

Eye on Campus

Writing Center Workshop: Whoops! (Common Writing Errors)

Recap and Review By Dave Serpentine *Lion's Eye Staff Writer* dms5419@psu.edu

This workshop, proctored by Doctor Pamela Main (Writing Studio Coordinator and Instructor in English), featured common writing mistakes and homonyms. Here's a recap:

- "Apart" vs. "A part"
- "Apart" is used as an adverb or preposition; it also means a separation in distance or in time. "The family fell apart because the father was abusive."
- "A part" is used as a noun; it also means to belong to someone or something. "Walter was a part of the Boy Scouts."
- "Effect" vs. "Affect"
- "Effect" is a noun; it also means a result. "The effect of that drug is dangerous."
- "Affect" is a verb; it also means a change in in order or feeling. "Your attitude affects your work."
- "Alot of" is not a word; it should be "a lot of." However, it is recommended that you do not use that

phrase, instead use the words "many" or "much"

- "I have a lot of cats" compared to "I own many cats."
- "Alright" is not a word; use the word "all right." "Everything is going to be all right."
- "Already" vs. "All ready" (Note: this was not discussed during the session, it was questioned afterwards)
- Already is an adverb; nine times out of ten it will be used in a sentence. "All ready" is more informal. "He is already here" compared to "We are all ready to go to the beach."
- If there is a countable noun, use the word "number" in your sentences. "A great number of people attended" compared to "A great amount of people attended." Here, you can count people; therefore it makes sense.
- "Themself" is not a word; use the word "themselves."
- Likewise, it is "himself" or her-

self" not "himselves" or "herselves."

- "Should of" or "Would of" are not real words; use "Should have" or "Could have." "I should of gone to that event" compared to "I should have gone to that event."
- Avoid sexist language and have things agree in number and in gender.
- "The typical student doesn't want people to see their mistakes" compared to "Typical students don't want people to see their mistakes" or "The typical students don't want people to see his or her mistakes."
- Next, certain homonyms were discussed. When is it an appropriate time to use "than/then," "two/too/to," "it's/its," "no/know/knew," "there/their/they're," "who's/whose," "accept/except," and "whether/weather."
- A worksheet was given covering apostrophes, plural possessives, contractions, verb agreement, and

dangling modifiers.

- The next Writing Studio workshop is on paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting on Thursday, October 14 from 11:30-12:20 in room 110 Vairo Library.
- Quick test; how many mistakes can you spot. "After being apart of the club for a lot of years it's effected me greatly I remember my first day their; I was all ready prepared alright. Horribly that day they was asking for donations and alls I, has was too moneys. I did right them a check of course. All of the club members that day looked nice in his uniform despite the whether. I no I should of knot rambled on. But that is my story; accept than again, they're is more. Like the time while driving the sunlight glared across the windshield. But thanks for listening who's ever you are."

Constitution Day

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The delegates of the Philadelphia Convention created the Constitution on September 17, 1787. After two centuries, this iconic document still provides as the vital core of our government and tells us how to behave as citizens. While the allure of this hallowed document is still present, it is also still marred with confusion and controversy.

Every year University Park hosts its own Constitution Day with an annual program called "Writer's Block" where chalkboards are placed outside around the campus and students have the choice to voice their opinions on selected controversial topics. This year, on the 223rd anniversary of the Constitution, University Park has elected Mont Alto and Brandywine to join this program. Interestingly, these two Penn State campuses are the first and last institutions of the family, respectfully.

Doctor Patricia Hillen, senior instructor of English explains the history of University Park's creation, "University Park has utilized the writer's blocks for four years. I'm not sure how they celebrated it in the past, but in 2007, the Office of Undergraduate Education's Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy commissioned a first year architecture class, taught by Dr. Peter Aeschbacher, to create a means to celebrate Constitution Day. These writer's blocks are publically placed works challenging the university community to consider constitutionally-based issues and their implica-

tions for citizen participation in the American democracy. The installations received a 2008 Education Honor Award from the American Institute of Architects and the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. Hundreds, mostly students, chalked their observations on the installations as they considered their amendments and rights."

Hillen also discusses why Mont Alto and Brandywine were elected to be apart of this event, "This year, Dr. Jeremy Cohen, Associate Vice President and Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, together with Peter Aeschbacher, graciously loaned blocks to two campuses, Mont Alto and Brandywine. I was first approached by Dr. Cynthia Lightfoot, who had had a conversation with Cohen. They both agreed that Brandywine could benefit from using the writer's blocks for Constitution Day and beyond."

Hillen then mentions how this event was planned, "On September 8, I was invited to Jeremy's house in State College, along with the Mont Alto folks, to have lunch, and debriefed and get a demo on installation. Because I showed up with a pick-up truck, they decided to give us the two largest structures. Tony Montagna and his staff met me on our campus the next morning and housed the blocks in the maintenance shed. On Friday, September 17th, they helped to set up and move the two structures onto the grass for public commentary. I took some photos and gathered content analysis and will be sending those up to the folks

at UP. Meanwhile, we were thrilled that our students took the time to take part in discussion around these two constitutional questions. We do have the writer's blocks on loan for the rest of the academic year, and you will see them again when we will use them in conjunction with our common read, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*."

The first chalkboard block, placed outside of the Main Building featured the following question: "Is intolerance of the 9/11 mosque fundamentally un-American?" And the second chalkboard, placed in between the Tomezko Building and the Vairo Library featured this question: "Can the right to carry a gun be balanced with public safety?" Several students were interviewed for this event and each expressed mixed and thought provoking statements.

In regards to the first chalkboard, here is a brief back-story. There are plans to construct an Islamic community center and mosque (a church) roughly two blocks away from the former World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan. And this issue challenges the First Amendment. The First Amendment reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." In its simplest definition to relate it to this controversial topic, the

Islamic people have the right to express their religion by building their mosque. On the other hand, many Americans have the right to use free speech and voice their opinions. And here is what some members of our student body had to say:

"I believe it's American to build that mosque. If they can build a church or synagogue, they can build a mosque," Omer Yilmaz, freshman.

"They should build it somewhere else," Chelsea Hermansen, freshman.

"It's distasteful," Rob Ewing, sophomore.

"I think it's fine, they can do whatever they want. It's cool if they want to build it, but they should have it somewhere else," Jess Devers, sophomore.

"No, we shouldn't be blamed for 9/11," Kyisha Joshua, sophomore.

"Let them put it up," Ken Fite, sophomore.

"It's okay. It's freedom of religion," Stephen Iatesta, junior.

"Maybe. In a way it's like a victory for Muslims," Brad Carpenter, senior.

In regards to the second controversial topic, the Second Amendment reads, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." That being said, here's what you said:

"Yes. What if someone wants to jump you," Kayleigh Pugliese, freshman

"No, I don't think anyone should have a gun," Cara

Jones, freshman.

"People should have it in their houses," Jenna Jones, freshman.

"You can't have a gun unless you're a felon," Tyler Truskey, sophomore.

"Every bullet should cost \$5,000," Sean Mulkeen, junior.

"If people have guns, they're gonna use it for self-defense and people who use guns are gonna fine away to get around it," Tom McKeever, junior.

"Guns should be for self-defense. If you ban it, people are gonna get it either way—like prohibition," Josh Koehler, junior.

"I don't support carrying guns," Amy Moore, senior.

Doctor Phyllis Cole, professor of English, Women's Studies, and American Studies shares her thoughts on what Constitution Day means, "[It] is hugely important, and it defines who we are and strives to achieve a perfect society. Interpreting the constitution is very controversial these days."

Finally, Hillen shared her thoughts on what it means to be an American on Constitution Day, "as an American, Constitution Day presents opportunity for reflection and discussion about our freedoms and our rights."

Whether you are for or against any of these issues or opinions, it does not matter because we are Americans who are still trying to keep the great tradition alive to freely share and express our feelings openly. And it is all thanks to a simple piece of paper written two-hundred years ago.