

## Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, co-authors of "They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing," deliver a lecture on September 22, 2010.

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY—In their public lecture on Wednesday, September 22, the dynamic husband and wife team of Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, who co-authored the best-selling textbook *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*, will try to dispel some of the mystery that often surrounds writing. Free and open to the public, the William Starr Annual Lecture will begin at 5:30pm in Taylor Hall, room 102.

“What does it mean to argue? And how is that different from making an argument?” Those are some of the questions that this year’s William Starr Distinguished Lecturers will address in their talk. Graff and Birkenstein maintain that the best academic writing rests on certain conventions or “moves” that can be made accessible to students through templates. With the most import of these conventions for students to learn involving entering into critical conversations and debates.

[Gerald Graff](#) is considered “one of his generation’s most influential commentators on education, not only as a historian and theorist, but also through his impact on the classroom practice of teachers.” He is the author of *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*; *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education*; *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*; and *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind* (this year’s common text for the Vassar College class of 2014). Graff is professor of English and education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2008, he served as president of the Modern Language Association (MLA) and he has been named the 2010 winner of the Francis Andrew March Award for distinguished service to the profession of English by the Associated Departments of English of the MLA.

Cathy Birkenstein has also published essays on writing in College English and, with Graff, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *College Composition and Communication*, and *Academe*. She is a lecturer in English at the University at the University of Illinois

where she has also helped direct the Writing in Disciplines program. Graff and Birkenstein are currently working on a textbook tentatively entitled *On Further Examination*, which will adapt principles of *They Say/I Say* to writing about literature.

Each year the William Starr Annual Lecture brings writers of every stripe - from journalists to poets - to Vassar's campus to address the first year students and talk to them about the writing process. Past speakers have included Salman Rushdie, Tim O'Brien, and Billy Collins. A book by each lecturer is selected as the common text for the freshman class to read. The William Starr Annual Lecture is sponsored by the dean of the faculty, the Freshman Writing Seminar program, and the Vassar First Year program.

Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations at Vassar should contact the Office of Campus Activities at (845) 437-5370. Without sufficient notice, appropriate space and/or assistance may not be available. Directions to the Vassar campus are available at [www.vassar.edu/directions](http://www.vassar.edu/directions).

Vassar College is a highly selective, coeducational, independent, residential liberal arts college founded in 1861.

*Posted by [Office of Communications](#) Thursday, September 2, 2010*