

COMMUNITY WRITING@WSU

NEWSLETTER OF THE WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
COMMUNITY WRITING PROGRAM



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- 826MICHIGAN
- ADVOCATES FOR BABA BAXTER
- ARTS & SCRAPS
- BRIGHTMOOR ARTISANS COLLECTIVE
- BRILLIANT DETROIT
- DETROIT COMMUNITY WEALTH FUND
- DETROIT BLACK COMMUNITY FOOD SERVICE NETWORK
- DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- DETROIT RESCUE MISSION MINISTRIES
- GLEANERS FOOD BANK
- HANNAN CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING
- MAURICE AND JANE SUGAR LAW CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
- RACQUET UP!
- ST. JOSEPH'S MERCY HOSPITAL
- STARFISH FAMILY SERVICES
- WAYNE STATE FOOD PANTRY

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THOMAS TRIMBLE, SENIOR LECTURER
WSU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Community Writing Program at Wayne State University!

This initiative, which is part of the Composition and Rhetoric Program within the WSU English Department, pairs teaching about the conduct of primary research with hands-on work with community-based organizations in metropolitan Detroit.

In this issue, you'll find short profiles of projects completed this past year along with short previews of current projects.

We invite your feedback. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to email us at ttrimble@wayne.edu. Thanks for reading!

Winter 2019 Course Profiles

ENG 6010: SECONDARY EDUCATION AND SERVICE-LEARNING

JULE
THOMAS

Senior Lecturer

In **Secondary Education and Service Learning (ENG 6100)**, WSU students enrolled in the College of Education partnered with 826Michigan, a non-profit organization that works with school-aged students, to write with skill and confidence in collaboration with adult volunteers in their communities.

Students enrolled in the course explored and investigated theories of tutoring and secondary education pedagogy. Alongside the course work, students connected theory and practice by completing 20 service-learning hours as tutors at 826Michigan. Students could also complete their service hours through a variety of workshops (poetry, storytelling, songwriting), field trips, publication of student work, and in-school tutoring. The service-learning hours provided 6010 students with the opportunity to connect theoretical and pedagogical knowledge with real-life practices.

Jule Thomas is a Senior Lecturer in the English Department and directs the writing center at WSU. Her research interests include genre theory, Writing In the Disciplines (WID), and mixed-methods research.



Students in two sections of **Community and Writing (ENG 3020)** worked with four community partners: Arts & Scraps, the Maurice and Jane Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice (the SLC), Advocates for Baba Baxter (A4BB), and the Detroit Community Wealth Fund (DCWF).

Arts & Scraps, an “Education, Arts & Culture, and Environmentalism” 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has helped educate communities since 1989 by re-imagining recycled industrial materials to inspire people of all ages to think, create, and learn. They operate nationally with a specific focus on the low-income children of Southeastern Michigan. Students partnered with Arts & Scraps produced grant applications, redesigned their social media platforms, produced a donation marketing schema, designed a monthly teacher communication newsletter, and redesigned their marketing materials.

The SLC is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing advocacy and support to poor and working people on important societal issues with national impact. The SLC provides legal assistance, advocacy, and technical support to individuals, community organizations, unions, attorneys, and other people who are working for economic and social justice. Students who worked with the SLC interviewed current and former employees and advocates for the SLC and compiled a written narrative history from the SLCs origins in the 1960s.

A4BB is a grassroots disability justice organization named for Baba Baxter Jones, “a beloved elder, a wheelchair user, and renowned activist.” They focus on the concerns of people with disabilities and their caregivers and fight for the radical inclusion and representation of people with disabilities. Their work is intersectional and aligns with other justice issues, including housing and water rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, racial justice, and economic justice. Students partnered with A4BB wrote CRIO complaints regarding ableism in Detroit, wrote articles for Riverwise Detroit, produced social media posts and videos, and researched disability pension laws for advocacy campaigns.

DCWF empowers innovative historically marginalized Detroiters by providing non-extractive and supportive loans to cooperatives and community-based businesses. DCWF acts as a partner and helps focus on the stability and growth of businesses based in and built to serve low-income neighborhoods in Detroit. DCWF does not take any money from the people they work with that hasn't come from income generated through collaboration with DCWF. Students who partnered with DCWF interviewed members of cooperative businesses in Detroit, created a booklet for DCWF to share that described cooperative principles, and created infographics and slide decks to support DCWF in growing their community.

Rachel Dortin is a PhD Candidate in Rhetoric and Composition. Her research focuses on the nexus of embodiment, identity, and community-engaged learning.

In this section of **Community and Writing (ENG 3020)**, the majority of students worked with one of two community partners. Racquet Up! Detroit is a nonprofit which “focuses intensively on the long-term development of Detroit youth by promoting their education, health, and character development through academic tutoring, health and fitness coaching, and youth development. In all, ten students contributed roughly 180 hours of service, mostly involving the tutoring of children and adolescents between the age of 10-18.

Three students engaged in service-learning with the Detroit Black Community Food Service Network (DBCFSN), whose mission is to “address food insecurity in Detroit’s Black community and to organize members of that community to play a more active leadership role in the local food security movement.” The bulk of the students’ work for DBCFSN was in the form of assisting with the agricultural development at the organization’s D-Town Farms location. In March and April, students worked for roughly 60 hours at D-Town Farms. As one student noted in an end-of-semester reflection: “The work we were doing not only aligned with the values of the people working there, but also the values of everyone looking out for the best interest of the community.”

The seven remaining students contributed close to 120 hours at the following local nonprofits: Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries, Starfish Family Services, Brilliant Detroit, Gleaners Food Bank, St. Joseph’s Mercy Hospital, Detroit Public Schools, and Wayne State’s food pantry.

In addition to the service hours, the course consisted of two major writing assignments and numerous smaller assignments. The first major assignment was a group assignment which asked students to decide upon and make the case for 5-10 key principles of service-learning courses. The groups were tasked with selecting the principles from the service-learning scholarship they read at the beginning of the semester, and to develop a rationale for why these principles should be seen as essential to community writing or service-learning courses. The middle portion of the semester was dedicated to reading Sarah Van Gelder’s 2017 book, *The Revolution Where You Live: Stories from a 12,000-Mile Journey Through a New America*.

The course’s major assignment was a 12-15 page research proposal. In this assignment—some version of which is required of all intermediate composition courses at Wayne State—students developed a research question pertaining to an issue affecting the Detroit or greater Detroit area. In the proposal, students developed a rationale for the importance of the issue, composed a 6-8 page literature review, designed and proposed a study to address the issue, and discussed the potential benefits of carrying out such a study.

The semester ended with students presenting reflective writing or multimedia productions which conveyed important lessons gained from their work at their community partner sites.

Ryan Flaherty is a lecturer in the English Department’s Composition and Rhetoric Program.

FALL 2019 Courses

ENG 3020: Community and Writing - The Black Bottom Project

Thomas Trimble, Senior Lecturer

In partnership with Detroit's Hannan Center for Lifelong Learning, this section of ENG 3020 connects WSU undergraduates with older adults enrolled in the Hannan Center's lifelong learning program to explore Detroit's historic Black Bottom community and the legacy of the Paradise Valley arts district. While undergraduates conduct primary research using archival material from WSU's Reuther Labor Library and the Detroit Public Library's Burton Historical Collection, students from the Hannan Center write short narrative and creative pieces which will be used by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's Community Jazz Ensemble in a future performance dedicated to the legacy of Black Bottom.

ENG 3020: Community and Writing - Brightmoor Artisans Collective

Christopher Susak, Lecturer

This section of ENG 3020 is a partnership with Detroit's Brightmoor Artisans Collective.

ENG 3020: Community and Writing

Ryan Flaherty, Lecturer

This section of ENG 3020 includes partnerships with a number of organizations, including Raquet Up! and the Detroit Black Community Food Service Network.

