

Faculty of Education  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong



# Teaching Writing in the 21st Century

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Auditorium B6, Ho Tim Bldg.

## Professor Richard Sterling

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For many years, the teaching of writing has been ignored in our schools. The emphasis on improving student performance in schools has largely centered on the teaching of reading and the study of mathematics. But writing may make the crucial difference between a perfunctory education and one that prepares young people for success both in the university and the workplace. Professor Sterling believes it has become *the* crucial skill for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The inclusion of a writing program implemented across all grade levels and subjects is mostly found in the highest achieving schools, both public and private. This deficiency regarding the lack of attention to the teaching of writing led the College Board in the US to form a Commission on the Teaching of Writing in America's Families, Schools and Colleges. Their reports, *The Neglected R*, which surveys the teaching of writing in K-12 schools, and *Writing: A Ticket in or a Ticket Out*, which surveys the writing needs of 120 major American corporations employing nearly 8 million people, have triggered a national debate on the importance of writing in the US. In addition, both of the college admissions testing programs, the SAT and the ACT have added a writing component, although the ACT is an optional test.

In addition to these changes in assessment, there are some optimistic signs in the culture of communication today. There has been an explosion of informal writing outside of the school settings, mostly by young people, and all emerging from the new uses of technology. Instant messaging, blogs, websites involving videos, digital photos, music and texts, and digital story telling are filling hours and hours of young people's time, all involving a complex series of literacy moves.

It is these contrasting settings that the lecture will address.

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