TEACHING WITH WRITING

Pre/Views   by Vicki Collins

Are you looking for practical help in teaching with writing? This issue of TWW offers both high tech and low tech options. Jon Dorbolo's article on page 1 begins a three-part series on writing-to-learn using email. Jon's project is the outgrowth of WIC grant seed money awarded last spring. Now he is ready to make the assignments available to other WIC faculty.

This issue also includes suggestions for adapting Peter Elbow's "Believers and Doubters" concept for an in-class writing-to-learn exercise (page 2) which promotes critical thinking and jump-starts class discussion.

WIC teachers have expressed frustration with students' failure to truly revise drafts, even when they receive feedback from the teacher or peer reviewers. "The Process of Writing: Teaching Students to Revise" on page 3 offers suggestions for a cyclical revision process which begins with global revision and ends with techniques for better proofreading. Students don't know how to revise because they may

WIC ON-LINE

by Jon Dorbolo
OSU Philosophy Department

WIC techniques allow students to focus their thinking, apply writing skills, and communicate with peers. If these techniques can be employed without using in-class time, our teaching will profit. With WIC email activities it can be done well.

I have taught a philosophy course, InterQuest: Introducing Philosophy, on the Internet since Fall 1994. The clearest success in the development of this course is the introduction of WIC techniques by email. I want here to introduce you to this teaching strategy. In future articles I will present the mechanics and pedagogy of WIC on-line.

All OSU students have email access. They have accounts and several campus labs to work from. Assigning structured WIC email activities produces three benefits:

• Student participation is increased dramatically. Students report that email conversation is more comfortable than in-class discussion. I find near universal participation in email discussion.

• Email discussion turns out-of-class time into participation. Students use their own time to converse about class issues.

• Instructors are participants. You receive all the exchanges and may respond to them selectively and strategically.

Assigning structured email activities gives students more responsibility for learning without creating much additional work for you.

WIC ON-LINE - *continued from page 1*
That has to be a plus in anyone's book.

You do not need to be computer literate to use WIC email in your course, just computer aware. You need to use email yourself and be comfortable directing students to do so. Unless you are teaching computer applications, you need not take it on yourself to be a computer expert. There are likely to be several computer-smart students in your class who will cheerfully share their expertise.

Your work is to provide the learning content of the activity. WIC techniques employ informal, directed writing tasks. Email is a written communication medium that lends itself well to such tasks. The teaching challenge is to construct activities with focused educational objectives and clear directing steps. This article provides one example. A future article will explore methods for constructing WIC email activities.

Instruct all your students to activate their Email accounts. They may do this in about ten minutes in a campus lab. University Computing Systems (UCS) at Milne Hall provides handouts for this procedure, guides to email use, and schedules of campus labs. Some labs are open twenty-four hours seven days per week.

Hand out the activity directions and have students select activity partners in class. The selection process can be one of the creative features of the activity. Divide or combine students by belief, background, or any criterion relevant to the course. For a first activity, pairing experienced computer users with novices works well.

A well constructed WIC email activity articulates the task into concise steps. Each step has a due date. While the activity is fully carried out by the students, each message exchanged is cc:'d (carbon copied) to you as well. This allows checking for completion, quality, and provides opportunities for your responses.

I seek to select my responses strategically rather than commenting on every message. A strategic response that brings out a point of general interest can be forwarded to the whole class by means of a class list. With a few thoughtful comments from you, the activity will transform into a intensive participation, high yield lesson with minimal work from you.

InterQuest students typically report that this method leaves them feeling more direct contact with their professor than they do in most other courses. They certainly enjoy more contact with other students than usual.

Here is an WIC email activity I have

A Writing-to-Learn Exercise: Critical Thinking as Believers and Doubters

On a class day when student have been assigned an article to read, divide the class into two groups, Believers and Doubters. Ask students to write without stopping (freewrite) for three minutes as follows:

> •Believers try to summarize the position or major point of the article, representing as clearly as possible the viewpoint of the author.

> •Doubters raise questions about the article, pointing out weaknesses in the argument or data and aspects that are unclear.

A few students can be asked to read their freewrites aloud as a way of starting class discussion. Adapted from *Writing Without Teachers* by Peter Elbow, published by Oxford University Press.

The Process of Writing: Teaching Students to Revise

Students in WIC classes need not only opportunities to revise their writing but also instruction in how to revise. They need to see revising as more than correcting typos and eliminating grammatical errors.

Here are some suggestions on how students can approach revision. Encourage students to take a piece of writing through several cycles of revising:

1. Begin revision with global issues:

   •Does the paper respond to the assignment?
   •What is the purpose of the paper? Where do I make that clear?
   •Is the paper directed toward the appropriate audience?
   •What is the overall thesis, idea, or position being presented? How can that be clarified or focused?
   •How can the overall organization of the paper be improved?

2. Check for adequate development, support, and transitions:

   •Are all required supporting sections present, clear, and fully developed?
   •Is documentation of outside sources needed? Is format correct?
   •Do I give the reader signposts/transitions to signal shifts from one topic or section to another?

3. Edit for correctness at the sentence and word level:
   •Spelling
   •Punctuation and grammar
   •Word choice
   •Sentence Structure

4. Read the paper aloud to catch awkwardness and confusing sentences.

5. Proofread beginning at the end and going backwards, sentence by sentence, in order to defamiliarize the text and spot errors more easily.

Point out to students that it is a waste of time to edit for correctness until they have dealt with larger revision problems.

[Teachers can revise this list to suit the requirements of specific assignments.]

WIC Calendar:

January

Monday, Jan. 15 - WIC Director Office hours begin

Wednesday, Jan. 17 - Nominations for Advanced WIC Seminar due

Wednesday, Jan. 17, 3-4:30 p.m. Meeting for 1995-96 WIC teachers, Waldo 121

Wednesday, Jan. 24, 3-5 p.m. Advanced WIC Seminar begins.

February

Thursday, Feb. 15 - WIC Grant Proposals Due

Are you teaching a WIC Course during the 1995-96 school year?

On Wed. January 17, 1996, there will be a meeting of all faculty teaching a WIC class during fall, winter or spring term. The purpose of the meeting is to provide information as well as opportunities for discussion, support, and feedback for (and from) WIC teachers.

Come and bring your questions about teaching with writing. Fall WIC teachers: we want to know how things went for you and what suggestions you have for other teachers.

WIC Meeting: Wed., January 17, 3-4:30, Waldo 121.

WIC ON-LINE - *continued from page 2*

used. I believe this can be used generically for just about any discipline. "Dear Author" has been effective in getting students to re-read their texts in preparation for their role-playing. Apparently students tend to hold high standards for what they present to other students.

You fill in the content (in the "<>" brackets) and it is ready to go. One week is a reasonable time frame for this activity. Be prepared to deal with the occasional student whose partner never responds. S/he can join another pair that is performing well.

I'd like to hear from anyone trying this out and any ideas you have about the method. <dorboloj@ucs.orst.edu>

"DEAR AUTHOR" Exercise

In class you should have paired with a conversation partner from your group. You should have that person's email address with you (put it in your email address book.)

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A CONVERSA-TION PARTNER, SEND ME A NOTE RIGHT AWAY <instructor's Email address>.

1) Think about reading "X." If you could ask the author of that text a question about it, what question would you ask? If you already know what you want to ask, great. If not, go back to the reading. Please try to fashion a substantial question that connects directly to the reading. Avoid loaded questions (i.e. "Why are you such a lousy writer?"); rhetorical questions ("Who are you to say?"); unrelated factual questions (i.e. "How many words on page 7?"); and insufficiently clear questions (i.e. "What is your view?"). You will know when you have a genuine and appropriate question when a real answer to it will help you in your work on the reading.

2) Now, keeping your question in mind, compose a short letter to the author of the reading.

In your letter tell the author about something that you did get (understand) from their work. You may also tell them how you feel about their work overall. Include in your letter the question you want answered (see step 1 above.)
DO THIS PART BY <date>.

3) Send your letter to your email partner (selected in class). If you do NOT have an email partner, contact me now. Put the email address of the person you are sending it to on the "to:" line. Put my address <professor@orst.edu> on the "Cc:" line (Carbon copy.) Do NOT send your messages in this project to your whole group address or the whole class address. This is between you and the author (with me along.) Note that in writing and sending this letter you are addressing your email partner as if s/he were the author of the reading. That's one reason to advance a serious, thoughtful question.

4) When you receive your email partner's letter, read it carefully. Your job is now to assume the role of the Author of the text. You are the writer of the second reading, now. Within that mindset, answer your partner's question as best you can. If you find the question unclear, write back with an explanation of what is not clear to you. At the end of this process you should be able to provide a good answer to the question (based on your understanding of the reading.) It is doubtful that you will be able to accomplish all this in one email session. This activity is designed to take up both of the two required sessions for the week. So get the question(s). Go back to the reading. Formulate an answer. Compose and send the response. Do this by <date>.

5) When you receive the reply to your letter, read it carefully. If significant questions remain or you disagree with the author's answer, reply to it with your comments. Be sure to send me copies of all the work you do on this project by including my address <Instructor's email address> onthe "cc:" line.

Library Research Tips: The Big Red Books and other Secrets of Subject Searching on OASIS

By Loretta Rielly
OSU Coordinator of Library Use Education

Do your students claim they "can't find anything" on OASIS? Or "The library doesn't have any books on my topic?" Chances are they really did try but they did not know the "correct" subject heading.

All items in OASIS are assigned to standardized subject headings devised by the Library of Congress. These subject headings can be dated (Cookery), political (Vietnamese conflict), a variant spelling (marihuana), euphemistic (Inefficiency, intellectual), or just plain odd (Oil well drilling, submarine). Fortunately, there are ways to find the correct subject heading:

1. Use the "big red books," the four-volume set of Library of Congress Subject Headings next to the OASIS terminals on the main floor of Kerr Library. They include "See" references and related, narrower, and broader terms used in the catalog.

2. Search by "Anyword(s) in Title," (tw=). Then initiate a subject search from a single catalog record by using the "related Works" option.

For example, "tw=field burning" retrieves 32 items with "field" and "burning" in the title. The catalog records give the subject heading "Burning of Land." The "related Works" option lets you do a more thorough subject search without retyping anything.

3. Ask a reference librarian for help.

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                B A S I C    S E A R C H    M E N U

   Search by FIRST WORD(S).in....        Search for ANY WORD(S) in....

      subject (s=)                          subject (sw=)

      title (t=)                            title (tw=)

      author (a=)                           author (aw=)


                                         EXTENDED SEARCH MENU

                                         ITEMS ON RESERVE MENU

Type subject...................  ▌


   Use <SPACEBAR> or arrow keys to select, type search, then press <ENTER>
       Press <ENTER> for examples.  Type "?" for help.  Type "e" to exit.
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Copies of the OSU Libraries Information Bulletin "Library of Congress Subject Headings" are available
by contacting

Phyllis Smith
(x7-7282; smithp@ccmail.orst.edu).

If you have any questions about searching OASIS, contact

Loretta Rielly
(x7-2642; riellyl@ccmail.orst.edu).

Move Over, Strunk and White:
OSU Department of Philosophy Publishes
Writing Philosophy Papers: A Student Guide

The next time you're in the OSU bookstore, stop by the Philosophy textbook section and check out (or purchase for $5) the Philosophy department's new user-friendly, student guide, *Writing Philosophy Papers*, second edition.

Funded by a 1995 WIC Department Development Grant, the Department of Philosophy has developed a guide which, according to the introduction, "may well turn out to be your [the student's] best friend in philosophy."

The guide promises that students will find "what you need to know to write a variety of different forms of philosophical prose. So when your professor asks you to write, for example, a position paper, you can turn to this booklet and find out exactly what the professor means. You will find here a definition of each kind of assignment, an explanation of its purpose and audience, a set of criteria by which your professor will evaluate your work, and an example that you can use to envision your end product. You will also find information about the proper form for citations, and a list of places (on campus and in books) where you can go for help."

Forms of writing included are case studies, dialogues, examples, class journals, personal essays, thesis papers, refutation, self discovery writing, the research paper, argument summaries, abstracts, and the rhetorical precis.

Courtney Campbell and Kathy Moore headed the team which collaborated to produce this guide. Other team members were Bill Uzgalis, Jon Dorbolo, and Jeff Ramsey. WIC Director Vicki Collins participated in the initial retreat as a consultant.

Sixteen Faculty Complete WIC Fall Seminar

Faculty from six colleges, twelve departments, and military science completed the WIC seminar on November 8, culminating the experience by sharing their own writing assignments and reflections on teaching writing with other members of the seminar. For the first time, a faculty member at a remote campus participated in the seminar via mail and email.

Seminar participants were: Alan Acock, Human Development and Family Sciences; Marcella Becker, Political Science; Jeff Cunningham, Military Science; Penny Diebel, Agricultural and Resource Economics (Eastern Oregon); Katherine Field, Microbiology; Angeletta Gourdine, English; Kinsey Green, Human Development and Family Sciences; Andy Hashimoto, Bioresource Engineering; Greg Hightower, Military Science; Jon Katz, History; Sunil Khanna, Anthropology; Kate Lajtha, Botany and Plant Pathology; Lani Roberts, Philosophy; Molly Shor, Electrical and Computer Engineering; Tom Wirth, Military Science; and Barbara Yoder, Forest Science.

Writing Across the Curriculum Conference

The 1997 International conference on Writing Across the Curriculum will be held in Charleston, South Carolina, February 6-8, 1997. Proposals from teachers who use writing in all disciplines are welcome. Proposals are due May 15, 1996.

For more information, contact the WIC Office.

About TEACHING WITH WRITING

Teaching With Writing is the newsletter of the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum Program. As part of the Baccalaureate Core, all OSU students are required to take an upper division writing intensive course in their major.

The content of WIC courses ranges from radiation safety (for Nuclear Engineering majors) to golf course design (a Horticulture option).

While subject matter differs by department, all WIC courses share certain commonalities defined by the Faculty Senate:

- Informal, ungraded or minimally graded writing is used as a mode of learning the content material.

- Students are introduced to conventions and practices of writing in their discipline, including the use of borrowed information.

- Students complete at least 5000 words of writing, of which at least 2000 words are in polished, formal assignments.

- Students are guided through the whole writing process receive feedback on drafts, and have opportunities to revise.

For complete information on WIC guidelines, contact Vicki Collins by email at collinsv@cla.orst.edu or consult the OSU Curricular Procedures Handbook.

never have been *taught* to revise. Composition research by Nancy Sommers of the Harvard University writing program indicates that unless students receive guidance in revision, inexperienced writers confine their "revisions" to sentence- and word-level correction of errors.

Speaking of revisions, at the suggestion of a colleague new to the university last year, I have included a statement in this issue of TWW briefly explaining the OSU Writing Intensive Curriculum. Since this newsletter is read not only on the Corvallis campus but also by colleagues in public schools and community colleges in Oregon and by composition folk at a variety of institutions across the country, a program statement seems like an excellent idea. Thanks to Irv Horowitz in Psychology for the suggestion.

I am hoping that the article on the Department of Philosophy's new publication *Writing Philosophy Papers: A Student Guide* will inspire other departments to reflect on the writing needs of their own majors. What would happen to student writing at Oregon State if every department developed a student guide to writing papers in their discipline? What would happen if faculty across the university became that self-reflective about what it means to be a good writer in their courses? What would happen if students in every department knew what criteria were being used to evaluate their writing? As John Lennon would say, "Imagine..."

WIC Director Holds Office Hours for Faculty

Beginning January 15:
Mondays 3-4:30 p.m. in Waldo 125.

No appointment necessary. Drop in to discuss writing assignments, course development, grant proposals, and other questions related to the Writing Intensive Curriculum.

Call for 1996 WIC Department Development Grant Proposals

The Writing Intensive Curriculum Program is now accepting proposals for WIC Department Development Grants for 1996. Proposals should focus on projects which will increase and improve the use of writing in undergraduate courses, encourage the use of writing at all levels of curriculum, and/or improve WIC course offerings. Grants range from $50 to $2500, with preference going to grants proposed by faculty with WIC seminar training.

Faculty wishing to apply for a 1996 WIC grant should consult the Request For Proposals distributed to department chairs and WIC seminar alumni. Proposals are due in the WIC office, 125 Waldo, on February 15, 1996.

Trends in WIC Grants

When the WIC requirement was first implemented, most WIC Department Development Grants were awarded to individual teachers for developing new writing intensive courses. Now that all departments have WIC courses in place, a new trend has emerged in grant requests. Departments are realizing that they need to take a broader look at the role of writing in courses at all levels. WIC grants are supporting departmental initiatives with funding for retreats, workshops, and projects focused on writing within and throughout departments' curricula.

Faculty and department chairs are encouraged to explore ways that a WIC grant might help increase the use of writing at various course levels. Faculty wishing to propose a grant for a writing-focused retreat can obtain a retreat-planning worksheet from the WIC office.

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

ADVANCED WIC SEMINAR

For the Winter Term

FIVE WEDNESDAYS BEGINNING JANUARY 24, 1996

3 to 5 p.m.

(Honorarium upon completion of seminar requirements)

Topics will include: What's working and what's not? More writing-to-learn. Managing collaborative writing projects. Non-native speakers in WIC classes. Improving writing assignments... and more!

Faculty who have completed the introductory WIC seminar prior to Fall 1995 are eligible. Request nomination by your chair. Chairs should send nominations to millss@CLA.orst.edu

Deadline for nominations: Wednesday, January 17, 1996.