

TEACHING WITH WRITING

THE OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING INTENSIVE CURRICULUM (WIC) NEWSLETTER

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PRE/VEWS

By Vicki Tolar Burton, WIC Director

The most exciting WIC event this term was Jon Dorbolo's two hour workshop "Writing-to-Learn Online," which was held in the Valley Library Computer Classroom and attended by thirty-two faculty members. Coming from Information Services, Dorbolo, who is a WIC seminar alumnus and co-author of the *Guide to Writing in Philosophy*, led faculty through online activity design, including examples of good writing activities, and the use of email lists and threaded web boards for writing assignments. He also introduced participants to Blackboard, the online resource available to OSU faculty for putting course materials online and setting up online student discussions. Many thanks to Jon for this very successful workshop.

I am also grateful to faculty who contributed to WIC Eating-to-Learn Seminars this term: Jean Caspers (Library) for a helpful session on teaching students to evaluate online sources; Robby Robson

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Writing for Change: Raising Awareness of Difference, Power, and Discrimination

By Vicki Tolar Burton

On June 1, 2000, the Faculty Senate of Oregon State University (OSU) reaffirmed the requirement that all students take at least one course that has as its main focus issues of difference, power, and discrimination in the United States. The Senate also approved revised guidelines that must be met by all courses designated as meeting the Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) requirement. The revised guidelines were the product of a year of work by a Faculty Senate task force chaired by Alexis Walker, Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences. Walker is a nationally known scholar on gender and family relationships and past President of the National Council on Family Relations.

With support from a WIC Department Development Grant, DPD Interim Director Susan Shaw and graduate students Janet Lockart and Janet Armentor have co-authored *Writing for Change: Raising*

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Call for Participants in Fall 2000 WIC Faculty Seminar

Faculty interested in the fall 2000 WIC Faculty Seminar should ask their department chair to send an e-mail nomination to Vicki Tolar Burton (Vicki.Tolarburton@orst.edu). The seminar will meet five Wednesday afternoons from 3 to 5 p.m., beginning on October 11 and ending on November 8. Faculty who complete the seminar receive a \$250 honorarium. Last fall the seminar nearly filled before any fall announcement was made, so early nominations are advised.

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Awareness of Difference, Power, and Discrimination, a guide to using writing to help students in DPD classes explore issues of difference, power, and discrimination.

Writing exercises are grouped by length of time necessary to complete them, ranging from 5-10 minute in-class activities to some that take sixty minutes or more. For each activity, the manual identifies objectives, materials needed, time needed, and instructor directions, along with a stand-alone handout that can be photocopied for students.

Nearly three hundred topics are addressed by writing activities in the guide. A sampling includes: ageism, Anti-Semitism, homophobia, racism, and other prejudices; the many ways language is implicated in discrimination; issues of hierarchy, "natural order," institutional oppression, empowerment, disempowerment, just to name a few.

Many of the activities are designed to help students use writing to reflect on their own views and the views of the American culture on difference, power, and discrimination. Activities also encourage students to analyze constructions of power and discrimination in academic and in their own major disciplines. (*See examples this page, second column.*)

DPD courses are offered across the disciplines, and faculty development workshops are available for those who want to teach a DPD course. A recent report by the student-led TEAM on diversity at OSU indicated that students of color view the DPD program as a key part of the University's efforts to promote diversity. The TEAM report also supported the requirement that DPD courses involve active learning by students. This new writing guide should help further those goals.

Check it Out! Department Writing Guides

Available Online

Anthropology <http://osu.orst.edu/pubs/bookreviews/memurray>

Nuclear Engineering http://www.engr.orst.edu/classes/ne/Writing_Guide/

Philosophy <http://osu.orst.edu/dept/philosophy/resources/guide/Guide.html>

Speech Communications <http://osu.orst.edu/dept/speech/writing/index.htm>

Available in the OSU Bookstore

TextOrder@bookstore.mu.orst.edu

Apparel, Interiors, Housing, Merchandising

Human Development and Family Sciences (coming in fall)

Philosophy

Political Science

Sociology

Thinking About Gender in Your Major

Directions

- Identify a gendered phenomenon in your major or field.

- Research and write a descriptive report about it.

Answer the following questions:

How does gender operate in your major field?

What is the proportion of women to men?

What behaviors are expected of women and of men in this major or field?

What factors may have influenced women to enter or avoid this environment?

How active or passive are the roles they play in this environment?

What are two positive and two negative aspects for this environment of having women present in this proportion?

Variation: Identify a racialized phenomenon in your major or field. Research and write a descriptive report about it. Follow the above directions.

Putting the People Back into Language

Directions

- Identify the passive constructions in the sentences below.

- Discuss how use of the passive constructions can obscure meaning, perpetuate oppression, deflect responsibility, and deprive people of identity or agency (autonomy) in their actions.

- Rewrite the sentences in the active voice. (*Note: You may need to insert an appropriate subject or pronoun.*)

-In 1920, American women were given the right to vote.

-The bus driver was attacked by an unknown assailant.

-Mistakes were made.

-She was the first woman awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

-The woman was brought to the shelter after it was discovered that she had been severely beaten.

-The book was removed from the library's shelves.

-A decision was made not to observe the recommendation to delay the launch.

-Ming Wu was admitted to the conservatory in 1997.

-The test, which was administered to freshmen and sophomores, yielded results in the 50th percentile.

-The demonstrators were subdued with rubber bullets and tear gas.

-An investigation was performed, and it was determined that no hazing occurred.

-In what year was America discovered?

Variation: Locate a print or online news article that uses passive constructions. Discuss the article with reference to the instructions above.

AREc WIC Workshop Report

By Larry Lev, Agricultural and Resource Economics

On June 14, 1999, the Agricultural and Resource Economics (AREc) faculty took advantage of a WIC grant to stage a half-day writing workshop with three learning objectives:

- Provide instruction on the use of specific "writing-to-learn" techniques;
- Motivate faculty to participate in the WIC seminar;
- Begin a broader discussion of writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) for the department.

The workshop was well attended with the participants actively engaged throughout. The short-run assessment at the end of the workshop was that all three objectives had been achieved. A year later, that conclusion must be tempered. At the individual level (as measured by objectives one and two) it is possible to document changes resulting from the workshop. At the departmental level, however, the energetic and interesting discussion of WAC issues that we had at the workshop has not led to any concrete actions.

Teaching responsibilities in AREc are broadly shared across the department, with most faculty members teaching one or two courses an academic year. Since we rarely meet as a faculty to seek to improve our teaching, the writing workshop presented a new and different opportunity. The first half of the workshop focused on providing an experiential introduction to a series of writing-to-learn techniques. Of the 12 faculty who attended, five reported that they had taken specific techniques discussed in the workshop and applied them to classes that they subsequently taught (and one more indicated that he still planned to do so). The changes they made include incorporation of rewriting of a term paper, breaking a term assignment into multiple related segments, using four sentence summaries, having students write before discussing, write and pass, and the use of informal journals. One workshop attendee was inspired by the content to sign up for the fall 1999 WIC seminar.

The second half of the workshop examined the writing needs of our graduates and the types of writing currently assigned in our courses. Neither of these topics had previously been addressed in any systematic fashion within the department. The discussion about these two topics was excellent and has changed some attitudes about the importance of providing greater attention to writing in our courses. Despite recognizing that we aren't fully meeting the needs of our students and aren't coordinating the writing experiences that we do provide across classes, no firm commitment to change was reached at the workshop.

In the post-workshop period, WAC issues did not rise to the top of the pile in undergraduate education. The major departmental curricular thrust over the past year has been developing modular courses--breaking up traditional three or four credit courses into more tightly focused one credit modules taught over a shorter time. Thus the key concern has been restructuring what we teach to fit these modules rather than better integrating writing into classes. The modular courses in many ways provide a less friendly environment for the incorporation of writing intensive learning approaches.

A year later, workshop participants are still glad that the "writing within the department" conversation took place. Writing considerations have helped to identify courses that are not good candidates for modularization (WIC courses, for example). In time, the department may return to this conversation. For the moment, however, the writing needs of our students are being met on an ad hoc, course by course, basis. The workshop has helped us to do that a bit better.

Anthropology WIC Grant Report

By David McMurray, Anthropology

The anthropology department met on two evenings to discuss writing issues common to us all, and we greatly benefitted from the two mini-retreats. Perhaps the most important outcome of the sessions was a general sense that we need to come together more regularly to discuss the place of writing in our classes and curriculum. But, more specifically, we:

- 1) Listed the types of writing used across the four subfields of anthropology (site reports, questionnaires, social network diagrams, linguistic transcriptions, coding of interviews, news releases, proposals, etc.);
- 2) Learned about the varieties of writing we use in our own courses;
- 3) Thought about the kinds of written competency we should be requiring of our majors;
- 4) Exchanged tips and hints on how to make certain writing exercises more useful;
- 5) Figured out how to make writing guides available to the students and then decided to set up an ever-expandable web page.

Number five has been partially completed, with a website tied to the department's website which is devoted entirely to issues of writing in anthropology. We have so far included writing guides and links to grad thesis guidelines, the American Anthropological Association style guide, the Valley Library, and the OSU Writing Center.

Much is still to be done on the website and in the department, but we are beginning to reap the long-term benefits of the WIC grant which helped get started.

2000 WIC Grants Announced

Department of Chemical Engineering (Gregory Rorrer, Proposer)

Goals: To develop writing assignments that address ABET 2000 criteria regarding professional and ethical responsibilities (3f), and knowledge of contemporary issues (3j). Assignments will be integrated into four chemical engineering courses. Both writing-to-learn and formal writing in the discipline will be included. Assignments will be piloted in the four courses and assessed based on ABET 2000 criteria. Results will be reported to WIC and to the discipline through a manuscript to be submitted to *Chemical Engineering Education*.

Department of Chemistry (Michael Lerner, Proposer, Christine Pastorek, Co-PI)

Goal: To develop a writing guide for laboratory reports in chemistry in order to help undergraduate students in chemistry work towards writing reports in the standard American Chemical Society style and standard format. The guide will initially be distributed in junior and senior-level laboratories and published on the department website.

Difference, Power, and Discrimination Program (Susan Shaw, Proposer)

Goal: To develop a manual, "Ideas for Teaching about Difference, Power, and Discrimination through Writing," to distribute to participants in the DPD faculty seminar and to make available to faculty throughout the University.

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(Mathematics and Education Reform) for introducing WIC teachers to the how-to of learning outcomes; Mark Edwards (Sociology) for sharing his fascinating experience with allowing his WIC class to watch his progress on a scholarly paper; Barry Lawler, William Petty, and Eric Hill, all of whom teach business and technical writing in the English Department, for sharing their approaches to these courses taken by many students across the curriculum.

Our final lunch seminar, "Educating Ethical Writers," opened a provocative discussion on a topic I hope to pursue in more depth next year. Faculty who attended raised many interesting questions about the ethics of teaching writing and the ethics of writing in the workplaces to which our students go.

I am particularly grateful to my Assistant Editor, Anna Harrell (a Masters student in English) for her dedication to publishing a quality newsletter for the WIC program. Anna has a rich experience in publishing from which we have benefitted this year. Thank you, Anna.

About *Teaching With Writing*

Editor: Vicki Tolar Burton

Assistant Editor: Anna Harrell

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 the WIC courses ranges from radiation safety (for Nuclear Engineering majors) to golf courses 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, and 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 Tolar Burton by email at Vicki.TolarBurton@orst.edu or consult the OSU Curricular Procedures Handbook.