Artifacts

Lee Kathryn Hodge, University of Massachusetts Boston

Platforms of communication that collapse social distance change the way rhetoric functions. That apology statements continue to form a staple of public discourse stands as evidence of the perennial relevance of the written word to embody the ideals of the earnest, heartfelt appeal. Apology letters by public figures are pedagogically useful for discussions on audience, genre, and context.

C.2—WORKSHOP: Practicing an Anti-Racist and Health-Promoting Pedagogy in Ongoing Uncertainties: Centering Student Engagement and Collective Transformation (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4130)

Karen Grayson, Keith Jones, Tony Vandermeer, Patricia Krueger-Henney, Suha Ballout, University of Massachusetts Boston

By focusing on decolonizing the classroom and amplifying student voices, this workshop will provide a platform for constructive dialogue and pro-active involvement in anti-racism and health-promoting efforts and pedagogies pertinent to engaging campus communities in a climate of global precariousness and uncertainty.

C.3—Keeping Lines Open: Retention and Persistence in ESL and FYC Programs (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4140) | Chair: Lauren Bowen

Lauren Bowen, Maura Norton, Brittany Peterson, & Mara Martinez Earley, University of Massachusetts Boston

This panel presents two studies to identify barriers to student success in ESL and first-year composition courses and considers potential avenues for classroom and programmatic intervention to support retention and facilitate student persistence.

C.4—Benefits of an Immersive TA Program During Uncertain Times: How to Create and Manage for Students' Optimal Progress (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4160) | Chair: Liane Czirjak

Liane Czirjak, Joe Domolky, Aidan Conte, & Cole Keeler, Suffolk University

Discussion of the strategies and benefits of a peer-oriented Teaching Assistant writing-support program—especially critical during uncertain times—plus practical options for how to start and manage an ongoing Teaching Assistant program. Perspectives from program Founder/Manager and from students/TAs.

C.5—WORKSHOP: Creative Solutions for Feedback and Grading Challenges (University Hall, 4th floor, room 4190)

Amy Bennett-Zendzian & Christina Michaud, Boston University

Walk with us through an intersectional process identifying your particular challenges effectively responding to students' writing (emotional labor? disabilities? time? institutional constraints?). Reflect with peers and explore creative approaches to feedback and/or grading. Together, we will brainstorm strategies for maximizing your use of (un)grading conferences, and more.

1:30-3:00 PM PLENARY ADDRESS & LUNCHEON

“Rhetoric and Composition as Critical Care Work” (Campus Center, 2nd floor, Alumni Lounge)

Ira Allen, Northern Arizona University

Dr. Ira Allen is an Associate Professor of Rhetoric, Writing, and Digital Media Studies at Northern Arizona University and author of [*Panic Now?: Tools for Humanizing*](#) (2024, University of Tennessee Press). In his plenary address, Dr. Allen will examine what rhetoric, composition, and writing studies practitioners might do in the face of daunting crises facing humanity, led by the triple threats of carbon, capitalism, and colonialism.

Lunch will be provided for registered attendees at no cost.

