

TEACHING WITH WRITING

THE OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING INTENSIVE CURRICULUM (WIC) NEWSLETTER

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Pre/Views

by Vicki Collins, WIC Director

The Experience of Practicing Excellence

"Practice makes perfect" is not just something your grandmother taught you. It is also the assumption underlying a sequence of writing assignments designed by OSU market professors Bill Browne, Beverly Browne, and Dennis Kaldenberg for their course in Marketing Principles. "Writing in Marketing Principles," excerpted in this issue, is from a presentation by these professors to the Western Marketing Educators' Association.

In a carefully planned sequence of memo assignments, the authors show how large classes of students can be taught to interact with course material, gain experience in writing in the discipline, and improve the quality of their writing through revision. Bill Browne, who has completed both the Introductory and Advanced WIC seminars, said, "Of course the WIC seminar influenced the development of these assignments."

As the authors indicate, the sequencing of writing assignments needs to be intentional. Later assignments build on knowledge and skills learned in earlier assignments. What I like about this sequence

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Writing in Marketing Principles - Practice Makes Perfect

Excerpted from an article by:

William G. Browne, Beverly A. Browne and
Dennis O. Kaldenberg, College of Business

One of the most frequently listed skills that employers expect from a university graduate is the ability to communicate in writing. In surveys of placement officials, employers, and alumni, writing is always mentioned as a basic requirement for employment and advancement (Bennett and Olney 1985; Lauffer and Crosser 1990; Horton 1985; Macmillan 1985). Most college students have had training in basic English skills and composition, both in high school and as a basic lower division university requirement. However, these same students often do not have practice in using or adapting previously acquired skills to a professional environment. One reason for this is that many college courses are taught in large mass sections which make grading writing assignments an onerous task for faculty. Our assignment effectively communicates the requirements of business writing, allows the student to interact with critical course material, and can be used in large sections.

The Writing Assignment

Our marketing faculty made a decision to require a series of writing assignments in the marketing principles course. The college's administration supported this writing requirement by providing faculty with a graduate student to help grade the papers. We guaranteed that all junior level students successfully completing this course would have ample opportunity to redirect and exercise their basic writing skills.

The intent of these writing assignments is four-fold:

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- To provide an opportunity to prepare five business memos responding to different marketing situations.

- To provide practice in developing reasonable habits for the preparing business correspondence. All assignments are written in a business memo format and provide students with an opportunity to improve and use their writing skills. The memo writing also encourages the students to digest and apply the material assigned before class discussions begin.

- To provide an experience with computer and library information searches needed for developing meaningful information on select marketing problems.

- To provide meaningful marketing experiences with a World Wide Web capability both as shoppers and as users of marketing information available on the WEB.

Memo Requirements

The memo guidelines are strict. Every assignment must be typed on white paper (8 1/2 x 11 inches). Students are encouraged to develop a personal business letterhead for use with all memos. While only one page of text will be read, a second page, in the form of an exhibit (picture, graphs, chart, advertisement, etc.), may accompany the text. Papers are not accepted before or after class unless there is a prior agreement. If the paper is satisfactory, the student receives five points (of 280 course points). A memo loses one point for every error

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is that students gain content knowledge, process knowledge, and what I would call experience in practicing excellence through revision of their writing. Research in cognitive aspects of writing indicated that students who must revise their writing improve more than students who just have their errors and problems pointed out when a grade is assigned.

In a world that often reinforces just getting by, the experience of practicing excellence may be the most valuable aspect of assignments that press students to polish and refine

in style, spelling, grammar, fact or logic. If a student fails to turn in a paper or fails to type the paper, they receive no points. Students are advised during the first class and in the course syllabus that the memo scores can make a difference in the final grade. A loss equivalent to a letter grade is possible for non-participation or unsatisfactory participation in the writing assignments.

Because our primary intent is improvement of writing skills, papers may be revised if the student does not receive all of the available points on the paper. A re-written paper must be submitted at the beginning of the class following its return and must have the original paper attached. This practice has been successful in encouraging continuous improvement. The number of revisions drops drastically through the term as most students recognize the efficiencies in submitting acceptable originals. Another technique for ensuring better memos is to read memos aloud to the class or to have students report on their memos to the class.

The memos are used for classroom discussion. Material covered in the memo are integrated into the lecture and the students make contributions to the lecture based on material explored in developing their individual memos. Example topics along with a brief description for one term's assignments are listed below. These can be modified depending on the instructor's interests or goals for the course.

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their writing. Thanks to the OSU marketing faculty for showing us one way to do this.

Also in this issue Jon Dorbolo, Philosophy, is back with more advice on developing writing assignments for electronic media. See the WIC Brown Bag schedule on the back page of this issue for the date of Jon's appearance. He is eager to answer questions and hear how your experiments with writing using electronic media are going Spring Term.

Thanks to graduate student Trevor Murphy for design and layout of this newsletter.

Implementing Information Technology Techniques in the Classroom

by John Dorbolo, Department of Philosophy

I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.
-Chinese Proverb

Writing is doing. Getting students to do what we want them to learn is a basic motive of the WIC pedagogy. In the last WIC newsletter (Vol. 5, #1, Fall 1995), I introduced ways of employing WIC techniques via IT (information technology.) These use email and, in the case of InterQuest <<http://www.sce.ojgse.edu/iq/>>, World Wide Web communication methods. One advantage of this approach is committing student communication activity to out-of-class time, leaving more time in class to employ other teaching strategies.

Since the introduction of WIC On-Line in the last newsletter, some colleagues have reported using these ideas. Bill Uzgalis customized the "Dear Author" activity for his Great Voyages: The History of Western Philosophy from 1492 to 1776 <<http://www.nws.orst.edu/~uzgalisw/302/>>. Bill reports strengths and weaknesses in the activity's effectiveness. This trial and tell approach is precisely what is needed to adjust the method of on-line WIC for wide scale use. If you are interested in trying on-line WIC in your courses, I hope you will contact me for discussion and follow up. These methods work well for me as I have been using and adjusting them for over a year. While I don't promise your first experience to work magic, it will be revealing.

This article provides ideas for customizing on-line WIC activities.

Making WIC do IT

Designing and customizing an on-line WIC activity involves several steps. We need to be clear on what the activity is designed to accomplish, connect the relevant content, select a discourse model, and provide explicit directions.

Activity Objectives

Knowing what learning objective you want the students to perform with the activity is key. An objective differs from a goal or purpose in specifying the desired performance outcomes of the activity. Here are some goals:
I want each student to recognize the symbols for chemical elements.
I want each student to be able to use punctuation properly.
I want each student to understand Freud's concept of "transference."

These succinctly state the goal of a particular lesson. They do not indicate what performance task a student will accomplish in meeting that goal. Activity objectives do just that.

I want each student to write the symbols for any twenty chemical elements.

I want each student to write out all possible grammatically proper combinations of three clauses and three punctuation marks.

I want each student to explain Freud's "transference" by example and reference to the text.

Having specified these performative parameters, the design effort is to find a type of WIC activity that requires that performance in collaboration with some other student(s).

Relevant Content

The activities I have produced for OSU WIC are intended to be content-independent so that a variety of faculty from different disciplines using different teaching styles may use them. This means customizing the activity as needed and supplying the relevant content. Having specified activity performatives in stating the objectives, identifying the content is fairly direct. The sample activities "Dear Author," (see Vol. 5 #1) and "Quiz Me" (see below) are examples of this generic approach. The content of any academic discipline may be filled in to make these work for whatever course. That is not to suppose that every activity presented is appropriate for every

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instructor's needs.

Discourse Modeling

On-line WIC activities are collaborative. The dynamics of collaboration may be set up in various ways. I use five discourse models in designing activities:

1) Peer-exchange: Pairs of students exchange work and respond to one another in a designed activity. This dynamic produces large scale active participation with minimal impact on the instructor (as moderator, anyway.)

2) Small-Group: The class is divided into conversation sub-groups (via mail-list designations or arranged address clusters.) Groups may be designed by discrete topics, or simply in the interest of size. What each group member writes and replies is broadcast to the entire group, but not the entire class.

3) Group-exchange: Two (or more) mail groups exchange the results that each group has fashioned amongst themselves. This works well to show different approaches to a topic or to exchange summaries on different topics. The key is to assign each group the task of fashioning a collective message to be sent to the other group. Group members must collaborate in the formation of the message and then respond to the other group's result (and replies to their result.)

4) Chain-exchange: A group of students performs a task sequentially, passing messages along a chain. Starting the sequence with each individual allows all students to participate in all parts of the sequence. This model is effective for accentuating the articulation of a concept or

process (e.g. an argument, a calculation, a sequence.)

5) Global-exchange: What each student writes and replies is broadcast to the entire class with the use of a group maillist. This model is useful where everyone's concerns are at stake.

Quiz Me

Versions of Quiz Me for philosophy, computer science, and engineering texts have been employed. This activity may follow the Peer-Peer, Small-Group, or Group-exchange discourse models. This example is designed using the Peer-Peer model. Note the design changes necessary to employ the other models.

Directions to Students.

- 1) Make sure you have read <text>.
- 2) Your task is to devise a 5 question quiz (any combination of T-F, Multiple Choice, Short answer) based on <text>. You should work to make the quiz accurate, clear, fair, and substantial (non-trivial).
- 3) Send your finished quiz (without the answers!) to your E-mail partner. Do this by <date>. 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.
- 4) When you receive the quiz from your email partner, answer the questions and return the quiz to your email partner by <date>.
- 5) When you receive the completed quiz, grade it. For each of the five questions, give a short explanation of what shows the correct answer to be correct. Give the quiz a grade (each question = 20%; 100% = A; 80% = B; 60% = C; 40% = F.) Send the graded quiz to your partner. Do this by <date>.
- 6) When you receive your graded quiz, reply to your partner with an evaluation of the quiz (in terms of accuracy, clarity, fairness, and substantiality). If you disagree on any aspects of the answers or grading, explain yourself. Do this by <date>.

I find the easiest and most effective place to start with on-line WIC activities is the peer-peer model. The most difficult to design and manage effectively is the global exchange model. Interestingly, the latter is typically the most used model for on-line class discussion. Perhaps this is a reason many faculty find their first experiences with on-line discussion disappointing.

More material and examples of these discourse models can be found on the InterQuest Pedagogy Web page

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Full Text Articles On-line

By Loretta Rielly, OSU Library

Access to the complete text of journal articles is an exciting development in the online world. The OSU Libraries have entered into a trial, year-long subscription to an online service which provides 24 hour

access to citations from 2500 journals, of which over 900 are available in full text. The service includes three databases:

- Expanded Academic ASAP (over 1500 magazines and professional journals; 500 in full text)
- Business Index (over 900 business journals; 420 in full text)
- General Business File (directory and investment information for over 180,000 companies)

Whether or not a journal is available in full text is dependent on the publisher. Currently, the social sciences and humanities are more heavily represented than the sciences, but new titles are added frequently. The database is updated daily, so information is very current. This service is

financed with money from the Student Technology Fee. We selected it because of its relevance to undergraduate needs and the ease with which it can be searched. We encourage all faculty to look at it.

How to access Academic ASAP, Business Index, or General Business File.

Via Campus Network:

Telnet: ucs.orst.edu

login: iac <return>

password: <return>

or Dial-in to the OSU mainframe:

Login with UCS account ID and password.

At the UNIX prompt (%),
type: iac <return>

When prompted to select terminal emulator, choose "generic."

Later this spring, a web version will be available which will allow printing of images as well as text. If you would like more information about this service, or a demonstration for your class, please contact your subject librarian or Cheryl Middleton (7-7273; middletc@ccmail.orst.edu). Note: Information on citing online information is available at the Library's Information Desk. A basic format for articles is:

Article Title. Journal Title. [type of medium],
paging if given. Available: give information
sufficient for retrieval.

Example: Huber, P. (1996, Feb 26). Chips and
choices. Forbes. [Online], p. 114. Available:
Expanded Academic ASAP.

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<<http://www.sce.ojgse.edu/iq/>>.

Student Directions

On-line WIC activities with the directions for use are given in clear sequential steps. The desired performance for each step needs to be stated explicitly. The usual study questions found in text books in the form "discuss X" are not explicit enough. To work effectively the directions must tell students to find, create, ask, or otherwise act on some aspect of the learning, then convey their results to the activity partner(s). Due dates for each step should be specified. The directions may be delivered by

in-class handout and by email.

For managing general information by email it is well to have a maillist set up for your class with all students subscribed. University Computing Systems or your college system administrator will help you get this going. Doing this much should provide concrete possibilities for on-line WIC activities you may use.

The next issue is how the activities fit into your curriculum overall. That, and some troubleshooting tips, is the intended topic for my next WIC Newsletter article. I hope IT works for you.

Writing in Marketing - continued from page 2**Sample Memo Topics**

The following describes two topics which have been used for memo assignments. Memo topics are changed each term to discourage cheating.

Memo 4 (due eighth week) - Advertising.

For this memo the students located a recent magazine or newspaper advertisement. In this memo the students evaluated the advertisement based on its: 1) objective(s), 2) type of appeal and 3) effectiveness in meeting the objective(s). They also evaluated the media choice for reaching identified target markets. Every term dates for the example advertisement can be changed, thus eliminating (reducing) the chances of using memos from an earlier term.

Memo 5 (due tenth week) - Marketing Organizations.

Data for this memo was generated with an in-class assignment requiring the students to complete a modified SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1994) questionnaire during the seventh week. The survey results were summarized and given to the students during the eighth week of the term. They were to assume that they have been hired as marketing director at the university and were looking for ways to improve the educational services offered by the college and university. Students received copies of their survey results depicting student expectations and perceptions regarding current services. They selected one area, (gap) between expectations and perceptions, and briefly described a potential factor for the gap's existence. They then made recommendations for reducing undesir-

able gap sizes. They discussed who in the college and university should be responsible for implementing their recommendations for improving services.

Grading and Administrative Activities

Typically, the grading has been handled by a graduate student, usually with an under-

Memorandum

Date: September 25, 1995
To: BA 390 Students
From: William Browne, Ph.D.
Subject: Writing a Memo

This memo describes how to write a memo.

Date the memo, include a recipient and sender, and include a statement about the subject of the memo.

The introductory statement may be a sentence or a short paragraph. Complex topics may require longer introductions. The statement should identify what the memo is about and why it was written. If there are subtopics, identify what they are here.

The body of the memo is where the meat of the memo is placed. If you have identified subtopics in the introductory statement, divide the body into sections based on these topics and identify with a heading.

The conclusion is brief and courteous. It may recommend an action, it may provide an offer of further help or instructions on what to do after the memo is read.

Finally, inform the reader if attachment(s) should be reviewed as part of the memo.

Memos should be concise, clear, and readable. Avoid unnecessary topics and don't repeat information. Headings and set-off lists (with bullets) may add clarity and coherence under certain circumstances.

graduate degree in English, journalism, technical writing, or reasonable work experience in writing. Because the intent is to improve each student's writing skills, memos are graded primarily for correctness in presentation and secondarily for content.

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Writing in Marketing - continued from page 6**Results**

The results of these efforts have been excellent. At the end of each term we survey the students in regard to the usefulness of the course and the value of each course ingredient. Two of the sixteen questions in the course evaluation relate to the memo assignments. The students respond to one statement that "memo writing should be discontinued" on a five point scale. Every term the students strongly disagree (4 on a 5 point scale with 5 being strongly disagree) with this statement and their written comments on the evaluation form indicate that this exercise has been very beneficial.

In the comments section of the course evaluation students have regularly stated that they appreciated having a second chance to repair memos. They have indicated that the repetition has increased their appreciation of good writing skills and has instilled self-esteem in submitting quality work. Unfortunately, however, a third of the students with less than all possible points do not exercise their option to correct and resubmit the memo(s).

By the end of the term, very little editing is required. The students have developed and gained confidence in their writing skills. The remaining challenge is to continue these writing activities beyond the course in order to maintain and develop the newly acquired skills.

A number of the faculty members of the senior level courses, both in marketing and management, have adapted the memo writing format (often increasing the memo length to fit the needs of the assignments in these courses). These faculty members have observed that written assignments with this format are much easier to interpret and grade than traditional papers. An advantage of the memo format for students is that the student doesn't spend time second guessing the instructor's preferences for presentation style and can devote their time to the assignment's content.

The secondary payoffs from the assignments are important, too. With completed

assignments instructors are confident that students have, at a minimum, reviewed the portion of the book related to the assignment and can discuss the material in a meaningful way. These discussions have worked well and provided proof that there are dividends in preparing for class. Students appear to recognize the advantages of their practice as teacher evaluations have been rising.

Conclusions

Select writing assignments can achieve a number of interests and provide windfall gains. We, as faculty, are primarily interested that students obtain a good grasp of the intellectual substance of our respective courses. Videos, cases, class visitations of business executives, computer games, etc. can all be used to provide views of the material from a different vantage point than the text or lectures. We can also, with minimal effort, provide an environment where the student is gaining more than a cursory understanding of the text, and also developing writing skills that will play a role in their career success. In this paper, we have described a method that has been successful in developing, practicing, and retaining a skill that will be used beyond the class. Responses to course evaluations (again not to be confused with instructor evaluations) related to the areas of the writing assignments have always received high scores.

References

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- Lauffer, D. and R. Crosser (1990). The Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Concept in Accounting and Tax Courses. *Journal of Education for Business*. November-December: 83-87.
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New Perspectives on Writing Groups:

A Lecture by

Dr. Anne Ruggles Gere**Monday, April 29, 4 pm, MU 208**

On Monday, April 29, Dr Anne Ruggles Gere, Professor of English at the University of Michigan, will speak at OSU on the topic, "New Perspectives on Writing Groups." Dr. Gere is a nationally known expert in the teaching of writing, with a particular interest in collaborative writing. Her publications include: *Language and Reflection: An Integrated Approach to Teaching English; Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications; and Roots in the Sawdust: Writing to Learn Across the Disciplines.*

Faculty and Students from all departments are invited to attend this important lecture on writing sponsored by the Department of English.

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.

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@ela.orst.edu or consult the OSU Curricular Procedures Handbook.

Spring Term WIC Brown Bag Seminars

**Faculty interested in WIC and teaching with writing
are invited to bring a lunch and gather for brown bag seminars during Spring Term.**

All Brown Bags are held from 12 to 1 p.m. in Waldo 121.

Friday April 12	Teaching Writers to Organize: The Outline and Beyond
Thursday April 18	Exercises that Improve Motivation and Responsibility of Writers
Friday April 26	Developing a Department Writing Guide for Students. Kathy Moore and Courtney Campbell, (Philosophy)
Thursday May 2	WIC on the Internet. Jon Dorbolo (Philosophy)
Friday May 10	Teaching Students to Revise. Vicki Collins (WIC)
Thursday May 16	Practice Makes Perfect: An Assignment that Works. Bill Browne, Dennis Kaldenberg, Beverly Browne. (College of Business)
Friday May 24	Evaluating Sources on the Internet. Scott Chadwick (Speech Com) and Vicki Collins (WIC)

Feel free to enter late or leave early as your schedule dictates.