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UNH Writing Program

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WRITE FREE OR DIE

The Newsletter of the UNH Writing Program

Volume 1, Issue 2

Spring 2015

IN THIS ISSUE

Writing at UNH	1
Upcoming Events	1
Writing Committee Members	2
Dangling Modifier	2
Ask	3
Patty	4
Les Perelman	4
Grammar Box	
Tom Newkirk and Self-Conferencing	5
Notes on Oxford Comma.....	9
Past Perfect	9
Faculty Resources	

Writing at UNH: What Do We Know and How Does it Relate?

Ed Mueller

Director, University Writing Program

Since 2010, the University Writing Program has been conducting an ongoing ethnographic study of student writing at UNH. In the spring, the Writing Committee invites a panel of graduating seniors to give brief presentations on their writing histories at UNH, followed by Q&A and discussion.

Over the course of several years, some themes have emerged. Among them, students have said that they...

- valued feedback from faculty, specifically feedback that motivated them to continue writing

- appreciated faculty articulating their expectations and giving feedback during the writing process

- appreciated it when faculty explicitly taught how to write (especially in discipline specific genres)

- appreciated the diverse types of writing they encountered in UNH courses

- emphasized the value they place on opportunities for "genuine" writing

- valued their fundamental experiences in ENGL 401

- felt that the collective effect of the UNH curriculum had made them better writers

These themes provide a window into

continued on page 2

Future Tense:

Upcoming Writing Across the Curriculum Events

- **March 31: WI Course Proposals** Fall 2015 Semester proposals are due by March 31. See: <http://www.unh.edu/writing/uwr/faculty/WIproposal/>
- **April 9: Guest Speaker, Dr. Les Perelman (MUB, Strafford Room, 12:45-2:00)** Former Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at MIT, Dr. Perelman has received national attention in both the scholarly and popular press for his critique of automated essay scoring. His talk, "Artificial Unintelligence: Why and How Automated Essay Scoring Doesn't Work (most of the time)," will have an interactive component (bring a laptop or tablet if you'd like to participate). If you intend to attend, please send an email to edward.mueller@unh.edu to let us know (not required; drop in if you find you have the time and haven't emailed)
- **April 29: Student Exit Interviews (Dimond 352, 1:00-2:30)** The Writing Committee will be conducting exit interviews with a panel of graduating seniors on their writing histories at UNH. Faculty are invited to join in this event. If interested, please contact the Director of the Writing Program or a member of the Writing Committee. Reports from past sessions can be found on the Writing Program Website: <http://www.unh.edu/writing/assessment/>
- **June 8-10: Writing Intensive Faculty Retreat** The UNH Writing Program is accepting applications from faculty who are teaching, or preparing to teach, Writing Intensive (WI) Courses for participation in an immersive WI retreat, June 8-10, at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel, to be followed by a half day session at UNH in August (TBA). Participants will revise a currently-taught WI course or develop a new one. Among the goals of the retreat will be to give faculty a more complete awareness of the principles underlying WI courses, equip them with practices to enhance working with student writing in their courses, and to promote exchange and forge connections among WI faculty. Participation will be limited to ten tenure-track faculty members, to be decided by the Writing Committee in early April. Applications are due by April 6: contact edward.mueller@unh.edu for details.

WAC(ky) People

UNH Writing Program

Ed Mueller, Director
Molly Tetreault, Assistant Director
Sarah B. Franco, Associate Director
Wendy VanDellon, Associate Director
Patty Wilde, Associate Director

Writing Committee

College Representatives:	Term End
PCBE - Tevfik Aktekin (Decision Sciences)	2016
COLSA - Iago Hale (Biological Sciences)	2015
CEPS - Nivedita (Niva) Gupta (Chemical Engineering)	2015
COLA-1 - Nicoletta Gullace (History)	2016
COLA-2 - Petar Ramadanovic (English)	2017
CHHS - Marc Hiller (Health Management and Policy)	2014*
UNHM - Gail Fensom (English, Director of First Year Writing Program)	2017

* Faculty Chair

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Director of Composition
Christina Ortmeier-Hooper
Center for Teaching Excellence
Michael Lee
Academic Standards
Judy Spiller
Discovery Committee
Dan Beller-Mckenna

Ex officio (non voting):

Mark Rubinstein
(VP, Student and Academic Services)
Andy Colby
(Registrar), Committee Secretary

local practices that reflect major issues in the literature on student writing, like enabling the transfer of writing skills, the influence of assignment design, effective modes of feedback, the importance of audience, and student engagement with material through writing, among others.

These themes at UNH also echo those found in larger studies, like those done by *Project Information Literacy* at the University of Washington Information School

("How College Students Evaluate and Use Information in the Digital Age" and "How Handouts for Research Assignments Guide Today's College Students"), and in the ongoing research of Lerner, Geller, and Eodice (*The Meaningful Writing Project*), who presented their findings at UNH last year as guest speakers of the Writing Program.

For more information, please contact edward.mueller@unh.edu ▲

The Dangling Modifier:

Tips and Advice

Wendy VanDellon

Associate Director, University Writing Program

Students have written in response to the prompt, and there is a stack of papers sitting on your desk. Now what?

It's time to read student papers and offer feedback. What works best? Studies indicate that students respond better to feedback that is couched as a reader making an effort to understand the text as opposed to a "grader." Nancy Sommers, a respected researcher who has done a great deal of work on response to student writing, found that there are four categories of comments that are most useful to students:

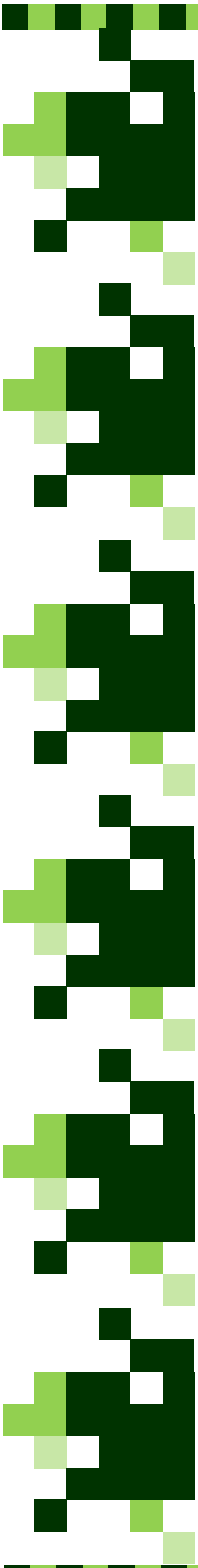
- Questions that stimulated further thought
- Brief summaries of what the reader got out of the paper
- Descriptions of difficulties the reader encountered
- Even highly critical feedback that was still constructive and respectful

In order to offer this type of feedback, here are some thoughts from Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj (*The Elements of Teaching Writing: A Resource for Faculty in All Disciplines*):

1. First, read through each paper receptively, making no marks.
2. Then compose replies to the writer as a set of organized end comments.
3. Now go back to the student's text and insert specific questions, suggestions, or praise (an important point: comment on what goes well, too). These are most effective if they illustrate things you have said in the end comments.
4. Then, if necessary, determine the grade.
5. Create limits, such as setting a time for each paper. Beginning with the end comments makes this easier to do since you can then limit marginal comments.

Finally, there are efficient ways to respond to correctness. First, one has to accept the fact that even the best-intentioned student can only assimilate so much. If you are marking corrections to help students develop, then being selective is better than being comprehensive. One method is to mark corrections in early passages and then draw a line and note in the margin that line editing has ended, but the patterns still exist. This offers students both input and a manageable task. Another idea is to read through all the papers and identify trends that you can then address in class or in an email as opposed to in the margins of every paper.

For a more complete discussion on responding to student writing, please contact Wendy: wja26@wildcats.unh.edu. ▲



Ask Patty:

Your writing concerns addressed by our very own Patty Wilde

Dear Patty:
*I've never used peer response in my classes before.
What should I consider as I plan for peer response?*
—Puzzled by Peer Response

Dear Puzzled by Peer Response:

Peer response can be a great way to help students move through the writing process and encourage revision. Conventionally, peer response is focused on fixing papers before they are submitted, and that is, in part, what peer review can do. Defining peer review based on the product, however, can make it seem like a waste of time given that papers will still come in with issues. However, this approach misses the very real benefits to students as respondents. Responding to others can prompt students to reflect on their own writing, to compare and evaluate ideas, to think critically about writing-in-progress, and perhaps even to learn something from seeing the moves that another student has made (or failed to make). Below are some suggestions for designing and structuring peer response in the classroom.

Use peer response throughout the writing process at different stages of development. Peer response can be very helpful in earlier stages. A five minute thesis statement or idea workshop will get students thinking and talking about their writing earlier, provide feedback, and require that they be thinking about the assignment early enough to help structure a more effective writing process. The same goes for setting expectations for the end of the writing process: A twenty minute proofreading workshop before a paper is due will build proofreading into the process and may catch errors that can save you time when grading.

Provide instruction on how students should engage in peer response. Taking a few minutes to explain the purpose of the session, highlighting aspects of writing the class should pay special attention to, providing a mini-lesson on a

specific aspect of writing, and answering student questions about writing will help frame the experience and emphasize what they should be paying attention to (and how).

Structure the response process. Students are often unsure of what to focus on without directions from the instructor. One option is to provide a list of questions, helping the responder to think through and develop a response to the draft. The key is to ask open-ended questions (usually beginning with the question stems “how, why, what”) so that responders must provide more than a one word answer to the questions. Another mode of response—Affirm, Question, Consider—is guided by three questions: What are 3 affirmations you have for the writer? What are 3 questions you have for the writer? What are 3 considerations you have for the writer? Or, to save time in class, try assigning peer response letters, which can also be exchanged via blackboard: Students write a letter (typically 1-page, single-spaced) in response to these questions: What is the writer doing well in the draft? What could the writer improve in the draft? What questions or specific suggestions do you have for the writer?

Encourage students to ask each other questions. Ask reviewers to pose their own questions. Question-posing is part of the reflective process that helps writers reconsider and revise their writing. By asking students to formulate questions about their partner’s draft, students begin to internalize the question posing process. Questions also help create a productive and collaborative peer response environment that actively engages the writer in an unfolding conversation about his/her work.

Keep working on peer response. Collaboration takes time, repetition, and effort. Doing peer response throughout the semester gives students a chance to develop collaborative habits.

Best,
Patty
Associate Director, University Writing Program

If you have a writing-related question that you would like Patty to address, please send your inquiry to: paa44@unh.edu. ▲

Les Perelman to Speak at UNH

Sarah B. Franco

Associate Director, University Writing Program

This spring, the University Writing Program will welcome Dr. Les Perelman, who will give an interactive presentation in early April entitled, “Artificial Unintelligence: Why and How Automated Essay Scoring Doesn’t Work (most of the time).” Dr. Perelman, former Director of Writing Across the Curriculum at MIT and President of the Consortium for the Research and Evaluation of Writing, is a nationally recognized researcher who has drawn significant attention to the promises and pitfalls of automated essay scoring in both the scholarly and popular press. His findings, gathered over several years of reviewing essays graded by machines, demonstrate the limitations of machines in assessing cohesive, accurate, and articulate writing. Dr. Perelman has argued inexhaustibly that machines

are incapable of accurately assessing human communication, and has shown as much through his own generation of non-sense essays, which receive high, if not perfect, scores when graded by an automated essay scorer.

Most recently, Dr. Perelman, working with a team of MIT and Harvard students, developed a software program fondly called the Babel—for Basic Automatic B.S. Essay Language—that generates essays when provided with a few key words. This new creation further substantiates Dr. Perelman’s assertion that machine scorers are unreliable.

All UNH faculty are invited to attend and engage in a conversation about this very current topic with a leading voice in this area of research. Please bring a laptop or tablet for the interactive portion, and prepare to have some fun with the Babel. See “Future Tense” for details. ▲

“How do the slight touches of the chisel, the pencil, the pen, the fiddle-stick, et cetera, give the true swell, which gives the true pleasure! O my countrymen! Be nice; be cautious of your language, and never, O! never let it be forgotten upon what small particles your eloquence and your fame may depend.”

- Laurence Sterne: 1713-1768

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman

The Grammar Box:

Data vs. Datum

Sarah B. Franco

Associate Director, University Writing Program

“Datum” is an item of factual information collected through a research process or measurement. “Data” is the plural of “datum” and should only be used when referring to several pieces of collected information. Consider the following sentence:

Once each datum is collected, I will transfer all the data to my computer for review.

Here, “datum” refers to individual pieces of information to be collected; “data” is used to refer to all pieces of information.

In modern research, “data” is often misused to mean a single set of information. Consider the following misuses of “data”:

The data reveals two distinct patterns.

The data is indicative of a problem that needs to be addressed.

In each case, “data” is incorrectly used as a singular noun. To correct the examples above, adjust the verbs in this way:

The data reveal two distinct patterns.

The data are indicative of a problem that needs to be addressed.

The topic for this newsletter’s Grammar Box was inspired by Dr. Alan Baker, professor of Biological Sciences at UNH. If you have ideas for future topics for The Grammar Box please contact Sarah: sbl39@wildcats.unh.edu. ▲

UNH's Thomas Newkirk Talks about How Narrative Impacts Writing and Learning

Sarah B. Franco

Associate Director, University Writing Program

Thomas Newkirk, Professor of English at UNH and author of *The Art of Slow Reading*, which offers practices for sustained reading, recently made the case that good writing—the kind that keeps readers engaged and fulfills its purpose—follows a narrative arc, one that introduces a question or tension, and takes the reader on a journey that ends in resolution. In an effort to learn more about how this theory might apply to writing across the disciplines, I sat down with Tom in his office and asked him about his motivation behind his latest project.

"I think all along I've felt that academic writing gets a bad name," he said, "That often in the public consciousness, to say something is academic is like saying it's pointless." He laughs and continues: "But the academic writers I like are really good storytellers, and even if they're not telling a story, there's some drama to it, so there's a sense of drama and plot that keeps your attention. To write in that way is part of what I try to do and what writers I love do."

In *Minds Made for Stories*, his latest book, Tom argues that narrative is the essential component in the way people process information and make sense of the world. At the root of this claim lies an understanding of narrative not simply as a type of writing, to be taught in isolation from other types of writing, but as "an embodied and instinctive mode of understanding" (23). Narrative offers us a way of contextualizing new information, and, in this way, it transcends its traditional label as a mode of writing that is distinct from other types of writing, such as persuasive and informational. Supporting these ideas with voices from several disciplines, including UNH's own Donald Murray (who referred to narrative as the mother of all modes), Tom encourages his readers to reconsider narrative's role in the curriculum.

How, then, can narrative be used in classrooms to help support students as writers and learners? Tom offers a list of self-conferencing questions, a Baker's Dozen of Self-Prompts, which draws on elements of narrative to help explore their ideas. The questions range from prodding the writer's memory and past experiences to challenging the writer's intentions. When asked about their utility, Tom added, "These questions cross all kinds of disciplines and come close to defining what critical thinking is." Provided

as guidelines, which, Tom suggests, can be amended by any writer, the Baker's Dozen offers writers of any discipline the freedom to explore a question by working through possible solutions. "To think of writing as a set form," Tom says, "is limiting. To see writing as an avenue for using those prompts seems like you're creating a bigger, more interesting game with more moves."

As writers follow through on various chains of inquiry, guided by their questions and associations, the reader, Tom suggests, experiences a feeling of inevitability – an embodied sensation very much associated with the narrative arc of storytelling. More experienced writers, Tom believes, have internalized these questions, and use them throughout their writing process to reach resolution in their "story" and, subsequently, completion of their writing project. As the "internal motion machine" in the mind that generates material, the Baker's Dozen can be helpful for beginning writers, who may believe they don't have very much to write about. Integrating these prompts into our assignments or other guidance can offer students an opportunity to engage and present material in a way that complements natural learning processes and better meets reader expectations.

For more ideas on how narrative links to learning, pick up Thomas Newkirk's *Minds Made for Stories*, or email Sarah at sbl39@unh.edu. ▲

A Baker's Dozen of Self-Prompts or How We Give Ourselves a Conference

What happens next?

What does it look like, feel like, smell like?

How can I restate that?

What's my reaction to that?

What example or experience can I call up to illustrate that?

What's my evidence?

What parts of my prior reading can I bring to bear on that?

What comparison can I make that makes that clearer?

Why does that matter?

What do I mean by that?

Who else would agree with that? Disagree? What would they say?

How can I qualify that statement? What are the exceptions?

How does that fit into larger debates or controversies?

—From *Minds Made for Stories* (18)

"You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club."

- Jack London

Notes on the Comma Question

Prompted by the Grammar Box in the last newsletter

*Michael Ferber,
Professor of English and Humanities, University of New Hampshire*

More and more writers and publishers are joining newspaper editors in the belief that the second-last item in a series needs no comma after it. They would write

of the people, by the people and for the people
or
solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short
or

Walk one block, make a left, go to the end of the street
and jump in the lake.

They say the “and” sufficiently separates the last from the second-last item, so a comma is superfluous. But this is a mistake. The “and” does not separate the last two items; it unites all of them. The comma before “and” does what its kindred commas do in the rest of the series: separate each item from the next.

That comma must also separate the second-last item from the “and” itself, which must not be taken as uniting

the last two items more intimately than it unites all the items in the series together. It is a false argument, in other words, to say that because a list of only two items needs no comma before the “and” that a list of three or more should conclude the same way. For example:

The Garden was inhabited by the serpent, Adam and Eve.

This is a terrible sentence, but perfectly correct according to the anti-comma school. “Adam and Eve” is a closely unified phrase sanctioned by long usage, and its appearance at the end makes the sentence sound unfinished. We expect another item, say, “the serpent, Adam and Eve, and Lilith,” so we have been misled into misreading it.

The Garden was inhabited by the serpent, Adam, and Eve.

This is a good sentence: note how it separates Adam from Eve, seemingly for dramatic effect. The anti-comma school would ban such sentences. If one wanted to keep “Adam and Eve” together without a comma one could write, “the serpent, and Adam and Eve,” or “Adam and Eve, and the serpent,” but the anti-commatists would eliminate those commas, too, and ruin the effects. By making it a rule that the last two items must lack a comma between them, this school has restricted the expressive resources of English; it has hamstrung writers in a small but sometimes crucial way.

If you say a sentence with a series aloud, moreover, you



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will pause before the “and,” so a comma there reflects normal oral practice. It is bad to have a writing convention that departs from such usage.

Law firms insist on being exceptions to this rule:

Airdale, Airdale, Whippet and Pug

But few lawyers remember how to write.

It is sometimes essential to have the final comma or confusion will result, especially when the items in the series are themselves compound:

We invited President and Mrs. Obama, the V i s c o u n t and Viscountess Poobah, Ed and Myrtle Jones, Cher, and Karl Rove.

Note what happens, for a startling moment, if you leave out the last comma. Another example, borrowed from an older handbook on usage:

Like Hitler, Roosevelt and Churchill, though t h e y were responsible to democratic institutions, had extraordinary powers.

Under the rule that drops, or even permits dropping, the final comma, this sentence will certainly be misread as far as “had,” as the three political leaders will be taken as belonging to one series, all of them the object of “like,” in which case there is no subject of “had” and the seeming sentence is a fragment. But in fact “Roosevelt and Churchill” is the subject of “had,” and only “Hitler” is the object of “like.” Writers are well advised to avoid sentences like this, alas, because the habit of dropping the comma has bred conflicting expectations; if everyone kept the comma, such sentences would not have ambiguities hovering over them. Here is an example from a recent book about British history:

Three new earls were created, in Chester, Hereford and Shrewsbury, and Pembroke, delegated to subdue as much Welsh territory as they could, . . .

If the comma after “Shrewsbury” were omitted you would have no idea whether “Shrewsbury” belongs with the preceding “Hereford” or the following “Pembroke.” The sentence is correctly punctuated, but in our comma-evaporating atmosphere some readers will halt, wonder if there weren’t really four earls, scratch their heads over the extra “and,” and so on, before backtracking and getting it right. This perfectly good sentence deserves a better fate. An example from another recent book: “At the moment we have two, the two greatest children’s poets since Blake, Ted

Hughes and Charles Causley.” Ted Hughes and Charles Causley, that is, are the two greatest children’s poets since Blake. The sentence is correctly punctuated, but in these comma-losing days readers might well read the three poets as in series, and then wonder why the two greatest children’s poets at the moment are not named.

Suppose that you wish to write, as I recently did, that Samuel Beckett admired the following motion-picture clowns:

- (1) Laurel and Hardy
- (2) Chaplin
- (3) Keaton.

How would you group them with commas instead of with numbers? Laurel and Hardy are a pair, so if you (as an anti-commatist) end the list with them, you will have a list of four people with one comma, say: “Chaplin, Keaton and Laurel and Hardy.” This tends to group the last three together; it also raises the question why there is a comma at all after “Chaplin” instead of “and.” If you begin the list with them—“Laurel and Hardy, Chaplin and Keaton”—you seem to have two pairs, not three items. And if you put them in the middle—“Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy and Keaton”—you get the same problem we find in the first option. Putting a comma before the final “and” obviates all these troubles.

The habit of omitting the comma, I admit, sometimes earns its right to exist through hilarity. To make the point that its gyms are “judgment free zones,” Planet Fitness, Inc., places a large sign in the front of its exercise room that defines a “lunk” as “one who grunts, drops weights and judges.” I suppose it is a judgment-free zone because some lunk dropped all the judges from a considerable height.

Here is something amusing from a higher source, a statement by Pope Francis on May 16, 2013, welcoming several new ambassadors: “I am pleased to receive you for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See on the part of your respective countries: Kyrgyzstan, Antigua and Barbuda, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Botswana.” “Antigua and Barbuda” is the name of one country, but Luxembourg and Botswana are not parts of the same grand duchy.

On December 10, 2013, for a last example, Sky News announced these top stories: “World leaders at Mandela tribute, Obama-Castro handshake and same-sex marriage date set . . .”

The arguments I have been making apply, of course, to

“Why, a four-year-old child could understand this report. Run out and find me a four-year-old child. I can’t make head nor tail out of it.”

- Groucho Marx
Duck Soup

series of terms united by “or” and “nor.”

You may order a piece of cake, a plate of cheese and crackers, or a slice of pie.

Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

It is rare to encounter a defense of the leave-out-the-comma policy, probably because once a writer or editor stops to think about it the correct policy reveals itself as correct. Many writers and editors just leave it out, though they probably have no considered opinion. What positive reasons might be offered for getting rid of the comma? To save ink? Be serious. To simplify? But what could be simpler than a comma? To save space? This might be a minor motive in a newspaper, but hardly worth sacrificing clarity for; commas are tiny. To remove redundancies? But we have shown that the commas are not redundant, and even if they were, what is wrong with a certain amount of redundancy? Information theory has shown that a good writing system contains redundancies. About the only reason one can defend is that it often matters little if the comma is left out. But that is a very weak reason, because it often matters very much indeed, it is never wrong to put the comma in, and it is unwise to have a variable policy—a policy that requires a comma only when an ambiguity would result from omitting it. (Note the momentary confusion that would result if the comma after “in” in the preceding sentence were left out.) A variable policy itself breeds ambiguities.

Some opponents of the serial comma point out that some series of items are ambiguous and their ambiguities cannot be resolved by inserting the comma. For example:

They went to Oregon with Betty, a maid and a cook.

Here, under the regime I have been advocating, Betty is a maid and a cook, but the writer may be trying to say that there was a maid and a cook besides Betty. Insert a comma, however, and it gets worse:

They went to Oregon with Betty, a maid, and a cook.

This could mean either that Betty is a maid (but not a cook) or that she is not a maid (or a cook); inserting the comma does not clear up the problem.

But under the leave-the-comma-out regime we are no closer to a solution: the sentence is still readable in two conflicting ways; one of the ways is different from one of the ways under the put-the-comma-in regime.

This series is inherently ambiguous and needs more than a comma to rescue it. It is not ammunition against the comma, or for it.

The only other reason—well, motive—I can think of for omitting the comma is that it is sometimes called “the Oxford comma” or “the Harvard comma.” “Oxford” and “Ha-

rvard” here are evidently just terms of abuse by reverse snobs. According to the King James Bible, Jesus used that comma, though he was not a student at either Oxford or Harvard.

Above all, editors should not remove this comma from a writer’s manuscript. A writer who always uses the comma will have a slightly different ear, a slightly different feeling for sentence structure and logical ordering, from one who does not, and to “correct” the commas will inflict subtle but widespread damage on his or her prose. ▲

Authorities

H. W. Fowler, in *Modern English Usage* (first edition 1926), anathematizes what he calls “bastard enumeration”: the omission of the final comma. He gives many examples, of which this is one: “This license [of omitting the comma as one wishes] often leaves readers helpless against ambiguity; e.g., if the comma after the last item is a matter of indifference, the reader faced with *A party formidable, intelligent, and numerous outside the House* cannot possibly tell whether the limitation *outside the House* applies to all three adjectives or only to the last.”

The Elements of Style, by Strunk and White (1972 edition): “In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last.” Example: “He opened the letter, read it, and made a note of its contents.”

The Everyday Writer, by Lunsford and Connors (1999): “You may often see a series with no comma after the next-to-last item, particularly in newspaper writing. Omitting the comma can cause confusion, however, and you will never be wrong if you include it.”

The Longman Handbook for Writers and Readers, 2nd ed., by Anson and Schwegler (2000): “Placing a comma before the *and* that introduces the last item in a series helps avoid confusion.”

The Bedford Handbook, 6th ed., by Hacker (2002): “When three or more items are presented in a series, those items should be separated from one another by commas. . . . Although some writers view the comma between the last two items as optional, most experts advise using the comma because its omission can result in ambiguity or misreading.”

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed., by Gibaldi (2009): “Use commas to separate words, phrases, and clauses in a series.” Three examples follow, but the statement of the rule itself exemplifies it. (It has another ambiguity, however, as it is not clear from the structure if “in a series” applies to all three items.)



Past Perfect: *Director's Notes*


Ed Mueller,
Director, University Writing Program

This spring, the Writing Program is offering several ways for faculty to become involved with writing across the curriculum. Listening to our guest speaker, Dr. Les Perelman (April 9), will inform faculty of important issues involving the use of so-called "robo graders" in the classroom, something we can expect to be hearing more about as vendors market these products for wider use. The 2015 student exit interviews (April 29) will give faculty an opportunity to participate in a discussion of writing in the UNH curriculum from the student perspective. Please drop a line if you'd like to participate in either. For those who would like to develop or

revise a WI course, we are offering an inaugural WI retreat for ten faculty members in June at the Omni Mount Washington Hotel. This will be part workshop, part seminar, and part network-building opportunity. Both the guest speaker and faculty retreat are enabled by the generosity of the Dey Family Fund. Please see the "Future Tense" section of the newsletter for details.

We were gratified at the response to the last newsletter, the (surprising?) star of which was the Oxford Comma, which clearly tapped into a passion (dare we name it so?) of the readership. Writing across the curriculum will always need the energy of faculty to be effective, and such kinetics are a good sign of the energy that exists. So much for grammar being dull. We continue to welcome your feedback and input. Our next newsletter will be in the fall. In the meantime, we hope to see you at one of our spring events.

As usual, if you'd like further information or references on any topic, please drop a line. ▲



"Often without consciously realizing it, accomplished writers routinely rely on a stock of established moves that are crucial for communicating sophisticated ideas. What makes writers masters of their trade is not only their ability to express interesting thoughts, but their mastery of an inventory of basic moves that they probably picked up by reading a wide range of other accomplished writers."

- Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein

They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing



WAC(ky) Resources *Tools for Faculty*

- Pdf Handouts:** The Writing Program website has a range of pdf handouts that faculty may find useful to assist with managing writing in their classes: <http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/handouts/>
- Writing Center Videos:** The Connors Writing Center has informational videos as well as a video on peer review on its website: <http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc/videos/>
- WI Course Proposals:** Fall 2015 Semester proposals are due by March 31. Spring 2016 Semester proposals are due by October 15, 2015. See: <http://www.unh.edu/writing/uwr/faculty/WIproposal/>
- Other:** Feel free to contact the Director of the Writing Program for consultation on managing writing in a course, department, or program: edward.mueller@unh.edu