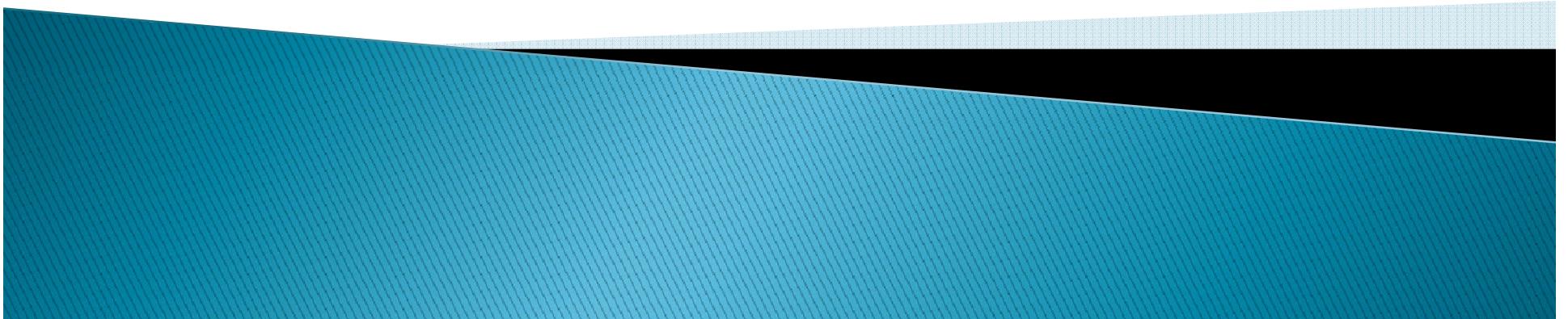


Excuse Me, But...What Exactly is Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)?

Tara Pauliny, Assistant Professor, English

Writing Intensive Certification
Faculty Workshop
John Jay College of Criminal Justice



Definitions

- ▶ **Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)**

Broadly speaking, WAC is often considered a pedagogical movement, working to change modes of learning and teaching, particularly the reliance on multiple choice and short answer modes of assessment.

- ▶ **Writing in the Disciplines (WID)**

While some academics and administrators use the terms/acronyms **WAC** and **WID** interchangeably, proponents of **WID** have argued that writing should be taught within disciplinary frameworks, attending to the particular modes and conventions within specific academic discourses.

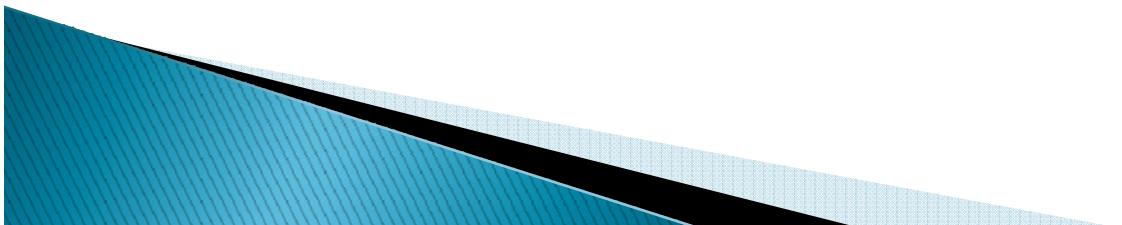
- ▶ **Writing in the Professions (WIP)**

An extension of **WID**. **WIP** focuses on writing within specific professions, such as business, law, or nursing.



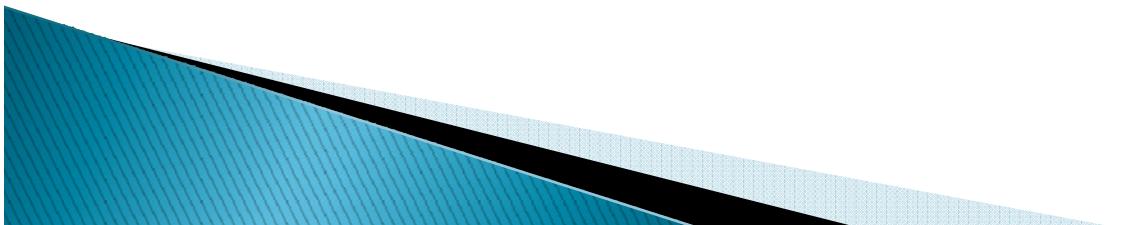
A Brief Introduction

- ▶ Started in the 1970s
- ▶ WAC/WID are motivated by the ideal that “writing belongs in all courses in every discipline” (Anson ix)
- ▶ Historically, the movement was responding to the problematic notion that writing is elementary, generic, and a transparent skill set that can be mastered in general education courses like first-year composition



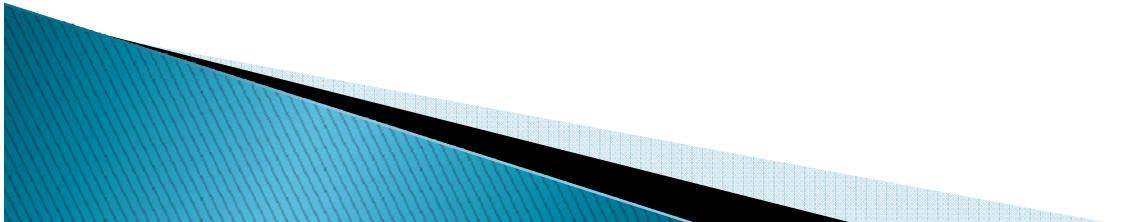
John Bean explains it well:

- ▶ “The writing-across-the-curriculum movement [...] is largely a reaction against traditional writing instruction that associates good writing primarily with grammatical accuracy and correctness, and thus isolates writing instruction within English departments, the home of the grammar experts. The problem with traditional writing instruction is that it leads to a view of writing as a set of isolated skills unconnected to an authentic desire to converse with interested readers about real ideas.” (*Engaging Ideas* 15)



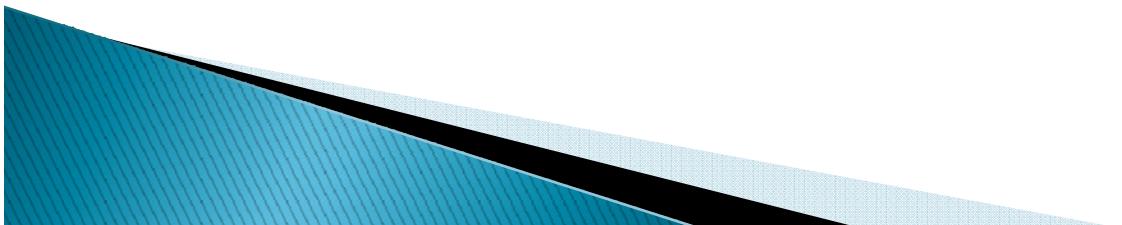
“Writing instruction is everyone’s business”

- ▶ WAC/WID are complementary approaches to thinking about how students become proficient in the discourses of disciplinary communities
- ▶ WAC/WID stress that:
 - some elements of writing for college courses are generic across differences of disciplinary practice
 - students come to understand writing conventions as the products of disciplinary communities when they can compare writing tasks and conventions across disciplinary contexts



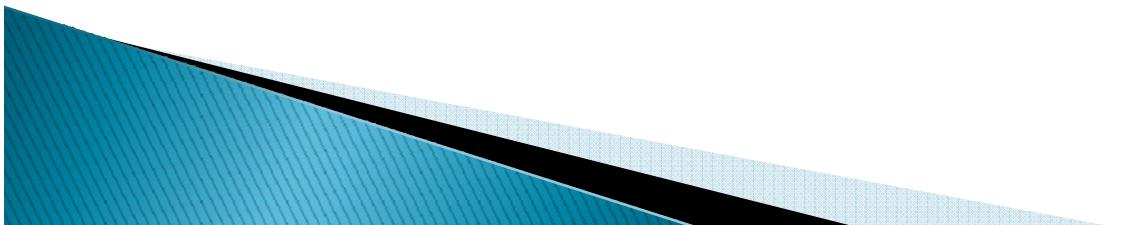
WAC/WID Believe That:

- ▶ “language, learning, and teaching are inextricably linked” (Russell 41).
- ▶ students most effectively learn to write when
 - writing is integrated into their course work
 - the disciplinary nature of writing tasks and faculty expectations around writing are made explicit



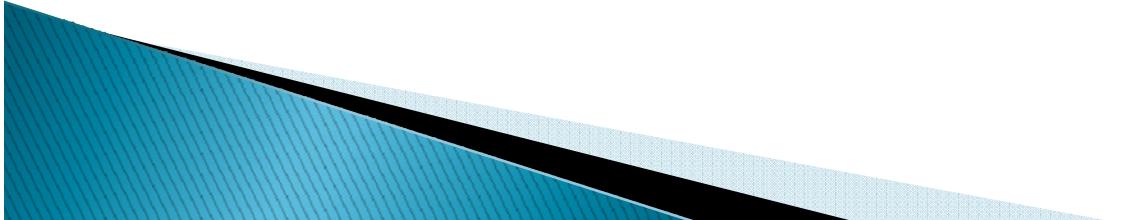
WAC/WID...

- ▶ promote the notion that students benefit from:
 - writing in multiple contexts and courses
 - over the course of all four years of study
 - toward a variety of authentic purposes
 - while working closely with professionals in their chosen fields



Ultimately, WAC/WID claim:

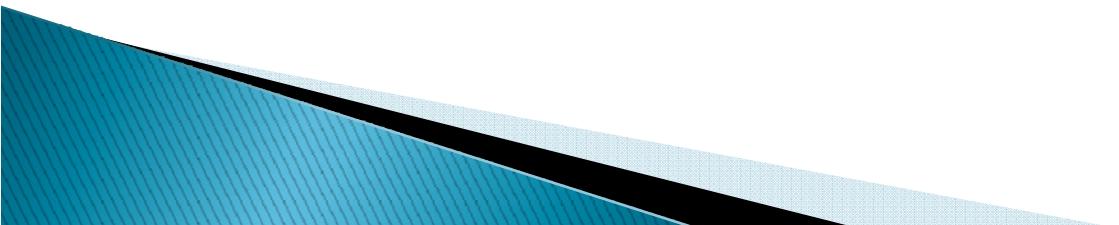
- ▶ that learning to write within a discipline is intimately connected to learning to think like a professional in that discipline
- ▶ that even competent student-writers may show signs of struggle in their writing due to the complex and unfamiliar nature of the discipline-specific tasks that they are asked to perform
- ▶ and that writers at all levels of proficiency benefit from thinking about the often unspoken assumptions of “effective” writing within particular contexts.



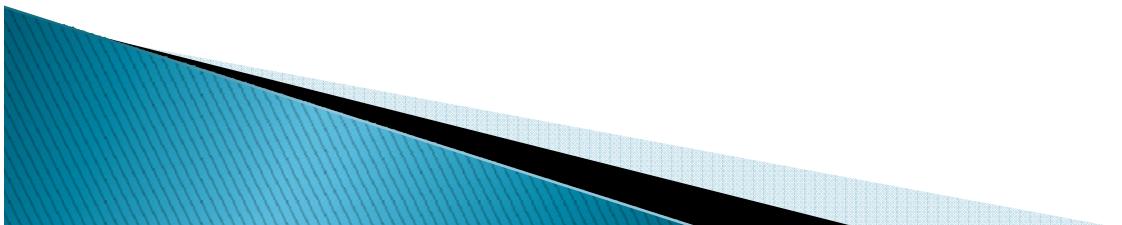
WAC Vocabulary

- ▶ **Audience:** This term is used to define those for whom a piece of writing is intended. It is especially important to keep in mind the difference in audiences implied by discipline (the audience for a lab report, for example, is different than that for a performance review).
- ▶ **Error:** Error is closely connected to the study of grammar, basic writing, and ESL. Error analysis is a technique for identifying possible underlying causes of mistakes in sentence structure, verb form, etc. The identification of recurring “patterns of error” in a writer’s text is a widely used pedagogical tool to reduce a seemingly large number of errors to a handful of teachable categories of error (subject–verb agreement, possessives, etc.).
- ▶ **Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics:** Grammar is the study of how words and their component parts combine to form sentences; the system of *rules* inherent in any language (from the *American Heritage Dictionary*, 3rd Ed). Grammar is structure, form, syntax. *Grammar* needs to be distinguished from *usage* and *mechanics*. *Usage* refers to the way in which language is conventionally applied within the culture and reflects an awareness of one’s audience. *Mechanics* include the technical aspects of writing, such as spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

- ▶ **Expressive, Transactional, Poetic Uses of Language:** Britton and his team developed a framework for classifying school writing, based on sociolinguistic theories of the functions of language (drawn primarily from the work of linguist Roman Jacobson). The three categories of language function, according to Britton in *Development of Writing Abilities*, are:
 - **expressive**—writing that is “close to the self,” representing the “ebb and flow” of a writer’s thoughts and feelings.
 - **transactional**—“language to ‘get things done’ or participate in the world’s affairs . . . to inform, persuade, or instruct.”
 - **poetic**—“writing as a verbal construct, a patterned verbalization [poem, story, song, etc.] of the writer’s feelings and ideas.”

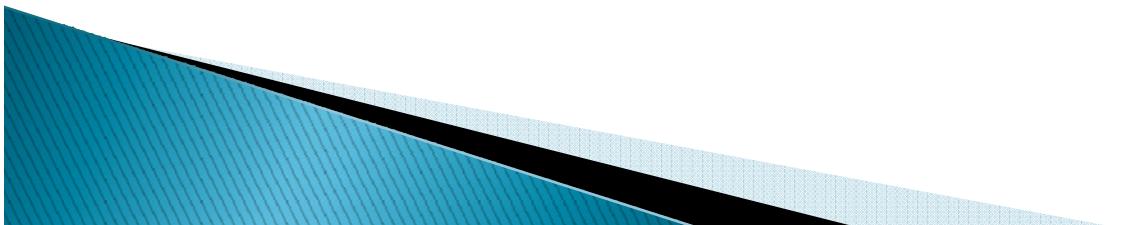


- ▶ **Journals:** Generally informal, journals can be a productive place for students to record their thoughts, experiences, questions, and informal writings throughout college, in all disciplines, as well as in their daily lives.
- ▶ **Minimal Marking:** The principle behind minimal marking is that correcting each technical mistake is not the most useful way to respond to students' work; minimal marking encourages a focus on the larger ideas the student is trying to communicate, and emphasizes responding to those.
- ▶ **Peer Review:** Practice of having students read and provide comments and suggestions for each other's writing. This is generally done in class in pairs or small groups. Also referred to as peer editing, peer review is often guided through the use of handouts or worksheets that assist students in reading others' writing through various critical lenses.



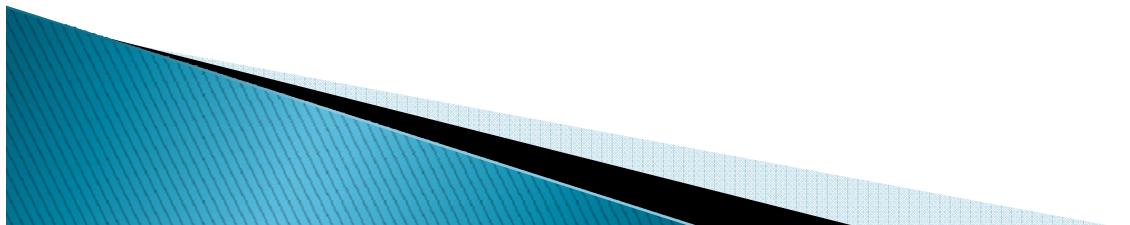
Scaffolding: The term scaffolding has come to be used within education to refer to the ways in which complex projects can be broken down into manageable pieces, with the instructor/expert guiding the students/novices through the entire process, and encouraging students to move to higher levels of expertise.

Rhetoric: Rhetoric is the art of speaking or writing effectively, using the principles and rules of composition drawn from classical traditions, typically tied to the art of persuasion. Early scholars and teachers of composition tended to discuss and teach rhetorical modes: persuasion, description, argument, compare-contrast, etc. More recently, WAC/WID practitioners have focused on the rhetorical nature of all language, emphasizing the rhetorical dimensions and methods of disciplines. All these approaches share the fundamental belief that a speaker or writer will use any given language more effectively if s/he is consciously aware of its rhetorical dimensions.



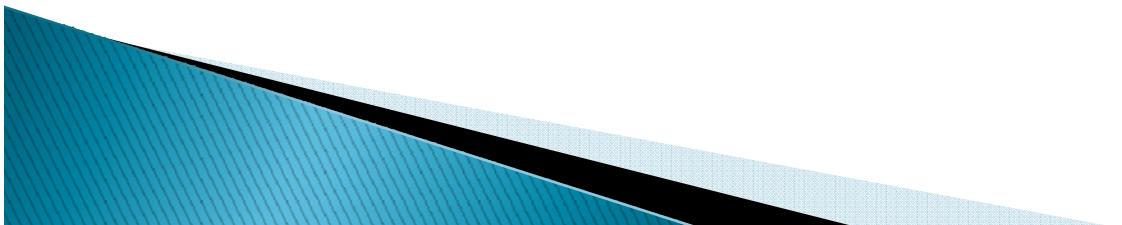
WAC @ John Jay

- ▶ Writing Intensive (WI) Initiative
- ▶ CUNY Writing Fellows



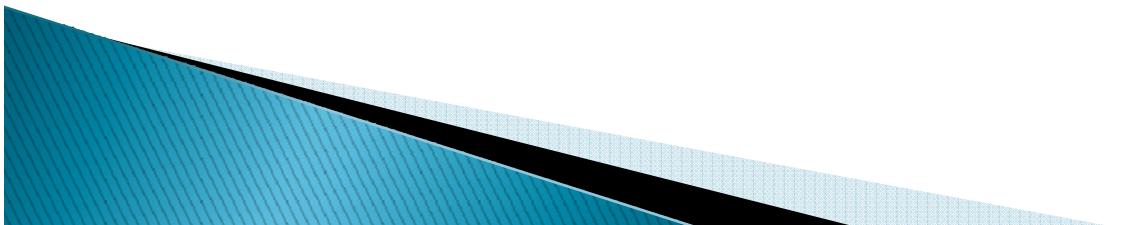
Writing Intensive

- ▶ Creation of Writing Intensive Undergraduate Courses Across Disciplines
- ▶ WI Certification of Faculty
 - 7 hours of WI certification workshops
 - WI Portfolio (WI syllabus and writing assignments)
 - Implementation of WI requirements in classes



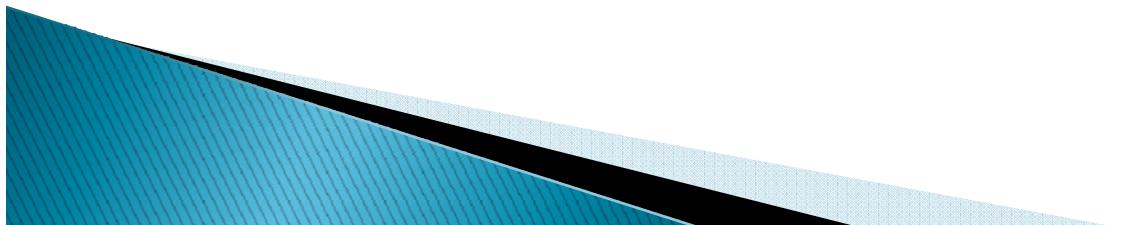
CUNY Writing Fellows

- ▶ Each year, six CUNY PhD students work at John Jay as Writing Fellows
- ▶ 15 hours per week through the semester
- ▶ Work directly with departments and programs
 - to integrate writing into their courses
 - on large-scale writing projects
 - on assessment (as it relates to writing)



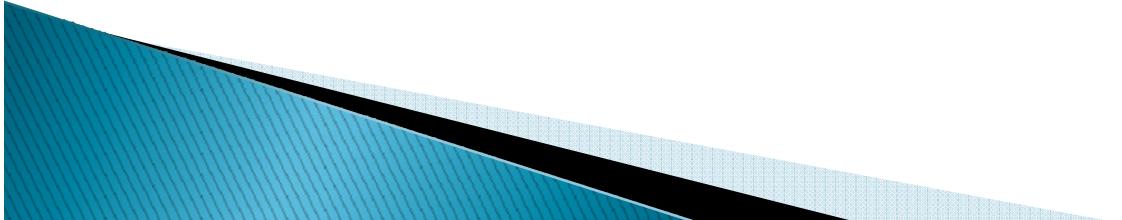
Current WI Requirements

- ▶ Qualitative requirements (Instructional Methods & Assignments)
- ▶ Quantitative Requirements (Instructional Methods & Assignments)



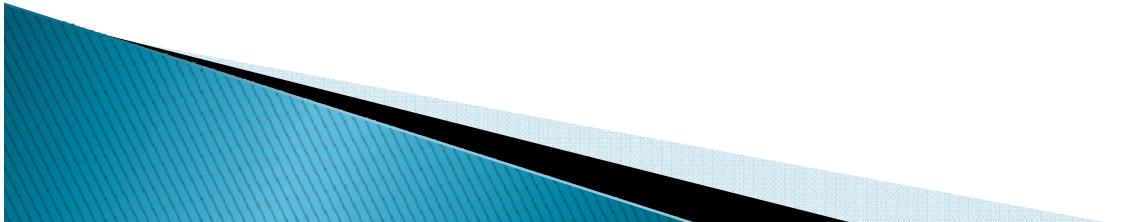
Qualitative Requirements

- ▶ Integration of “low-stakes” and “high-stakes” writing assignments:
 - Low-stakes assignments can be ungraded or count little toward the final course grade
 - Examples include freewriting, journals, group writing activities, peer critique, and post-class annotations of lectures or discussions
 - High-stakes assignments typically weigh heavily on a student’s course grade
 - Examples include lengthier essays, final papers, and structured group projects



Qualitative Requirements

- ▶ Integration of peer review of writing assignments:
 - Peer review allows students to read and critique the writing of their peers
- ▶ Integration of self-reflective writing:
 - Self-reflective writing asks students to reflect upon and write about the processes they go through while composing a writing assignment



Quantitative Requirements

- ▶ *100-level WI courses:*
 - At minimum, 10 pages of formal graded writing
 - At minimum, 10 pages of informal low-stakes writing
- ▶ *200-level WI courses:*
 - At minimum, 15 pages of formal graded writing
 - At minimum, 15 pages of informal low-stakes writing
- *300-level WI courses:*
 - At minimum, 20 pages of formal graded writing
 - At minimum, 20 pages of informal low-stakes writing
- *400-level WI courses:*
 - At minimum, 25 pages of formal graded writing
 - At minimum, 25 pages of informal low-stakes writing

Note: The writing for any of these courses can be of varied lengths and grade value, depending up on the needs of the disciplinary field and the discretion of the individual instructors.

Perks of Certification

- ▶ Smaller class size
- ▶ 21 students per WI course
- ▶ Writing to learn
- ▶ Writing as a process
- ▶ Building on ENG 101 and 201

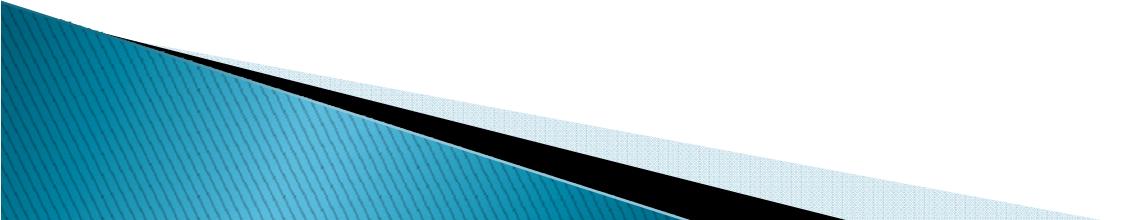


Outside resources

- ▶ WAC at CUNY--
<http://web.cuny.edu/academics/oaa/uei/wac.html>
- ▶ WAC Clearinghouse, Colorado State--
<http://wac.colostate.edu/>
- ▶ Online Writing Lab at Purdue--
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>
- ▶ WAC at George Mason University--
<http://wac.gmu.edu/>
- ▶ National Writing Project resources--
www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/doc/resources/topics.csp
- ▶ CUNY WriteSite--<http://writesite.cuny.edu/>

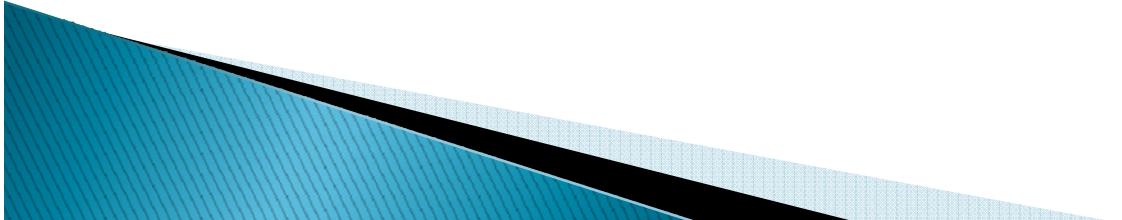
References

- ▶ <http://projects.uwc.utexas.edu/praxis/?q=no/de/254>
- ▶ From “Grammatical to Global: The WAC/Writing Center Connection”
- ▶ <http://www.lehman.edu/lehman/wac/about.html>



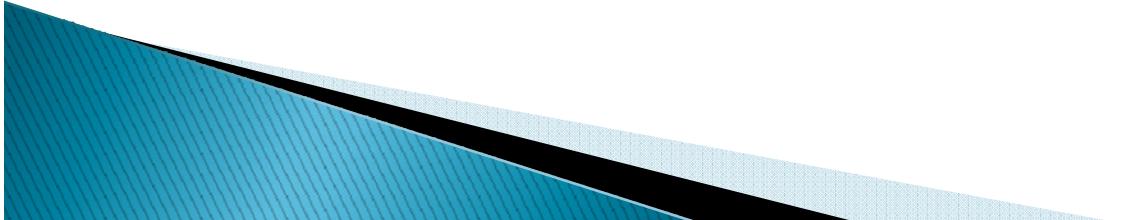
Designing a WI Course

- ▶ Let's get into groups of 2
- ▶ Identify the course you plan to teach as WI
- ▶ Identify its level (100, 200, 300, 400)
 - Review the quantitative WI requirements
 - Review the qualitative WI requirements
 - Brainstorm/list ways you might:
 - integrate low and high stakes writing into this course
 - Integrate peer response
 - Integrate self-reflective writing
 - Amount and kind of writing assignments you'll assign



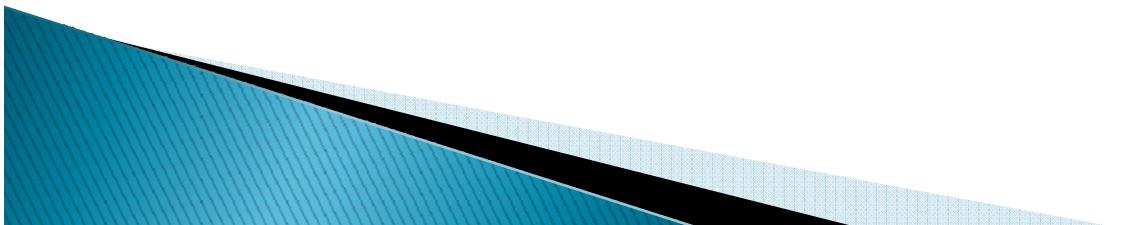
Low Stakes Writing

- ▶ Freewriting
- ▶ Journal writing
- ▶ Group activities with writing built in
- ▶ Quizzes
- ▶ Peer critique
- ▶ Lecture or discussion notes
- ▶ Minute paper
- ▶ Class reflection
- ▶ Lecture/concept/discussion synthesis



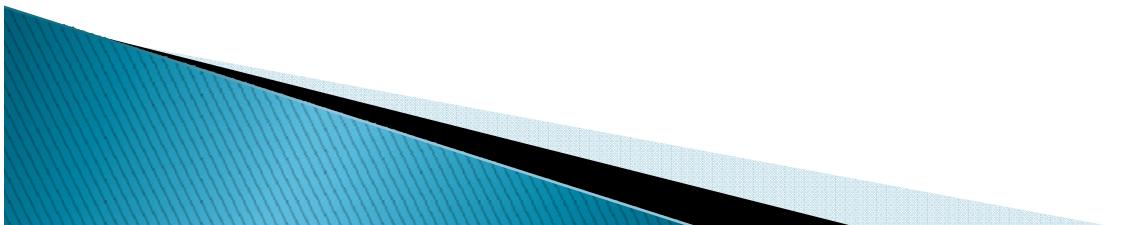
High Stakes Writing

- ▶ Typically these are graded and multiple drafts are written and responded to by you and their peers
 - Formal essays
 - Group projects
 - Final papers, research papers
 - Lab reports
 - Other discipline-specific writing



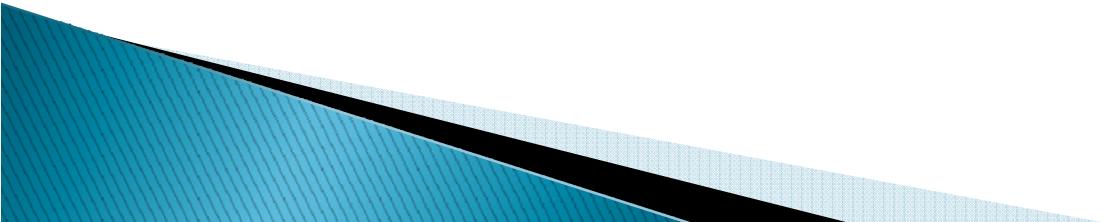
Self-Reflective Writing

- ▶ Asks students to reflect on their writing process
 - Short reflection before turning in a draft
 - Formal, end of the semester reflective essay in which they discuss the improvements they have made throughout the term and what they would like to work on next
 - In-class reflection that reviews their prior knowledge about a subject or course reading
 - Reflection about the day's lecture or class work



ENG 316: Gender and Literature

- ▶ Low stakes writing:
 - Reading journal
 - Daily quizzes, with short answers and essay questions
 - Directed group work where students answer questions I have posed, pose their own, analyze passages from the text, or synthesize readings
 - Leading class discussion, where students construct a lesson for the day (in writing) and lead the class through their plan
 - Thesis development and outlining



High Stakes Writing

- ▶ Essay Exam
 - ▶ formal, graded, in-class essay exam given at the end of the term
- ▶ Annotated Bibliography
- ▶ Analytical Essay, with drafts, 10–15 pages in length
- ▶ 5, 1 page, single-spaced response papers focused on a course reading
 - One paragraph of summary
 - One paragraph of analysis
 - Can revise one of these



Self-Reflective Writing

- ▶ In-class work where they review their response papers and comment on their strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ Peer response of each other's work and related reflection on their own drafts
- ▶ Self-reflective statement to accompany their final paper

