

Free Writing Workshops Being Held for Students Short on Time and Money

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Reporter



Tired of mixing your metaphors and dangling modifiers? Do you think an ellipsis only occurs when the sun and moon are aligned in the sky? Or that a colon is only an organ in your body and a semi-colon results from emergency surgery?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, or you would just like some writing questions answered for free, there is a place waiting for you at the Teaching and Learning Centre on Tuesday or Wednesday nights.

Writing Workshops are being offered every Tuesday and Wednesday on behalf of the Writing Centre and the University Writing Council until April 4 and 5.

Every week a new subject is breached, spanning from the writing process, writing for certain disciplines, frequently asked questions and documentation hints. The last week will provide participants with exam preparation information. The workshops take place twice a week so if you miss one session, you can go to the next. Depending on the number of participants, workshops can last up to an hour. Also, the workshop topic is flexible: if students wish to learn more about grammar during the documentation session, that's perfectly fine. Workshop topics are simply a guide – something to discuss if students do not have specific questions.

Workshop participants are offered free refreshments and the opportunity to learn about various writing topics in an informal setting. Who could ask for anything more?

Christine Gordon, a workshop organizer and UPEI employee, said writing is a subject that professors feel

most students are lacking in. This is why the workshops were planned; to give students a chance to learn the skills necessary for good writing.

"It is a recognizable fact that the level of writing among students can be vastly improved. After talking with various professors across campus, I learned that very few professors are satisfied with their students' writing abilities. One biology professor told me that the written sections of his exams are always lower (in marks) than any other section," she explained.

"Often times, a student's writing can be improved by providing information to the student. It's amazing how the same types of writing errors can occur over and over again in students' writing. You would be surprised at how effective a 10-minute session on commas can be."

Gordon said the informality of the workshops can also be beneficial to students looking for more information. The students more or less program the sessions. The workshop facilitators, Gordon and Heather Gushue, are just there to guide.

"Our approach in offering these workshops is to provide a laid-back atmosphere where students can come and discuss their writing problems. We do not wish to lecture. Our workshops are structured in such a way where discussion is key. We talk about punctuation, grammar, writing styles, etc. We ask questions. We probe. We try to make sense out of (what can be) complicated definitions — we're not hung up on whether a student knows the proper definition of a "preposition" for example; we would rather a student knows how to use

them."

And she has another wish. "Hopefully word will spread about these workshops and more students will attend. Writing can be an intimidating process, and we try to avoid that at all costs."

For those of you who continually fear being smote by the grammar gods, fear not. Gordon was once one of you.

"While working toward my undergraduate degree, I had a phobia of grammar," she confided. So you are all in good hands. Both Gordon and Gushue have Honour degrees in English. Gordon has an MA in Women's History, and Gushue is working toward a Masters in Island Studies.

For more information about the writing workshops, email grammar2005@gmail.com. RSVPs are requested to allow for sufficient supplies. So email now. What's stopping you?

Writing Workshops in March

Does the comma continue to confuse you? Do you constantly mix up "its" and "it's"? Would you like to know what the point of a semi-colon is? Do you know the difference between "eighteenth century" and "eighteenth-century"?

The Writing Centre (The Write Place) and The University Writing Council present a series of workshops on grammar and punctuation for students. For greater accessibility, each workshop will be presented twice.

March 8 and 9: Punctuation 101 and Common Word Errors
 March 15 and 16: The Writing Process
 March 22 and 23: Various Writing Styles (Business, Science, Professional, etc.)
 March 29 and 30: Writing Q&A and Documentation
 April 4 and 5: Tips for Exam Preparation

All workshops will take place at The Writing Centre, located in The Webster Centre for Teaching and Learning, Robertson Library Annex, at 4:30 p.m. Please RSVP by emailing grammar2005@gmail.com (to allow for sufficient supplies).



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