

spig news

Winter 2004



Preview for Toronto; SPIG comes on strong

By Kimberly Wilmot Voss,
SPIG Head



It is after many e-mail negotiations, several frantic phone calls and a few alarming moments that Small Program Interest Groups proposals became programming realities. The AEJMC annual chip auction was held in early December in Atlanta. This process involves many hours of work throughout November, as officers try to find other divisions and interest groups to co-sponsor with us and in return, offer their co-sponsorship to other divisions and groups. (If you would like more information about the chip auction, please check <http://www.aejmc.org/officers/chipinfo.html>)

I want to thank those of you who sent in teaching and PF&R panel proposals. We had a strong pool to draw from once again this

year. I also want to apologize to those of you who sent in sessions that were not scheduled. It is not a reflection of the quality of your proposal, instead it is a matter of making a good match with another group or division. If your proposal wasn't scheduled this year, please consider sending it in again next year. You can improve your chances of being scheduled by connecting with another group or division ahead of time.

SPIG got many strong sessions scheduled with a special focus on teaching. Several of these sessions developed out of issues brought up on our listserv, such as "Is News Reporting and Writing 101 Dead? Would New Approaches Inspire Undecided Students to Consider Print

Journalism?" A list of the sessions, along with contact people, is included on page five of this newsletter. Most of the moderators have already found speakers to sit on the panels, although I have encouraged any moderators with openings to post their needs on the SPIG listserv.

Our business meeting is scheduled for Friday, August 6 at 6:45 p.m. and our executive business meeting will be held on Saturday, August 7 at 1:30 p.m. This schedule means that if you are interested in becoming an officer, you should stay in Toronto through Saturday late afternoon.

Thanks again for all the hard work. It will pay off in Toronto.

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Have a great teaching idea? Share it at the GIFT session

By Edna R. Bautista,
GIFT Program coordinator

The Community College Journalism Association (CCJA), Small Programs Interest Group (SPIG) and the Scholastic Journalism Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) are seeking Great Ideas For Teachers (GIFT) for a mega-poster session at the AEJMC convention on Wednesday, Aug. 4, 3:15 to 4:45 p.m., in Toronto, Canada, to showcase 25 of the year's most innovative teaching tips from the world's best journalism and mass communication educators—just in time for the new academic year!

All AEJMC members are eligible to submit one (1) GIFT for blind peer review; graduate teaching assistants are also encouraged to participate in this opportunity to share their innovative teaching tips. GIFT finalists/scholars will be selected for inclusion in the poster session, a GIFT publication, the AEJMC program listing and GIFT scholar Web page index (<http://www.geocities.com/aejmcgift>).

Moreover, finalists/scholars are eligible to win a \$100 grand prize and commemorative plaque to be awarded at the convention. All receive a souvenir certificate for their teaching portfolios as well.

Teaching tips wanted include but are not limited to the following courses: advertising, broadcast journalism, general or introductory mass communications, ethics, history, international/multicultural communication, law, public relations, research, technology and new media, visual communication and writing.

Those who are interested in sharing their GIFT must describe their teaching idea in proper form (available from <http://www.geocities.com/aejmcgift>) and submit it via e-mail (preferred) and/or regular mail (recom-

mended back-up copy) to the GIFT coordinator (emailaejmcgift@yahoo.com for current mailing address). All entries must be received (not post-marked) by April 1 and will be reviewed by a panel of six judges based on originality, creativity, practicality, adaptability and impact. Submissions will be acknowledged but not returned.

NOTE: GIFT finalists only will be notified of their status after May 15.

TIMELINE

April 1 — deadline for GIFT submissions

April — judging of GIFT submissions; top 25 papers chosen

After May 15 — notification sent to 25 GIFT finalists/scholars only

May 15 — list of GIFTs due to AEJMC for program copy

June — ranking of top GIFTs; grand-prize winner chosen

July — production of GIFTs for publication

Aug. 4 — GIFT poster session at the AEJMC convention; winner recognized and awarded

September — highlights/photos of poster session and winning GIFT reprinted on the GIFT Web site

December — scheduling of GIFT 2005 in San Antonio, Texas

For more information about the GIFT program, contact Dr. Edna R. Bautista, the GIFT Program coordinator, at aejmcgift@yahoo.com, or go to the new GIFT Web site at <http://www.geocities.com/aejmcgift>

Are you a potential teacher of the year? SPIG seeks excellent teachers for competition

Classroom teacher. Student adviser. Mentor. Curriculum developer.

SPIG members play many different roles at their colleges and universities. And the SPIG Teacher of the Year competition gives you a chance to get some well-deserved recognition for your hard work and the many teaching hats that you wear.

"I was amazed at the publicity – on-campus and off – that I received for this award," said James Simon of Fairfield University, SPIG's choice for the award in 2003. "I'm still teaching the same way I always have, but now suddenly people come up to me and comment on the award and often ask for teaching advice. It's a great PR tool, both for you and for your campus.

"Suddenly you have the best small college journalism teacher in the country working at your school"

2004 will be the fourth time in SPIG's 11-year history that the award has been given.

Nominees must pull together a packet of supporting material and mail it to the judges, who include the SPIG chair and vice chair plus the previous winners. All SPIG members are eligible to enter except for those judges.

The packet must include such items as evidence of teaching excellence, letters of recommendation from a colleague or former colleague, a letter from a student or former student. Five copies of the packet are due May 15, and the winner will be announced at the AEJMC annual conference, to be held in Toronto in August 2004.

Simon said any SPIG members with questions can contact him at jsimon@mail.fairfield.edu.

Small Programs Interest Group Teacher of the Year Award Guidelines

This annual award will honor a member of SPIG who demonstrates excellence in teaching and advising.

Those interested can be nominated or can apply

Only members of the SPIG are eligible but the current SPIG chair, vice chair and past winners are not eligible.

The following materials must be submitted:

1. At least one letter of recommendation from a student or former student
2. At least one letter of recommendation from a colleague or former colleague
3. Evidence of teaching and advising excellence, which may include, but is not limited to, student evaluations; syllabi; examples of assignments, projects, tests, exercises, etc.; statement of teaching philosophy.

Nominations must be to the SPIG chair by May 1; the chair will notify the nominee

The candidate will mail out full copies of all supporting materials to the five judges by May 15. The chair will supply the addresses.

Committee members will rank the applicants and forward their rankings to the SPIG chair, who will tabulate the results. Rankings must be to the SPIG chair by June 15.

The winner will be announced at the SPIG business meeting during the annual AEJMC conference.

The winner will receive a plaque, and the SPIG chair will send notification to the following:

4. The winner's dean and/or department chair
5. The winner's school and local newspapers

AEJMC's central office (with a request that an announcement appear in the next newsletter)

St. Bonaventure University leads the way with grammar boot camp for aspiring majors

By Denny Wilkins

We've all heard those anecdotal accounts about entering freshmen — their ability to use their language clearly, accurately and with a certain degree of charm is dwindling with each passing year.

Although our students' SAT verbal scores may be up slightly over the past several years, the ability of incoming freshmen to write clearly just isn't what it used to be — and has to be to prosper in journalism, advertising or public relations.

The University of Nebraska at Lincoln plans to require a "grammar slammer" placement test "before freshmen can take The Art of Good Writing, a new 100-level class required for all news-editorial, advertising and broadcasting majors," according to the *Daily Nebraskan*.

That's good news, and it mirrors what we've been doing at Bonaventure over the past two years.

Every student — whether they be incoming freshmen or internal or external transfers — must take a grammar and skills test as well as craft an essay before they can take our introductory newswriting and reporting course.

It's not our intent to be punitive, always a danger in screening exams. Each year we administer this to about 80 prospective freshmen journalism majors. Very few do so badly that they're told they cannot be journalism majors.

However, about half are told this: You may register for the introductory course, but you must attend a four-session remedial language-use workshop during the first week of the semester. Fail to attend and you're out.

I'm the conscripted volunteer who teaches those sessions. Frankly, I know I cannot do in about five hours what either the students or their high schools

failed to do in five years. It is not my intent to dramatically increase their ability to use the language in these "grammar slammer" sessions.

I try to demonstrate that good ideas need to be clearly and precisely expressed. As do most journalism professors, I have a collection of examples showing how poor punctuation, wording, etc., produce dramatically different meanings than those intended. I try to shock them into seeing how the same set of words can have two different meanings depending on punctuation.

These "grammar slammer" sessions are more about introducing them to an attitude about language-use. Without an attitude that correct language use is important, I argue, it would be pointless to continue as journalism majors.

The majority of the time in these sessions is used to show the most common language-use errors. Here's my list:

- What are the parts of speech and why should we know them?
- Its/it's error
- comma error with introductory phrase or clause
- comma splice
- compound modifier
- noun-pronoun disagreement
- subject-verb disagreement
- unnecessary passive construction
- possessive apostrophe error
- possessive vs. plural errors
- unnecessary shift in person
- comma errors with appositives
- that/which errors
- using "who" to refer to inanimate objects
- wrong or missing preposition
- comma errors with independent clauses joined with conjunction

- comma errors with independent clause and dependent clause joined with conjunction
- comma error with verbal phrases
- punctuation errors with simple and complex items in series
- sentence fragments
- punctuation errors associated with quotations and paraphrases
- dangling or misplaced modifiers
- arbitrary capitalization
- numbers vs. words errors
- punctuation errors with address, age identifications
- punctuation, abbreviation errors with days, dates

Using overhead transparencies, I explain what each item is and provide "right" and "wrong" examples of each. Repetition is important: I ask them repeatedly to identify the error by name, explain the error and show how it should be fixed.

That constant repetition helps them grasp these errors. I require them to turn in at the last session a paper outlining these errors.

Our approach to declining language-use abilities of our incoming freshmen isn't perfect. But it's an attempt to put our majors on notice that such skills are critical to their success in the major — and to their success as paid professionals in the world beyond the classroom.

Denny Wilkins is an associate professor of journalism and mass communication at St. Bonaventure University.

SPIG sessions for Toronto convention

Most of these panels already have speakers scheduled, but keep your eye on the SPIG listserv for any openings.

1. Journalism and the Liberal Arts: Can't We All Just Get Along?

Session contact: Brian Steffen, steffen@simpson.edu

2. "Who, What, Where, When and Why Didn't I get an A?" Grading The Journalistic Writing Assignment.

Session Contact: John Hanc, jhanc@optonline.net

3. Breaking Out of the Ivory Tower: Getting Started with Freelancing, Professional and Consulting Work.

Session Contact: Jack Zibluk, jzibluk@astate.edu

4. Great Ideas For Teachers (GIFT)

** Please see article in this newsletter for more information about this poster session.

5. Coping Skills for Journalism Educators

Moderator: Beverly Bailey,
SuzanneBBailey@aol.com

6. The Basic Media Writing Course: Tinkering, Tweaking & Tailoring So That Students Benefit.

Moderator: Beth Haller, bhaller@towson.edu

7. Is News Reporting and Writing 101 Dead? Would New Approaches Inspire Undecided Students to Consider Print Journalism?

Moderator: John Lofflin, jlofflin@mail.park.edu

8. Voices in the Wilderness Revisited: How Are Small Programs Greeting the Teaching Challenges of the Future? (Off-site)

Panel Contact: Kim Landon, klandon@utica.edu

SPIG newsletter, Web site and listserv can foster solidarity and learning

By John Jenks,
 Newsletter Editor

For many of us SPIG is a refuge of relevance at the annual AEJMC convention. It is the interest group that sponsors sessions that actually address our needs, and the one (along with Community College Journalism Association and others) that helps us generate new ideas for the classroom through the inimitable GIFT program.

And, of course, SPIG members are the most fun at any convention party.

But after the convention, there are the other 51 weeks of the year. Those are the weeks when we are still wrestling with the challenges connected with small programs, including the relative isolation from colleagues in journalism education. Some of us are in small departments; some of us are the department. (I became the journalism department at Dominican University when I signed on as the first, and so far, only full-time journalism faculty member.)

SPIG can help out. We have a number of ways to keep in touch.

The listserv, administered by Brian Steffen (steffen@storm.simpson.edu) can help you with quick notes and urgent questions. It's easy to subscribe. Just send an e-mail to the following address: majordomo@storm.simpson.edu. Leave the subject line blank. Click "off" any automatic sig line you append to your emails. Then write in the body of the message: subscribe spig. If there are problems, let Brian know.

The SPIG Web site at <http://www.angelo.edu/org/spig/> is packed with information, from sample syllabi to pages of teaching tips. And, of course, the site is well stocked with information about SPIG. Cathy Johnson at Angelo State University (cathy.johnson@angelo.edu) is the webmaster.

There is also this newsletter. If you have a good idea, a complaint about AEJMC (or SPIG), or simply some news about your or program, send it to me at jjenks@dom.edu and we'll be sure to get it in.

The newsletter gives you a chance to spread the joy when you're promoted or land a new job. The newsletter also gives you a chance to talk about ideas and programs you've developed. Denny Wilkins from St. Bonaventure University did just that when he wrote for this issue about the grammar programs at both his university and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

It's your organization. They're your media. Use them.

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Inside this issue:

Preview for Toronto convention.....	page 1
GIFT session.....	page 2
Teacher of the year competition.....	page 3
Grammar training ideas.....	page 4
SPIG sessions for Toronto	page 5
Keeping in touch with SPIG.....	page 5

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