Published on *University of Colorado* (https://www.cu.edu)

Beyond Academic Writing [1]

Ed Rivers
University of Colorado Boulder
English

Article from University of Colorado Silver and Gold Record, May 13, 2004

By Jefferson Dodge



President's Teaching Scholar Ed Rivers of UCB English, at left, watches as MacroSystem instructor Scott Vicek, center, asks UCB student Gray Robinson a question about his media presentation. Robinson, a senior creative writing major, was enrolled in Rivers' Beyond Academic Writing course during spring semester. Photo by Larry Harwood

This spring, a CU-Boulder student produced a video that tells the story of a woman who is sexually assaulted at a party.

It had nothing to do with the recent football controversy; it was part of an experimental writing course made possible through a unique partnership between a CU President's Teaching Scholar and a Boulder company.

The idea of having students incorporate a variety of media into their writing came from Ed Rivers of UCB English, who took a course last summer at Casablanca University, a digital-imaging education program offered by the Boulder firm MacroSystem. He was so taken by the Casablanca editing equipment and his MacroSystem instructor, Scott Vicek, that he invited Vicek to team-teach a component of Rivers' Beyond Academic Writing course, using Casablanca's digital-video hardware and software.

Rivers told S&GR that Vicek and Jeff Richey, a MacroSystem vice president and CU alum, liked the idea so much that they allowed Rivers and his students to hold the course in a MacroSystem computer lab at no charge. Company officials are also discussing the possibility of offering corporate internships to CU students, Rivers said.

The result, Rivers explained, is that his students were able to use state-of-the-art equipment

to produce their creative works, and to benefit from the free technical training provided by Vicek.

"When I saw what a terrific teacher he was, I started getting these ideas," Rivers said. "He's among the five best teachers I've ever seen in my life."

Rivers added that the equipment is user-friendly. "If students had to take a month and a half learning the interface, as they have to do with other programs, this would not have worked."

He called the partnership a perfect example of President Betsy Hoffman's goal of creating a "university without walls." Vicek added, "I was thrilled with the idea, because CU is in our backyard. I was absolutely honored to help teach a CU class."

In the course, students take their original writing and incorporate a variety of media -- spoken word, animation, still photos, sound effects, video, text and music -- to give their printed passages a rich environment that can affect the impact and meaning of the writing. In making the video about the party and sexual assault, senior Nora Lipson used student actors and added the sounds of a Super 8 camera and a heartbeat, which gradually intensifies.

In his project, senior Gray Robinson incorporated his own poetry, photography and music. Robinson, a drummer, composed a piece, recorded the music with his band, and then narrated his poem, which is heard on the video over a backdrop of photos accentuating the meaning of the poetry.

Sophomore Tanith Rozanski used still photos, creating a slideshow featuring her written language and one of her favorite songs. The text and photos, which focus on friends and the central symbol of red, plastic cups they use when drinking, appear on screen with a variety of special effects.

One student who had taken the course previously, Jason Horodyski, liked it so much that he returned to serve as Rivers' teaching assistant -- for no pay and no credit. Horodyski said students don't have to waste a lot of time or effort learning how to use the computer equipment for the course. "The technology side doesn't take away from the art," he said.

Rivers said he eventually wants to create a full course out of the partnership with MacroSystem, and that he hopes to interest other faculty in using AV equipment. The course represents one of the ways he fulfills his President Teaching Scholars' commitment to cultivate new, creative avenues for teaching and learning, he said.

Permission to republish on May 13, 2004 by Susan Barney-Jones
Editor - University of Colorado Silver and Gold Record

Groups audience:
President's Teaching Scholars Program

Source URL:https://www.cu.edu/ptsp/beyond-academic-writing

Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/ptsp/beyond-academic-writing