

Curriculum Vitae

Sara Whitestone
Professor/Creative Writer
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Biography

Sara Whitestone is a writer, photographer, and teacher. In exchange for instruction in English, her students at John Jay College in NYC introduce her to the mysteries of the world. Whitestone discovers writing through travel. Her works appear in book anthologies and many popular and literary magazines including *The Portland Review*, *Word Riot*, *Piedmont Virginian*, and *Literary Traveler*. Her current short project is about her search for writing and healing, and her book-in-continual-progress is a fictional autobiography. To learn more about Whitestone's inner and outer adventures, visit sarawhitestone.com.

Current Professional Appointment

2013 to present: Full-time Lecturer in English, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (John Jay), a senior school of the public City University of New York (CUNY)

Courses Taught

Freshman Writing:

- English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for ESL students at the lower, intermediate, and advanced levels.
EAP 121, FA 13, FA 14, FA 15
EAP 131, SP 13, SP 14
ENGW 100, FA 14
These 3 courses are credit-bearing and prepare students to pass the CUNY skills exams in reading and writing while also scaffolding assignments that offer practice for better success in English 101.
- English 101 First Year Composition (ESL sections) FA 13, SP 14

Non-traditional:

- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)—SP 14 hybrid, SU 14 fully online)
This fully online writing course is for adults who are returning to college after an extended absence.

Creative writing:

- Creative Nonfiction (SP 14, FA 15, SP 15)
This course teaches students how to write works that include photo, travel, personal, nature, art, and science essays.
- Expressive Writing: Words that Heal (fully online, SU 15)
This was a pilot course in which students read psychological studies about how writing brings healing and then also wrote expressively themselves in order to find meaning through their own traumatic experiences.
- The Writing Workshop, FA 15
This is the introductory creative writing course for the John Jay writing minor. It highlights the personal essay, a short story of fiction, and poetry which includes the lyric essay.
- The Art of the Autobiography (course in development)

Service

- In collaboration with colleagues, revamping the EAP program to become more aligned with the rest of John Jay's writing curriculum
- Writing policy on the intake, placement, and advancement of John Jay's English as a Second Language (ESL) students
- Assessing the EAP program and writing the yearly report
- Assisting in assessment of the overall John Jay College writing program
- Providing training for writing tutors in the SEEK department (for at risk students), the EAP program, and the full John Jay Writing Center
- Developing the PLA program through policy setting and curriculum design
- Presenting to faculty on how to help students learn to self-evaluate their own writing and the trajectory of ESL students
- Collaborating with students to create and maintain a website for John Jay College students' Creative Nonfiction called [JJayCreation](#)
- Preparing students in the Creative Nonfiction class to present posters of their work during John Jay's annual Research and Creativity week
- Coordinating, training a mentoring students in the Student Assistant (SA) program for the English Department, in which students are attached to courses, the goal being that the assigned SA becomes a liaison between the professor and students in the class
- Mentoring students through their academic life at John Jay and then also as they prepare for graduate school or professional careers

Research Interests

- Discovering how expressive writing brings mental, emotional, and physical healing to those who practice it
- Through cognitive psychology, understanding how fear and memory relate to learning—especially to the writing process
- Documenting how international students who are educated in America are then returning to their home countries in order to assist in development and push for social change

Invited Talks and Presentations from 2008 to Present

- Invited author talk for the MA in Writing Program, Johns Hopkins Conference on Craft, Nature, Place, and Environment: Mountain Immersion in the Shenandoah National Park, Virginia, June 12, 2015
Prior to my arrival, Johns Hopkins writing students read and analyzed my [“Nature of Fear”](#) essay. When I was onsite they asked me questions they had prepared about my writing process. I then served on a panel that discussed writing and publishing and also work-shopped several students’ creative works.
- Invited author reading at New World Stages, New York City, November 16, 2014
I was invited by the Dramatic Adventure Theatre to read my Travel/Nature Essay, [“Patina,”](#) from the anthology, *On Foot: Grand Canyon Backpacking Stories*.
- [“Creative Nonfiction Online,”](#) lecture in Dr. Michelle Brown’s Online Genres in Creative Writing course, Shenandoah University, Winchester, VA September 2014
- Two workshops entitled [“Why Women Need to Write”](#) and “Why Young Women Need to Write,” Winchester, VA, June and August 2014
- [“How Writing Brings Healing,”](#) lecture in Dr. Michelle Brown’s Trauma Narratives course, Shenandoah University, Winchester, VA April 2014
- “Show Them How and Then Get Out of the Way” workshop on student self-evaluation for Faculty Development Day, John Jay College, January 2014
- “Our Story: A Model of Student and Teacher Collaboration,” co-presented with international student Joaquin Gonzalez at the Southeast Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESOL) conference, September 2012

- “Finding the Form and with It the Freedom,” a reading of this creative-nonfiction essay on craft at the Ohio University’s conference on Experimental Creative Writing, sponsored by the literary journal, *Quarter After Eight*, October 2010
- “Piloting ESL Support Programs in the University Writing Center,” co-presented with Dr. Doug Enders at the Southeast TESOL conference, September 2008

Publications from 2008 to Present

- “Finding the Form and with it the Freedom: Creative Writing with ESL College Students,” teaching article forthcoming in *Humanising Language Teaching*, October 2015, Online
- “The Passion of Ballooning in the Blue Ridge,” cover story photo essay, in *The Piedmont Virginian*, Fall 2014, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “Patina,” creative nonfiction essay in the anthology, *On Foot: Grand Canyon Backpacking Stories*, published by Vishnu Press, September 2014, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “Fearless: An Interview with Novelist Adam Berlin,” in *Word Riot*, August 2014, Online, acceptance rate 2%
[Read it here](#)
- “The Graciousness of Muslim Women,” an essay in the anthology *Finding the Islam of Tomorrow*, published by the CUNY Dispute Resolution Center, John Jay College, July 2014, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “An Outsider’s View of Guns and the Men Who Shoot Them,” creative nonfiction essay, in *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, June 2014, Online
[Read it here](#)
- “Only a Moment,” poem, in *The Voices Project*, April 2014, Online
[Read it here](#)

- “The Silencer,” fiction, excerpt from novel-in-progress by same name, in *The Portland Review*, Summer 2013, Print, acceptance rate 2%
[Read it here](#)
- “Honesty Laid Bare,” lyric essay, in *Prime Number Magazine*, Issue 31.2, January-March 2013, Online, acceptance rate 5%
[Read it here](#)
- “Powerful Presence,” photo essay, in *Piedmont Virginian*, Spring 2013, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “The Question of Pigs,” opinion essay, in *Foliate Oak Literary Magazine*, March 2013, Online
[Read it here](#)
- “Fort Star: Exploring the history of the Second Battle of Winchester during its 150th Anniversary,” photo essay in *Winchester Life*, March 2013, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “James Joyce and the Golden Gate of Pula,” travel essay, *Literary Traveler*, February 2013, Online
[Read it here](#)
- “A Walk in the Woods in Winter,” photo essay, *Winchester Life*, February 2013, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “Route 11 Potato Chips: A Small Company with Big Taste,” article, *Winchester Life*, February 2013, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “The Nature of Fear,” creative nonfiction essay, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, Volume 7.4, January 2013, Online
[Read it here](#)
- “On Tragedy, Hope, and Love: Stories from Two Italian Castles,” travel essay, *BootsnAll*, December 2012, Online
[Read it here](#)
- “Elections, Eels, Castles, and Cathedrals: On My Student’s Own Turf in Nantes, France: Part 2,” travel essay, *BootsnAll*, October 2012, Online
[Read it here](#)

- “On Their Own Turf: How My Students Became My Teachers in France,” travel essay, *BootsnAll*, September 2012, Online
[Read it here](#)
- “Freedom and Power: A Talk with Zelda Lockhart,” an interview with novelist Lockhart, *North Carolina Literary Review*, Summer 2012, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “Daniel,” creative nonfiction essay about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and AIDS, *Summerset Review*, Spring 2012, Online, acceptance rate 3%
[Read it here](#)
- “How One Tutoring Experience Changed My Teaching,” teaching article, *Humanising Language Teaching*, February 2012, Online
[Read it here](#)
- “Reality,” prose poem, *Chiron Review*, Spring 2011, Print
[Read it here](#)
- “Fishing for Hearts,” teaching article, *Essential Teacher*, September 2008, Print
[Read it here](#)

Past Teaching Experience

2007 to 2013: ESL Coordinator, Shenandoah University (SU), a private accredited university

- Mentored students in gaining admission to college and graduate schools
- Built and coordinated the ESL program, including the ESL Certificate Degree
- Developed and taught for-credit college level courses, each with a strong writing focus
- Taught Reading, Writing, Listening, and Public Speaking to both undergraduates and graduates—both online and face to face
- Hired and supervised staff
- Directed intensive language program for 3 summers
- Trained and supervised tutors in the Writing Center
- Used the Writing Center as the focal point of my classes, providing students with one-on-one instruction
- Consulted and collaborated with faculty in the divisions of Arts and Sciences, Business, Health Professions, and Conservatory
- Designed and conducted research, obtaining necessary IRB approvals
- Presented at internal faculty workshops and regional conferences

- Assessed student needs in both reading and writing through standardized testing and through informal evaluation
- Taught reading comprehension strategies
- Advised ESL students in their programs
- Mentored students through academic multi-disciplined writing projects
- Assisted students in transfer and graduate applications
- Managed the ESL program budget
- Found funding for special projects and conferences
- Presented with students at conferences and worked to publish their writings
- Assessed program for yearly accreditation purposes

2000 to 2007: All Ways Learning (AWL), a 501 (c) 3 non-profit educational organization

- Tutored students one-on-one and in small groups for the reading and writing portions of college entrance testing including SAT and ACT, with high success rates
- Mentored American students from middle school on up, following them through the college application process and into their freshman year
- Founded the organization and served on the Board of Directors
- Assessed student academic strengths and weaknesses through standardized tests and informal evaluation
- Used educational therapy to remediate students, helping them to overcome learning disabilities, especially in reading and writing
- Trained teachers and parents in writing strategies
- Supervised colleagues with advanced degrees as well as college interns and other staff, monitoring teaching methods and procedures at all grade levels from pre-kindergarten through college in the areas of reading, writing, speech, and literature
- Taught writing to students at all grade levels
- Developed a curriculum called *Responses to Literature*, with over one hundred study guides that heavily emphasize the writing process

1998-2000: Boyce Elementary, a public school in Boyce VA

- Taught second grade at this public school, where I developed a children's literature and writing program that was used by several other staff members
- Directed student plays and public readings from a wide variety of literature and poetry

1988-1998: Private Tutoring, self-employed/government contractor

- Worked with all levels and abilities of students from kindergarten through college in all subjects, with emphasis in the areas of reading and writing

- Partnered with an educational psychologist in a government sponsored program, facilitating learning and success for at-risk students in high school and college.

Education

M.Ed. in Reading/English/ESL, Tulane University, 1989
 Johns Hopkins Conference on Craft, 2012
 Chautauqua Writers' Center, Chautauqua Institute, 2010
 Baltimore Writers' Conference—Towson University, 2010
 Creative Writing Nonfiction graduate course—Johns Hopkins University, 2009
 Creative Writing for Children graduate course—Shenandoah University, 1994
 Storytelling graduate course—Penn State University 1988
 B.S. in Elementary Education—San Diego Christian College, 1986

References

Colleagues

“You have overseen and participated in a number of important initiatives that have a direct impact on our curriculum and students. Your achievements exceed performance expectations. Your contribution to the students, department, and college is exemplary.”

—Dr. Valerie Allen acting English Dept. Chair (2013-2014), John Jay
 Phone: 212.237.8594; email: vallen@jjay.cuny.edu

“Your careful presentation on tutoring non-native English speaking students was especially welcome. I am certain that as a result of your presentation, the Writing Center tutors will be more prepared to serve the needs of NNES English 101 students. You went out of your way to provide them with pedagogy, handouts, etc. Thank you for your spirit of collaboration and your generosity. We need more faculty members like you.”

—Dr. Livia Katz, Director of the John Jay Writing Center
 Phone: 212.237.8567; email: lkatz@jjay.cuny.edu

“We owe so much of the success we have had so far [in Prior Learning Assessment] to all of the time you spent with me throughout the year, talking through problems and ideas, helping me figure out how to find the best students to participate in PLA, how to advise them, and clarifying the vision and goals of the program. It was a real challenge going into it without a roadmap and you handled it with skill and courage, creating an experience for the students—and for me—that was truly joyful.”

—Michael Rohdin, Director of Operations and Coordinator of PLA, John Jay
 Phone: 212.484.1343; email: mrohdin@jjay.cuny.edu

“Whitestone is a person of deep perception and exquisite writing ability, with endless compassion for students and boundless energy and enthusiasm for her work and her life.”¹

—Dr. Mark Richardson, Associate Professor of Writing, SU
Phone: 540.665.4500; email: mrichsn@gmail.com

“Ms. Whitestone is a committed educator who seeks to work collaboratively with others to create programs that really benefit students. Her masterful teaching practices and respectful treatment of students make her a model instructor.”

—Dr. Doug Enders, Director of Writing, SU
Phone: 540.665.4500; email: wenders@su.edu

“From every teaching standpoint, Sara is exceptional. In point of fact, Sara Whitestone is one of the very finest Instructors I have ever known. Although her Vita speaks for itself, Sara also brings with her extraordinary competence, charisma, and participatory passion.”

—Mr. John Winn, JD, LL.M., Associate Professor of Law, School of Business, SU
Phone: 540.665.4500; email: jwinn@su.edu

“I have known Sara for approximately six years and have found her to be a dedicated educator and advocate for students. She consistently goes “the extra mile” to help international students get assimilated to the university’s academic culture and then pushes them to be successful. It has been my privilege to teach mathematics to a number of Sara’s students and see the care she takes with each student.”

—Dr. Cindia Stewart, Associate Professor of Mathematics, SU
Phone: 540.665.4500; email: cstewart@su.edu

“Sara Whitestone is a talented writer who has worked to develop a prose style that is both complex and accessible. Her incisive work covers subjects as far ranging as visits to European castles and the wrenching death of a loved one.”

—Ms. Evelyn (Ginger) Garver, Writing Center Supervisor, SU
Phone: 540.665.4500; email: egarver@su.edu

“Sara’s hardworking, diligent, and goal-oriented attributes makes her a great asset in working not only with international students but with faculty and staff as well. She is highly respected by all groups. Sara can work independently as well as follow through with any task at hand and always has a very positive attitude. She is considerate, fair-minded, trustworthy, and takes her responsibilities seriously.”

—Ms. Betty Wardrope, Coordinator/PDSO, International Student Advisor, SU

¹ Full letters of all excerpts are available on request.

“As a professional, Sara is hard working, creative, knowledgeable, and student centered. Her sincere desire to help her students achieve their academic and career goals shines through in everything she does. On a personal level, Sara is always pleasant and cheerful and helpful and fun to be around. She is an outstanding colleague on many levels, and would be an asset to your organization.”

—Dr. Steven Humphries, Associate Professor and Chair, TESOL, SU
Phone: 540.665.4500; email: shumphri@su.edu

“Sara offers a compassionate worldview that infuses her writing with a respectful wonder that refuses to avoid the uncomfortable. The result is lyrical prose or poetry that rings true for the tensions it unearths, even when fictionalized.”

—Dr. Michelle Brown, Assistant Professor of English, SU
Phone: 540.665.4500; email: mbrown5@su.edu.

Former Students

“I think you deserve to know that it is through your encouragement and through your inspiration and through your kindness and through your passion that drives us and keeps us wanting to write the pieces and do the work even when we do not understand the challenge that comes with writing. You make us work harder than we thought we ever could. So I sincerely thank you for all that you've done and for all that you continue to do. When I teach someday, I will be thankful if god gives me half of the talent he has given you.”

—Aya Abedelmoamen, John Jay graduate, now teaching in an elementary school

“You were not just a professor to us but a role model, a supporter, a friend, and someone who we will remember forever. Class was more than just class with you, we learned about ourselves, you made each and everyone of us think to a point we never thought we could reach. Class was therapy for me. A class where I knew I was going to leave learning something, especially about life. The way you opened up to us was unbelievable. I hope we showed our appreciation in return. You taught/showed me what it is to be a strong woman. What it means to be happy, and even at your lowest you can still reach happiness one day.”

—Jenica Llanos, John Jay graduate, now an enrollment specialist at John Jay

“This wasn't just another class. This was a great experience. Professor Whitestone was so helpful in class and also she did a great job to help me to organize my academic life in general. I feel so happy that I had a chance to take a class with her. I improved my English dramatically and did better in other classes than I was supposed to.”

—Stanislav Kutypof, John Jay student whose first language is Russian

“What makes a writer? Must you have published work? Must you be able to generate income through a writing career? Is it how well you write? Or is it as simple as having a story to write? Professor Whitestone introduced us to these questions, gifting us writers with the motivation to tell our stories. To weave our experience into words on paper and give it to the world.”

—Jonathan Chan, English major, John Jay

“I’m going to keep writing, I’m going to keep looking for happiness, and I’m going to find my way because it’s who I am. You’ve helped me get to this option of acceptance and I thank you so much for being a professor that cares more about the student and their life than just a grade. Thank you for being there and supporting me. You’re class has changed my life and it’s because of the wonderful and kind person that you are.”

—Alondra Ramos, graduated English major, John Jay

“It is my great pleasure to tell you that I have been accepted to John Jay Honors program. Since you taught me in my first year of college, I was able to go one step closer to my dream. You have encouraged me a lot and helped me have less fear of being a college student.”

—Seonae Byeon, John Jay student whose first language in Korean

“Ms. Sara’s teaching, advice, and experience with international students have been so resourceful that I later became a highly competent student in schools, graduating with an honor in Laos and in the U.S., and a resourceful Communication Officer at Plan International in Lao PDR – let alone the fact that I am now a Fulbright candidate for 2013-2015. All of which achievements mentioned here are hugely influenced by Mrs. Sara after I had met her. In fact, her influence on my success is too great for me to express adequately in this letter.”

—Sankerdas Latthanhot, Fulbright scholar, now an MA graduate from Ohio University and working toward social change in his home country of Laos.

“Sara Whitestone made me who I am now, and I appreciate that she works hard for me.”

—Maha Alfraih, Saudi Arabian undergraduate business student at SU, graduated with honors, SP 2015.

“Sara is a wonderful person, a fantastic teacher, and a great writer. She has a way with words, and her ability to connect with people from around the world is unique—I know she has made a difference in their lives, just like she has in mine.”

—Katie Brown, American undergraduate teaching assistant in the SU Intensive Language Program, now a professional working in a communications company

“It is not an exaggeration to say that Ms. Whitestone is the best teacher whom I have ever seen. In addition, she is also a great mentor and friend for students.”

—Noritaka Okada, Japanese graduate arts management student, now managing the Oakland CA Performing Arts Center

“Sara knew when to push her students to achieve more, but also when they were struggling and needed time to engage a subject. I can still look back and specifically remember several essays that I wrote for her that invoked hard questions that I still dialogue about. I appreciated that she asked for deeper and more thoughtful responses about life issues and questions.”

—Jordan Smith, American high school student at All Ways Learning, now a college graduate and an English teacher at a private high school

“She is not just a wonderful teacher who explains to you the American history, the American anecdotes, the culture, who gives you the desire to read good American books and to write texts with your heart. She is also a person who gives you tools to open your mind and to evolve in this difficult world.”

—Karen Baranger, French undergraduate exchange student at SU, now a successful business owner in France

“An important impact that professor Whitestone had to me is that she is very open. She listens to students. Whenever I had problems, professor asked me to meet up and tell her why I was worried. And she always gave me advice that made me feel better, which does not mean that she gave me answers that I would like to hear but the answers that made me understand things better. This made me trust her and make my experience in the States so wonderful.”

—Chitsuda Chinati, Thai undergraduate exchange student at SU, now a pharmacist in Singapore

“I have known Sara for much of my life. She has influenced me through being both my teacher and my employer. When I think about the time that I have spent learning from or working for Sara, I am struck by the skilled way that she guided me in learning. For example, she would give me a task or assignment, and then trust me to get it done, allowing me the freedom to figure out the best way to go about accomplishing it. She made me feel confident in my abilities to problem solve and I knew if I needed help, she would be there to advise me. I truly value the independence and self-esteem that I developed through the opportunities I had to learn from my own mistakes and successes, always knowing that Sara was there to support me.”

—Corinne Accettullo, American student and staff member at AWL, now lead teacher in a Montessori school.

“At the beginning of the first semester, I would never say that my English was good enough to communicate with native people, but after taking Whitestone’s classes, my speaking, listening and writing skill got much better than before. On another occasion, I got some trouble with the other classes and I was so depressed. Despite of the fact that she does not have to deal with the problem, she was kind enough to help me in many ways. My Japanese friend said that Whitestone was the best teacher ever in his life, and that if it were not for her, he would not continue to study in U.S.”

—Kazutoshi Abe, Japanese undergraduate psychology student at SU

“As an international ESL student who studied under Ms. Whitestone, I achieved tremendous success. When I first started Ms. Whitestone’s ESL classes, my TOEFL score was 45. TOEFL is the English exam for those whom English is a second language. After studying with Ms. Whitestone, my TOEFL improved by twenty points, so that I received a 65. I know that my increase is due to the fact that Ms. Whitestone is a brilliantly effective teacher.”

—Kenyu Yamamoto, Japanese student at SU who received a $\frac{3}{4}$ academic scholarship to transfer to another American university, studying Environmental Science, now graduated with honors

“Sara’s class is heart-warming. One day, she brought two books for children and read them, like mother read for her children. I cried because it was so heartfelt. I feel I experienced how American children grow up.”

—Toyama Tomohiro—Japanese SU exchange student, now a banker in Tokyo

Ms. Whitestone “was always concerned about each student individually, not only about the academic aspect of the student, but also about his adaptation to a new country and a new life. Back then I had only 19 years old, and it was really important for me to have that kind of person by my side. She works really hard to inspire her students to perform at a very high level. Ms. Whitestone has excellent communication skills and a love for the English language, and she transmitted that to all of her students.”

—Pedro Blanco, Argentine exchange student to SU, now a MBA from a business school in Argentina

“Even though we were many cultures in one class, Sara Whitestone managed to lead the class in a very good way in order that everyone could understand her courses.”

—Maude Simon, French SU exchange student, now an MBA from a business school in France

“Whitestone’s classes were designed to target intermediate/advance students and make them ready for their programs. The classes improved my presentation skills, academic writing skills, and also reading skills. She always assigned us many homework and that was really helping for developing my skills.”

—Raad Alghmadi, Saudi Arabian SU MBA graduate, now a manager at an American medical company

“Sara can consider student’s problem as if she faced with the same problem. It is not exaggeration that she saved my friend’s life with her devotion. Students can learn from teachers not only skill and subjects, but also learn how they behave for students. I am so impressed her way as teacher. She worries student’s troubles and tries to find resolution together as if it was her own problem. I cannot find professor who think about their students as their family except her.”

—Keita Katsumi, Japanese studying jazz at SU, former ESL teaching assistant, and now a jazz musician in California