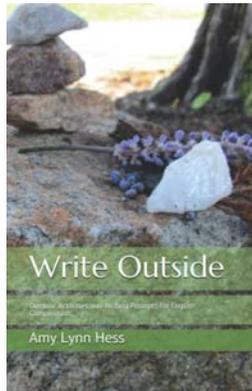


Associate Professor Amy Lynn Hess's Book Showcases Creative Pedagogy

In 2020 Associate Professor of English Amy Lynn Hess published *Write Outside: Outdoor Activities and Writing Prompts for English Composition*. She could have scarcely anticipated the timely nature of the book as she began working on it prior to Covid-19. Its encouragement to students to get outside and explore nature proved the perfect antidote for those feeling cooped up from quarantine.



Hess also discovered that the tactile dimensions of teaching and learning how to write proved to be an inspiration for many. She described the pedagogical approach as partly contemplative and partly “authentic inquiry through kinesthetic activity and tactile interaction.”

The book requires students to document their outdoor activities. Take a walk in the woods? Good! Now document it through writing. Go on a picnic? Time to start writing. Even a walk around campus turns into an opportunity to identify flora and fauna.

Hess asks students not just to narrate their experience with nature but also to weigh aesthetic principles against ecological impacts. She also encouraged people to touch and smell and experience nature. “It’s literally and metaphorically about getting one’s hands dirty,” she explained. She has mapped the book’s assignments to English 1102 course outcomes in the syllabus.

Hess sounds creative because she has an artistic streak involving pedagogy, ecology, art, and drumming. Her interest in percussion ranges from drum kits to shamanic forms. She connects interests in unique ways. Where others might just discern a beat, Hess hears a new writing assignment for students in an exercise called “creating rhythm.” Visualization also comes easily for Hess, who made the paintings below.

“Amy is a maker,” observed Dan Vollaro, a colleague in English. “She is extremely creative and talented in a variety of areas, and she is able to build a bridge between different kinds of creativity and writing.”

Hess’s book and her pedagogy made contributions in unexpected ways. “I’m always learning new things from her,” said Vollaro. Students have also praised her approach to writing. The *thank you* notes from students surprised Hess. “They commented that being outdoors had such a positive impact on their mental health,” she remarked. Given the success of her book, it is little wonder that she is working on a second edition.

By Richard Rawls



Hess in nature and in publicity photo



Ardea Herodias (left) and Windy Harvest (right)