

Introduction

Volunteer State Community College Best Essays is a new incarnation of a previous publication entitled *VSCC English Department's Best Essays*. As the early version has done over the past decade, this publication will continue to showcase some of the best writing being done by students at Volunteer State, and we have just expanded the publication to include examples of excellent writing from a variety of academic disciplines. While much of the work appearing here is nominated by faculty in the Department of English, which publishes this book, faculty from other disciplines are now also invited to nominate student essays for collection. This year, we are pleased to include our first essay from a discipline other than English, "Patriarchy's Roots," written by Amy Leu for History 1110, World Civilization 1.

Each year, instructors at Volunteer State nominate students who have demonstrated excellence in writing and invite them to submit an essay to our selection committee; that committee of Vol State faculty then works collaboratively to choose superior student work for publication. *Best Essays*, then, represents the exemplary writing of student authors, the efforts made by nominating faculty, and hours of hard work the selection committee does in reading and choosing the best of the best submissions.

The purpose of this publication is twofold: first, to showcase exemplary student writing by Vol State students, and second, to provide our faculty with helpful tools for teaching writing and critical thinking skills to our students.

The student essays published here exhibit the elements essential to high-quality, college-level writing. They are separated into three categories, and one student in each category is awarded a prize for his or her work. Prize winners are chosen based on creativity, critical thought, organization, and an awareness of the fundamentals of good writing.

Section 1 focuses on English Composition 1 (English 1010) expository writing, personal responses to topics, and essays which do not typically include formal research. The essays generally rely upon the rhetorical modes of narration, description, and illustration.

Section 2 focuses on researched essays written for English Composition 1. This category gives first semester composition students the chance to show off their beginning collegiate research skills without having to compete with more advanced writers. Good research essays employ rhetorical modes such as comparison and contrast and/or cause and effect as a means of critical analysis. They include research from a limited number of sources.

Section 3 focuses on research essays written by students for English Composition 2 (English 1020) and for other courses. It also may include essays from other disciplines. The arguments are well-developed, and the research for these essays may be substantial.

The student essays appearing in this publication were submitted between the Summer 2014 and Spring 2015 terms. We think they demonstrate both the excellence and diversity of student writing at Volunteer State. We would like to thank all the professors who nominated student essays and encouraged students to submit. We'd also like to extend our sincerest

congratulations to the students whose work appears here. It is our goal to continue to develop this project, and to publish the best student writing at Vol State in a way that is meaningful to both students and faculty alike.

Leslie LaChance, Committee Chair
On behalf of the Best Essays Committee
Fall 2015