Teaching With Writing

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Teaching With Writing: The WIC Newsletter

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By Vicki Tolar Burton, Director, Writing Intensive Curriculum

On Computer Grading of Student Writing: What Can Be Counted, and What Actually Counts

The OSU Faculty Senate recently engaged in a surprisingly lively discussion of student writing in the Baccalaureate Core. At the November meeting of the Faculty Senate, former Baccalaureate Core co-chairs Kerry Kincanon and Marion Rossi presented recommendations from the Bacc Core Committee (BCC) regarding writing in the Baccalaureate Core. These recommendations were drawn from the 2012 report Review of Writing in the Baccalaureate Core.

An engaged discussion of writing followed Kincanon and Rossi's presentation. One senator suggested that OSU move toward computerized grading of student writing. The presiding co-chairs asked me to respond to this suggestion, and I was glad to do so. Computer grading of student writing is a hot-button topic nationally, and I was glad to share with the senators what grading software can and cannot do. While computer programs are very efficient for grading Scantron examinations, they are limited in their ability to deal with prose texts, especially anything much longer than a paragraph.

Here are some things a computer program can tell you about a student's paper: the length/number of words, the percentage of words over three syllables, the average number of words per sentence, whether there is variety in sentence length, and whether it has a title. As we know from MS Word, a computer program can also scan for grammar and punctuation errors.

Here are a few things a computer program cannot assess:

» Whether the paper addresses the assignment
» Whether ideas are fully developed
» Whether the paper has accurate content
» Whether the purpose of the writing is clear
» Whether the paper addresses the appropriate audience

As it turns out, these attributes are the qualities valued most highly by OSU faculty in the fall WIC faculty seminar, based on an exercise conducted on November 12.

The assessment of these highly-valued qualities requires a human reader with knowledge of the content area, the assignment, and the rhetorical situation for the piece of writing. It also requires familiarity with the discourse of the field or discipline.

This human reader might be a teacher, and for the final evaluation of student writing in a WIC course, it must be the teacher. But feedback on the crucial elements might also be given by peers. Most of our students, especially those raised in Oregon, have been giving each other feedback on their writing since they were in elementary school. As these experienced responders move into advanced university courses in their major and grow in content knowledge, they might also grow as reviewers, being trained to raise the intellectual level and precision of their feedback.

So my suggestion to faculty senators considering machine grading of university level writing based on use of long words and sentence variety is that instead we improve student writing by turning to our best resource: students. Let's teach them to give quality feedback on writing in their discipline and by doing so help improve the quality of writing in our majors. If this project interests your unit, WIC can help. Email us here.

By Tim Jensen, Director of Writing and Assistant Professor in the School of Writing, Literature, and Film

What is your background and training in rhetoric and composition?

I received my PhD in Rhetoric, Composition and Literacy from the Ohio State University. I was incredibly fortunate to have worked with some phenomenal scholars there, including Wendy Hesford, Cindy Selfe, Kay Halasek, and Scott DeWitt. That said, formal study in rhetoric and composition can only account for so much of one's development. It's really in our daily interactions—with email, random people at bus-stops, car commercials, etc.—that we train in

rhetoric and composition.

How would you describe your research interests in a couple of sentences?

I'm interested in how a culture's emotional norms are built through various rhetorics. So I look at how we're entrained to experience certain emotions in particular ways, how we're implicitly instructed to express them in rhetorically sanctioned ways, and how dominant discourses shape what one is even allowed to feel towards. Take a common phrase like "tree-hugger," for instance—with just a little analytical pressure, you can see how we are routinely exhorted to take on certain emotional orientations, which, considered collectively, have big consequences.

What should instructors expect students to know once they complete WR 121?

A central goal of WR 121 is to strengthen the student's rhetorical awareness, so that they can recognize and respond to a range of situations and audiences, especially academic audiences. To that end, by the end of 121, students will have analyzed and written in multiple genres.

Another key objective of 121 is to get students thinking about the writing process itself. We believe that in order for one to continually develop as a writer, it's critical to reflect on and build strategies for all stages of the writing process, from free-writing to proofreading. The ultimate aim, of course, is for students to craft strategies that truly work for them.

WR 121 also places great emphasis on information literacy. We work in close collaboration with the Valley Library to teach students how to locate, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize relevant sources. I think it's vital that students receive this instruction in information literacy early in their time at Oregon State, as research will be an integral part of their studies, regardless of major.

We have additional learning outcomes that are listed on every 121 syllabus, but they are largely framed by these three key objectives: strengthening one's rhetorical awareness, reflecting on writing as a process, and developing skills in information literacy.

How does Writing 121 prepare students for upper division, discipline-specific writing?

In three ways: with rhetoric, research, and practicing the moves that matter in academic writing. As students progress through their majors, they need to become familiar with the genres that circulate most in those fields, whether it's lab reports, press releases, or argumentative essays. WR 121 prepares students for these genres by helping them develop a rhetorical perspective, which can be effectively applied across genres, and across disciplines. Our focus on research and information literacy gives students familiarity with library databases, and we practice the skills needed to evaluate the sources they discover. Upper division courses frequently have substantial research components; WR 121 helps shape a foundation for success in these areas by teaching effective research practices. Finally, it's important to note that 121 plays close attention to the sentence-level specifics of academic writing. We use a book, They Say/I Say, which helps demystify academic argument, and assists students in critical maneuvers indicative of quality writing, like transitions, introducing quotation, and answering the ever-important "So What?" question.

What are a few key concepts begun in WR 121 that WIC faculty can use to scaffold writing in their courses?

Our curriculum emphasizes writing as a process. One way WIC faculty can set students up for success is by also emphasizing this notion, and even better, providing opportunities that recognize and reward key steps of the writing process. For example, if you have a substantial writing assignment, consider setting a date when drafts are due and arrange a peer-review process. Instructors can encourage students to use concept-mapping or free-writing to generate ideas early on in the term. They can remind students to write in smaller, more frequent sessions, rather than rely on the binge-writing that so often happen with big projects. Emphasizing writing as a process not only provides students with a positive message, one consistent with what they learned in WR 121, it will also, quite simply, often lead to much better writing.

What do students struggle with in WR 121? How does WR 121 address those struggles?

It's often the case—despite the rich array of cultural backgrounds in our students—that they've mostly known writing as a means of examination. Writing has largely been framed for them as an assessment technique—as something one does for school. We encourage students to see writing more broadly—to see it as a tool for thinking, as a means of and opportunity for inquiry, expression, and connecting with others. In this transition, a sense of certainty is definitely lost. An examination-based approach to writing frequently means seeing things in terms of "right" and "wrong." There's a fair amount of comfort in that, actually. Approach writing within a framework of rhetoric, however, and you switch to metrics of "more persuasive" and "less persuasive," contingent upon one's purpose, context, and analysis of audience. You can easily see how the latter is more complex and offers less assurances. Students often struggle in this transition to a view of writing based in rhetoric, rather than testing. Instructors of WR 121 will often acknowledge this situation directly with their students and assure them that growth in learning can be difficult. The WR 121 assignment sequence, moreover, encourages students to take ownership of their writing and ideas from the beginning, and increasingly challenges them to do so as the term progresses.

What are characteristics of Oregon State students and their impact on WR 121?

It's difficult to generalize about OSU's student body. We have an incredibly talented and diverse group here. Last year's incoming class had a 3.56 average GPA, for example, with more than 40% achieving a 3.75 or higher in high school. OSU enrolls more salutatorians and valedictorians than any other university in the state. Nearly 23% of our student body are members of a U.S. minority. That's quite impressive. At the same time, many of our students are coming from classrooms that were overcrowded and underfunded. Here in Oregon, for example, our high school student-teacher ratio is higher than all but two states in the nation, and state funding per student is substantially below the national average. These are real challenges, especially for writing instruction, since it's so labor intensive. My fear is that because of these conditions, students arrive feeling as if they're somehow intrinsically "just not good at writing," while feeling competent elsewhere in their studies. This is not unique to OSU, of course; lots of students everywhere feel as if they are simply "not writers," in a way similar to when someone says "I'm just not a tech-person." One of our charges in WR 121 is to move students from this perspective of fixity to one of growth and expansion, so that they can improve their writing skills, regardless of where they're starting from.

Where can students go if they would like more help with their writing?

I'll give you 5 options, in no particular order of privilege.

  A. Go to their peers. I think it's incredibly beneficial for students to seek out feedback from friends and colleagues. I think we could do a lot more in developing authentic contexts for peer-review in all our classrooms, but students should also be encouraged to pursue comments on their own. Doing so, I believe, would go a long way in creating a culture of writing here at OSU.
  B. Go to the writers they admire and study their works. Quality writing often involves a fair amount of quality reading. Instructors can ask students to seek out samples and encourage them analyze the moves being made.
  C. Go to the Writing Center. OSU is blessed to have a strong Writing Center with great leadership. Students can visit at any stage of the writing process and work with trained consultants to improve their writing. Students can also submit their writing to the Center's Online Writing Lab (http://cwl.oregonstate.edu/owl.php).
  D. Go to your advisor and schedule more courses with substantial writing components. Improving one's writing means sustained practice and one must seek out opportunities for doing so. Students should absolutely check out the Writing Minor (http://oregonstate.edu/cla/wlf/writing-minor). They should look over course listings for the School of Writing, Literature, and Film. They should look for courses with WIC designations. Just because a student is only required to take one WIC course, there's nothing stopping them from taking more.
  E. Go to 750words.com. This is a site that encourages you to write—you guessed it—750 words a day. As the site's creator puts it, "if you can get in the habit of writing three pages a day [...] it will help clear your mind and get the ideas flowing for the rest of the day." It doesn't have to be good writing. Rather, it's a space to write out rants, to scratch out the day's half-formed thoughts, and to reflect-while-writing. Take the challenge to write 750 everyday for a month! Doing so will create the habits and rhythms of writing that are so critical to improving one's abilities.

What is the role of grammar instruction in WR 121?

We encourage and train instructors of WR 121 to incorporate grammar rhetorically and integrally. Rhetorically, grammar is a matter of ethos, or credibility. With this, we can reframe grammar not as hard-and-fast rules with rights and wrongs that hold true across all contexts, but rather as an integral function of language, as inextricable from its system as words are to sentences. By communicating grammar as an issue of authority and credibility, we invite students to view it as another tool in their persuasive arsenal. For a lot of our students, grammar has mostly likely been taught as if it operates within a vacuum; by discussing it in terms of rhetoric—with an emphasis on context, audience, credibility and purpose—the hope is that it will be more approachable a topic, one that is integral to their development as persuasive communicators.

I've found that an effective way to further frame this issue is to argue Standard Written English (SWE) is just another subdialect of American English. Students encounter and interact with a variety of subdialects everyday; SWE is just another one. One can argue it's an important one, since it's the standard for most professional worlds (academic, legal, governmental, etc.). For better or for worse, it's an integral component of the language of social authority. The be credible within those spheres, it's critical to know the conventions.

More pragmatically, I might add as a final note that Mina Shaugnessy has two guiding functions I try to follow in dealing with grammar in student papers: 1) Look for a pattern of error; 2) Not all errors are created/received equal.

What else would you like WIC faculty to know?

That the work they do is incredibly important to the development of their student's writing. I want to thank them for their efforts in fostering a culture of writing at the university and encourage them to support others doing the same.

What are some of your personal goals for the Writing Program at Oregon State?

I'm very motivated by the challenge of establishing authentic contexts for student writing, so that the writing process is infused with a sense of personal passion, which I find catalyzes learning in remarkable ways. For example, instead of asking students to "imagine you're writing to a government representative about an issue you're invested in," I want students to actually write their state representative. Find out who she or he is, research their interests to inform the approach, analyze the rhetorical situation, draft, review, revise, and proofread the letter—and then find the actual address and send it! I want students to feel a sense of real exigency and experience authentic stakes in their writing.

I am also keen on making WR 121 a more shared academic experience. I want students talking about what they're writing on to others who aren't necessarily in their class. Anita Helle, Director of the School of Writing, Literature, and Film, has a phrase that I think is particularly apt here: "An academic culture really thrives when there's as much horizontal mentorship as their is vertical mentorship." I believe we can realize this vision with WR 121, creating a culture of writing at OSU where students are so genuinely motivated by their writing projects and so invested in the topics they're thinking through, that they seek out feedback from multiple sources.

Although I have plenty of more goals for the program, I also know that others have ideas, too, so I encourage anyone interested in creating a culture of writing at OSU to get in touch!

Thank you so much for your time, Tim. One last question: What (or who) are you reading right now?

On my desk at campus is Cruel Optimism, by Lauren Berlant. She has enormous talent for viewing the political as primarily an affective sphere. On my desk at home is One Man's Wilderness, a collection of journal entries by Dick Proenneke, a man who in 1968, at the age of 51, ventures into Alaska's wilds to put "self-reliance on trial." Proenneke is a rugged as it gets, felling spruce trees alone and building a cabin by hand. His writing has a rugged simplicity that reflects the lifestyle: "At minus thirty degrees the moose meat saws like wood," he writes one December morning. "The wind is the villain when the thermometer is low. Nature's invisible knife." Beautiful stuff.

By Hannah Rempel and Anne-Marie Deitering, Valley Library

Would you be surprised to find out that, when asked, students report that finding, using and evaluating sources are not what scares them about research projects? Researchers at Project Information Literacy (http://projectinfolit.org) have reported in several studies that the #1 barrier students face is topic selection and "getting started." Their findings show that many students see topic selection as a gamble; they must choose a topic at the start and they will not know until they are done if it is appropriate for the assignment requirements. Researchers at The Citation Project (http://citationproject.net) report that undergraduate students engage more with specific sentences than with sources during research projects, looking for evidence more than synthesizing and learning from a variety of information sources. These studies suggest that students focus more on assignment requirements than on research as a learning process. This is borne out by an emerging body of qualitative studies published in the last two years. For example, Holliday and Rodgers (2013) found that faculty and librarians shape student expectations about research with a classroom discourse that focuses more on "finding" things than on "learning about" things.

Are you curious?

Our personal observations of WR 121 students' attempts at navigating an academic research process suggested that students at OSU fall into similar traps. In particular, when students talk about their research process, the role of curiosity and exploration is conspicuously absent. This mirrors the conclusions drawn in the studies discussed above: that students seek out topics they think will "work" (in some cases, because they have used them before) instead of approaching research as an opportunity to learn. We are currently beginning a study that seeks to explore the role of curiosity in a typical, assignment-focused undergraduate research process. Cognitive psychologists have identified several dimensions of curiosity; we are using scales developed by Jordan Litman and others to focus on three of these: epistemic curiosity, perceptual curiosity and interpersonal curiosity. (Take the curiosity self-assessment yourself here: http://tinyurl.com/nw665xs). In-depth, qualitative data gathered from a small number of students with strong preferences toward these different curiosity dimensions as they engage in a typical research process will help us create a rich, descriptive picture of the role of curiosity in a typical undergraduate research process. Hopefully, the results of this study can be used to improve the information literacy component in WR 121 at OSU, and may serve to inform how students explore research ideas in the disciplines as well.

By Chad Iwertz, WIC Intern

Have you ever wished there were a way to see the sources that your students are finding and using in their terms papers before they submit a completed draft? Have you ever wanted a less time-consuming way of collecting, assessing, and commenting on the source research your students compile in your course before 6-9 weeks into the term? Let me tell you, there is—and you may have already heard of it.

Zotero (Zotero.org) is a free and open-source software program that collects, stores, and organizes source information in easy-to-use, yet powerful ways. It lives in your internet browser and works alongside you as you research. With just a click of a button, Zotero will save bibliographic information for the citation into a library where you can retrieve it later when you need it. What's more: since the library is stored through Zotero, you can access it anywhere you have internet and internet-enabled device. It is also praised for its ability to help compose complex, discipline-specific bibliographic pages for research papers in just a few mouse clicks. If you'd like to know more, Hannah Rempel has a fantastic and comprehensive guide to getting started with Zotero (http://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/zotero) and the Valley Library routinely offers workshops that can teach you more.

But beyond the side of Zotero that can help you compile your own research is another size of Zotero, one that has powerful collaborative features that often go unnoticed or unused. Last year, I had the opportunity to incorporate Zotero into my freshman composition course. What I found was that students with the option to save research into Zotero and share that research with myself and other students throughout the writing process found more relevant, more recent, and better-informed sources. They also crafted more persuasive and more professional written products and arguments.

My first task was to introduce Zotero to freshmen who were unfamiliar with the software and—for the most part—unfamiliar with research in general. Because in ten weeks there isn't much time to spend teaching user interface of a

program, I assigned Rempel's Zotero guide as course reading, the link to which is located above. Then, I devoted one part of one day showing Zotero in the classroom, how to download it, and some basic features that we would be using for class. Because there was not much time to spend on introducing or properly teaching Zotero to my students, using the software was optional; however, because I also offered extra credit points to those who participated, nearly the whole class opted-in to using the program throughout their writing process.

The next step was to get students sharing their research with me and with each other. Once we reached the point at which students were able to start collecting sourcework for their papers, they used Zotero to create a group folder (or library) to start documenting the sourcework they were hoping to use as they entered into drafting for their final papers. These folders were then shared with me. As I was able to see who was using Zotero for their research, I was able to then group students up and have each student share his or her group library with the rest of the group. (More information on creating and sharing a group library within Zotero is available on Rempel's guide here: http://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/content.php?pid=442055&sid=3836347).
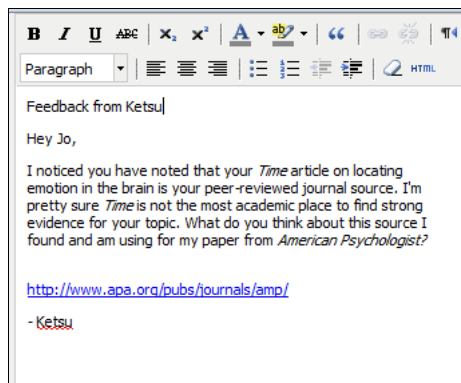
The final step was to model the feedback process and get students evaluating each other's sourcework. A big part of the research students do in freshman composition is getting them to understand and make decisions about what research is reliable and relevant to a topic and which research is not. Because research is something all students must do in their college writing, I've found that group work lends itself well to stimulating conversations about meaningful research. Following these steps, I was able to create space for such peer feedback on source work as well as provide some freedom for myself in reaching out to especially struggling students or identify especially well-prepared students who could assist others in their research processes.

The "Notes" tab houses all feedback.
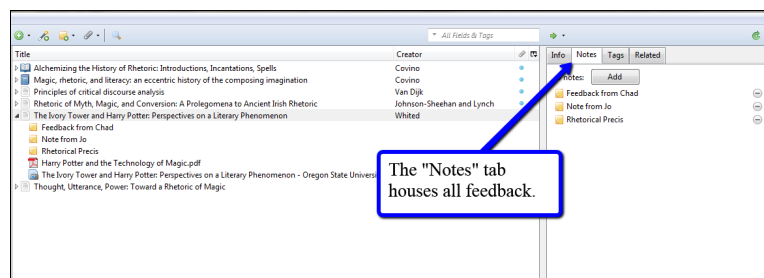
A. As students collect sources—and especially if they are not able to attach full-length copies of those sources—they create a "Note" for that source with a rhetorical précis, summarizing in four sentences the entire article, its methods, and its audience. Students also note the genre of that source (e.g. a peer-reviewed journal article, an article from a widely-circulated magazine, a blog post, a Wikipedia page). (More information on rhetorical précises here: http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/rhetorical-precis/sample/peirce_sample_precis_click.html).
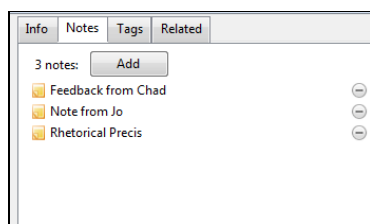
B. In groups, students then respond to group member sources. After reviewing a rhetoric précis, students create more "Notes" with feedback. I provide a fictionalized example to help guide students toward productive peer review, such as: "Hey Jo, I noticed you have noted that your Time article on locating emotion in the brain is your peer-reviewed journal source. I'm pretty sure Time is not the most academic place to find strong evidence for your topic. What do you think about this source I found and am using for my paper from American Psychologist?" Through creating and revising "Notes," students have space to dialogue about the effectiveness of their sources and teach each other about the process of research—ultimately taking responsibility for their research and their written work.

Feedback from Ketsu

Hey Jo,

I noticed you have noted that your *Time* article on locating emotion in the brain is your peer-reviewed journal source. I'm pretty sure *Time* is not the most academic place to find strong evidence for your topic. What do you think about this source I found and am using for my paper from *American Psychologist?*

http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/amp/

- Ketsu

C. Having oversight of the entire process, the instructor is able to watch the process unfold, guide discussion as needed, and respond to particular areas of opportunity or success. I have found that designating a due date for peer response about a week before first drafts of papers are due allows for all students to have some feedback in time to research alternatives, if needed.

Using Zotero has been a rewarding process for guiding students in their research. For one, the process encourages students to conduct meaningful research. Just as it is hard to binge-write a research paper that requires peer review of drafts, it is hard to binge-research for a paper when a group and the instructor review and provide feedback on those sources. Furthermore, students feel more vested in the research they do with Zotero because it is carried with them outside my 10-week course and into the courses they will write for in their discipline. And, as long as they register with Zotero an email they can access after graduation from OSU, this research is something they can have in their profession long after graduation from the university as well. If only Zotero had been around when I was in undergrad!

By Jon Louis Dorbolo, Technology Across the Curriculum

This article focuses on uses of Google writing tools, collectively called Google Drive, for collaborative writing assignments. This focus is relevant because in Fall 2013 OSU made an institutionally licensed Google Apps resource available to students, faculty and staff. Student ONID email accounts have migrated to Google (maintaining their onidname@onid.orst.edu addresses). This creates a condition where students may easily share Google documents with one another and instructors may join as well. Google Drive includes tools for shared Documents, Presentations, Spreadsheets, Forms, and Drawings. Group work on producing any of these may be considered collaborative writing.

Collaborative composition can be a very powerful teaching strategy because it pushes into the open aspects of writing that are often opaque to learners. Collaborative writing is social and requires (or at least encourages) meta-communication about the writing process and content. The social dimensions of co-writing are described by Galegher and Kraut (1994) as:

negotiation about the meaning of facts, a demand for consensus as to an appropriate solution, division of labor based on concerns for fairness and quality of work, coordination of individual contributions, and resolution of questions about authority within the group. (113)

Making learners accountable to one another for an assessed writing assignment produces a dialectic in which these factors must be faced. If you have ever co-written with a colleague, you know how powerful—and challenging—these social factors in collaborative writing can be.

To facilitate collaboration, many apps may be "connected" to individual OSU Google accounts for collaborative creativity, including mindmaps, photo editing, video editing, cad design, drawing, project management, music production, white board drawing, bibliography creation (Zoho), note taking, cartooning, mathematics, code writing, 3-D modeling, chess, and a whole lot more. How useful any of these apps are for your teaching will be determined by your experimentation with the tools and your designs for employing them. TAC offers webinars in OSU Google use and will consult on any instructional project using OSU Google tools that you can think of. Visit http://oregonstate.edu/tac for webinars and contacts.

Ritchie and Rigano (2007) identify three types of collaborative writing used for higher education assignments.

Lead writing: Here drafts are produced by individuals and exchanged with others who review and edit, and then exchange back to continue the process. This type of assignment is well suited for partnered pairs of writers, though more collaborators may be involved. The 21st century brings us Cloud-Based tools that allow for real-time and self-directed collaboration. These are the potentials that Google Apps offer for teaching and learning.

Turn writing: Here learners each compose parts of a text that is then edited into a combined whole. This type of assignment focuses on individual writing and group editing; this is where review and negotiation takes place. Establishing roles such as section editors and executive editor can be helpful here. Turn writing is well suited to longer term projects involving multiple participants and resulting in public presentation (e.g. a public blog or presentation to the whole class).

Writing Together Side-by-Side: Here, collaboration is very rich as the participants are both writing and communicating about the writing in real-time. This process could take place in a classroom or out-of-class meeting

where the group, for instance, brainstorms an outline in discussion with one of the group taking notes on paper or a white board. I do that every day in my work, though it is more difficult to compose paragraphs in the whiteboard mode. That is exactly where online collaborative tools are useful for this type of collaboration. Getting good at group decision making and planning is critical to all learners.

Given these three types of collaboration, we now consider the instructional use of Google Apps characterized by variations in the usage of time and space as shown in four activity models.

	Time		
		Same Time	Different Times
Space	Same Space	Synchronous Local Model	Asynchronous Local Model
	Different Spaces	Synchronous Distributed Model	Asynchronous Distributed Model

Adapted from Ellis, Gibbs, and Rein (1991).

Synchronous Local Collaboration: Learners writing together while sitting in a circle is a powerful learning experience as the vocal meta-communication about the writing emerges naturally. Google aids this model by providing a common document that all in the circle can see and contribute to in writing. A typical version of this model is to ask all learners to bring laptops to class (if they do not have one they can arrange a loan from the Valley Library). Tablets and phones may work, though their typing capabilities are limited. If a learner has no digital device, they can view another's and participate verbally and on paper. Instruct the group (3-7 participants works well) to set up by having one student start a document in Google and invite the other members to it. The writing process may move from in-class to out-of-class and back iteratively. For instance: Produce an outline (in-class)....Research topics individually (out-of-class)....Share research and produce a group draft (in-class). This synchronous model may be mixed with other models effectively. Everything depends on providing learners with a clear process to follow.

Asynchronous Local Collaboration: This model involves participants using a single space at different times from one another, much like creating graffiti or a writing wall. We may consider a threaded discussion board (such as in Blackboard or Google Groups) to be a part of this model since learners post to a common place (an online forum) with time as the variable. Google collaboration does not lend itself as well to this model, though I expect that some inspired educator will find a creative way.

Synchronous Distributed Collaboration: Learners can have same-time group writing online from different places by using a combination of Google Drive Apps. This accomplishes the aims of Synchronous Local Collaboration through using video (Google Hangouts) to mediate meta-communication as learners work on a shared document (Google Documents). Shared video platforms are in constant metamorphosis, so it is effective to ask your learners to select a platform, to help one another, and to show you how. Of course, TAC will be glad to assist in this with you and your class any time.

Asynchronous Distributed Collaboration: This is likely the most familiar model of collaborative writing with Google Drive. Composition, broadly construed, is a powerful learning strategy for every discipline and contemporary technologies may facilitate collaborative composition in ways that make it practical for your instruction. Success in such efforts follows from three basic steps:

1. Plan: Adapt a model for your purposes and develop an instructional structure such that a beginner can follow them readily. It is not the job of faculty to provide technical support. Turn to your instructional technology support professionals for that.

2. Test: Whatever you design, try it out yourself before assigning it to students. Put the assignment and technologies through the whole cycle from initiation to grade. Having tested the assignment for yourself, consider releasing it to learners as a trial or extra-credit for a term. Tell them that you want to field test a new assignment and collect feedback and suggestions. In IT this is called user testing: an essential step in any project development.

3. Assess and Revise: Once your creation is in use by learners as an assignment, make yourself open to feedback. Anonymous surveys are excellent for this. Consider the feedback honestly and make revisions where useful.

Follow this development cycle and you will gain mastery over the instructional uses of some technologies. Please share your successes and challenges with us at TAC and remember that we will assist in technology selection, technology use, assignment design, and learner support.

oregonstate.edu/tac

In good spirit,

Jon Louis Dorbolo

Sources:

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By Stefani Dawn, Interim Director of Assessment and Accreditation

The 2013-14 Baccalaureate Core (Bacc Core) review will begin in the Winter 2014 term and is the first review to include WIC courses (last year's review covered Science, Technology and Society and Contemporary Global Issues). WIC course reviews are organized by college with each college being reviewed once every 7 years. Colleges undergoing review this year are the Colleges of Agricultural Science (16 WIC courses, 3 no longer offered), Business (4 WIC courses), and Public Health and Human Sciences (9 WIC courses, 1 no longer offered). Next year's review will assess WIC Engineering courses.

The review process is as follows:

» In the Spring, instructors and/or units submit one online form for each WIC course addressing questions about the course. The questions ask about:
  » Whether the unit/instructor wants the course to continue as a Bacc Core course;
  » The structure of the course (lecture, labs, etc.) and who teaches (faculty, TAs);
  » How the course specifically addresses the Bacc Core WIC category student learning outcomes and how those outcomes are assessed in the course;
  » The student attainment of the WIC learning outcomes;
  » Specific informal and formal writing assignments; and
  » The process the unit uses to consider changes to Bacc Core WIC courses.

» Course syllabi and instructions for the formal writing assignment(s) are submitted with the form. Syllabi and assignment submissions are checked to ensure they meet the WIC criteria and that they provide evidence to support responses in the review form.
» Course submissions, which include specific course data provided by Institutional Research, are reviewed by the Baccalaureate Core Committee (BCC). The BCC determines if the course is "re-certified," is "on probation" to allow time for the course to more fully comply with the category criteria, or if the "course needs substantial development before re-certification." The goals of the review are to ensure WIC courses meet the criteria, to engage faculty and units in a meaningful and successful review, and to ensure that students are receiving the full benefit from their WIC experience.

In addition to providing course level and student learning data, the Bacc Core Category Review provides an opportunity for faculty to collaborate in assessment and to help ensure consistency across different sections of the same course. The review also provides a mechanism for faculty and units to communicate about larger curricular considerations, such as the skills students have when entering the WIC course and whether those skills are at the appropriate level, faculty support needs to deliver WIC courses, and/or the structure of the Baccalaureate Core.

The Academic Programs, Assessment, and Accreditation (APAA) website provides additional detailed information about the Bacc Core Review, including a calendar, review form templates, and example responses to review form questions. The website is: http://oregonstate.edu/admin/aa/apaa/assessment/baccalaureate-core-assessment-0 . You are welcome to contact me or Vicki Tolar Burton with any questions you may have about the Bacc Core WIC Review.

By Elizbeth Summer Wimberly, WIC GTA

The WIC program and staff would like to give a warm, heartfelt congratulation to the participants in the 2013 WIC Fall Seminar. After five weeks together of discussions, thoughtful considerations, along with a few honest misgivings, we are proud to have these faculty members as part of the WIC community.

This year's seminar took a telling turn as many members were interested in the intersection of WIC and teaching online courses. The growing interest in online teaching has been a hot topic nationwide as many colleges and universities, Oregon State included, expand their online course offerings. As such, the fall seminar participants had many lively, professionally critical discussions. Through considering how key elements of a WIC course, such as writing to learn activities, could be utilized in an online realm, participants sparked a dialog likely to continue throughout future WIC events and across the greater WIC and University communities.

It was a privilege and pleasure sharing the learning space of the WIC Fall Seminar. This year's participants were:

» Sarah Cunningham (Anthropology)
» Michelle Dolgos (Chemistry)
» Susie Dunham (Fisheries and Wildlife)

- » Evan Durland (Fisheries and Wildlife)
- » Julia Goodwin (Music)
- » Celeste King (INTO)
- » Chris Knowles (Wood Science and Engineering)
- » Devlin Montfort (Chemical, Biological, and Environmental Engineering)
- » Jan Spitsbergen (Microbiology)
- » Su Sponaugle (Zoology)
- » Mark Novak (Zoology)
- » Eli Meyer (Zoology)
- » Sam Van Laningham (Cascades—Geology)

We were excited to work with you and look forward to continuing to do so in the future.

CONTACT INFO