

IGNITE

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Rediscovering India at the India Centre

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INTERVIEW

Interview with Prof. Elena Popa

ELENA POPA

Assistant Professor of Philosophy

The War in Ukraine

Q: What is happening in Ukraine?

Ukraine is currently under Russian invasion and attempted regime change. This is an escalation of a conflict from 2014 in the East of Ukraine, subsequent Russian involvement and claims over Ukrainian territories.

Q: How does this relate to earlier events ?

During the Euromaidan protests in Ukraine (also known as the Revolution of Dignity), tensions have emerged between those supporting ties with the European Union (EU) and those supporting ties with Russia. This led to the fall of the Ukrainian government at the time. The conflict in the East of Ukraine, which is home to a large number of ethnic Russians, have been used by Russian President Vladimir Putin to launch a military intervention. Russia annexed Crimea, and clashes between separatists and the Ukrainian government started in the Donbass region. The EU has imposed economic sanctions on Russia following the annexation of Crimea.

In addition to Russia's interference, it is important to note the role of internal divisions between various groups in Ukraine in the conflict. After gaining independence in 1991, development has been unequal, leaving large groups in precarious positions, lacking political representation. This is a broader problem among countries in Eastern Europe after 1990.

Another important factor is the expansion of NATO, as Ukraine sought NATO membership. This is relevant for the conflict since Eastern Europe was part of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence before 1989. Currently, many of the countries that were part of the Soviet Union or within its sphere of influence are NATO members. Some are not, however, including Georgia. Past attempts to include Georgia into NATO have been followed by military action by Russia.

Q: Ukraine has been part of the Soviet Union before gaining independence. Does this have a bearing on the current conflict?

While the history of the Ukrainian people goes farther back, Ukraine first declared its independence as a state in 1918, after the events in World War I and the Russian Revolution. By 1921 it was annexed by the Soviet Union, though having the right to self-determination during Bolshevik rule. This freedom been criticized in Putin's recent speech, which is reminiscent of the Russian

Empire, rather than the Soviet Union.

Q: What kinds of problems is the war raising?

One basic question is whether this is a just war. The answer here is straightforward: an invasion of a sovereign, independent state is not a just war. In fact, the International Criminal Tribunal convened in the wake of World War II has called such wars 'supreme crimes'.

An important moral question rises with respect to the situation of the refugees fleeing Ukraine. EU countries have allowed access to refugees from Ukraine and waived various immigration requirements. Moldova, which is much less affluent than members of the EU, is hosting a large number of Ukrainian refugees. Still, these measures are not followed everywhere. For instance, the policy of the UK has been criticized. Questions about racism and discrimination have also emerged as citizens from Africa or Asia, mainly students, have not been allowed on buses driving to border crossings or inside neighboring countries. There have been calls for extending the kind of support EU countries have supplied to Ukrainian refugees to all refugees.

Other moral questions concerns civilians in Ukraine who are unable to leave for various reasons, including precarious economic conditions, having poor health, belonging to historically discriminated groups, and other reasons. This stresses the need for humanitarian assistance, not only military support.

There are also questions regarding the situation of civilians in Russia. Those protesting against the war have been arrested and/or subjected to police violence. The recent closures of social media in Russia are part of increasingly repressive measures taken against all opposition. At the same time, questions have been raised about how effective economic sanctions against Russia are in terms of prompting political change. One concern is that they are likely to affect vulnerable people living in Russia alongside migrant workers from post-Soviet states. For instance, the fall of the ruble has caused inflation, and inflation is known to affect the poor the most.

Then there is the question of the EU's dependence on gas imports from Russia. A switch to renewable energy would not only ensure independence from Russian gas, but also help fight climate change. A related issue concerns the sanctions against Russian billionaires keeping their wealth abroad. Again, here one may call for similar actions beyond the current context, given that the billionaires' ability to avoid taxes and to turn wealth into political power is a threat to democracy globally.

Q: What are the possible outcomes of the conflict?

Making predictions in the social sciences is notoriously difficult, so I will only list several potential outcomes. There is a possibility that the war will continue for a long time, which could be devastating – wars such as those in Syria or Afghanistan are examples of this. There could be an escalation of conflict which could possibly include NATO fighting against Russia bringing about the start of World War III alongside the possibility of nuclear warfare. It is also possible that Russia wins the war, but cannot rule over Ukraine, given the fierce resistance Ukrainians have demonstrated thus far. There is also the possibility of a diplomatic solution, where Ukraine would give up plans to join NATO and cede certain territories to Russia. Another possibility is that Putin loses support in Russia given the costs of the war and the effects of economic sanctions on the people.

Q: Where I can learn more about the conflict and its background?

In addition to the articles in The Guardian on which some of the points above are based, other helpful resources include The New Statesman, Foreign Policy, Al Jazeera, LeftEast. A discussion of the ethics of war applied to Ukraine can be found in Daily Nous.



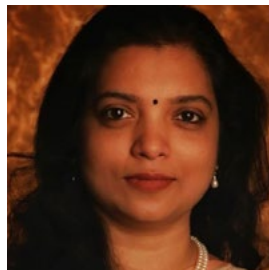
INTERVIEW #2

Mindful Consumption: Is it for you? Akshita Goel in conversation with Prof. Preetha Menon

PREETHA MENON

Associate Professor of Advertising and Branding

Lately, I have been dabbling with sustainability and several aspects around it, prompted by my faculty mentor, Dr. Preetha Menon, Associate Professor of Advertising and Branding and Head of Department, Media and Journalism. Having gone through scores of literature on the subject of sustainability and mindfulness, I had several questions that came to my mind as a business management student and as an individual inclined towards it. Best to reach out to my professor Dr. Menon, I thought. This interview is an attempt to hear her views on the myriad questions that were running in my mind.



Q: Professor, you introduced me to sustainability and mindful consumption for my graduation project. Why did you think I should work on this?

For decades, sustainability and mindful consumption were mostly buzz words and nothing more. However, today these terms have taken center stage moving from policies and media talk right onto our plates, metaphorically and quite literally. One of the major thrusts came in 2015, when the United Nations proposed the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG numbers 3 and 12, "good health and well-being" and "responsible consumption and production" are directly linked to mindful consumption. Since its introduction, 3129 events, 1319 publications, and 5503 actions related to mindful consumption have taken place as we speak today. These goals are adopted by policy makers, researchers, businesses and NGOs alike with equal gusto and hence it's important for young professionals like you to learn about this in detail.

Q: As a business management student, I am really curious to know how businesses are involved in mindful consumption.

Businesses realize that the values in our society are shifting from self-directed to benevolence and other-directness. From attaining products/services that are low on price or high on fashion, consumers today question the process and also the people involved in the making of these products and services. Consumers want to see fairness in the process, a value-system based strategy, and want to endorse products that go beyond just playing to the gallery. They want companies to invest in the right values of fairness, trust, and equality. Not only are brands incorporating these values into their businesses but also projecting them in their branding and positioning activities. Lack of empathy and mindless marketing has affected more brands than I can mention here and no business is in a position to take that risk.

Q: What qualifies as mindful consumption? Can you help our readers understand the term?

Mindful consumption is the coming together of two concepts: mindfulness and consumption. Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, acknowledging and accepting one's feelings and thoughts. Mindful consumption is the application of mindfulness while making consumption choices. In concept, it may seem complex and tricky. For instance, what if we feel like some sinful indulgence? Should we acknowledge and accept that? However, in practice, mindfulness is a transformative experience. It's something every human being should experience at some point of time or the other. It introduces you to your elements and brings about transformational change in thought and action. Mindfulness would ultimately lead to temperance in acquisitive, repetitive, and aspirational consumption.

Q: What are the developments in the area of mindful consumption? Do you see any lacunas?

In the space of research, mindful consumption has received the attention from reputed universities like Harvard. Recently, an Indian Institute of Management conference was themed around mindfulness where I presented a paper on the effect of advertising on mindful consumption. Several interesting studies link the practice of mindfulness to health and well being. So, it is

gaining traction.

However, as consumers we seek fun experiences and meditation and yoga seem like a far cry from being fun. So, while people seem to agree that they should do something to contribute to their well being, the society around them and the environment at large, most times the buck stops there. The gap between thoughts, feelings and action is the greatest lacuna as far as mindful consumption is concerned.

Q: This leads to my most important question for today. Who is the mindful consumer and is it for me?

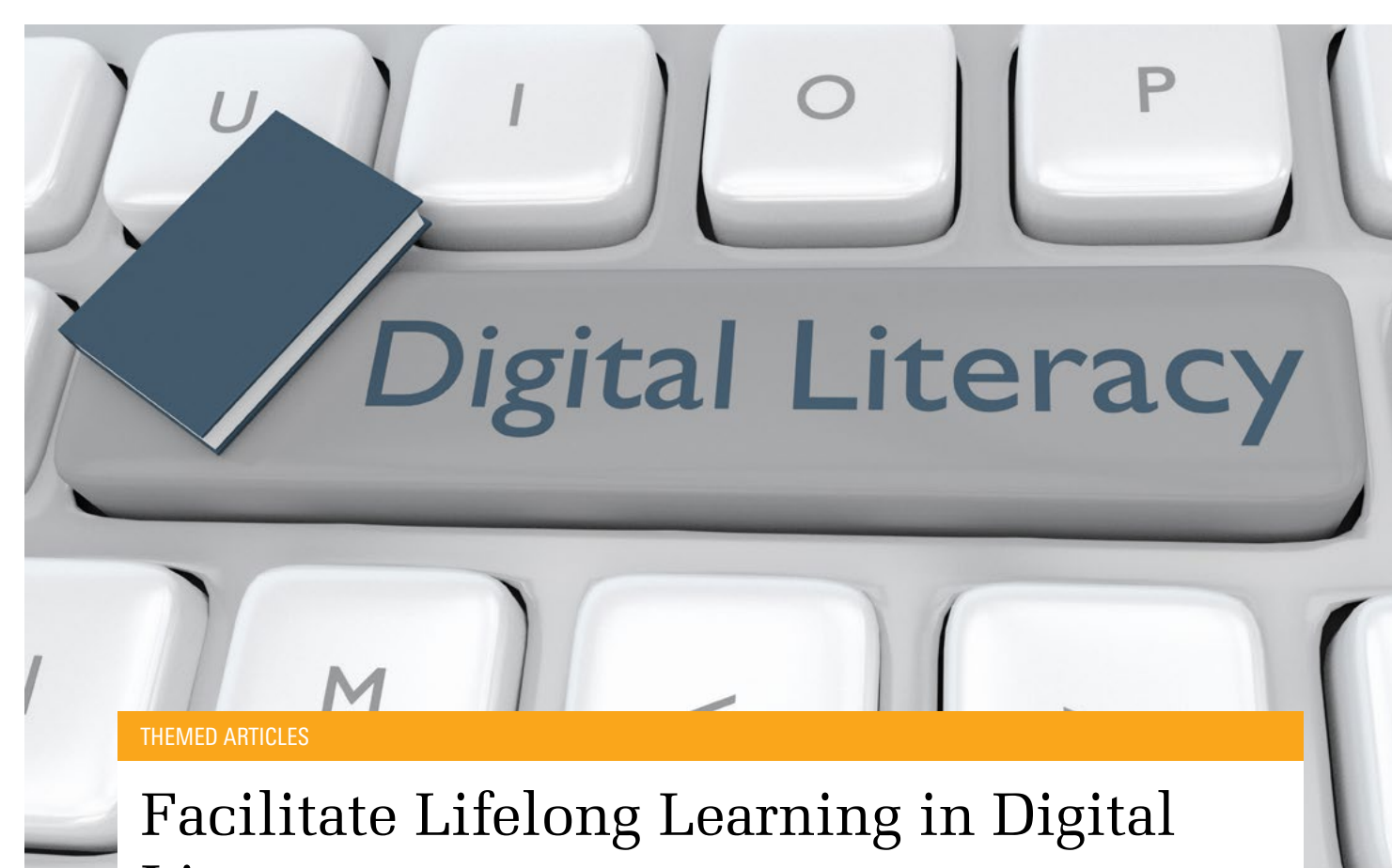
Is it for you? Of course it is! It's for you, me, and everyone around us. But to get there here are a few things you must do. Answer these five questions and see if you answer in the affirmative. 1. Am I able to differentiate between my needs and wants? 2. Do I care about the society as much as I care about my well-being? 3. Do I spend time following the sustainable activities of the brands I buy into? 4. Am I willing to see a value in quality over price? 5. Do I make my consumption choices based on the impact on care to self, society, and environment? This is the new age 'mantra' for mindful consumption. I agree that it may not be possible for us to follow these principles in all our consumption decisions every day. However, one purchase at a time, one change a day and one act of temperance may lead you to being a mindful consumer.

Interviewer: Akshita Goel, Second-year postgraduate student, MBA (Communications Management), FLAME University

Interviewee: Prof. Preetha Menon, Associate Professor of Advertising and Branding and Head of Department, Media and Journalism, FLAME University



Themed Articles



THEMED ARTICLES

Facilitate Lifelong Learning in Digital Literacy

JASMINE HSU
Assistant Professor of Digital Literacy

TEJPAL SINGH BATRA
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The pandemic and campus closures resulted in a new normal for teaching and learning. While instructors developed strategies for teaching online effectively and minimizing screen fatigue, students accustomed themselves to taking classes via Zoom and remote learning. The transition to online classes required many students to become more independent learners and was challenging for students unaccustomed to finding and evaluating information at a distance from their instructors and peers.



Digital Literacy, one of the Foundation Core courses at FLAME, helps students develop the ability to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information using digital tools and technologies. Every first-year undergraduate student is required to take the course as it helps

them develop digital skills and competencies in the use of tools and technologies required in their academic studies and future

career.

The key challenge for faculty teaching the course is to meet the needs of different learners. Typically, students fall into one of the three categories based on their experience and confidence. One category of students, being native netizens with high levels of self-confidence, question what more this course could add to their existing digital knowledge. They usually comment, "I think I am pretty comfortable with using computers and mobile phones already. I have made websites before too. What else is there for me to learn?" The second category of students believe themselves to have 'tech phobia' and suspect they are technologically challenged. Their concerns are, "I am not good with anything technological. Will the course be too tough? How will I cope?" However, most students are in the majority, the third



category. They are indifferent, being unsure how this course could be helpful to them.

As faculty, our goal is to ensure the course provides students with a growth mindset and the opportunities to gain confidence in acquiring and advancing their digital skills. As technology evolves, students' background and exposure to technologies vary drastically. It becomes increasingly difficult to engage students of different levels in a course like Digital Literacy because some may find it too difficult while others are not being challenged. How do we meet learners where they are?

When students were asked about what they enjoyed the most about the course, they commented:

Prof. Tejpal Singh Batra turns class sessions into conversations with students. Students describe:

"Taking the class is like chatting with friends. The class was interesting and the conversation always got me curious and wanted to find out more.... The way Professor Tejpal talked in the class got my creativity flowing. I write songs, so all I do is string words together, and then it becomes this Internet Security song."

Some students were so intrigued by discussions about ethical hacking that they later enrolled in external certification courses. Tapping into individuals' interests and curiosities opens the world for student learning and ways to apply their new knowledge.

Prof. Jasmine Hsu converted a topic like web basics into a series of interactive adventure challenges. Students acquired the basic HTML/CSS knowledge through video tutorials in advance, and during classes, they completed different difficulty levels of learning tasks. Students set out on individual journeys to complete the required work and advance to the next level. Experienced learners are called upon to assist others, and those who need support receive personal attention to complete their tasks.

"Surprisingly, I enjoyed doing HTML and CSS the most even though I thought it was going to be the most complicated part. I learned that I need to explore it and see that maybe what I thought was tough is not bad and fun. I want to explore more new things in life in general!"

Confronted with the challenges of teaching online classes during university closures and creating meaningful learning experiences,

we trialed an experiential and blended mode of learning to encourage self-motivation and make effective use of class hours.

Partnering with Students for Co-Creation

We invite students to be partners and co-creators in the course. On the first day of class, we share with students a draft of the course roadmap and parameters for evaluation. Students are then encouraged to suggest new topic ideas and collaborate on the course design.

The course topics range from the basics like online safety, email etiquette, to disruptive technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality. Our agenda is to involve learners in the process and instill a sense of curiosity in all so that students experience the joy of learning and upskilling by the end of the course.

The course hosts a peer-learning online learning repository where students contribute examples of their digital knowledge and skills throughout the course. Some students create and share the content of what they know and are good at, for example, the use of Canva, Photoshop, and blog creation. This approach turns students into partners and allows the class to shape their learning.

Tools of Self-Assessment

At the start of the course, we use a self-assessment survey to gauge students' confidence and self-perceptions of their proficiency in digital skills and knowledge of the course topics and emphasize students' ownership of learning. They re-visit the self-assessment survey at the end of the course. Though the survey is not designed as official pedagogical research, we use it to understand students' learning experiences and restructure the course if required. We are pleased to see evidence of positive changes, as students of all levels are more confident and have greater self-belief in their abilities in learning digitally. As one student put it on the self-assessment survey, "Digital Literacy is a course that you did not know you needed! I am so glad I was made to take it."

Introducing Self-Paced Learning

We divided course hours into live face-to-face classes and self-paced sessions. Learners acquired basic concepts at their own pace and join live sessions for interactive discussions and practical activities.

A Google site of the course shares information about assignments and contains rubrics and collection of tutorials and past examples. We prepare video tutorials and set-up online learning modules in the FLAME learning management system (Moodle). Interactive quizzes and practical sheets are embedded in the learning materials so students can test their understanding of basic concepts when they learn on their own. The use of technologies enables a holistic learning environment beyond live sessions.

Teaming Up for Innovative Class Communication

Unlike many courses, where a single faculty teaches the entirety of one course, Digital Literacy is co-taught by two faculty members. We begin and end each course as a team, but each faculty member is responsible for specific learning topics. In this

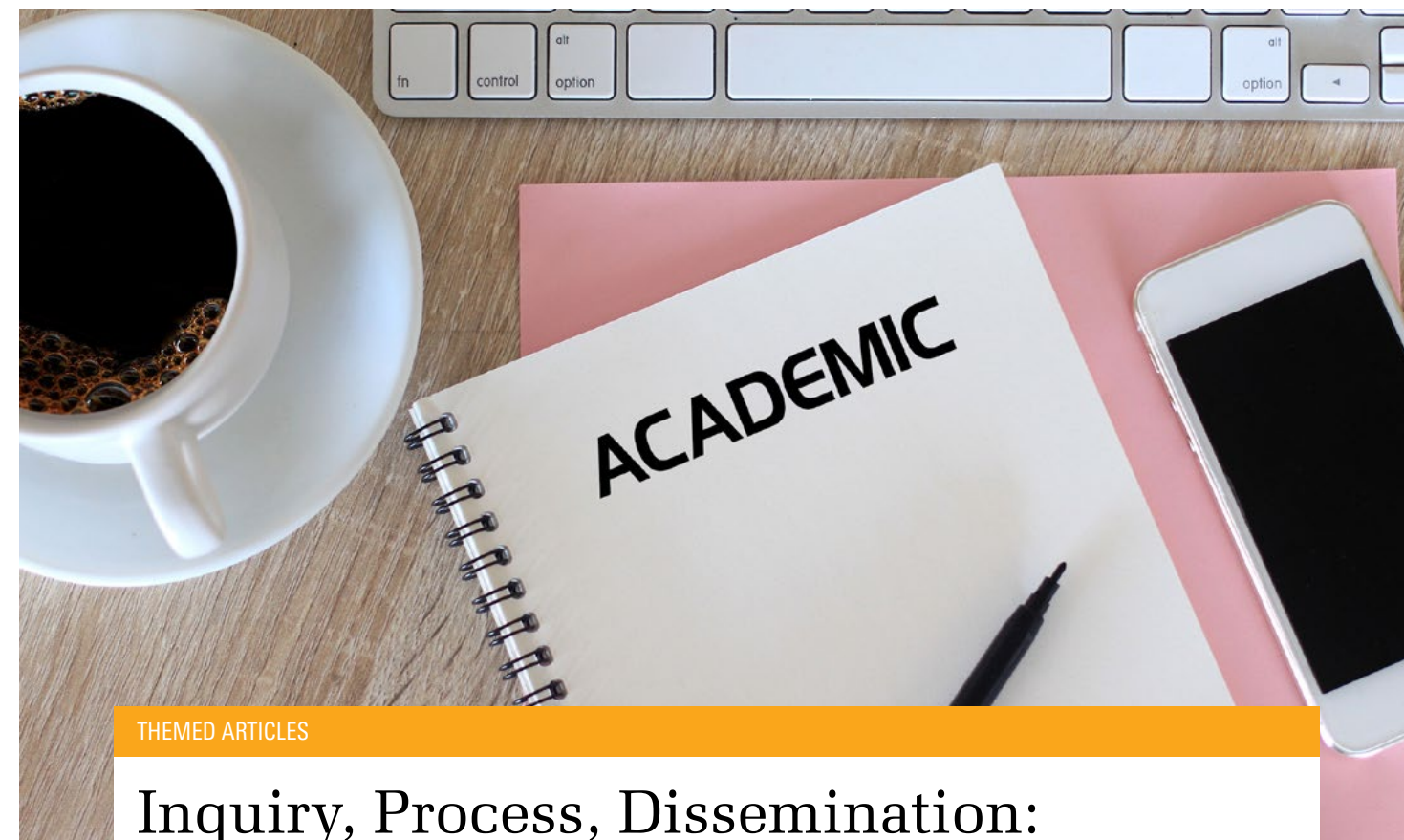
format, students experience diverse delivery styles and benefit from the skills of more than one faculty.

Students are considered partners in their learning, and their engagement is an important component of each class. The use of emoji 🍌 and gif files in communication facilitates a rewarding learning experience. Quizzes are exciting when students play and compete on Kahoot Games. Even during more formal evaluation components, the focus remains on learners and their experiences. Assessment includes the following:

- E-portfolios that allow students to reflect on what they learned in a week and what was implemented or planned.
- Team projects to explore common interests and identify team members' skills. Projects are shared through websites, videos and digital posters.
- A project fair, the highlight of the course, that brings everyone together and allows teams to showcase their work. During online classes, the project fair was made up of virtual booths and online galleries so students had a chance to view and explore other teams' projects anytime.

All of the approaches described above allowed us to quickly adapt to changing circumstances during university closures and continue to engage with students even during online classes. Students also have the flexibility and freedom to learn on their own. We witness an abundance of creative expressions and excited learning, individually and collectively, for students and us as teachers. Students, the digital natives, adjust to the new normal fast and are ready to take the driver's seat of their learning.

While the future is unpredictable, we believe our learners from Digital Literacy who experienced the benefits and joy of lifelong learning had a head start to thrive in the digital world.



THEMED ARTICLES

Inquiry, Process, Dissemination: Academic Writing in Today's Day

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Assistant Professor of Academic Writing

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Assistant Professor of Literary & Cultural Studies

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Assistant Professor of Academic Writing

Academic Writing may sound as if it is a specialized skill done in a stodgy old classroom. However, today we text, post, tweet, reply



on a forum or thread, make a gif or meme or vlog or reel, and email constantly. These inventive forms require an understanding of current discourse and the willingness to engage with rapid technological innovations. The concept of writing has changed dramatically in recent times with an explosion

of genres, formats, and expressions on multitudes of platforms beyond a traditional text. While reading and writing might have

traditionally been associated with literature or humanities, we have moved to the space of interdisciplinarity where several



kinds of "texts" engage in a conversation or are brought into conversation with each other. This helps in rewiring, expanding, and questioning perceptions.

As a result, one inadvertently engages in critical thinking in interpreting a "text." With the exponential

growth in communications forms and technologies, it is becoming essential to recognize the social significance of texts that have,



until now, been considered niche instead of accessible, pop culture instead of high culture, or unworthy of the academy for their formats, themes, subjects, or target audiences. Breaking down such boundaries of genres and worthiness has allowed institutions of higher education to embrace departments of cultural studies and to expand our understanding of what constitutes “literature” to begin with. Here, literature can be anything that we read, examine, understand, and interrogate, from a poem, a novel, a movie, to a legal bill, a professional contract, or mathematical formula.

This is a skillset that we develop organically by engaging with different forms of communication in our everyday lives. Listening obsessively to a newly released song, we end up knowing its lyrics, its references to other artists or cultural moments, its metaphors and so on. We are attentive to the cover art, the audience it caters to, the kind of money it is likely to make. As scholars, years of studying poetry and literature has given us frameworks to understand the cultural markers of our world in better depth, to recognize their complexity and impact. And writing academically has enabled us to recognize these frameworks and the dynamism of cultural conversations. Anyone who studies the poetry of W. B. Yeats, for instance, knows exactly why the Irish musician Hozier would sing about gyres in his song, “Be.” At its heart, academic writing is a rich conversation with ideas, history, culture, and most importantly other people. So, when we see a BTS inspired twitterstorm, it is allied with basic academic tenets. “There is nothing outside the text,” so goes the famous Derridean dictum, implying that anything can be analyzed like a text.

A text in that sense could be a news story, an advertisement, an Instagram post, or even a mundane, quotidian activity like drinking tea or a global phenomenon like climate change. Rohan Chakravarthy’s cartoons exemplify how illustrations, dialogues, and layout work together to convey scientific facts lightly, humorously, and engagingly, without depriving issues of their gravity and alarm; in TM Krishna’s album *Poramboke*, the unconventional background, setting and lyrics (with culture specific puns) for Carnatic music and the artist singing with the mask on (in pre-Covid times, signifying pollution) simultaneously convey the backstory of Chennai’s floods, institutional apathy, and social and environmental injustice. Juxtaposing ideas or readings from different perspectives engender multiple meanings which, in turn, help us form a nuanced understanding of reality, challenging singular and exclusive interpretations and conclusions. These rich public contexts of writing and responding have made critical thought, discussion with wider public thought, and a sharp focus on the topic or issue viral. A training in academic writing enhances these aspects of learning for all students regardless of what disciplines they are likely to join since it is these analytical and expressive skills that are fundamental to functioning well in today’s complex world.

II. The process-oriented approach followed in academic writing, in a sense, operates similarly in any creative or productive endeavor. It all begins with the need to develop an idea, and then the spark of an idea. As one brainstorms, we could be instinctively building on a thought process or sifting through numerous thoughts, choosing those which have the best potential. Successful critical thought and dialogue is preceded by a series of hits and misses that are reworked in our writing in the past. Writing, as we teach in classrooms, is always rewriting. Whether it be finding the best

ways to express yourself, or careful analysis of the anticipated audience’s reception of your post, we do an intellectual dance between what it is we know and what we need to understand better before we come out with our ideas. Some form of research is carried out at every stage from inception until the final production, and this research is often a meandering journey beginning haphazardly and gradually gaining focus. By wanting to write about a topic, we have already engaged with it critically enough to unravel its layers, to see its deficiencies and merits, to see it from a perspective that is unusual. This is most evident in some of the best comedy! And by the very act of writing, we situate ourselves in dialogue with work that has come before us and set the stage for the next part of the conversation.

The editing option inserted into Facebook, the unsending of emails that Gmail allows, as well as the option to delete a WhatsApp message are testimony to how the first iteration of a thought leads to its improvement or deletion in the next. Further, these now happen within minutes, unlike the retractions that newspapers offered on the next day or next week, and of course the much slower academic responses that happen in journal articles or scholarly work. The gains from training in academic writing are much more than are generally acknowledged. The breaking-down of any text, the way to discover and articulate our own thought-process, and lastly strengthening authority in writing through undertaking satisfactory investigation are crucial for college students today. These are the basis on which putting your digital pin on the map, with an audience in mind, can take place with control and consideration.

While we work in and with our minds, whether frantically or methodically until this point, henceforth the journey shifts gears to audience-orientedness, for one is not developing something merely for oneself. Whether it is a research paper or a piece of creative writing or producing content for any other purpose, it is to be consumed by a certain audience to whom the content needs to communicate and add value. This reorientation to the audience guides the way one re-views the content for clarity, coherence, completeness, and any other requirement as the purpose of the work demands. No matter what platform we write for, there is always a process of beta-testing ideas. We run them by our friends, we get a loved one to read our work, and ultimately, we take on board the comments of our anonymous reviewers, editors, and even audiences. And to do this, we develop the often-underrated traits of humility and openness to feedback. Whether in the long-term or the short-term, we learn to work with deadlines, to meet the demands of our publishers, to cater to the tastes of our readers and market demands. Team-working, planning, drafting, public engagement, meeting deadlines, attention to detail, and the ability to communicate effectively for various audiences are skills that would populate the CVs of any successful entrant into today’s job market across any field.

III. While being pivotal in writing, extensive and accurate research will not serve the purpose if it fails to communicate with the intended audience, whether in a research community or in general. Understanding the purpose and audience are crucial determinants in choosing the style and tone of any kind of content. The texts we produce—and here we don’t just mean traditional “texts” but various forms of communication across media—are

not isolated to their formats either. With greater emphasis than ever on public engagement, there is always the impetus to try and reach a new audience, one which will provide fresh perspectives and new opportunities. Academics are now live-tweeting conference papers, collaborating with creative industries and non-governmental organizations, students are creating TikTok videos and Instagram reels commenting on socio-political issues, scholarship opportunities, employees are managing the public image of brands, increasing sales, customers are impacting inclusivity and so much more. The purpose of creating texts varies from output to output. We have information, commentary, criticism, advocacy, and activism. The impetus for collaboration has never been higher!

For instance, with worsening climate change occurrences, the discourse on the environment cannot anymore rest with scientific research alone but needs to diffuse the urgency of the issue across all quarters, ranging from political administration to the layperson’s common sense. One of the pioneering examples of this approach was Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* which conveyed scientific facts and phenomena as a narrative to enhance its comprehension and reception. A more recent example is Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical “*Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home*” which Amitav Ghosh contrasts with the Paris Agreement in communicating the seriousness of the matter more effectively. And let us not underestimate the critical acumen that goes into

disseminating critical thoughts in creative ways. No one knows better than a person cold-calling hospitals looking for ICU beds in a pandemic the value of framing a short, pointed, and direct question. A teenager understands the significance of the topic, the context of the performance, and the meanings of a song’s lyrics and rhythm before layering them to produce a reel that will reach thousands.

And it is in this respect that a training in academic writing adds an emphasis on reflexiveness and effective design. Both these aspects supplement the growing modes of public interlocution with a sense of responsibility. With academic writing, we learn that the way we finally articulate ourselves is sharper than the first iteration of our thoughts. On this account, we can reconsider from multiple perspectives what it is we truly want to stand for instead of caving into public discourse without the opportunity to develop our own minds. A grounding in the values of academic writing allows us to not just read texts, but produce them, and then distribute them to audiences with intention and self-consciousness. These are skills and values that have always been important. But as we deal with everything from environmentalism and sustainability, economic drawbacks, the pressures of healthcare, the rising costs of education, religious intolerance—often all at the same time—these very skills and values are now the urgent need of the day.



THEMED ARTICLES

Environmental Education: The Need of the Hour

ANDREA D. PHILLOTT

Professor of Environmental Studies

SMRITI JALIHAI

Research Associate, Centre for Knowledge Alternatives

Late in 2021, amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow, UK, and the 15th Conference of Parties to the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in Kunming, China, drew the world's attention. The conferences addressed two important global issues: climate change and biodiversity loss.



The former issue attracts more public, political, and media attention but the two issues are interlinked. Natural habitats such as forests, grasslands, seagrass beds, and coral reefs store the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide and the destruction of these carbon 'sinks'

results in higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and contributes to climate change. With the loss of habitat and the

species living within them, society will also lose the benefits known as 'ecosystem services'. Ecosystem services include the following: food, water and other resources such as timber, fossil fuels, and minerals, that can be extracted from nature (known as provisioning services); basic services, including flood and erosion control, soil generation, pollination, waste decomposition, and climate regulation, that are needed to moderate the natural phenomena that sustain human life (regulating services); natural processes, comprising photosynthesis, nutrient cycling, soil generation, the water cycle, and more, that sustain the world; and, development and advancement of creativity and cultures resulting from interactions with nature, and recreation (cultural services). Ecosystem services directly or indirectly benefit society or enhance social well-being.



Given the profound impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss on society as we know it, there is an obvious and immediate need to address issues. India set bold national targets to address climate change at COP26, such as increasing non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity, reducing total carbon emissions, meeting half of the country's energy needs through renewable sources, and reducing the carbon intensity of the economy (the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions emitted for every unit of GDP) to below 45%. Many of the targets to address climate change have a 2030 deadline, with the last target—the most ambitious of all—also committing to net-zero emissions by 2070. At COP15, India similarly outlined actions to preserve habitat and reduce biodiversity loss, designating terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine environments adding up to ~17% of its geographical area for protection. The country is also committed to the global 30x30 initiative, the goal of which is to conserve 30% of the planet by the year 2030. Meeting the targets established at COP26 and COP15 will be possible through interventions implemented by government, solutions designed by relevant sectors, but also through individual responsibilities, awareness, and behaviour changes.

The study of climate change and biodiversity loss predominantly involves environmental scientists, biologists, and ecologists, reducing and reversing these threats. However, meeting the COP targets will require the involvement of people in more diverse sectors, including policy, economics, finance, business, journalism, psychology, entrepreneurship, agriculture, forestry, and conservation science. How professionals in these disciplines will contribute to mitigating climate change and protecting biodiversity is apparent when considering initiatives in the public, private, and government sectors.

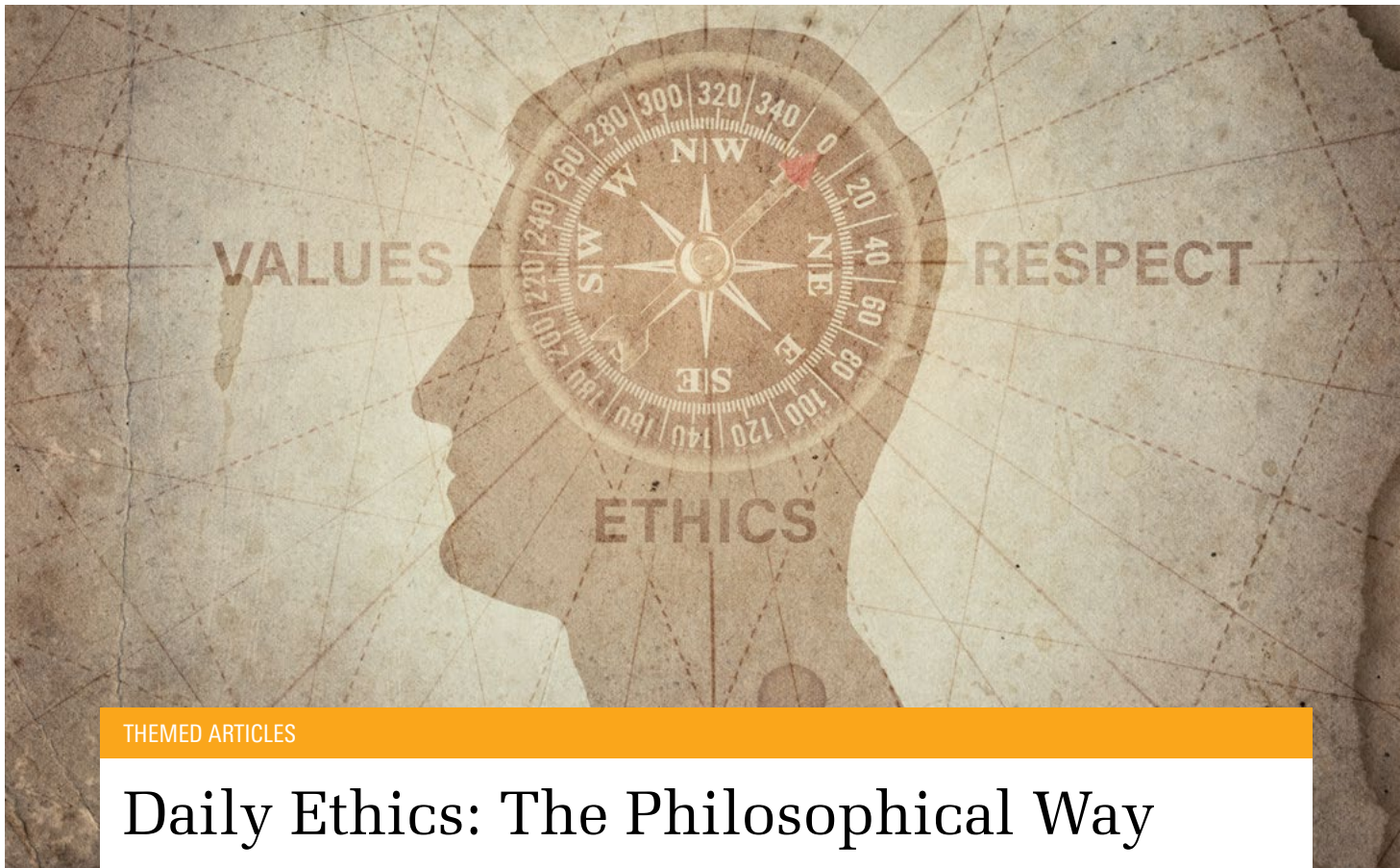
Environmental actions such as the Green Grids Initiative, a joint project between India and the UK for connecting solar wind energy supply across borders, involves people in finance, carbon accounting, engineering, and international relations. As part of the social welfare scheme Ujjwala Yojana, LPG cylinders are provided to households to reduce the usage of firewood-fed chullahs and resulting indoor air pollution and poor health; this scheme is at the intersection of natural resource management, health, and social welfare, and environmental protection. Understanding the cap-and-trade system to curb pollution in Gujarat requires the involvement of economists, policy makers, and financiers. Industries have environmental wings for meeting regulatory standards, manufacturing companies need design

experts to develop sustainable packaging, and large software companies are funding environmental activities as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility commitments.

Factors influencing whether people demonstrate sustainable consumption behaviours are studied by psychologists and sociologists as well as people interested in marketing. Environmental solution start-ups in India are driven by entrepreneurs and those in the advertising and business sectors, and environmental journalism has never been more popular. Finally, national policies such as the National Climate Change Action Plan, Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, and Environment Impact Assessment Notification are developed, implemented, and evaluated by policymakers.

Recognising the importance of professionals understanding the drivers and outcomes of environmental challenges, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India requires its affiliated universities and colleges to offer a compulsory course in Environmental Studies for all undergraduate students regardless of the discipline they are studying. An appropriately designed course builds critical understanding of the interconnectedness of the environment, economy, and society and enables graduates to contribute to building a more sustainable future for India throughout their professional career and also make environmentally-aware choices in their personal lifestyle. At FLAME, this UGC-mandated requirement is met through the course 'Introduction to Environmental Studies' for first year students, which introduces the impact of biodiversity loss on ecosystem services described above, reviews the ways in which human actions can threaten—and protect!—different ecosystems, and analyses how different stakeholders are impacted by environmental change. In this way, students carry with them an interdisciplinary understanding of environmental issues throughout their degree.

Climate change and biodiversity loss will impact all sectors of society, and it is the responsibility of all sectors (and individuals too) to design and implement solutions through our personal and professional choices and actions. Environmental education for all undergraduate students will certainly play a role in enabling India to meet the targets outlined at COP26 and COP15 and ensure a more sustainable future.



THEMED ARTICLES

Daily Ethics: The Philosophical Way

AVANI SABADE

Academic Specialist of Literary & Cultural Studies

“The unexamined life is not worth living”

The Greek philosopher Socrates lived (and even died) by this principle. He examined the meaning of a good life, which virtues make up character, and whether knowing virtue makes someone act virtuously and so on. This legacy continues in what is now called moral philosophy. Applied ethics is a mode of ‘doing’ moral philosophy. Here, I will explore what applied ethics is, why it is a worthy pursuit today, and its impact on our behaviour.

ethical opinions and practices. For example, people rarely agree upon issues relating to animal welfare. But, if applied ethics cannot help people come to see ‘eye to eye’, why should one study applied ethics at all?

Differences in opinion may come from one’s cultural or religious values, personal opinions based on experiences, or from any number of other sources. So, is such disagreement necessary and is there no progress made by studying applied ethics? Although it is true that there are different values held by different societies or cultures, this does not imply that there are no common moral beliefs or values amongst them. Even if different cultures do not agree on whether or not animals should be consumed, animal suffering is recognised. In order to reduce animal suffering, the right course of action may be the point of divergence.

On the other hand, some claim that moral opinions differ from person to person due to their unique situation and experiences. Even if they differ, there is use in evaluating one’s opinions. Ethical opinions are not mere taste preferences. For example, I think mint-chocolate is the best ice-cream flavour, but I cannot convince someone who does not like it at all. This is simply a matter of taste; we are likely to have many differences without

trying to reach consensus. Also, if I change my mind about taste preference, I do not consider my previous taste wrong.

If I change my mind about ethical issues, we consider it an improvement of opinion. This is why it is sensible to try to convince someone else of one’s own ethical opinion. This would be futile and perhaps impossible if it was simply a matter of personal preference, like the best flavour of ice-cream. However, ethical opinions and practices are based on reasons, justifications, and/or values. So, we should be able to engage in a respectful conversation about them even with those who hold opposing views. Applied ethics provides the tools for doing exactly that.

How do we reach some common ground? Studying moral philosophy allows us to think through our moral opinions. We might have moral opinions about whether our friend did the right thing in a specific situation. These opinions may vary but are based on some reasoning; this is called moral argument (not fight or quarrel). When we have different or opposing opinions, moral philosophy provides skills that help us look through the reasons for them. Instead of simply disagreeing, ethics clarifies where disagreements come from and how to reach some common ground.

Who should study applied ethics? Everyone!

Many of us probably do the right thing for our family and friends, but it is not as easy to recognise what duties we have towards strangers or in business. To move from instinctive morality to reflective morality, we must study moral philosophy. It is also important on other fronts. Ethics touches all aspects of a person’s life, so learning to think through things clearly is an advantage.

Ethical dilemmas arise in all aspects of life: from personal and businesses to the larger social and global issues too.

Personal relationships such as friendships, marriage, and family raise peculiar ethical issues: if I have to save the life of a loved one at the cost of a stranger’s, is it permissible that I harm the stranger? How should I understand and apply a certain professional code of conduct if it goes against my personal moral belief? As a profit-making business, how should I also fulfill my duties towards my employees and society at large? It’s not that there is no right answer to moral dilemmas. Some answers are wrong: like thinking that I am always correct and others are always incorrect. So, how do I expand my view from this limited personal angle and act morally while taking into account the situation of others? This is exactly what we learn by studying applied ethics. We look at the relevant facts, how conflicts of values arises, and how to respond by coming up with alternatives. For example, even if I choose to save my loved one over a stranger, it must be evaluated whether this is necessary and the extent of harm done to the stranger, keeping in mind possible alternative ways of minimizing harm to the stranger and so on.

In addition to thinking through argument analysis, clarification of values and opinions, respectful discourse, there may be another added bonus to studying ethics in a particular manner: change in moral attitudes and behaviours. Recent empirical studies show that studying moral philosophy has an impact on how we act in our lives as we become more aware of moral issues. Therefore, the study of applied ethics is promising in not only improving moral understanding but also (potentially) moral behaviour.

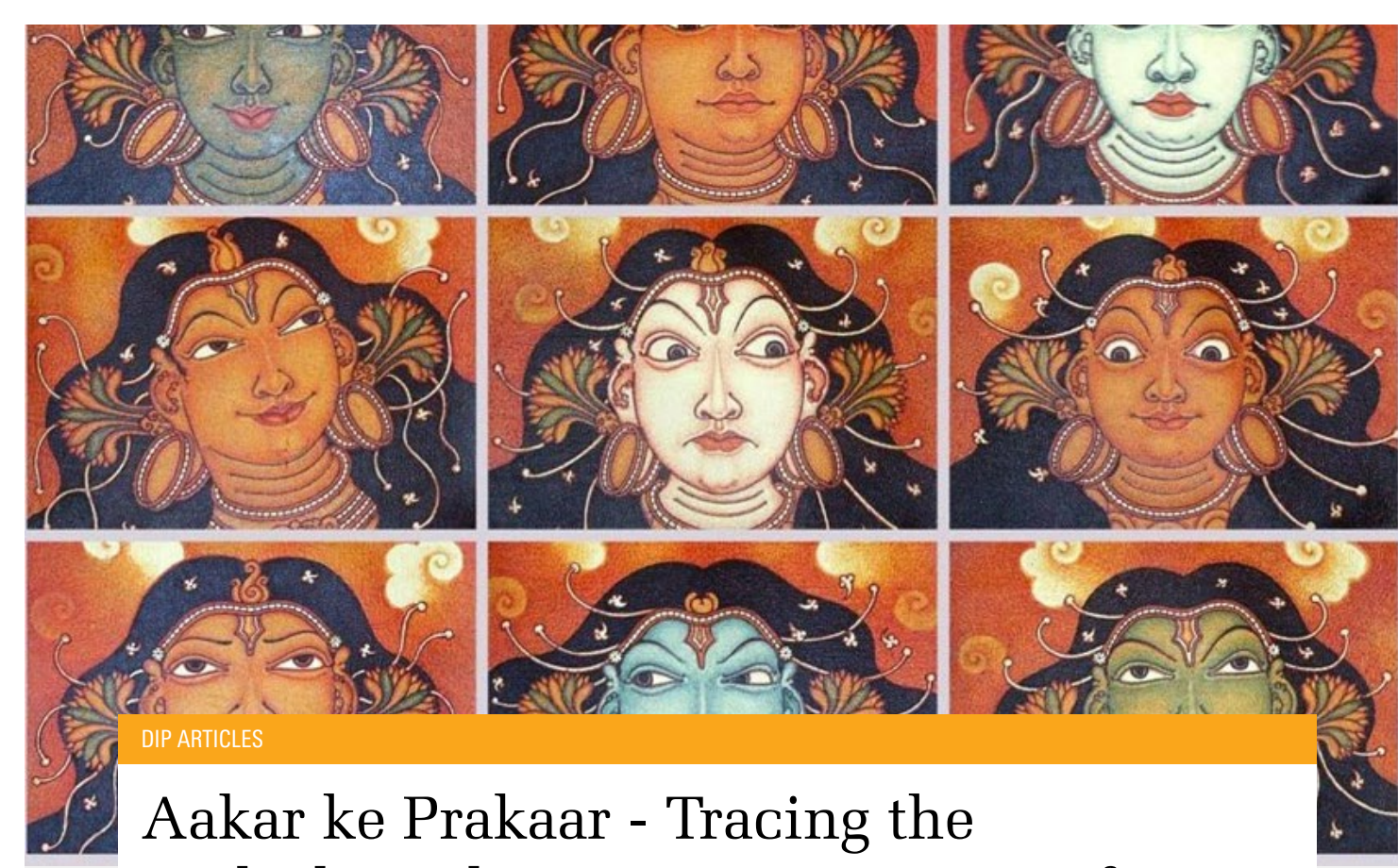


What is ethics, and how it is “applied” to different issues?

Understood as a systematic study in moral philosophy, applied ethics aims to understand and resolve moral problems that arise in practical life: personal, professional or broadly social. Issues discussed in applied ethics have varying opinions attached to them. Many strong disagreements can be easily seen in

The Discover India Program (DIP)





DIP ARTICLES

Aakar ke Prakaar - Tracing the Multidisciplinary Juxtapositions of Sacred Geometry

MAYA DODD,
Associate Professor of Literary & Cultural Studies

ARNAZ DHOLAKIA, PRANATI MALOO, KANAK SONI
Third-year undergraduate students

Introduction

The term 'sacred geometry' elicits images of massive intersecting circles and triangles, aesthetic designs which are intertwined through shapes and lines, and above all the idea of symmetry. As the terminology suggests, the two words, 'sacred' and 'geometry,' comprise an attachment of anything measurable on earth and to what is perceived or indecipherably accepted as 'sacred'. Geometry itself has been conceptualized as a sacred art form imbued with an intrinsically divine plan. The harmonical attribution simultaneously connects to the precise allocation of

mathematical ratios and proportions like the golden ratio/sacred mean observed across classical periods and medieval civilisations.

From mathematicians like Carl Freidrich Gauss to scientists like Johannes Kepler, the notion that "God arithmetises" has been discerned in shapes such as the hexagon of honeycombs to mollusc animals. Harmony, balance, and symmetry are seen as integral to the shape and meanings of symbols. While extensive attention has been paid to the application of the golden ratio in art works such as Leonardo da Vinci's use of this principle in the Mona Lisa (where the Golden Number 1.61803398874989 is used), geometric principles are applied in planning and constructing ideas across disciplines, but they have been studied from a predominantly western point of view.

Our research project aimed to analyse the precedents and

application of geometric principles found across sacred traditions in India, specifically across the disciplines of architecture, dance, psychology, and theology. While we are aware of many more aspects that could have been included, from visual arts and aesthetics, to mathematical history, music, harmonics, and astronomy, these areas have received significant scholarly attention elsewhere and hence did not fall under our scope of the study. Through the lens of comparative history and in interlinking the disciplines of theology, architecture, dance and psychology, through the common thread of "sacred geometry," that weaves all together, we unite the ancient wonders of faith alongside secular antecedents of how the world has been seen with both reason and awe.

The Project

In the chosen practices, our research affirms the use of sacred geometry through scientifically foregrounded concepts of fractals and mandalas across domains. Detailed visualization of Indian dance forms, such as bharatnatyam, also lend themselves as evidence of embodied deployments of geometric patterns. The methodology used relied on semi-structured interviews and secondary research, including books, articles, and research papers. We incorporated purposive and snowball sampling methods to shortlist interviewees. Respondent profiles include professors and scholars specializing in psychology, theology, architecture, and performing arts. We found that each discipline draws on the sacred geometry of shapes, and thus reveals connected thinking on the principles of geometry across major religions including but not limited to Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Jainism.

The Reasoning

We endeavored to parse this theme through several disciplines to understand the continued significance of these principles in contemporary usage. Undoubtedly, this theme has also been framed by a fundamental debate in academia—whether the ontology of sacred geometry is verifiable or constructed socially through culture and traditions. Is it a deterministic attribute ascribed through religion or naturally occurring phenomena signified through a divine source? As we studied sacred geometry, we realized that it is also imperative to lay out some of its definitions and descriptions to clarify what we propose to query and what it is we are discussing.

Geometry, in this specific context, has been conceptualized as a sacred art form imbued with an intrinsically divine plan. This intrinsic and underlying 'Godly ascribed will' depends on the same essentialist premise of the 'Harmony of Being' (Dabbour, 2012). The harmonical attribution simultaneously connects to the precise allocation of mathematical ratios and proportions like the golden ratio/sacred mean observed across classical periods and medieval civilisations as seen in Hindu and Buddhist Temples and Islamic architecture (Dabbour, 2012). Sacred geometry is alternatively conceptualized as a central intelligent high power being a 'geometre', i.e. a mathematician who has magically woven objects existing in nature through intrinsically perfect proportions (Skinner, 2009).

Findings

Our research project aimed to analyse the precedents and application of principles of geometry found across sacred traditions in their present-day forms. Instead of viewing these sites as contests between sacred and secular thinking, we opted for a more expansive view. Each of the chosen four case studies drew parallels on sacred geometry and drew attention to the interconnectedness of academic disciplines.

Despite its structural, functional, and material presence all around us, sacred geometry has not received the attention of recent research in academia. This topic's esoteric nature and religious origins have been relegated to specific cultural conclusions de-emphasizing the explorable dimensions of universality. An added challenge is that such a topic has primarily occupied status and significance with the "irrational." So our four case studies probed the dependence on academic disciplinary without the common misgivings that have befallen this association to return it to a fair assessment.

Briefly, our field-specific learnings were aimed thusly. How does the concept of sacred geometry appear across Indian theology, ancient Indian architecture, Hindustani traditional dance, and psychology in today's practice in India? -

- 1) Theology: To learn the significance of shapes in theological aspects specific to yantras and mandalas, the Sri Yantra, and Vastu Purusha Mandala. Since theology is the study of religious belief, there is a need to understand aspects of many yantras other than Sri Yantra and Vastu Purusha Mandala.
- 2) Performing Arts: To appreciate the applicability of geometric shapes in Bharatanatyam and Odissi as instances of forms that are ancient and imbued with mathematical significance that still resonates.
- 3) Architecture: To amplify the significance of shapes across human history and to test the schism between historical religious cosmology and modern scientific methods, which also affirm the validity of sacred geometry via scientifically foregrounded concepts of fractals and mandalas. We learned that the rigorous and intricate knowledge systems used to create the sundial and gnomon to measure time accurately and appropriately place buildings show that the theological architectural plans are a testament to the rich historical traditions of sacred geometry foregrounded in Islamic, Jain and Hindu cosmologies.
- 4) Psychology: To study mandalas and fractals on a psychological basis. Some fascinating learnings from the findings include that yantras and mandalas demonstrate mathematical significance and have historically also had physical importance for the human body.

Conclusion

From mandalas to fractals, surveying the idea of shapes and sacred geometry with religion, architecture, and creative arts demonstrated implications for the human psyche, the way we use our bodies, understand the universe and design our built

structures. Though the principles in these knowledge systems precede modern scientific and mathematical affirmations of Euclidean and Fractal geometry, we have not fully understood the appeal of these continued legacies beyond Western mathematical traditions. There needs to be a shift in the paradigm of education in India to encourage engagement with the subcontinent's rich history and living practices. To educate ourselves about architecture and performing arts that have originated in our own context would enable a deeper appreciation of where many modern-day ideas and practices have also originated. The weaknesses and limitations of this study are our own and there is much room for further exploration in this fascinating field.

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Website: <https://sites.google.com/flame.edu.in/myth-magic-or-science/home?authuser=1>

Note: The 2022 Emerging Open Scholarship Awards, awarded by the Canadian Social Knowledge Institute, for open scholarship [carried out by undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and early stage professionals] was won by students from FLAME University: Ananya Pujary, Khushi Gupta, and Muskaan Pal (FLAME U) for the The Indian Community Cookbook Project. This entails one tuition scholarship for each recipient to the Digital Humanities Summer Institute and they have deferred that to 2023 to enable them to attend in Canada in person.

They have also been featured on the BBC, the Hindustan Times, Atlas Obscura, the Indian Express amongst other media outlets. They have also presented the work at various conferences and were the winning entry for the "Mapping Matters" category at Sahapedia's Culture For All conference

See at <https://communitycookbooks.wixsite.com/website/conferences>

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a white lab coat, looking through the eyepiece of a microscope. The microscope is a light-colored compound microscope with silver objective lenses. The background is a blurred laboratory setting with shelves. A white text box with a yellow border is overlaid on the top right of the image.

RESEARCHER FOCUS

The Promise of Sociology

TANNISTHA SAMANTA
Associate Professor of Sociology

In the Fall of 2009, on a gorgeous weekday afternoon in College Park (Maryland) as I scanned news on Indian politics and economics, I was confused by the trumpeted media furor around the anticipated “demographic dividend”. Media at that time was rife with stories focusing on the uneasy debate between population growth and economic growth. The news emerging from India was mostly hopeful, arguing that a steady fertility decline (orchestrated by heavy-handed family planning programs) have opened up the possibilities of a burgeoning youthful population (or human capital) and expanding markets. The future seemed buoyant for India, both demographically and economically.



At that time, I was at the department of Sociology at the University of Maryland and I specialized in demography. This national euphoria of an unfolding demographic drama was both amusing and baffling. I knew from my training that changes in age structure does not automatically guarantee human development. India has had a long

economic history of sluggish markets, dismal savings, low labor

productivity and declining labor (particularly, female) participation rates, among other poor socioeconomic indicators in health, nutrition and education. Given this background, the policy and media euphoria seemed naïve and misguided. Clearly, what this unrealistically optimistic narrative missed is that age structure changes would also lead to a demographic “bulge” of those over 60 and above (or the “elderly”).

In a country where there are no institutional provisions for economic and social security for its older citizens, this emerging demographic trend is worrying, especially since this age group has always been dependent on familial transfers and care regimes both of which have been known to be shrinking. In a way, this interweaving of paradoxical social, economic and demographic forces was my intellectual initiation to the larger questions shaping my future academic engagements: what happens after the dividend? What are the social and cultural challenges to older people in a context that is plagued with acute wealth inequalities and hierarchies of caste, gender, and religion? How do forces of culture intersect with the market in a country where care and social security are enmeshed within the ideological landscape of the family?

My research draws from the intersecting disciplines of sociology,

gerontology, and public health to examine the sociological question of inequality adopting a range of methodological tools and praxis. My substantive contribution is primarily in the field of aging studies with a focus on India. My doctoral research empirically unpacked the link between living arrangements and health outcomes among older Indians using a method (propensity score analysis) that mimics randomization and hence allows us to estimate causality in non-randomized settings. This research was significant not only for its methodological innovation but also because majority of gerontological research looks at these two factors (living arrangement and health) separately and not simultaneously, despite their socially interdependent and transactional relationship.

Following my doctoral research, I have closely examined the intersection of age with the “social” in terms of social capital, family/kinship, intimacy, and context. My interest in these questions motivated me to argue for the need to go beyond the traditional dualisms of young/old, developing/developed, etc. and push intellectual frontiers to engage with theory more meaningfully. This assertion culminated through the publication of an edited volume, “Cross-cultural and Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Social Gerontology”, (Springer Nature, 2016) that critiqued the “data rich, theory poor” dimension of this field known to amass large volumes of empirical data.

I have been fortunate to work with international collaborators with interdisciplinary training and to publish in both demography/population studies and sociology journals. Some of the competitive awards/grants that supported my research on family sociology, health, and gerontology over the last decade include Indian Council of Social Science Research (project involving intergenerational relationships and family inequalities), United Nations Population Fund, India (social capital and health), Population Foundation of India (female virginity and the cosmetic industry in India), School of Medicine, University of California, San Diego (women’s empowerment as self-compassion) and University of Haifa, Israel (intimacy and care regimes among LGBTQ older persons).

More recently, my work on aging studies has attempted to harness the “cultural turn” - an epistemological shift from structure to agency with renewed interest in subjectivity, reflexivity and individuation. In this line of inquiry, I have examined how social membership among older Indians is achieved through the culture industry (leisure, consumption) and the practice of middle-classness. This interrogation has also allowed questions

of sociality, intimate selves, and caring practices of older adults to be brought under sociological scrutiny. The pandemic, as we know, has questioned, reconfigured, and disturbed assumptions made earlier about the social world and individual behaviours. Building on this recalibrated intellectual commitment, I have started several projects including one that de-centers kinship ties by focusing on friendship and conviviality among single middle-aged to older women, as well as one where I offer a critique of the “hetero-happy”, “successful aging” cultural enterprise by focusing on feelings of dislocation, unbelonging, and institutional discrimination faced by LGBTQ older persons.

In addition to academic writing, I have strong conviction in our roles as public intellectuals shaping larger popular discourse. To this end, I have regularly contributed thought/opinion pieces drawing from my research at several media platforms including *The Wire*, *Forbes (India)* and *The Quint* as well as looking at how films or any visual media afford sociological imaginations (most of my writings in this domain have been published in the *Film Companion* and *Kafila*).

Sociology has always been unapologetic in its examination of inequalities, hierarchies, and the politics of representation. My training in sociology made me painfully aware that as one climbs up the academic ladder, the more apparent systemic biases become. A majority of leading journals, PIs of large international grants, prestigious award boards, leadership positions across the globe are dominated by privileged men who have benefited from unchallenged patriarchy in higher education. Additionally, in an era where scientific publishing is governed by the neoliberal logic of hyper-performativity, notions of diversity and representation are hugely compromised in this new knowledge economy. My ongoing involvement with leading journals (*Anthropology & Aging*; *The Sociological Review* and the *Journal of Family Studies*) in my capacity as co-editor/Associate Editor, have been propelled by this acknowledgment. Through my own research and other academic engagements, I hope I never stop questioning the certainties of power and politics in knowledge production.

CENTRES AT FLAME UNIVERSITY



Rediscovering India at the India Centre

PANKAJ JAIN
Chair, The India Centre

SHIKHA SHARMA
Research Associate, The India Centre

The India Centre is a hub for an outstanding interdisciplinary study of India and developing academic resources through various activities, including research, teaching, conferences, and archives building. It is a meeting ground for diverse scholarly perspectives in India from within and outside it. The India Centre provides an enabling environment for students and researchers from India and abroad to study the evolution of various aspects of

Indian culture and identify and promote the study of some of its features. It offers a space for the public to engage with the topics of interest. It encourages aspirants from India and outside India to dive deep into the flavors of India.



The centre incorporates various research projects to promote the study of Indian cultural traditions, including artistic heritage, artist and artisanal communities, socio-economic-religious-ecological traditions, and historical and

epistemological knowledge. It engages in scholarly discussions on the development of the above aspects of Indian culture in the modern world context to explore how and why our understanding and approach to viewing Indian culture has been shaped through seminars, conferences, and research projects. Engagement with the public for teaching an informed understanding of varied aspects of Indian culture, polity, economics, etc., is also an essential feature of the center.

As the currents of globalization continue to sweep us in the 21st century, knowledge systems inspired by Indian civilization have a great deal to contribute globally. Although yoga is now practiced worldwide, academic study of Yoga Shastra, Artha Shastra, and many other Indian knowledge systems of health, arts, linguistics, classics, mathematics, sciences, philosophies, and other disciplines are waiting to be explored. There is a need to develop new frameworks, categories, and strategies to study Indian civilization from several fields, including a religious and philosophical lens. The India Centre is a meeting place for Indian and diverse international perspectives in the spirit of Anekāntavāda (manysidedness). Similarly, the Ṛgveda

pronounces that the truth is one, and it has multiplied unto many views: Ekam Sad Vipra bahudha vadanti. We strive to integrate the classical texts with contemporary religious studies, politics, economics, environmental studies, gender studies, psychology, health sciences, and other disciplines.

Just as the European renaissance was based on the rediscovery of Greek classics in the 15th century, a global revival can occur based on academia's 'discovery' of Asian intellectual traditions, many of which are universally applicable. For example, the tenet of Vasudhaiva kutumbakam, now talked with the label of cosmopolitanism, was mentioned in many Sanskrit texts, with an average lifespan of 100 years of productive and healthy life described. The purpose of a multifaceted education system incorporating various sciences and arts is another essential feature of the center. It matches well with the ideas of Multiple Intelligence and T-Shaped Professionals. Gandhi's life, ecological teachings, and impact on civil rights movements in the United States and elsewhere need to be highlighted.

An essential objective of The India Centre is to conduct and

sponsor a variety of academic events such as conferences, workshops, and symposia by bringing scholars from all over the world to engage with each other, disseminate knowledge, and connect with the larger community. The center conducts one annual event with national and international participants. For instance, in May 2021, the conference titled "New Directions in Indic Studies: Beyond Imperialism of Categories" was organized with the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. Apart from this, we also conduct monthly webinars under the aegis of The India Centre.

To conclude, the Indian civilization has continued to flourish for over 5000 years, and our students deserve to learn from one of the oldest surviving cultures. India, the most vibrant and largest democracy, needs to be studied thoroughly.



CENTRES AT FLAME UNIVERSITY

Institutionalizing Case Methodology

SMITA CHAUDHRY
Chair, FLAME Centre for Case Development

One of the fundamental aims of education is preparing students effectively for their professional lives. Case teaching is a vital pedagogical approach to achieve this aim. The primary responsibility of FLAME Centre for Case Development (FCCD) is to promote teaching and writing amongst the FLAME academic community. It seeks to provide expertise and resources to students and faculty which would equip them with the knowledge, understanding, and opportunities for case pedagogy and publication. This article explains case teaching as a pedagogical tool, the objective and benefits of this tool, and the different types of cases employed in classrooms. It further discusses the purpose of the centre and the activities it undertakes to achieve its purpose.



Case teaching is a methodology for imparting education to students. It is widely used in premier educational institutes across the world, including the best-known institutes in India. A case contains a narrative about the history, past actions, current activities, and decisions of an event or organization. This narrative may

be built around factual information and situations in an existing organization. Alternatively, it can also be created from a fictional organization and hypothetical situations. Based on the narrative, students conduct detailed analyses and draw inferences. The analysis involves intense class discussion where the students take the lead on deliberation, and where the faculty acts as a facilitator. The analysis may use different models and frameworks (like SWOT i.e. strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) depending on the discipline, subject, and topic being taught. Alternatively, the analysis can be free flowing, and require identification of patterns or unique insights. Cases can be used in different disciplines like human resources, organizational behavior, strategy, entrepreneurship, marketing, operations, and/or finance. Sometimes, the same case can be used across disciplines.

Each case is intended to help students in either applying concepts already learnt or deducing new concepts in a specific subject and for a specific topic. Apart from aiding conceptual learning, cases also help students in understanding how organizations conduct their functions, manage challenges and make decisions. It also provides some ideas about how employees behave and navigate through their job roles. Case analysis helps build critical thinking

and problem-solving skills. Students learn how to assess large amounts of information, recognise the most relevant information, use it to frame arguments, identify problems and find solutions. It also helps in mentally preparing them about what they might experience when they enter the workplace.

Cases can be classified as short and long. Short cases are concerned with a specific topic and involve a focused discussion. Long cases can span topics, subjects in a discipline, or even different disciplines. They require deeper investigation and discussion. Faculty may use cases that are either written by them or sourced from published sources of information. The published sources can be authored textbooks, case repositories created by educational institutions, and/or case journals like Harvard Business Cases and Ivey Publishing.

The purpose of FCCD is to engage faculty across disciplines by building awareness and understanding about case writing and publication, collaborating with organizations for case writing, promoting students' interest in cases, and facilitating case publication. Publication of cases allows a larger academic community to access the cases for use in classroom teaching.

FCCD organizes faculty development workshops that are conducted by external experts. The aim of the workshops is to enable FLAME faculty to write cases that can be published in reputed journals. The Centre also provides informational resources from time to time to support case writing and publishing. This year, the Centre has identified organizations that can be approached for collaboration on cases.

In the long-term future, FCCD hopes that faculty would engage more in case writing and thus create a pedagogical resource, which would enrich their classroom discussions, and enable students to think, learn and apply theoretical concepts in a more systematic and contextual manner. This would not only equip the students with the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities for their professional life, but also leave an everlasting impact of their learning experience at FLAME.



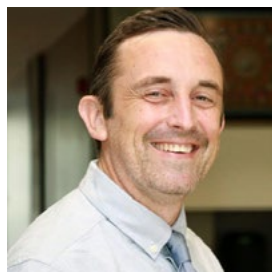
CENTRES AT FLAME UNIVERSITY

The Writing Centre's 2022 Plans

MICHAEL BURNS

Chair, FLAME University Writing Centre

Every single one of us can improve our writing. No matter how many letters we have (or hope to have) after our names, writing proficiency is never fully achieved. It's a moving target, and given how critical writing skills are in today's world, it's a target worth focusing on. With this in mind, FLAME's Writing Centre organises a robust series of events and programs to provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to develop their skills and enjoy the fruits of their writing labours. Specifically, the Writing Centre is sponsoring weekly skill-building workshops, guest speaker appearances, and exciting writing activities for our study body.



Every week, the Writing Centre holds writing workshops on different topics. We have presented workshops on how to edit your work, how to properly cite your research, how to make presentations, how to create a resume, how to find your unique voice, more. In fact, there are ten different workshops that we run each week on Wednesdays, workshops that we call 'rotation workshops' because once the cycle is complete, the

workshops then begin again in case students weren't able to join

the first time (or for a reminder in case they did join and want to review). These workshops are designed to fill gaps that exist at the University since there are no specific courses that probe into these topics yet they remain acutely important for student success. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of these sessions is that as our students return to campus, these will be conducted in person in coming months and in the future going forward.

Every month, the Writing Centre invites accomplished speakers to campus to share their experience and to answer student questions. It's incredibly valuable for students who wish to pursue writing as an integral part of their careers to speak with individuals who are already doing so. From poets and novelists, to award-winning journalists and film makers, we find writers and creators who are at the top of their fields, producing writing that's provocative, important, and insightful. So far, these sessions have been tremendously enlightening and we expect to do many more this year.

Lastly, the Writing Centre organizes several helpful, rewarding, and fun writing-related activities for our students. We oversee a peer tutoring pairing system where students can request help from more senior students on their writing projects. With a less than 24-hour turnaround time, students are connected with

peers willing to provide developmental, structural, and copy editing advice as needed. In addition, we have just launched a new program called Stories Around the Bonfire, where students submit true, personal stories for live performance once the stories are ready and perfected. We also have a weekly writing session called Shut Up and Write where students write together in a quiet space where they can concentrate and get feedback on their work with other students who love to write. Lastly, through a new Writing Centre-facilitated program called Embers, a student can send a written poem to another student on campus and the Writing Centre will deliver it. It might be a little old-fashioned, but in an era where everything seems to be digital and temporary, this provides a little change of pace and potentially some memorable moments for our students—including a tremendous number who appreciate, read, and write poetry.

We have even more ideas in mind for the Writing Centre, and as restrictions ease, we're looking forward to putting those into action as well. Each of these activities above is designed to turn writing from a mysterious, stressful activity to something

deeply rewarding and satisfying. When we can demystify the writing process, all of us not only become better communicators, but better explorers of our world and ourselves. In a centre of learning, perhaps nothing is more important than encouraging and opening up those channels confidently and professionally. We're thrilled to play a small part in that process.

A photograph showing two people in business attire shaking hands over a desk. The desk has a laptop, a folder, and some papers. The background is a light blue wall. The text 'FACULTY BIOS' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

FACULTY BIOS



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