Upcoming WIC Events

Winter 2007

Best Practices Seminar: Using Student Self-Assessment And Goal-Setting In Writing Intensive Courses

Monday, Feb. 19
3:00-5:00 pm
Waldo 121

Monday, Feb. 26
3:00-5:00 pm
Waldo 121

See page 5 for details

In This Issue

Educating academic writers

Vicki Tolar Burton
WIC Director

Leonard J. Rosen in *The Academic Writer's Handbook* (Pearson Longman, 2006) identifies four key characteristics of academic writing: it is informed, logical, clear, and based on evidence. We could debate these criteria (I might argue to include "audience-appropriate"), but for now let's go with Rosen's four. OSU students begin practicing academic writing in WR 121 and continue their practice through their Bac Core and major courses.

This issue of *Teaching with Writing* focuses on academic writing at OSU. Are you wondering how academic writing is being taught in WR 121? Read a review of the new course textbook *They Say/I Say* by Gerald Graff and Kathy Birkenstein on page 3. WIC co-sponsored an October lecture and workshop that brought the authors to our campus to introduce their text and pedagogy to WIC faculty and to the GTAs who teach WR 121. Graff's most recent book is *Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind*.

To find out what WIC faculty say about academic writing, see "What is Academic Writing?" on page 3.

While WR 121 gives students practice in the moves writers make in constructing general arguments and using evidence, students must also learn the writing moves specific to their major discipline and profes-

Continued on page 2

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 Bioengineering Design to the History of Photography. 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 use of borrowed information.

• Students complete at least 5000 words of writing, of which at least 2000 words are polished, formal assignments that have ben revised.

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

For complete information on WIC guidelines, visit the WIC website at:

<<http://wic.oregonstate.edu>>

Educating academic writers, cont.

sional field. Let's look again at Rosen's four criteria. While first-year writing is informed by reading on general topics (education, the environment, American culture), students writing in their major must demonstrate that they are informed about the content of the field, its conventions, its vocabulary.

Logical development and organization practiced in WR 121 must be re-formed at the upper division into the logic of a particular discipline with its genres, formats, and assumptions.

Clarity as practiced (or not) by first year students will be refined when they write in their major as they come to understand the field's elements of style. Some majors promote conciseness while other reward elaboration. Some look for short, direct sentence structure, while others promote sentence complexity. All want evidence of clear thinking.

Perhaps the most significant development in college writers over time is their changing understanding of what counts a evidence as they read and write in their major: They learn how to locate, generate, and select appropriate evidence and express it persuasively for different purposes and different audiences.

One challenge of teaching writers in the major is for the teacher to be able to step back and see the field and its discourse with a novice's eyes. The writing moves and assumptions that are second nature to professors may be quite invisible even to our upper-division students. Guiding a class analysis of a model document (classrooms with a document camera are perfect for this) enables the teacher to identify and discuss disciplinary strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing.

Giving students low stakes opportunities to practice various disciplinary moves can help: Here is a graph of data on x. Write one paragraph explaining what the data means. Make sure your analysis is logical, clear, informed by what you know about x, and based on the evidence in the graph.

Kerry Ahearn (English) is widely praised by majors and Bac Core students alike for his critical paragraph assignment. which asks students to write a concise, closely structured response to a reading.

What would happen if every OSU teacher articulated to students at every level a requirement for writing that is informed, logical, clear, and evidence-based, and furthermore, if every OSU teacher made meeting those criteria part of the assignment grade? I suggest that student writing in the university would improve in ways we all could see and students would feel. Are there OSU departments and faculty willing to test this argument?

This is not about teaching grammar in Mathematics or Chemical Engineering. It is about faculty naming and modeling elements of good writing in their field, giving students opportunities to practice, and holding students responsible for writing that is not only academic but ready for the world.

Michael Faris, new WIC GTA

Vicki Tolar Burton
WIC Director

The WIC programs welcomes Michael Faris as the WIC GTA for 2006-2007. Michael is studying for an MA in English with a specialization in Rhetoric and Composition. His research project seeks to understand the ways blogging can be used in critical pedagogy to promote democracy. Michael is also the Media Coordinator at the Pride Center and the Slam-Master of the Corvallis Poetry Slam. He received a BA in English Education and a BA in History from Iowa State University and taught middle school reading and language arts for two years before coming to OSU. Michael plans to pursue a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition after completing the MA.

Photo by Sam Leinen

New Writing 121 text on academic writing

They Say, I Say promises to demystify the moves of academic writing

Michael Faris, WIC GTA

Oregon State University's Writing 121 students are using a new textbook this year, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein (W.W. Norton & Company). The textbook claims to "demystify academic writing" by explaining and offering templates to help writers make academic moves in their own writing. As a useful text for Writing 121, *They Say, I Say* is a versatile guide to academic writing that all students can learn from.

Graff and Birkenstein use the metaphor of "entering into conversation with others" to describe academic writing. Thus, they offer "moves," or "templates," that writers can use in order to describe what other authorities claim and to position themselves in relation to those writers. The title of the book comes from a summary of this type of positioning: Other writers or thinkers believe this set of
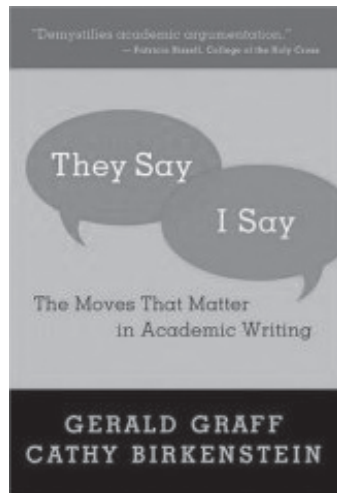
ideas ("they say") compared to the student's own argument ("I say").

The templates offered by Graff and Birkenstein model ways that writers can help them summarize others, quote others, respond to others' ideas, insert naysayers into their

writing, and explain why the ideas matter (the "so what" of the argument). For example, Graff and Birkenstein offer this template as an example of a way to both agree and disagree with another's position:

"He claims that _____, and I have mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, I agree that _____. On the other hand, I still insist that _____."

Some of the English graduate teaching assistants who teach Writing 121 have noted how useful *They Say, I Say* is in writing instruction. "The book really expresses a lot of the 'moves' to make in academic writing that I previously had a difficult time articulating to my students," says Sarah Burghauser, a second-year GTA. "I think that the book could really help give students a base knowledge of how to express agreement, disagreement, and complex relationships both in other's writing and in their own."

Burghauser was pleasantly surprised

What is academic writing?

OSU faculty answers

Michael Faris, WIC GTA

What is academic writing? If part of the goal of the university and of WIC courses is to teach students academic writing in their discipline, then addressing this question should be a strong concern. In an informal survey of WIC faculty, we have accumulated some thoughts on the nature of academic writing and what struggles students have with academic writing.

What is academic writing?

Most respondents stressed one aspect of academic writing that seemed central: the ability to take and support a position. While many aspects of writing were mentioned (including attention to mechanics, the ability to summarize, and innovation), the necessity of making a claim and supporting it was stressed most strongly.

Many faculty members emphasize the nuance between and within disciplines. For example, Dan Smith in Food Science and Technology (FST) specified his answer for the genre of research papers, which are most common in FST: "These exercises require laboratory and/or literature research, delineation of a clear set of objectives of the inquiry, some explanation of the methodology brought to bear on the problem, and presentation and analysis of relevant findings." Others noted that different disciplines have specific genres of writing that are particular to those disciplines.

Because the question of "what is academic writing?" is a general one, and there is so much variation in writing across the disciplines, few definitions offer much specificity. However, David Hackleman, Linus Pauling Chair in Chemical Engineering, offers a purpose for academic writing in his definition: "Writing in a manner that discusses a topic utilizing intellectual thought, fundamental beliefs / truths / philosophies and in a fashion that offers a net positive impact on the

human understanding of our existence and/ or surroundings."

What do students struggle with?

A few teachers surveyed stressed the need for strong mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, and citation) in their description of academic writing, and when asked about what students struggle with, most teachers felt that this was a primary area of concern. "Some students struggle with all aspects, others with one or two," noted Lani Roberts, assistant professor in philosophy. "Of the latter students, I'd say punctuation and citations are the biggest bugaboos." Other teachers noted student difficulty with thesis formation, organization, and transitioning between ideas.

How do faculty at OSU help students improve their academic writing?

Most faculty members who responded

2005-2006 Culture of Writing Awards go to eight students

Eight Oregon State University students received a new honor for their writing ability in Spring 2006 – a Writing Intensive Curriculum Culture of Writing Award.

Presented by the students' departments and OSU's Writing Intensive Curriculum Program, the awards recognize the top undergraduate paper written in the respective departments during the 2005-06 academic year.

Award winners, their majors and courses, and the titles of their papers include:

WIC Culture of Writing Award in Sociology
Calvin Hughes
Title: "A State of Crisis: Alcohol Use Among Oregon High School Students"
Course: Sociology 416 – Conducting Social Research

WIC Culture of Writing Award in Geosciences
Shawn Majors
Title: "Chemical Variability Comparisons of Springs and their Relationships to Local Lithologies"
Course: Geography 415 - Earth Materials III Igneous Petrography

WIC Culture of Writing Award in Liberal Studies, OSU Cascades Campus/Liberal Studies Program - Bend, Oregon
Robyn Lopez Melton
Title: "A Woman's Role"
Course: Political Science 363 – Gender and Race in American Political Thought

WIC Culture of Writing Award in Biochemistry and Biophysics
Eddie O'Donnell
Title: "Pathogenic mechanisms of cancer causing hMLH1 mutations"
Course: Biochemistry and Biophysics 483 – Biophysics

WIC Culture of Writing Award in Agricultural and Resource Economics, OSU/Eastern Oregon University Campus
Catherine Owens
Title: "Assessing the Economic Impact of NRCS Programs on Baker County Oregon's Economy: A Proposal"
Course: Agriculture and Resource Economics 432 – Environmental Law

WIC Culture of Writing Award in Agricultural and Resource Economics
Danya Rumore
Title: "Agricultural - Environmental Policy: Greening Agriculture"
Course: Agriculture and Resource Economics 352 – Environmental Economics and Policy

WIC Culture of Writing Award in Mathematics
Sharon Sternadel
Title: "Circles in a One-Way Street Taxicab Model"
Course: Math 338 – Non-Euclidean Geometry

WIC Culture of Writing Award in Women Studies
Margaret Jo Whiting
Title: "Yanyun Zhao: A story of progress in China"
Course: Women Studies 320 – Gender and Technology

Announcing
The 2007 WIC Culture of Writing Awards
in the Disciplines

Save copies of your best papers from fall term, and encourage your department to honor its best student writer.

How to participate:

• The department notifies the WIC director of their intention to participate and to match the WIC $50 prize money.
• Faculty in the department nominate their best undergraduate papers written during the prize period. Some departments use Spring term 06-Winter 07 as the prize period so that awards may be determined during spring term 07.

• A department committee selects the best paper and notifies WIC of the winner.
• The department awards the WIC Culture of Writing Award in the discipline, making the award in the venue of their choice.
• Winners are announced in university and public media.

WIC fall seminar

During fall term, ten OSU faculty members who currently teach or plan to teach WIC courses met for the annual WIC Faculty Seminar. During five meetings over fall term, the participants discussed integrating writing into their respective disciplines, using ungraded writing assignments, designing formal writing assignments, responding to student writing as students work through their writing process, and evaluating student writing.

Participants included:

Larry Becker, Geosciences
Rebecca Concepcion, Exercise and Sports Science
Tiffany Garcia, Fisheries and Wildlife
Roger Graham, Anncounting, Finance and Information Management
Scott Heppell, Fisheries and Wildlife
Atiya Mahmood, Design and Human Environment
Mary Nolan, Anthropology
Anne Nolin, Geosciences
Dave Sullivan, Information Management
Misty Ann Weitzel, Anthropology

Announcing
A New WIC Seminar

Best Practices for Teaching Writing in the Disciplines:

Using Student Self-Assessment And Goal-Setting In Writing Intensive Courses

Monday, Feb. 19 and Monday, Feb. 26, 2007
Plus one follow-up session spring 07 or fall 07

3-5 pm
Waldo 121

$150 honorarium for attending all three seminars

For WIC faculty willing to try new tools and strategies for student self-assessment in a future WIC class

Interested?
Contact vicki.tolarburton@oregonstate.edu

Teachers share views on academic writing, cont.

Continued from page 3
to the survey say that they respond in writing to student drafts and welcome students to visit them during their office hours. Nabil Boudraa, assistant professor in Foreign Languages and Literatures, utilizes the library for a special session in his class on academic research and writing papers, and other professors direct students to their departments' writing guides or the Writing Center. (Department writing guides can be found at http://wic.oregonstate.edu/wic_dept_writ_guides.html).

For assignments with very structured format, teachers often give out examples and hold in-class discussions on different elements of the assignment. A few teachers also use "writing to learn" activities, or low-risk in class writing activities that get students to engage with ideas before writing the formal paper.

In the survey, some teachers defined academic writing specific for their fields. Indeed, teaching writing in a WIC course must be specific to the discipline. In "Inventing the University," writing expert David Bartholomae writes that, "The student has to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse." When a student is learning academic writing, Bartholomae argues, she must engage in "inventing the university," meaning she has to learn to speak the language of the specific discipline.

Vicki Tolar Burton, Director of the Writing Intensive Curriculum Program, noted that "One of the keys for students in learning academic discourse is to learn what counts as proof or evidence in a particular discipline. This knowledge enables the student writer to take a position and support it appropriately for that discipline. In any one term, a student may be doing academic writing in several very different disciplines.

"It is important," she added, "for faculty to be as specific as possible about the qualities they are looking for in academic writing in their discipline."

First-year students at OSU are getting new assistance with "inventing the university" with the new textbook *They Say, I Say* (see review, page 3).

An Expert on Academic Writing:

In "Reflections on Academic Discourse," Peter Elbow describes the commonalities of academic writing: an avoidance of popular language, an attempt at creating authority, and the paradoxical combination of explicitness and inexplicitness. Elbow writes, "Academic discourse tries to be direct about the 'position' - the argument and reasons and claim. Yet it tends to be shy, indirect, or even evasive about the texture of feelings or attitude that lie behind that position."

The Read/Write Web: A primer for faculty

Anne-Marie Deitering
Undergraduate Services Librarian
Valley Library

The internet is called a resource, an information repository or the world's biggest library. For those of us who remember discovering new books in the card catalog, checking box scores in the morning paper, and finding the number for the pizza place in the yellow pages, it has become the place where we do all those things and more – a one-stop spot for looking stuff up. While the Web will continue to be a place to find information, increasingly it is also a place where some users can create things, share their thoughts, organize their lives and make new friends. The tools and applications that make up this emerging, dynamic, "Read/Write Web" include blogs, wikis, instant messaging, social bookmarking, podcasting and much, much more.

This new online environment is volatile; the Read/Write Web is growing exponentially, with new services being launched (in beta!) all the time. Understanding some common threads can help educators make sense of it.

Web as Platform

Using lightweight programming languages, developers have created powerful applications that use the web itself as a platform. What does this mean? Users can run applications without downloading programs, and save files directly to the Web.

A great example of this is Google Documents which is a web-based word processor. After registering for this service, users can write and format documents directly on the web. Another example is Meebo, a web-based instant messaging client that lets users monitor several IM accounts without installing any programs on their own (or the library's) computer.

Because these tools run on the Internet, they are incredibly easy to use for collaborative projects. Anyone with access to the Internet can access shared documents or programs. Different people can even edit the same document at the same time.

Microcontent

Music lovers who use iTunes frequently think of their music as a collection of individual songs, instead of albums. Researchers who use databases to run keyword searchers think of "information sources" in terms of articles instead of journal volumes. Increasingly, this phenomenon can be seen throughout the Read/Write Web. The emerging web is populated with individual chunks of information, both large and small, that users can link to, pull out, unbundle and repackage into a variety of creative forms.

This content needs to be understood not as pages or sites, but as posts, photos, videos, tags and podcasts.

Increasingly, users expect to be able to link directly to the pieces of information they like, whether those are photographs, articles, blog posts or songs and to pull those pieces out and use them in their own work. Look at YouTube to see how users are pulling clips out of digital video recordings, and then embedding those clips in other contexts, like blog posts.

Tagging

The Internet has made almost everyone more independent when it comes to finding information. Ten years ago we would expect to call an agency or company for information; now we expect to find it ourselves on a website. With the rise of the Read/Write Web, we have access to powerful tools for organizing our information too. With applications like del.icio.us (for organizing websites), LibraryThing (for organizing books) or Flickr (for organizing photographs), users can store huge collections of information directly on the Web.

All of these tools (and many more) also allow the user to assign "tags" or keywords to the stuff they save. Tags are an incredibly flexible tool in the virtual environment. When we try to "file" a website into a bookmarks folder, for example, we have to decide which single idea or concept best describes it. Do I put this recipe for strawberry jam into a folder marked "recipes" or one marked "strawberries?" Tagging flips the equation around. Instead of attaching a website to a folder, tags let us attach keywords (as many as we want) to that website, so that in the future we have a lot of ways to find that site. With the example above, one could attach tags like: recipes, jam, preserving, strawberries and fruit. And tags can be heavily per-

The Read/Write Web, cont.

Continued from page 6

sonalized. If your Uncle Hal loves strawberry jam, you could add an "Uncle Hal" tag to that recipe as well.

These tags make it possible for the individual to find the things they save. But because they are stored on the Web, it is also possible to allow others to see them. Anyone can use the tags attached by thousands of people using these social tools to find resources as well. To see how this works, visit Flickr. This social photo-sharing site has become one of the best places on the Web to find photographs.

<u>Conclusion</u>

A year ago, in Teen Content Creators and Consumers, researchers at the Pew Internet and American Life Project showed that people born after 1982, for whom the Internet has always been present, are much more likely than others to spend their time creating content on the Web. They are creating blogs, web pages and artwork. They're posting photographs, videos and music. And they're taking all of these forms of digital content and remixing them into new forms. These people are today's undergraduates. They expect to be able to do social, creative things on the Web. As educators, it is important that we understand this changing online environment.

Textbook They Say/I Say, cont.

Continued from page 3

when she found that the part of students' papers where they used the moves Graff and Birkenstein propose "were some of the strongest parts of their arguments."

Sara Jameson, Composition Coordinator in the English department, notes how the book has helped students develop critical thinking skills "in terms of introducing speakers, in terms of stronger integration of speakers with the student's own position, and in terms of transitions between ideas." She also intends to use the book in her 200-level writing course in the future.

Of course, the book does have its own naysayers. Some writing teachers argue that templates are too prescriptive and stifle creativity in academic writing, or that they might amount to rote learning. Others are concerned that the use of templates eliminates the student writer's voice.

Graff and Birkenstein address these points directly in their book. Noting that templates have a long history of use in writing instruction, going back to ancient Greece and Rome, Graff and Birkenstein claim that they are making visible what much academic writing does anyway. They view their templates as "concrete prompts that can stimulate and shape" rigorous, academic thought.

As a second-year graduate student, I myself have found this book to be very useful in understanding the way academic writing works, and wish that I had read this book when I was just starting my degree work. The moves that Graff and Birkenstein describe are very helpful prompts in understanding the way writers can position themselves in relation to others.

Information Literacy Summit draws teachers and librarians from across the state

Michael Faris
WIC GTA

What is information literacy, and how do we teach it? On Friday, November 17, forty-five librarians, writing teachers, and technology professionals from Oregon State and its partner community colleges met at the Information Literacy Summit at OSU to discuss this question.

Part of the impetus for the Summit was a concern that students would be coming into OSU's upper division courses with varying degrees of information literacy – that is, the abilities to recognize when they need to find information, to find information efficiently, to learn from the information gathered, and to use the information effectively and ethically.

Because so many students at OSU are transfer students, their introduction to information literacy in a course like Writing 121 may vary due to differences in coursework, library access and student backgrounds. A recent survey of 23 WIC classes found that approximately 40 percent of WIC students do not take their Writing 121 course at OSU.

For example, students in OSU's Writing 121 are guided through a research process using the library's search engines and databases. A transfer student might come from a community college and not have the familiarity with Valley Library's tools that someone who took Writing 121 here might have.

Participants at the Summit found that they all were teaching information literacy, and all agreed that it could not be taught in a one-shot attempt, meaning it could not taught in just one course. Summit participants discussed what skills students needed, what was working in instruction, and what was not working.

Several themes developed, including students' needs for critical thinking skills, technology information literacy, ethical use of sources, awareness of choices for research, ability to synthesize information, and the ability to quote, paraphrase, summarize, and cite effectively and ethically.

Additionally, the Summit hosted a panel with guest speakers. Jon Dorbolo of OSU's Technology Across the Curriculum spoke about the need to keep up with technology in the classroom, but to understand that we cannot assume that using new technology is going to automatically make students better writers.

Kate Sullivan from the Lane Community College English Department shared the ways in which information literacy is imbedded in courses at her institution and the challenges she sees her school and the state experience.

Torie Scott from Portland Community College Library offered a librarian's perspective on using online technologies to facilitate communication between libraries and students in their coursework.

Participants in the Summit agreed to create a task force that would seek funding from OUS's Joint Boards Articulation Committee in order to fund a website with resources on teaching technology literacy, and developing information literacy outcomes and criteria.

The Summit adjourned with the intentions to meet again in the future and to include faculty from more Oregon higher education institutions.
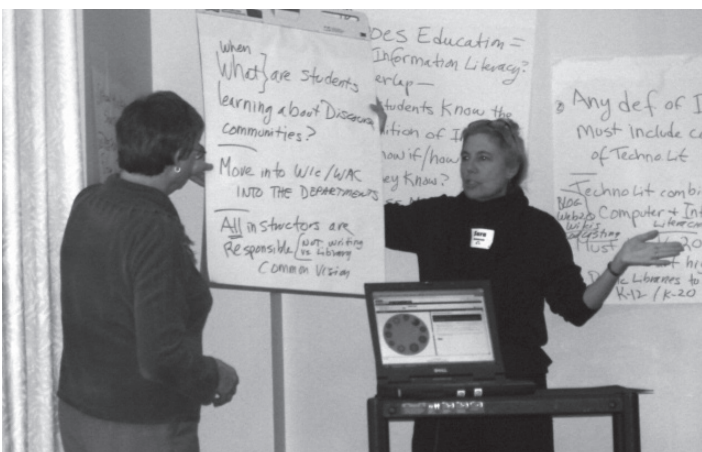

Photo by Michael Faris

OSU Technology Across the Curriculum Associate Director Jon Dorbolo discusses technology integration in teaching

Photo by Michael Faris

OSU instructor Sara Jameson presents key components of information literacy from her discussion group.

COMING UP IN
THE NEXT ISSUE OF

TEACHING WITH WRITING:

TEACHING
INFORMATION LITERACY

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