

How Do I Teach Writing
When I Don't *Teach* Writing?
Resources and Strategies for WI Courses

Sherrie Weller
Writing Program Faculty
Department of English

*Focus on Teaching and Learning:
Spring Semester 2013
Thursday, January 10, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
Corboy Law Center, room 208
Water Tower Campus*

How can I tell what I think until I see what I say?
-E.M. Forster

We do not write in order to be understood,
we write in order to understand.
-C. Day Lewis



CAS Writing-Intensive (WI) courses recognize and underscore the recursive nature of the link between strong critical thinking and effective academic writing.

i.e. read, think, write, think, revise, read, write, think, revise, think, write some more...



Very Brief History & Overview of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Pedagogy in Higher Education

- WAC movement grew in the late 1970's-early 1980's
- Concern over declining verbal scores on standardized tests, complaints from business and industry were fueling reform in many colleges and universities.
- Grew also in response to a *Newsweek* article, "Why Can't Johnny Write?" (Dec. 8, 1975: 61) that criticized American universities for producing students with poor literacy skills.



Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing-Intensive (WI) courses

- Philosophy that writing instruction should happen across the academic community and throughout a student's undergraduate education.
- Based on premise that students learn critical thinking best when actively engaged in the subject matter of a course through writing.
- When students use writing as a means of inquiry and problem solving in various classes, they simultaneously learn the material and become better writers.
- WAC acknowledges the differences in writing conventions across the disciplines, and believes that students can best learn to write in their areas by practicing those discipline-specific writing conventions.



Writing-Intensive (WI) Requirements and Courses at Loyola

UCWR 110 University Core Writing Seminar (3 credits, prerequisite for further WI courses)

- focus on brainstorming, peer review, revision and final editing.
- articulate, organize and support written positions.
- read texts carefully and critically, and to recognize how various perspectives inform interpretations of texts.
- grammatical, compositional, methodological and rhetorical skills in the service of effective communication.
- Essays include: summary / response essay, analysis essay, argument / synthesis essay, and researched argument project (with proposal, an argument in brief, and an annotated bib).



Writing-Intensive Requirements at Loyola (continued)

- Beyond UCWR 110, Students complete two WI Core curriculum electives
- WI courses incorporate the recursive nature of writing as a tool for effectively engaging and evaluating students in your usual non-WI required content.
- The only difference: integrating use of the writing process in activities and assignments that serve the class material and your course objectives.



How do I design a Writing-Intensive course?

In-Class activities:

- “low stakes” non-graded writing should be assigned for practice in writing strategies (free-writes / journal responses to prepare for essays).
- class time should be devoted to the conventions of writing in the discipline, such as structural requirements, documentation format, and document design.
- class time should be devoted to the principles of good writing, such as organization, unity, development, clarity, directness, and correctness through



More In-Class Activities for WI courses:

- “learning to write” activities such as generating tentative thesis statements, working on options to structure an essay, combining choppy sentences with logical links, and editing for excess.
- The process of writing should be addressed by moving through the stages of writing: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.
- Peer review of student drafts through workshop
- Some class time should be devoted to discussions of student sample papers, perhaps as models of successful responses or as examples of papers that need further revision.



Outside of Class / Online WI Activities:

- Use of Blackboard for discussion board posts and responses on course content
- Reading Journal posts or short response essays
- Peer review of essay drafts done online through discussion board



Consider the use of Essay Portfolios to Emphasize Writing Process:

- For medium (3-4 pgs.) to longer essays (5-6 pgs.) and research essays (7-10 pgs.)
- Turn in process work with final revision of essay (brainstorming, outline, drafts, peer reviews, final essay)
- Use peer review workshop sheet and detailed grading rubric that evaluates writing in detail (see examples in handout)



On campus and online WI Resources for
Instructors and Students:

Loyola Writing Center (LSD and WTC)

General Website:

<http://www.luc.edu/writing/home>

Specifically for Students on Writing
Process Tips:

[http://www.luc.edu/writing/getting_Started.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/writing/getting_started.shtml)



Another Great Resource for Instructors and Students

Purdue's OWL (Online Writing Lab):

- writing resources and instructional material,
- provides as a free service for users worldwide
- information to assist with many writing projects.
- materials for in-class and out-of-class instruction.

General website:

owl.english.purdue.edu/owl



Close the door. Write with no one looking over your shoulder. Don't try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It's the one and only thing you have to offer.

--Barbara Kingsolver

You fail only if you stop writing.

-Ray Bradbury

