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Paper by Nadine Frasseto '12 published in the spring 2011 issue of *Metamorphosis*

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Paper by Nadine Frasseto '12 published in the spring 2011 issue of Metamorphosis

Summary: Frasseto's paper examines "passing" by African Americans in Jessie Redmon Fauset's novels.

(April 25, 2011)-A research paper written by Nadine Frasseto '12 was published in the spring 2011 issue of Metamorphosis, the online undergraduate research journal of The Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC). Her article, "Pardoning Passing in Comedy: American Style," was one of only two papers accepted this semester from any COPLAC member institution.

Frasseto discusses the phenomenon of "passing" among African Americans, a topic derived from an assignment in Associate Professor of English Michael Lackey's African American Women Writers course. One of two guest lecturers to visit the class, Vanessa Dickerson, professor of English at DePauw University, explored "passing," the conscious decision by a nonwhite individual to pretend to be white because his/her skin is light enough to be believable, in Jessie Redmon Fauset's fiction.

Fauset's book made the topic more specific, says Frasseto. Since the assignment involved refuting a particular viewpoint, Frasseto examined Mary Conde's work, *Passing in the Fiction of Jessie Redmon Fauset and Nella Larsen*, and its conclusion that the characters in the novels were more often than not forgiven for the choice to pass, focusing on those claims made in relation to Fauset's novel *Comedy: American Style*.

"Nadine Frasseto has written a remarkably insightful essay," enthuses Lackey, who submitted the paper to Metamorphosis. "A well-regarded scholar argues that Jessie Redmon Fauset supports light-skinned blacks who pass for white in order to secure the basic rights accorded to white Americans. Nadine disagrees, but instead of just arguing the opposite, she clarifies when passing, according to Fauset, is acceptable and when it is destructive and blameworthy. With a commanding grasp of primary and secondary sources, Nadine writes with a precision and authority rare among undergraduates."

An English and economics major from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Frasseto often looks at literary works through the lens of economics. The two fields overlap, she finds, in the socioeconomic and behavioral, rather than the mathematical, aspects of economics. This approach enabled her to analyze Fauset's work in terms of the characters' motivations, in contrast to Conde's focus on race, seeing them as naturally connected issues. "It's interesting how the idea of passing is closely tied to economic status in this [Fauset's] book," Frasseto argues.

Frasseto's future plans include continuing her work at the intersection of English and economics during graduate study.

Read Frasseto's paper [online](#).

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