This past year, the CMS office went through various changes. In January, we moved from the 1st floor to the 4th floor of the Humanities building, joining the rest of the English Department, and merging our space with the Composition program. Our office now serves students from both programs. The move has given us a unique opportunity to increase our collaborative efforts with the Composition program, its teachers and students.

In addition to the new digs, we experienced some changes in staff. In March, Kitty Quinn-Friel joined us as the office coordinator for the writing programs, and she now handles all matters related to Composition and CMS faculty. As a result, our office assistant Amanda Bent was able to assume her new role in the department, and now deals with all undergraduate student matters, and has maintained her duties to CMS students.

We are happy to have made it through another year, and look forward to exciting opportunities to come in 2016. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to you and yours!

~CMS Office
Announcements

Searching for Conversation Group Leaders in Spring 2016:

The CMS Program is looking for current MA TESOL graduate students to help lead conversation groups with students enrolled in CMS classes. This is a great opportunity to gain more hands-on experience working with multilingual students in an informal setting. Flexible schedule and small bi-weekly time commitment. Please contact Amanda Bent (abent@sfsu.edu) if you are interested in finding out how to get involved.

CMS Conversation Groups Returning in the Spring!

The CMS Program will be hosting conversation groups with students in CMS classes, who are interested in practicing their communication skills and meeting new people. More information will be sent out next semester with dates and times. We hope to see you there!

The LAC is a tutoring center that offers tutoring in reading, writing, math, sciences and study skills. Graduate and undergraduate students are encouraged and welcome to apply. Contact Deborah vanDommelen (dvan@sfsu.edu) if you are interested in applying.

Sutro Review: SFSU Journal for Undergraduate Composition is accepting submissions for its premier, spring 2016 issue. The journal will showcase undergraduate written composition from all disciplines and class levels - All freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors are encouraged to submit their best work! Students should send scholarly essay or creative nonfiction to sutro@sfsu.edu by February 20th, 2016 to be considered for publication.

Learning Assistance Center
Tutors Needed!
http://lac.sfsu.edu/lacjobs
What brought you to SFSU?
I wanted to study abroad, and so I checked out all the major cities. San Francisco looked very nice and diverse with lots of people from many different countries. LA and New York City didn’t look better, so I came here.

What do you enjoy most about being in the CMS Program?
I really like this program and am very passionate about it because it is helping me improve my English abilities. I have been here for a year and a half, and am still having difficulties. But in this program, I can improve my speaking and writing skills. It is the reason why I came here, to get better at English.

What do you find most challenging?
Speaking up in class.

How do you think the CMS Program has helped you improve, academically and personally, so far?
The program makes me think logically in English. Without it, I would fail. I think grammar is very important, so I am happy that the program offers grammar classes so that I can work on that.

What do you hope to do after you graduate?
I actually used to be a teacher in Japan before. I was teaching math and science for two and a half years. But after I finish here, I want to go back to Japan and may teach either English or Economics.

Takahiro likes to work out and listen to heavy metal music in his free time.
What do you enjoy most about being in the CMS Program?

Lucy: I feel confident in the classes, and enjoy being around people who understand me. It feels like a whole class of friends.

MJ: I like to meet new people. I am happy to have Lucy as I am shy to talk with other people from other countries.

What do you find most challenging?

Lucy: I don’t think it’s very challenging.

MJ: I don’t feel very confident, so I have trouble speaking up and in my writing.

How do you think the CMS Program has helped you improve, academically and/or personally, so far?

Lucy: I think the program will improve my writing more. I have already seen it improve this semester.

MJ: The teachers push me, which I think is helping me to improve. My teachers have conferences, like Professor Hilbert and Professor Arriaga, and they share their opinions with me so that I can get better.

What brought you to SF State?

I wanted to learn more about the culture, because American culture is very different from Chinese culture. Here, I can learn what I want and also improve my English skills. I decided to come to this school because the school I went to in China has a project with SFSU, and my teacher also recommended it.

What do you enjoy most about being in the CMS Program?

My grammar is improving a lot. My 212 teacher, Sandra Arriaga, is very patient. After class, I ask her many questions, and she answers carefully to clarify things for me. I also like my 209 teacher, Lisa Vicar, because we are reading a whole book, and we get to discuss the book in groups. I like that I can make more friends by working in these groups.

What do you find most challenging about the program?

You know English is my second language, so listening in class it’s hard to understand everything. I don’t always understand what the teacher is saying, so I go and ask them questions after class which helps. Also, In my heart I want to meet new people, but my skills make it hard to communicate, so people may not know this about me.

Outside of class, Chaoyu likes to explore the environment, and visit the beach.

Chaoyu Qiu (a.k.a. QCY)

Chaoyu is a junior from Zhejiang, China studying engineering.
T.A. Spotlights

Part of the MA TESOL curriculum affords graduate students the opportunity to work with multilingual students in the classroom, and learn from our experienced teachers. Here they share their background and experiences being a teaching assistant.

Ayaka Ihara

Ayaka is a 2nd year MA TESOL student from Yokohama, Japan. In Spring 2015, she was a TA for Lisa Heyer’s ENG 210 class.

What brought you to San Francisco State?

In Japan, I got a B.A. in English Literature. After graduating, I worked at a bank, was a tour guide, and tutored. In my daily life, I got to practice my English skills in communicating and teaching, as I helped others learn. Those experiences motivated me to go into TESOL. In searching for a program, I could tell that SFSU had a good balance between practice and theory, so I decided that this was the best place to pursue TESOL.

Why TESOL?

I want to change English education in Japan. Though I never imagined I would want to be a teacher, I really enjoy teaching and helping others improve their performance.

What have you enjoyed most about being a TA in a CMS class?

I can observe the class in detail while being a part of the class. I don’t feel like I am an outsider, even though I am observing. I actually also led a workshop, and though it was overwhelming, it was also good practice. The students are very supportive and the practical experience is worthwhile.

What are your plans after you graduate?

I plan on applying to teach in the American Language Institute (ALI) here on campus. Eventually I will go back to Japan and teach in middle school, high school, or university so that I can make a difference in the field of education there.
What brought you to San Francisco State?

When I was an AuPair in Belmont, I applied here and got in, then decided to go. I knew it was close by and that I could figure out my way around the city. All together, I really like the diversity here, the faculty is great and it is a reputable program.

Why TESOL?

I majored in English during my undergrad in Thailand. I had a professor who I got along well with and enjoyed her classes. She gave my advice on what to do and told me about different graduate programs. I’m not really a linguistics person, so she told me more about TESOL and I liked the practical aspect about it- just teach me how to teach!

What have you enjoyed more about being a TA in a CMS class?

Before I started the program, I didn’t have any teaching experience, since I went straight from undergrad to master’s. But it’s been great to see how Lisa teachers. She makes the class environment very relaxed, which makes both the students and me feel comfortable to talk and share opinions. I want to provide that same atmosphere for my own students in the future.

What are your plans after you graduate?

One plan I have is to go back to Thailand and teach small kids. My other plan is to get another master’s degree or even get a PhD in child development.

Jasmine Amphanphisut

Jasmine is a 2nd year MA TESOL student from Bangkok, Thailand. In Spring 2015, she was a TA for Lisa Heyer’s ENG 210 class.

What brought you to San Francisco State?

I originally came to San Francisco to serve as an AmeriCorps VISTA member in the Big Brother Big Sister program. However, I knew that I wanted to be in this field, and decided to stay in San Francisco to get my MA degree.

Why TESOL?

I did an ESL-focused internship in Brazil, and I fell in love with it. I realized this was it, and after going to teaching in Korea for a year, it solidified my desire to pursue TESOL for my career.

What have you enjoyed more about being a TA in a CMS class?

Andrea Kevech is a fireball of excitement and energy. It’s incredible to be a part of her class. I also love getting to know the students and learning about their goals. It’s truly been an invaluable experience in the program.

What are your plans after you graduate?

Stay in the Bay Area and teach in an adult ESL language school.

Erin Lake

Erin is a 2nd year MA TESOL student from Michigan, USA. In Spring 2015, she was a TA for Andrea Kevech’s ENG 210 class.
What brought you to San Francisco State?
In searching for graduate programs, I got to know that SFSU offers a very practical TESOL program where you can be submerged with the theories regarding L2 acquisition, and at the same time getting actual teaching experience throughout the program. It is the older program, but it is, I think, one of the most practical TESOL programs compared to other schools in the United States.

Why TESOL?
For the past several years, I taught English at high school in Korea. The more I taught, the more I felt the necessity of professional education in teaching English. Although I studied English literature and education in my undergraduate, I always thought I needed to gain more practical experience to develop my confidence in teaching English. I wanted to learn how to incorporate communicative tasks effectively in a way that actually enhanced my students’ communicative competence.

What have you enjoyed more about being a TA in a CMS class?
One thing that I am really impressed with is that every student has really improved in giving a speech compared to the previous ones, in terms of organizing content, their delivery skills, and being more confident, and less anxious. It is always great to see that students actually do learn and achieve throughout the well-planned and well-guided classroom instructions. I have also learned a lot of different strategies from my mentor teacher that I can use when I go back to Korea.

What are your plans after you graduate?
I will go back to Korea, and teach at high school again. I believe the time in the MA TESOL program at SFSU is broadening my perspective on English teaching and is shaping me into a well-educated language teacher.

Amy is a 2nd year MA TESOL student from London, England. In Fall 2015, she was a TA for Sandra Arriaga’s ENG 215 class.

What brought you to San Francisco State?
I did some preliminary research online for graduate programs and SFSU’s MA TESOL program stood out to me. It appealed to me because of its dual emphasis on theory and practicum, and also because it is one of the oldest and largest programs in the U.S. I was also attracted to San Francisco State because of its location. As someone who grew up in a big city, I love studying and living in San Francisco.

(continued on next page)
Why TESOL?

 Whilst traveling around South East Asia, I volunteered at an organization in Northern Thailand teaching English to people living in the northern hill tribes. It was there that I caught the teaching bug. I fell in love with teaching and decided that it was something that I wished to pursue further.

What have you enjoyed more about being a TA in a CMS class?

I really appreciate the fact that my learning experiences in the CMS classroom have directly corresponded to the theory I have been learning in my TESOL classes. In class we examined how to respond and give feedback to students about their writing. During the TA-ship, I got the chance to observe my mentor’s approach to feedback, and I also had the opportunity to practice giving feedback myself. I was able to grade short writing assignments, respond to students’ journal entries and even meet with individual students for one-on-one writing conferences. These were great experiences and really helped me to practice and gain confidence in my approach to providing feedback.

What are your plans after you graduate?

My plan is to teach at the A.L.I. for as long as possible, to get some valuable practical experience. My long-term goal is to return to Thailand to work as an EFL teacher there.

What brought you to San Francisco State?

I did my BA here and I didn’t want to stop, because I knew I wanted to get my master’s too. I also liked San Francisco so much because of its diverse environment, and compared to other places, there’s such a wide range of acceptance for different kinds of people. Why did I choose to do TESOL here? Because it’s the oldest and best program in the whole wide world to me!

Why TESOL?

Being a teacher and helping students learn has always been my dream. I chose TESOL because I’m an English second language learner; I was when I first came here, and I still am. Because of my experiences, I know what they need, and I understand their struggle to learn. I can relate to them, so that’s what draws me to this field and connects me to the students we teach.

What have you enjoyed most about being a TA in a CMS class?

I have taken a lot of ESL classes, but CMS is completely different. The level of education in CMS is of a much higher caliber than any other program for second language learners. As a TA, I can see how it really helps students develop their writing skills, and prepares them for true college-level writing, which is so valuable. The curriculum is very creative, and the teachers are knowledgeable and approachable. I truly believe in my heart that this is the very best program for English language learners. It makes me wish I were a student in the program!

What are your plans after you graduate?

I will be teaching at the ALI in the Spring, and plan to continue working there for awhile after I graduate to gain more experience. I may also go teach abroad, but plan to find my way back to SFSU and teach in the CMS program.

Reeta Duong

Reeta is a 2nd year MA TESOL student from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. In Fall 2015, she was TA for Sandra Arriaga’s ENG 215 class.
Why did you become a teacher in CMS?

Originally, I wanted to teach French, since I majored in French Education in college and was passionate about it. However, things changed after I first taught English in France, through a teaching Fulbright. There, I continued studying French, while teaching English to high school students. I really enjoyed the experience, and at some point, decided that I was better at English than I was at French, so after completing my Fulbright, I continued teaching English. I moved around a lot, teaching in Florida, again in France, and then in Spain for some time. It wasn’t until I was working as a social worker in San Luis Obispo that I first heard about MA TESOL. A friend there told me about SFSU. When I came, I did the program, taught at the ALI, and also got the composition certificate. When I finished, I taught in both the CMS and Composition program before becoming the CMSPT Coordinator (known as the ESLPT at that time). After that, I stuck with teaching CMS classes. I chose to stay because I liked it here- the school, the city, and the students in the program.

What is the best moment you can recall of teaching in your classroom?

I can’t pick any one moment, but what keeps me coming back are the students. It’s the moments like when you see a student understand something, such as the grammar; I see it as a puzzle, and when they put the pieces together in the right place, I see it click in their face, as they go, “Oh!” I see it too when they ask good questions, and relate the readings to things happening in their own life. It’s these small moments that are most exciting to me and are what I enjoy most about teaching.

What is something you have learned from your students?

You can’t always have the answer. The answer is sometimes much more complicated, and you need time to think about it.

Any advice for students on how to survive University?

Participate. Whether it is in class, in group discussions, joining student groups or activities, it is so vital to be a part of your college experience. Turn off the cell phone. Be in the moment. Participate in your campus community.

Have you ever been to a foreign country before? If so, what did you enjoy the most?

Yes, I have lived in France, Spain and England. What I like most is living in a country for an extended period of time. I like getting to know the food, the culture, the people, and everyday life. I especially love history, so I enjoy going to old cathedrals, and visiting old sections of town, just to lose yourself in the history of a place and imagine what it was like many years ago.

What’s your favorite kind of food?

French, Italian, and Mexican.

Outside of teaching, she enjoys reading historical mysteries, where she can be dropped into an accurate portrayal of a period in time long ago.
Appreciations

Special thank you to all the individuals who helped put this newsletter together and who keep our CMS community thriving!

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We wish you a Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

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