



Call for Participants: Naylor Workshop on Undergraduate Research in Writing Studies

**“Students’ Rights to Their Own Language”: Promises Made, Promises Fulfilled?
September 29–October 1, 2023**

Some Background: Acknowledging that students bring with them to college “their own language,” in 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication approved the following resolution

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.

Add to that the many 21st Century rhetorical skills, styles, genres, and modes in which students communicate within their own communities, and the picture grows even more complex.

But judging by many of the topics that our Naylor Workshop attendees have addressed over the past 8 years, we might conclude that we have a long way to go, that we need to do more than “reaffirm” this statement (as we did in 2003 and again in 2014), or that we need to reconsider if those premises and promises are still accurate to our times. Naylor participants have consistently asked research questions that return us to this topic. For example—just to cite a few—

Kayla Watabu of the University of Hawaii explored “how to negotiate the student’s voice with the voice of the academic community—a community that appears to require students to abandon their voice to succeed. I want to learn how to reconcile our identities to build alliances between these communities. . . . I have seen how rhetoric can be used to both construct and deconstruct identities and realities. As a person of Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) descent, I believe studying rhetoric and its impact on our identity to be a significant part of my kuleana (responsibilities, privileges, duties). . . giving voice to those that do not have the same privileges as I do.”

Likewise, Alan McKenzie of Marymount Manhattan College saw the need to validate a language that was based in his own community, tracing his interest in literacy education to “when I had to repeat the 3rd grade. It was a dark period of life filled with humiliation and alienation. Not only did I feel like I was incompetent and slow; I also felt misunderstood by my teachers. . . . This is exactly why Hip-Hop pedagogy is needed in education. Like many children my age, Hip-Hop is the only place where I saw my struggles and circumstances authentically displayed. In the times we live in today, where so many minorities in this country feel marginalized and alienated by society, education and literacy can arm them with the knowledge to combat oppression.”

Nidhi Gandhi from Hofstra University spoke for immigrant communities, telling us that “this [work] is important to me as a researcher because, as an immigrant with immigrant parents. I can see the communication problems my parents have when conversing with native English speakers. I also come from a diverse educational background where many students in my elementary, middle and high schools were multilingual students.”

And Carmen Renee Morley of Florida State University reminds us that “entering [academic] spaces like archives and university museums has always been difficult because I felt like I did not necessarily belong in those spaces. As a white student, I still felt uncomfortable; I can only imagine how a student who is a person of color might feel even more unwelcome. Making all sorts of students feel permission to participate fully in their studies and feel ownership over the texts and spaces they interact with is integral to a fuller literacy learning experience.”

Considering these needs, and with the coming 50th anniversary of Students’ Right to Their Own Language looming, we invite proposals for research in any area of writing studies and by students in all disciplines—but with a special eye to the ways we can “respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.” As undergraduate researchers, you have a special role to play in this work.

See the full call for participants below:

Call for Participants

As always, we welcome proposals for research projects in any areas related to literacy and literacy education—and since language plays a role in all fields of study, language-related proposals from students in any discipline. This year, we especially encourage proposals from undergraduate researchers that address topics related to students’ right to their own language—and the impact of those rights (or the failure to recognize them) upon social justice.

The questions below are not meant to limit your areas of research, but simply to help you think through your topics:

- How does “academic writing” (and the ways we teach it) serve, or fail to serve, various communities? Who may be left out?
- In what ways has writing instruction served, or failed to serve, students who are differently-abled, whose language skills do not fit the norm, or whose communication skills are not fully captured by traditional pedagogies?
- In your experience, how do writing centers value, or fail to value, students’ own language practices, “mother tongue,” or their relationship with written, spoken, and/or visual communication?
- Has writing instruction kept pace with the forms of communication that people actually use in their lives as well as in college? Should it have that wider purpose?
- In what ways have the communication methods and language used in various disciplines promoted or inhibited students with less experience in academic writing?
- In what ways has, or might, the teaching and tutoring of writing be more sensitive to the needs of students with diverse language backgrounds, or whose mother tongue is not English?
- Given that males have long been the dominant voice in colleges, how might feminist approaches to writing studies promote new and/or more equitable approaches to our teaching and tutoring?
- In what ways might community-based research promote racial and social justice through a wider understanding of the role of language and its power structures? What other publics beyond the classroom might our research serve?
- In what ways have our pedagogies and approaches to writing confronted, failed to confront, or even promoted racial inequities? How might we do better?
- To what degree have we lived up to our 1974 statement on “[Students’ Right to Their Own Language](#)”? Is this Resolution still relevant? Are there reasons why promoting students “own language” might negatively impact them or their futures, as some have suggested?
- In what ways might teaching or tutoring grammar and other “lower-order” concerns be affected by a more inclusive approach to language, as suggested in “[Students’ Right to Their Own Language](#)”? Is there a way to, or a reason to, reconcile attention to “correctness” with language diversity?
- How might your research (and the work of undergraduate researchers in Writing Studies) help to widen and deepen our attention to social justice issues related to the identities of those we serve (or fail to serve) in writing studies.
- How well does the teaching of literature promote an inclusive understanding of language? How might we do that better?
- How have your experiences in writing classes suggested the need for new practices in how literacy education is provided to both those in college and those who don’t have access to higher education?
- How might your research support practices that serve underrepresented or marginalized students and/or their uses of language? How do you propose studying these practices in systematic ways?
- How might writing centers play a role in equitable approaches to race and other identity issues, and how might tutoring be more sensitive to cultural difference?
- What might discourse analysis reveal about the role of language in promoting, or failing to promote, equity both within and outside of the academy?

PLEASE NOTE: The Undergraduate Researcher online application will ask you to upload a completed [2023 Proposal Form \(fillable PDF\)](#). Links to both the proposal form and the application (Google Form) are available at www.ycp.edu/naylor.

Naylor Equity and Access Grants: We remain committed to increasing applications from those working in the space of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) such as HBCUs, HSIs, as well as single-sex colleges and universities and community colleges. As part of our efforts to provide more equitable access to undergraduate research opportunities, the Naylor Workshop welcomes applications for our [Equity and Access grants](#). These grants provide travel funding, accommodations, and meals for students *who have an interest in undergraduate research and show promise as undergraduate researchers, but may not yet have identified a specific topic.*

Attendance can allow new participants to learn from our mentors, and to develop their areas of interest into possible projects. Our hope is that grantees will return to a future workshop as full participants. Mentors of the awardees will also be invited to attend.

[Ready to Apply? Click Here!](#)



Plenary Speaker: To be announced

About the [Naylor Workshop](#):

In its first five years, the Workshop has attracted over 160 students and mentors from forty states. Its participants have gone on to present at professional conferences, to publish their work, and to have impact on their campuses and communities. We have also featured leaders in the field's undergraduate research work as plenary speakers—including **Jessie Moore, Joyce Kinkead, Jess Enoch, Sheila Carter-Tod, Jane Greer, Laurie Grobman, and (Naylor alumnus) Megan Schoettler**—and have had many other national experts serving as mentors to participants.

The Workshop helps undergraduate researchers in Writing Studies to move their project (which can be at any stage of development) ahead in ways that are richer, more valid, and more theoretically informed. Attendees participate in mini-workshop sessions to learn a variety of research methods, and work closely with mentors who help them hone their project's focus. Attendees report that by the end of the workshop they have a much clearer path forward and a much stronger understanding of our discipline's work.

We hope mentors will encourage students engaged with undergraduate research projects in Writing Studies to apply. **Successful applicants also receive free room, food, registration, and funding to defray travel costs.** They need not be writing majors—we have had successful applicants from Writing Centers, from disciplinary courses that focused on discourse analysis, from those engaged in community projects, research on creative writing and publishing, and so on. Like our field's research, the Naylor Workshop embraces all facets of writing studies.

We also invite faculty to apply to become mentors at the workshop. Past mentors have reported that it is an intensive, exhausting, but fulfilling experience as they work within an idealized learning space with talented students from across the country. You can join us with students or come on your own. If you have students join you, we will assign them to other mentors for the workshop so that they get multiple perspectives. You may apply to attend as a mentor via the link below:

[Mentor Interest Survey](#)

PLEASE NOTE: The Mentor Interest Survey will ask you to upload a completed [2023 Mentor Form](#) (fillable PDF). Links to both the mentor form and the interest survey (Google Form) are available at www.ycp.edu/naylor.

Visit the website at www.ycp.edu/naylor for more details on how to apply as either an undergraduate researcher or a mentor.

[Ready to Apply? Click Here!](#)

Feel free to address any questions to Dominic DelliCarpini, Naylor Endowed Professor of Writing Studies, at dcarpini@ycp.edu.

