

Dreama Pritt: Teaching Composition Through the Works of Whedon: Is Joss Really Boss, or Is It Much Ado About Nothing?

In their 2010 book *Buffy in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching with the Vampire Slayer*, Jodie A. Krieder and Meghan K. Winchell said, “As instructors, we are always looking for new ways to enliven the classroom, engage students in difficult conversations about complicated topics, and spur them to think critically about the text in front of them and the world outside.” They further revealed that “[b]y exposing our students to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, we accomplish all of these goals.” By extending student exposure to the entirety of the Whedonverse—which crosses and connects multiple genres—these accomplishments take on even more depth and dimension. This presentation will be a detailed look at the experience of teaching collegiate Advanced Composition to both high school seniors and college freshmen using the works of Joss Whedon as impetus for critical thought, engaging discussion, and challenging written assignments. Works studied include *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (TV series), *Dr. Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog* (web series), *Firefly* (TV series), *Serenity* (film), *Astonishing X-Men* (graphic novel), *The Avengers* (film), *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (film), *Much Ado About Nothing* (film), and *Much Ado About Nothing: A Film By Joss Whedon* (book and screenplay), as well as a variety of academic articles, interviews, and other related materials. Student-produced artifacts include personal responses and reviews, research papers on Whedonesque topics, and creative projects—like short fiction, mini-graphic novels, film homages, and mixed media portraits. The presentation will address activities, challenges, successes, and reflections for improvement.