

Nate Mickelson

Writing as a Way of Staying Human in a Time that Isn't

SERIES IN LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

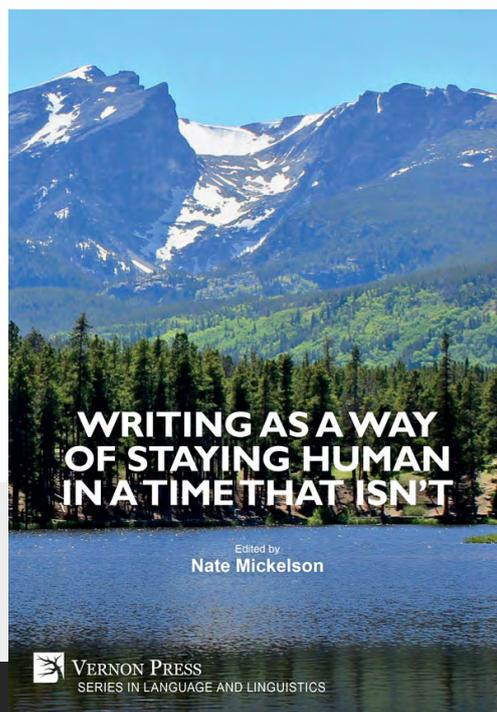
"This book is an edited collection for our times, one that speaks to a desperate need to embrace our shared humanity and refocus our individual and collective energies on imagining and working toward a more equitable, peaceful, and humane future. The essays in this collection remind us that writing can be a powerful tool for this purpose. Writing, as described by the authors of these essays, is both a tool for living and a way of being. In this sense, this collection is an antidote to the tendency, so fashionable in Writing Studies and education today, to approach writing as a "transferable" skill, a conception that limits our vision of the humanizing role that writing can play in our lives. Each of these authors contributes to this vision by showing us how writing can be, variously, a practice of empathy, self-realization, caring, well-being, and joy. Without denying the importance of writing as an essential communicative practice, these authors nevertheless reject the prevailing idea that the significance of writing lies primarily in its use as a means of learning and conveying content; rather, these authors describe the transformative possibilities of writing when it is liberated from the constraints of strictly utilitarian purposes. Because the vision of writing presented by these authors is unconventional, some readers might find these essays challenging for the ways in which they call into question mainstream pedagogies and practices. But readers who allow themselves to set aside conventional expectations will be rewarded by the compelling and hopeful accounts of writing's possibilities that these authors offer us."

Prof. Dr. Robert Yagelski
State University of New York at Albany

Summary

The human element of our work has never been more important. As Robert Yagelski explains in *Writing as a Way of Being* (2011), the ideological and social pressures of our institutions put us under increasing pressure to sacrifice our humanity in the interest of efficiency. These problems only grow when we artificially separate self/world and mind/body in our teaching and everyday experiences. Following Yagelski and others, *Writing as a Way of Staying Human in a Time that Isn't* proposes that intentional acts of writing can awaken us to our interconnectedness and to ways in which we—as individuals and in writing communities—might address the social and environmental challenges of our present and future world. Featuring essays drawn from a range of contexts, including college composition and developmental reading and writing, professional and legal writing, middle school English, dissertation projects, academic conferences, and an online writing group, the collection outlines three ways writing can help us stay human:

caring for ourselves and others; honoring the times and spaces of writing; and promoting justice. Each essay describes specific strategies for using writing as a means for staying human in inhuman times. The authors integrate personal stories, descriptions of classroom assignments and activities, and current research in writing studies. Their work shows that writing can contribute to personal, social, and political transformation by nurturing vulnerability, compassion, and empathy among students and instructors alike.



About the author

Nate Mickelson is Assistant Professor of English at Stella and Charles Guttman Community College, City University of New York (CUNY) and Associate Chair of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (AEPL). He was lead organizer of AEPL's 2017 conference "Writing as a Way of Being Human." He is the author of *City Poems and American Urban Crisis, 1945-Present* (Bloomsbury Studies in Critical Poetics). His articles have appeared in *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*, *Transformative Dialogues*, *Journal of College Literacy and Learning*, and *Learning Communities Research & Practice*. A native of Wyoming, Nate lives with his husband in Jackson Heights, Queens, NY.

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