

TEACHING WITH WRITING

THE OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING INTENSIVE CURRICULUM (WIC) NEWSLETTER
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Editor's Note: You'll find this issue of *Teaching with Writing* shows you two ways that OSU teachers have thought about using informal writing activities to teach their course material. The example on this page is from philosophy; the ideas on page 2 come from botany. See page 3 for this term's seminar and workshop schedule.

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Philosophy Example

This writing activity is designed to help students "understand and appreciate the extent to which one's philosophical presuppositions about the law shape real decisions in real cases."

1. Read the following case study and answer the question that follows it. (8 minutes)

In 1989, Franz Abelson was tried and convicted in an East German court for embezzling the equivalent of \$10,000 from the government-owned computer firm he worked for. He was sentenced to seven years in prison. Last Wednesday at midnight, the East German government officially ceased to exist, and East Germany became a part of the reunited nation of Germany. The East German laws were suspended and replaced by the laws of what used to be West Germany. Abelson has petitioned the new German court for immediate release from prison on the grounds that the laws under which he was convicted are not longer in effect.

If you were a judge in that court, would you recommend that Abelson be released? Why or why not?

(Sufficient space given here.)

2. Pass this sheet to the person behind you (the last row wrapping around to the front of the classroom). On the sheet you now hold, answer these questions: Which of the three theories of the nature of law that we have studied do you believe is presupposed by your classmate's answer to question #1 above? That is, what must that classmate believe about the origin and validity of law? Explain why you think so. (10 minutes)

(Sufficient space given here.)

3. Return the sheet to the person who answered question #1. Once you have your own paper, read what your classmate has said about your view of the nature of law. If you don't understand something or if you disagree with something, ask your classmate about it.

Botany Example

Students will be asked to turn in up to ten items that represent at least five of the following types of writing tasks. In each case, the writing may be turned in in "rough draft" but easily readable form. The receipt of suitable papers will be recorded and mistakes of fact or concept noted but not corrected. Length: 0.5 to 2 pages. Credit: 1% of the term grade each.

1. Writing to remember. Write field notes for yourself in order to record a) what you see on some part of a field trip, and b) your ecological interpretation of what you see.
2. Writing to teach. For a friend who missed class, write an explanation for a difficult or complex subject introduced in lecture.
3. Writing to correct. Provide a corrected answer to an essay question on which you did poorly.
4. Writing to relate. For some laboratory exercise or field trip, convince the instructor that you can relate something you observed to some specific concept given in lecture.
5. Writing to inquire. Pose a question for the instructor to answer at the next review session; make sure you explain why you need further clarification.
6. Writing to persuade. Choose one scientific concept that can be directly related to some societal controversy or decision. Write a letter to the editor invoking this concept to help persuade the public to think as you do about the controversy.
7. Writing to summarize. Choose one section of the course--at least four consecutive lecture topics long--and write a summary of its most important points for a friend who's interested in the subject but couldn't take the course.
8. Writing to propose. Propose to your boss either a) a change in land management policy, or b) a research project (on an area we saw on a field trip), giving reasons based on course material.
9. Writing to express. In a letter to a good friend, share your feelings about something that happened in this course or some location we visited. Discuss your feelings, and the reasons for them.
10. Writing to test. Write an essay question for an examination, provide an acceptable answer, and explain briefly why this question is important enough to ask on a test.

WINTER TERM WIC SEMINAR BEGINS JANUARY 16th;

The first meeting for the winter term's WIC seminar participants is set for Wednesday, Jan. 16th, 3-5pm in Waldo 120. The seminar, which is fully enrolled, gives faculty the opportunity to meet once a week for five weeks in order to concentrate on and discuss techniques for using writing to teach course content.

The winter term seminar includes faculty from food management, political science, education, agriculture, exercise and sport science, art, fisheries and wildlife, microbiology, foreign languages, journalism, horticulture, agricultural and resource economics, philosophy, psychology, speech, and sociology.

Faculty completing the seminar may draw up to \$250 from the WIC budget to support their professional development.

SPRING SEMINAR ENROLLMENT CONTINUES

The spring term WIC seminar still has openings. Faculty interested in participating in the spring term seminar should ask to be nominated by their department chair. Departments may nominate no more than two faculty in any given term. Nominations should be sent to the WIC office, Waldo 125. Faculty selected for the spring seminar will be contacted during the first week of classes spring term.

WIC WORKSHOPS OFFERED WINTER TERM

The WIC workshops are designed to offer brief introductions to various topics associated with teaching/writing pedagogy. Faculty may sign up for just a single workshop or for as many as all five. Space is limited. To sign up, call the Center for Writing and Learning main desk at 7-2930. Here are the topics and dates for winter term workshops:

"What Are WIC Courses?"

Thursday, Jan. 17th, 3-4pm, Waldo 120

"How Can I Use Informal Writing to Encourage Students to Think?"

Thursday, Jan. 24th, 3-4pm, Waldo 120

"How Can I Design Effective Formal Writing Assignments?"

Thursday, Jan. 31st, 3-4pm, Waldo 120

"How Can I Help Writers Revise?"

Thursday, Feb. 7th, 3-4pm, Waldo 120

"How Can I Grade More Efficiently?"

Thursday, Feb. 14th, 3-4, Waldo 120

If you've had good success with writing activities, let us know. Send the WIC office (Waldo 125) a copy of your handout or a description of what you've done in your classes. What has worked for you may work for others as well. Look for such examples in future issues of *Teaching with Writing*.

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