

JACOBSON CENTER TELEGRAM



NEWS & DEVELOPMENTS

Issued in early fall and spring, the Jacobson Center Telegram informs Smith staff, faculty, and students about newsworthy developments in the work of the Jacobson Center and the teaching of writing.

It's fall, the class of 2029 is settling in, and *the Jacobson Center is bustling again.*

We had three departures in the staff over the summer, and have two new colleagues this fall. Jaime Green, lecturer, who taught WRT 118 and 135, has moved out of the area, and Susie Chang, lecturer, who taught WRT 135 for ten years, has decided that it's time to devote more time to her own writing. Both had a significant impact on Smith students in their time here as classroom instructors. Alex Terrell, writing instructor, is now an administrative assistant and editorial coordinator at Meridians.

We welcome two new writing instructors: Syki Barbee and Joan Tate. Syki is a fiction writer and Joan a poet. Both received MFAs in creative writing from UMass.

We have an array of workshops planned for students throughout the semester, and one more teaching-with-writing workshop for faculty on October 23: Responding to student writing (CC 204, 12:15-1:05, lunch provided, RSVP).

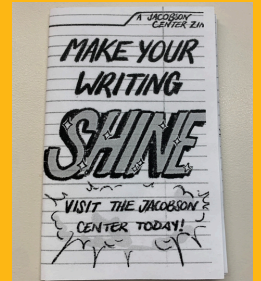
If you're interested in assigning a public writing assignment, check out the newly revised Public Discourse Modules. Each module starts with a brief introduction to the genre, followed by suggestions for creating an assignment and learning goals. Examples from professional and student writers illustrate possible outcomes. Each module ends with suggestions for multimedia expansion. Modules include podcasts, news articles, policy briefs, op-eds, video essays, and more!

In Jacobson Center publishing news, Sara Eddy's book of poetry, *How to Wash a Rabbit*, was accepted for publication by Cornerstone Press, and Miranda McCarvel's co-authored paper, "Advocating & navigating in the (non-)academic landscape," was recently published in the proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America Annual Meeting 2025. Congratulations to both!

Don't forget to check out the recently published *Smith Writes*, issue 6, for some great writing from last year's WI classes. You'll find essays on a wide array of subjects, including prison abolition, botanic gardens and decolonization, H.P. Lovecraft and queer readership, Bjork's relationship to domesticity, gender hierarchy in 1 Corinthians 11:3-12, and a biography through music of the hip hop producer Ivory. Something for everyone.

— Julio Alves, Director

SPOTLIGHT



Julio Alves and Sierra Silversmith '27 collaborated this summer to create three writing-focused zines.

Stop by Seelye 307 to pick up free copies!

UPCOMING EVENTS

10/20, Seelye 301, 4:30pm
Writing Anxiety Workshop
Sara Eddy & Ren Llewellyn

10/29, Seelye 301, 4:30pm
Notetaking Workshop
Ren Llewellyn

11/12, Seelye 301, 4:30pm
College Reading Strategies Workshop
Ren Llewellyn

COMMENTARY

Writing with Words & Images

Pamela Petro, Lecturer in
Writing & Public Discourse

If I ask you to think of a story about a kid in a red cape who has a dubious encounter with a wolf, an image pops into your mind, right? Maybe it's similar to my mental image, maybe it's not. But what if I were to hand you a written story with this picture?



You'd have a different tale in mind than if I presented you with a text with this one –



Same story, but now you have whiplash because the tone of Little Red Riding Hood just slammed on the brakes before changing lanes.

Images always impact the words around them, if not, perhaps, to the extreme degree of Cutesy Red Riding Hood vs Creepy Goth Red Riding Hood. Images hold power that we “text-only” writers both take for granted and under-utilize. They empower viewers who can't read—think of picture books that allow children to piece together a story otherwise accessible only to adults.

They provide foreshadow or dissonant information that crosshatches and contradicts the written narrative—Alison Bechdel pairs words and images to fruitfully paradoxical effect in her graphic novel, *Fun Home*. And images make you see things, as in witness them, that you might otherwise have avoided. It's sometimes uncomfortable reading Nora Krugg's scrapbook memoir, *Belonging* – A German Reckons with History and Home, but it's essential.

I teach a class called “Creative Nonfiction in Words and Pictures” that functions as a spinning kaleidoscope of text and images—each week we look at different configurations that delight, disrupt, and defy expectations. From artists' books to scrapbooks, zines to fotonovelas, comics to maps, digital narratives to medieval manuscripts—in which texts become images—the tug of war between what's read and what's seen yields astonishing opportunities, even in texts like “Red Riding Hood” we think we know. Wolves, beware.

PERSPECTIVES

*Reflections on the
Calderwood Seminar*
Hannah Osman '25

Whether I had to reveal early stages of my writing or cross a tall bridge with no rails, both brought the same loud heartbeat to my ears and registered as dangerous. Being perceived as less than perfect felt as frightening as free fall.

Last spring, I took a Calderwood Seminar called Psychosomatic Medicine with the wonderful Professor Benita Jackson. Whoever I become in the future, this course will remain a defining part of that journey.

That impact came not only from psychosomatics expanding my perspective and imagination, but also from the Calderwood approach to writing, which offered a uniquely transformative experience.



Sharing drafts at various stages helped me relinquish the constraints of perfectionism. I learned not to write and edit at once, which changed writing being a chore into a tool for thinking.

Presenting early compositions in a room of seven was intimate and sometimes terrifying. However, witnessing and enacting the courage it takes to offer something unpolished teaches that perfection is not the point. What matters is trying and learning from each attempt.

Every time we shared drafts, we were encouraged to consider our audience and trust the value of our voice. When Christina Barber, an editor at *The Smith Quarterly*, visited our class, we explored the power of individual perspective. She noted that while ChatGPT can be effective, it lacks the human spark. Writing does not need to be perfect. It's a way to offer something tangible to the world, and connection comes from vulnerability, not flawlessness.