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# STYLUS:

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The Most Popular Thing You've  
Probably Never Heard of  
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## *From the Editor*

I don't think it's a secret that students often feel disconnected from the subjects of their classes: they can understand the concepts being covered, they can use the vocabulary, but how often can they really relate to the material? This issue becomes particularly thorny in the first-year writing classroom, where students from a wide variety of majors come together and not only study a common set of topics, but actually write about and research these topics on their own. While terms bandied about in the composition classroom like "exigence," "discourse community," and "intertextuality" might be a normal part of the writing scholar's language, they can intimidate the incoming student. The challenge teachers and students face is to find some common space around these terms and concepts in which to have a conversation. Speaking from my own experience as a teacher, sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't. It's not easy, and it can't be forced. The essays in this issue of *Stylus*, however, show what can happen when this *really* works and students find the places where research and theoretical concepts intersect their own lives.

We begin with "The Most Popular Thing You've Probably Never Heard of," where Steve Liu examines the popular image board, 4chan. Even if you aren't familiar with 4chan itself, you've likely encountered some of the internet memes it's spawned. We might not expect a scholarly analysis of a discourse community to include terms like "rickrolling" and "lolspeak," but Liu shows us that the results of such a project can be simultaneously enlightening and entertaining.

Next up is David Galvez's "Intertextuality and Understanding Dave Chappelle's Comedy." Here, Galvez considers intertextuality—the concept that all texts, including books, movies, and television shows, are interconnected—by dissecting the comedy of Dave Chappelle. Again, this might at first seem to be an unlikely pairing, but Galvez demonstrates why Chappelle's work provides the perfect case study for a discussion of the complexities associated with intertext and authorship.

The last two essays provide two very different but equally successful takes on research. In the first, "How Personality Affects Literacy Development," Justine Patino considers how tests used to gauge personality type might be used as predictors of skill. Personality and literacy are concepts we too often take for granted and leave unexamined; Patino shows us there is, however, room for a rich field of study where these two meet.

Last we have “Tuesday Night Is HamBingo Night: a Glimpse of the Drag Queen Culture,” by Alissa Warren. Warren’s research takes a different form than Patino’s, but her discussion of drag queen culture and the reactions to it is no less compelling. Warren crafts a portrait not just of a person, but of a place and a moment, making for a fascinating read. We hope you’ll use these two very different but very successful essays to open up a conversation in your own classroom about the values of different sorts of writing and research.

Together, I think all four of these essays illustrate the importance of surprise in writing and research: surprising connections, surprising applications, and surprising findings. The science fiction writer Isaac Asimov once said, “The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' but 'That's funny....'” We would, I think, be wise to consider this when we sit down to write about a topic we think has already been fully explored or a question we feel deserves only a pat answer. Moreover, these essays show us that, with some cleverness and creativity, scholarly research and theoretical concepts that perhaps at once sounded as foreign as another language can, in fact, relate to us. But what’s perhaps most exciting is that these essays also demonstrate the power of our own seemingly ordinary, mundane lives to impact research in a meaningful way, leading to all sorts of new insights and ideas.

Finally, I would like to take this space to recognize the winner of the first President John C. Hitt Prize for Excellence in First-Year Writing, Tyler Obarski. Obarski was selected by President Hitt to receive the \$450 book scholarship for his essay, “The Complexity of Language at Publix Supermarket Store #0258.” The runners-up were Lauren Perry for her essay, “Writing with Four Senses: a Hearing Impaired Person’s Writing,” and Nicolas Oscheneek for his essay, “Fixing Our Future.” Obarski, Perry, and Oscheneek had their essays published in either of our first two issues and I encourage you to read their work. Our congratulations go out to these students.

-Matthew Bryan