

Embargoed until 8 May 2017

Critical Writing Prize 2017: The Winners

We are pleased to announce the winners of the Critical Writing Prize 2017.

Education category

The winner is Simon Taylor for his essay *Mind the gap: encouraging boys to read*.

The runner-up is Lara Conner for her essay *Critically discuss theoretical models seeking to explain the causes and identifying features of dyslexia and consider how competing notions of literacy and literacy difficulties have shaped your understanding of dyslexia*.

Social Work category

The winner is Yvonne Rusere for her essay *A critical comparison of the Youth Justice Service in England and Wales and the Juvenile Justice System in South Africa in relation to Social Work practice*.

The runner-up is Kate Sedgewick for her essay *Are we Doing Youth Justice?*

The winners received £200 worth of Critical Publishing books and the winning essays are available to read on *The Critical Blog*: <https://thecriticalblog.wordpress.com>.

The **Critical Writing Prize 2017**, sponsored by Critical Publishing, is awarded for the best student essay demonstrating a high level of critical thinking. The prize, now in its fourth year, is open to any undergraduate or postgraduate student from the full range of social work and education related disciplines.

Effie Maclellan, Emeritus Professor at the University of Strathclyde and this year's judge, commented about this year's entrants:

"I was again privileged to judge the entries for the 2017 Critical Writing Prize. The importance of critical writing (to evidence critical thinking) cannot be overstated as it is the prime intellectual tool we have which enables us to consider, evaluate and decide the accuracy and/or truth of what others tell us. It is therefore right that Higher Education promotes this capability. But the demands of critical writing are considerable: not only must the person synthesise a range of evidence and/or argument in defence of a point of view; the person must also analyse the chosen arguments and evidence (through considering whether they are relevant, sufficient, credible, or accurate). Many of the entries this year were very good in marshalling the evidence. A good number also shaped argument and

evidence into a defensible point of view. However, while that of itself is a considerable skill, it does not constitute writing critically. Having 'laid out one's stall' so to speak, the critical writer must then disaggregate the point of view rehearsed, by identifying additional information that could have been useful; challenging unstated assumptions in the thinking/writing of any authority cited; and teasing out the implications of alternative points of view. A good number of the authors in this competition are still at an early stage in developing the analytical processes that let them come to a conclusion that really is their own. That said, reading this year's entries was a pleasure, as they all showed promise in the authorial skill of thinking and writing critically."

The winner in the social work category, **Yvonne Rusere of Coventry University**, nominated by her lecturer **Dr Gurnam Singh**, said:

"I felt really elated, honoured and shocked about this win. Having done my last placement in a youth offending team and subsequently working there as a practitioner I was eager to present a critical piece on the development of this service, the comparison aspect of the assignment afforded me the opportunity to analyse a parallel service i.e South African Youth Just Service. Coming from an African background the choice of the latter was natural."

The winner in the education category **Simon Taylor of the University of the West of Scotland**, nominated by his lecturer, **Dr Anne Pirrie**, was surprised by the news:

"It's an incredibly surprising and humbling moment to be recognised in this way and I am so grateful and moved to have been selected. It's a testament to the mentorship of Dr. Pirrie, and to the passion instilled by the whole teaching team at UWS by sharing their own with us. The essay's topic was one very close to my heart, and it was a privilege to learn so much about it and make a small contribution towards understanding more about it."

Julia Morris, Education Director at Critical Publishing explained:

"As the name of our company suggests, we value criticality and believe critical thinking should be a key attribute of effective professionals in education and social work. We want to encourage students in these subject areas, working at all levels, to improve their critical skills. The Critical Writing Prize, now in its fourth year, both promotes and rewards excellence in this area and we continue to be amazed by the high levels of entries we receive from the professionals of the future."

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For further information please contact:

Di Page, Critical Publishing di@criticalpublishing.com 01727 851 462

www.criticalpublishing.com