Doing Writing Differently:
Using Writing in New Ways to Engage Students and Boost Learning

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Successfully integrating writing into your courses can create more active and engaged students; this in turn can create stronger and more interesting student work. For many classes, it’s a win-win situation: if you ask for the right kinds of writing, students can be more interesting to YOU even as they find your course more interesting to THEM.

This workshop will include answers to the following questions:

- What sorts of things can one ask students to write?
- What does one do with the papers students generate?
- How can one work smarter, and not harder, as a reader and responder to student writing?

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Support Materials for Designing Writing-integrated Courses

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What is Writing-Integrated Course Design?

Traditionally, the teaching of writing at the University of Washington has been the province of the English department. Faculty in other areas have also assigned writing, of course, but once through “freshman English,” many students have graduated without being regularly challenged to develop strong writing skills. This is now changing. We in the College of Arts and Sciences have come to understand that by itself traditional writing instruction can offer only an introduction to successful college-level writing. If students are to graduate as strong writers in their fields they will also have to write regularly, in a variety of classes, throughout their entire undergraduate careers.

Writing-integrated instruction

Central to the approaches we have developed to reach the goal of better student writing all across the College is the concept of writing-integrated instruction—a strategy for building writing assignments into courses throughout the curriculum in ways that significantly boost student learning even as they also improve student writing.

What is writing-integrated instruction, and how does it differ from traditional instruction?

- Writing-integrated instruction designs writing assignments that are directly related to central course concepts.
- Writing-integrated instruction asks students to write frequently in un-graded as well as graded formats.
- Writing-integrated instruction scaffolds its writing tasks in ways that build the skills students will need to write with success for graded course work.
Foundational Observations for WI-Courses

Designing writing-integrated courses begins with four observations:

1. While writing-integrated instruction will certainly help students develop strong writing skills, faculty should know that students who write frequently throughout a course also engage more consistently with material, come to class better prepared, and are better able to participate in class discussion. They also tend to learn material more deeply, and retain what they learn longer. So yes, integrating writing into a class can certainly improve student writing. But it can also make teaching and learning more effective—and enjoyable—as well.

2. Integrating writing into a course doesn’t necessarily mean more work for faculty. Though everything a student writes ought to be acknowledged in some way, that doesn’t always mean a traditional “read-comment-and-grade” response. It can also mean oral response to a class following a quick read-through of selected samples, or grading papers just plus, check, minus, or simply validating the work students have done through in-class exercises. By experimenting with a range of alternative response strategies faculty can actually assign substantially more student writing without spending significantly more time grading.

3. Faculty need to ensure that their commenting and grading methods are both effective and efficient. Not only do many faculty spend more time reading essays than they need to, some traditional practices can actually be counterproductive to student learning. Combining well-designed assignments with the range of response and commenting options that recent work in the field of composition studies has developed can enable most faculty to offer students substantially better feedback while still keeping workload under control.

4. Faculty often think that helping students develop writing skills in their discipline will take time away from covering course material—and when writing is not integrated into the central design of the course, it can indeed do exactly that. But it doesn’t have to. In fact, a well-integrated set of writing assignments will help (as I say above) make student learning of critical course concepts both deeper and better retained.
Four Common Writing-integrated Assignment structures

- **Term Project Model**: Here the course features a single major writing project focused on questions or concepts central to the course itself. It builds student ability to complete the assignment successfully by integrating into the course structure a series of low stakes papers sequenced so as to prepare students for the project’s demands. Students may also be asked to rewrite based on peer and/or instructor feedback. A Portfolio can be used to manage the low-stakes papers.

- **Sequenced Shorter Paper Model**: Here the course sets up a sequence of 2 to 4 shorter (3-4 pp) high stakes papers, each focused on some course feature—like a set of essential questions basic to the course, or a skill sequence, or some sort of progressive conceptual complication. Low stakes writing can be deployed for engagement and skill building for each of the high stakes assignments. A Portfolio can be used to manage the low-stakes papers.

- **Select, Develop and Re-write Model**: Here a sequence of short, low-stakes papers leads to the selection of one such paper for development into a longer paper. Often combined with peer review and rewriting exercises. A Portfolio can be used to manage the low-stakes papers.

- **Exam-based Model**: Here the high stakes work is solely on exams—either in-class or take-home—and low stakes papers prepare students for exam writing. At course end the low stakes papers can (again) be submitted in a Portfolio accompanied by a self-reflective and self-assessing essay.
Low Stakes Writing

“Low stakes writing” is any writing students do in or out of class which is either not graded at all, or graded only minimally (e.g., plus, check, minus, or done, not done).

What can low stakes writing do for you and for your students?

- Improve student learning.
- Improve discussion.
- Promote higher levels of student engagement with readings and lectures.
- Produce significantly stronger high stakes writing on midterms, finals, or larger projects.

How does low stakes writing do these things?

Well-designed low stakes writing:

- Improves learning by giving students multiple occasions to articulate understandings of key course concepts. Such articulations are likely to be the basic building blocks of deep learning in any course, but because college-level work very often demands ways of thinking that students do not yet control, students can benefit greatly from regular occasions to construct, revise and refine their nascent understandings of course material. Low stakes writing can provide those occasions, along with some of the base-line rigor that makes such occasions effective.

- Improves discussion by engaging students in active preparation for class sessions. When students must write about their readings, they will have strong incentives to keep up with assignments, and when they have written about what they have read, they will also come to class better prepared to contribute to classroom conversations.

- Promotes higher levels of engagement with course materials by making reading a more active, even personal, process. Much of what we ask students to learn can seem abstract and distant from their life experience, and this in turn makes intellectual engagement with new material particularly challenging. Low stakes writing can foster engagement by helping students connect class content to their own personal experience (“Velcro” writing).

- Produces better high stakes (graded) writing both by offering low risk trial runs for high stakes assignments, and by enabling a quarter-long “scaffolding” to help students develop complex writing and critical thinking skills. Students often find themselves lost among the sub-skills that the work we ask them to do requires. Many cannot write strong research papers, for example, because they cannot yet locate, sort, and process the professionally written books and articles in your field. Low stakes writing can give them practice with such sub-skills, enabling them to write far more effectively than they otherwise might.
Types of Low Stakes Writing

Engagement writing (Short assignments written either before a class or at the beginning of a class hour: “What grammar means to me”—a five minute in-class essay written before a class on the role of grammar in English language study; or two minutes taken to describe “Three things I already know (or three questions I have) about Subject X”). Engagement writing:

- improves engagement with readings by activating prior knowledge.
- can bridge the academic-personal experience gap by encouraging personal stakes.

Exploration writing (Assignments that offer students ways to find their own ways of articulating class concepts and readings: “Identify and explain three ways in which you see your two most recent readings differing most”—a 1-2 page paper written about currently assigned reading material; or, “For tomorrow’s reading pick 3 terms that seem to you to be essential to its understanding. Write a paragraph for each with first defines the term, and then describes why you think it is particularly important”—a 1-2 page paper about currently assigned reading material). Exploration writing:

- deepens students’ initial understanding of material.
- sets the stage for strong group work and class discussion.

Trial-run writing (Assignments that offer students experience with one or more of the subskills that will be necessary for a larger project: “Prepare a list of three sources you have consulted, with a paragraph for each that summarizes its content and explains how you might be able to use it in your project”—a two-page out-of-class exercise assigned early in the development of a student term-project.). Trial-run writing:

- gives students practice in transferring general writing skills to disciplinary contexts.
- allows for experience in new forms without fear of failure.
- assures instructors that students are not plagiarizing.

Metacognitive Writing (Assignments that encourage students to assess their own progress as learners in the course: “My nomination for the key idea of the day” or “Biggest Confusion I still have after today’s class”—a paragraph written as an end-of-class assessment of how well students have understood the lecturer’s presentation). Metacognitive Writing:

- provides feedback to instructor on what students are (and are not) learning.
- builds self assessment expectations and skills.
- promotes stronger learning by creating conscious awareness of strengths and weaknesses.
- enables instructors to engage in a scholarship of the classroom.
Whatever Else, All Written Work Should be
Authentic, Well-motivated, and Classroom-validated

Low stakes writing assignments will be more effective when they are *authentic, well-motivated,* and *classroom-validated.*

*Authentic and/or well-motivated assignments* are those which recognizably serve a purpose students themselves both understand and accept. Examples of such purposes include:

- Learning whether students have understood a concept relevant to the course.
- Eliciting questions students have about assignments, readings, or lectures.
- Priming the pump for class discussion of a given question.
- Providing a dry-run for a more formal assignment to come.

*Classroom-validated assignments* are those for which you have students use the writing they have done in classroom situations. Examples of ways assignments can be classroom-validated include:

- Briefly (7-8 minutes) using groups to work from papers students have written, asking them to discuss, summarize, or synthesize, and then report out to the class at large.
- Making students’ written responses central to a segment of a class lecture/discussion.
- Having students read and respond to each other’s work.
- Establishing a portfolio system to credit students for all work done.
- Reading and responding.
  - One can read and evaluate all papers (the traditional mode of validating student work), or
  - One can read selectively, by surveying, for example, 10% of a set of papers in order to report to the class how they have done with the assignment, or by using passages from selected papers to illustrate either why a given response was especially effective, or how a good but improvable response could have been stronger. (I don’t recommend using weak student work—much better to work with something with latent strengths that you can help students see how to recognize and develop.)
Low Stakes Writing-to-Learn Activities – some examples
Adapted from the University of Richmond’s webpage
“Writing across the curriculum, writing-to-learn”

• freewriting, and focused freewriting – generating ideas by writing continuously whatever comes to mind. You can start a freewrite with no prompt at all beyond “Write about what you read last night,” or with a prompt focused on a particular subject or question. Can use at beginning of class for 5-15 minutes. Variant: sentence – passage springboard: students choose a sentence or short passage from their reading that struck them, write it at the top of page, then write their thoughts about it.

• minute paper or entry/exit slips – written responses to questions you pose at beginning (entry) or end (exit) of class. These help instructors gauge whether students are following. Can ask “what is relationship between A and B?” “What confused you most about what we covered today?” “What do you nominate as the 3 most important things we talked about today? Why?”

• dialectical / double entry notebooks - write each page in two columns. One column can summarize the reading while the other column contains the student’s questions / reactions. Or two students can have a written conversation about a passage, taking turns each writing in one column and then exchanging the notebook.

• answer the question! – give groups of students a copy of a sample test question with a number of sample answers. Each student should write a paragraph evaluating the answers – where are they accurate, and where could they do more to answer the question?—and then discuss. Good for training students to write satisfactory short answers on tests.

• group writing activities – peer response groups, group projects, or group revisions of existing documents (for different purpose or audience)

• clarification / review letters - pairs of students exchange notes about some passage in reading (for example, a novel) they don’t understand, try to clarify for each other.

• student-formulated questions – either take home or in-class: ask students to write down their own questions for discussion. For example: questions on desirability of some quality, consequences / implications of something, what information is lacking, etc. Students can swap questions before reading aloud in class so can be shared anonymously.

• micro-themes – brief essays, either a single page, or something written on one side of a 5’x8” index card. Ask them to summarize material, or support a thesis, or comment on significance of data that has been provided, or explain underlying principles and propose a solution to a quandary that has been posed.

• writing to empower the student –ask students to write narratives, or descriptions, or definitions of a related concept before taking a matter up in class so that you can show them they already have some background knowledge or attitudes to defining the topic. Ask several to read some or all of what they’ve written, then bring discussion back to the topic you want to discuss, showing connections to what they’ve already written about.

• Letters to someone about class materials – So if they’ve just read a new novel, or a piece on fishing in the south Atlantic, have them write to someone (parent, old teacher, friend, the author—) about their response to having read.
Five Steps towards More Interesting Writing on High Stakes Assignments

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If you haven’t always liked what students have written for you in the past, or if you’ve struggled through a set of papers, slipping into a doze, or if you find yourself pulling out your hair, having no idea what you might write as a comment, then consider the following as steps towards more interesting papers, and more effective and efficient grading.

1. Begin by thinking of how your assignment can be integrated so as to be central—not an add-on—to your course. A course-integrated assignment might ask students to articulate understandings and evaluations of key course questions, or to extend ways of thinking learned within the confines of the course to material beyond the course, or to engage in one or another course curriculum-related inquiry. Students will write best if, on one hand, they can see clearly how the assignment helps them learn your course material, and if, on the other, the work they do on a day-by-day basis in class helps them develop the conceptual and technical skills the assignment will ask.

Even better, because integrating assignments into your course makes them as dependent as possible on the course itself, a well integrated writing assignment can also defeat plagiarism both by creating a topic to which generic on-line or otherwise obtained papers cannot possibly be relevant, and by enabling students to complete the assignment without recourse to outside help in the first place.

2. As you develop your idea of what you would like students to write, perform a “task analysis” in which you break down the project in terms of its component sub-skills. Then, “scaffold” students into their high-stakes paper through a short series of low stakes assignments or in-class exercises to introduce them to these necessary sub-skills. Students will write better if they can have trial runs, preliminary drafts, and some form of feedback along the way.

Sub-skills to a given assignment might include: doing literature searches; writing accurate summaries of resource material; learning to identify in key readings main arguments or supporting evidence; formulating a significant research question; locating and responding to oppositional voices.

Some of these skills may seem generic (if you understand how to summarize a first-year composition reading it might seem that you could also summarize an article central to political science or art history), but even many seemingly generic skills are in fact discipline-specific in either whole or part. Thus what philosophers think worthy of study and argument is quite different from what chemists or political scientists think worthy of study and argument. Similarly, what counts as evidence in a paper about Shakespeare will be radically different from what counts as evidence in a physics experiment. Most students need help in
learning how subskills with which they have experience elsewhere can transfer to your discipline. Think, too, about where in the course this help is going to come.

3. Give students a clear audience and purpose. Who should students imagine as the reader of their project, and what will that reader do with the paper you ask students to write? Such an audience can be imagined, even playful, but it will work best if it is also specific: “Write as if to a panel of experts in the field who will need to be convinced of the viability of the research project you propose” (for a grant/project proposal project); or, “Imagine you are writing to this class, all of us informed by the readings of the past quarter, though needing your help in remembering and placing the texts and passages to which you refer”; or, “You have been hired as a consultant to J&B Plumbing, to advise them on problems associated with partial upgrades of steel pipe-plumbed houses to copper pipes...” (for a paper explaining the chemistry of electrolysis).

4. Demystify the process! Students often find that the demands made of them in different courses are in fact very different, and they can find these differing demands highly confusing. So be sure to demystify your assignment by writing and sharing with students criteria for a strong performance. Such criteria help students understand exactly what sort of thing it is they are writing (report, for example, or summary, argument, or literature review), and both why and how you think this assignment will help them deepen their understanding of course material.

5. Use models. Show students an example of a successful paper, and, even if you have to write it yourself, show them an example of a good but less successful paper as well, along with an explanation for each as to what works, and what does not. But (especially with less successful papers) be careful to frame your work with them in a constructive way. As you might imagine, it rarely helps to run past efforts down; rather I find students learn most when the point of the exercise is to see what positive steps students can take to strengthen their papers, and when they have contrastive examples so that they can see what you mean, for example, by an argument that works, or an effective explanation of a data set.
Responding to Student Writing I: Creating Effective Assignment Criteria

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The single best way I know to make grading easier, more coherent, and faster, is to develop, share and use grading criteria. It may take a little time and experiment to work out what exactly you want students to be showing in a given paper, but that time is repaid many-fold when it comes time to grade.

Why develop explicit assignment criteria?

- Criteria help demystify what is for many students a very mysterious process.
- Because criteria allow students to understand an assignment’s goals, they very often also allow students to write in a much more focused and effective way.
- Criteria enable instructors to read and respond to papers more quickly, more consistently, and more effectively.
- Criteria promote consistency of grading across sections taught by different instructors—whether TAs or faculty.

What makes for good criteria?

- Alignment of assignment goals with course goals.
- Clarity.
- Concision. Too many criteria, or lengthy explanations of even a few, may render criteria ineffective. (Rule of thumb? Limit yourself to 3-6 criteria, and make sure they all can be set out together in less than a page.)

How can criteria streamline grading?

- Use your criteria to guide the design of your assignment in the first place.
- Share your criteria with your students before they write. Just as important, if you possibly can, give them model papers to show what successfully meeting of your criteria looks like. Students write much better when they know what you actually mean by a given criterion.
- Limit your commenting. You will save time and be more effective by focusing comments on only those criteria most important to a particular task.
Responding to Student Writing II: What can one say on papers, and how can one say it efficiently and effectively?

Six Preliminary Observations

1. Commenting keyed to grading criteria saves you time by keeping you focused, and it allows for much clearer communication with students. Three key principles for using criteria:

   - articulate your expectations clearly and fully, yet concisely.
   - communicate your expectations to your students, preferably along with models.
   - enact those expectations both in your assignment design and in your grading.

2. As much as many faculty don’t believe this, marking grammar errors actually doesn’t help most students. Indeed, focusing on sentence level error may even be counterproductive:

   - It may keep you from attending to higher level skills, and to how, and how well, a paper deals with the relevant content/knowledge.
   - It allows students, too, to direct attention away from content and higher order writing skills. But which is actually more important to you: understanding a key course concept or correcting uninflected verbs?
   - After many years of schooling, sentence-level error is actually pretty familiar ground to most students. To the extent a teacher’s simply correcting things made a difference, that difference, for most students, has already been made.
   - It is a general rule that the more challenging students find an assignment to be, the more surface-level mistakes show up in their drafts. The working capacity of the human mind can only do so much. When students are straining their capacities simply to understand how to work with the concepts in your course, many will have little energy left over when the paper is due to take care enough for surface level error.

All of that said, if reducing surface error is one of your teaching goals, a very little bit of marking, combined with a requirement for re-submission, is often more effective than extensive identifying of errors throughout a paper. (See Richard Haswell’s “Minimal Marking” in the resources section.)

3. More comment is not always better. In fact, it can turn out to be much worse! Studies have shown that except under special conditions students do not—maybe even cannot—process more than a limited set of comments. (One way to expand students’ processing of comments is to build a rewrite step into your assignment; another—short of asking for revision—is to ask students to write a short response to your comments in which they explain and give examples of the changes they would now make were they to have time for a full revision.)
4. Pointing out in very specific ways where and how students have been successful is at least as effective in improving student writing as pointing out where they are having difficulty.

- Many students find professorial response to their writing mysterious, and they are just as unclear about where they have succeeded as they are about where they have fallen short. Specific comments keyed to explicit criteria can help them identify strengths to build from as well as problems to solve.
- For our part as teachers, we are often so focused on pointing out problems students have that we don’t always remember to identify their successes. And then when we do, we aren’t always clear about exactly how and where a paper succeeded. “Great work!” without indicating just what, exactly, that great work was, may not actually help much.

5. When students are engaged in multiple writing tasks, you don’t always have to comment on or grade everything they write. Indeed, you don’t even have to read it all. To be sure, it’s important to explain what you will be reading, and you should indeed have some way of validating all of your students’ work. But in the end, the point of the paper management strategies you employ is to improve students’ learning. As long as you have ways to explain to them, and to confirm to yourself, that the writing students do truly is helping them learn, and as long as you validate specific assignments in effective ways, you really don’t always have to read everything.

6. When you do read and comment on a set of papers, you have a whole array of response strategies available to you. The next sections outline commenting strategies instructors often adopt—with notes about their strengths and their weaknesses.

Possible strategies for managing low stakes papers efficiently, effectively, and responsibly

- Grade done/not done, with minimal acknowledging comments.
- Grade plus, check, minus, with minimal acknowledging comments.
- Selectively sample a group of papers in order to locate 2-3 to read aloud with your commentary (or even just a paragraph from each of 2 or 3).
- Survey a whole or a representative number of papers, but rather than write comments, summarize orally in class their strengths and weaknesses. (Five minutes with this will often do more for student learning than any set of minimal written comments can possibly give.)
- As a non-take-home writing assignment, give a short-answer in-class quiz geared to assigned course material, followed by either peer review or (my own favorite) by class discussion followed by self-grading.
- Use peer review strategies. Read-around, or Paper exchange, or seven-minute group consensus exercise. These are strategies which students often really like and learn from, but they also constitute a form of publishing student work—a very powerful means of getting students to pay attention to, and take care with, their work. (This works best when you let students know ahead of time that you will be asking them to share these papers as short drafts.) (See Peer Review Basics, below)
- End-of-course Portfolios. These not only go a long way towards validating work, they also include the treat of Self-reflective essays. (Yes—they are a treat!) (See Webster, “The Elizabethan Age Portfolio,” in the resource packet for an explanation of how one sort of course portfolio can help faculty manage substantial amounts of student writing.)
Commenting on Student Writing

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There are many more ways to “validate” student writing than the traditional “read-them-all-and-comment-and-grade” strategy. But even when you do “read, comment, and grade,” there also are more ways than one to comment. Below I describe some of these different ways. The last two, “advising/prescribing” and “correcting,” are the traditional modes. We tend to think that they are also the best sort of commenting we can do. But the fact is that other strategies can often do more to help students towards what finally ought to be a chief goal: that students become better able to carry out on their own the revisions necessary for future writing assignments.

Ways to comment on student writing include:

1) **Recognition:** here the reader simply recognizes the writing, accepts it as there and done, but doesn’t judge, or edit, or comment in any way which suggests the work should be different or better. Though potentially appropriate for any sort of writing, it is truly the only fair response for most experimental drafts such as journals, free-writes, or any in-class engagement work. In such cases either the kind of writing required or the nature of the occasion on which the writing takes place makes the application of conventional writing standards irrelevant. Examples include:

   “Interesting.” “Fun to read.” “Nice observation.” “Reminds me of my own horseback riding stories. What did you do after you fell off?”

2) **Description:** non-judgmental response which aims solely at describing one’s on-going response to the paper’s logical, or argumentative, or descriptive sequence. This is appropriate, and very helpful, for any first or subsequent draft; indeed, description of this sort is central to most of what we do with student papers. Because the capacity to describe the developing effect of a piece of writing is particularly useful for building a student’s sense of audience, this is a commenting strategy to teach students to use in responding to the work of their peers.

   “As I read your opening I understood your claim easily, and I found the distinction you make between ads and ordinary texts very useful. As you went on, though, I then got confused about which of these two you were going to discuss. You say you will deal with ads first, but in fact you deal first with ordinary texts.”

3) **Conversation:** a response which moves a step beyond description to raise issues, ask questions, seek clarification, imagine options, and so named because one can think of these comments as a kind of (albeit one-sided) conversation with the student about the ideas and possibilities a paper offers. This is a more challenging sort of commenting, since, working from the assumption that students will already have produced at least something of value in the draft at hand, it involves imagining possible extensions and re-workings of what the student has
produced so far. As with description, this mode of response is one we want students themselves to be learning:

“You seem to have developed two different centers as you’ve made your way through this paper. Which do you really want to explore? Or can you see a way of synthesizing the two into a single argument? As they stand, the first does the most to convince me, but you clearly have something in mind for the second. What is it?”

4) **Evaluation:** This category includes elements of both Description (above) and Grading (below). My evaluation is criteria-based: I tell students where I think their paper stands with respect to certain well-defined functions/qualities a particular writing assignment should show. Fair and effective evaluation depends upon students’ understanding the criteria you will use; evaluation is inappropriate whenever students have not first been given the chance to understand those criteria, and to see how they apply to the assignment at hand.

“Oh, the whole, you’ve done very well organizationally—a clear center and a good sense of focus throughout. You still need to develop your argument further—it needs more weight if it is to be persuasive.”

5) **Grading:** Only used when the writing has gone through its entire composing process. For tips on how to grade efficiently, see pages 11-14 above, “Responding to Student Writing.”

**Modes of Response I try to avoid:**

6) **Advising/prescribing:** Here the reader offers advice on specific changes to be made in the piece. Advising differs from description and conversation in that it slides into prescription, and as such compromises my goal of making students themselves responsible for the choices and changes they make in their drafts. They, not I, should be the writers/decision-makers of their papers, but when I advise them about specific changes—even when my advice is pretty good—I work against that goal.

“I think you need a new paragraph here to develop your argument further. Additionally, though you give lots of support to your argument about the ad’s first claim, now you have to re-organize your points by putting that last idea first.”

But notice that by turning comments like these into questions which invite students first to imagine alternatives, and then to make their own decisions about how a problem can best be solved, you can shift from the advising mode and into the conversational mode of Category 3:

“I’m not sure yet that I fully understand what you are trying to tell me. How could you expand your discussion to be more full? What specifics can you find to give your argument more force? And as for your discussion of the ad’s first claim, though I like the points you make, I get lost, or lose focus, as I read through them. How could you make your argument easier to follow?”
As this example suggests, in conversational comments I’ll often pose a range of general choices that the logic of a student’s writing seems to offer—but my object then is to help students identify the problems I as a reader am having, and to clarify the range of choices they have in solving them. What I want to avoid is any urging of them to specific solutions.

This distinction between Conversation and Advising is sometimes difficult to maintain. My rule for recognizing the point at which conversation becomes prescription is to ask myself whether students could later say: “But you told me to do that!” If they could, I’ve gone too far, and I need to think again about how to get my point across—or even about the point I want to get across in the first place.

7) **Correcting/Editing**: Here the reader makes corrections, notes misspelled words, comma splices and the like in the student’s paper. On early drafts the local focus of such corrections actually tends to work against global revisions; students often just fix what you tell them to fix, and leave the rest alone. Corrections can be similarly counter-productive on late drafts, too, since even if students repair the errors you mark, they are unlikely to develop the ability to edit on their own. There are other ways of helping students deal with error; one is to do a certain amount of carefully limited editing to point out recurrent problems, but without “correcting” the paper as a whole. Thus on late drafts I may mark SOME offending passages and ask students to revise them for surface error. In my end comment I’ll say something like the following:

“I see a number of sentence problems—especially misspellings and comma splices. I’ve underscored some of them; how can you fix them and those like them on the rewrite?”
Peer Review Basics

Traditionally, students write papers, and faculty grade papers. That system has worked for a very long time, but it has two drawbacks. The first is that faculty can only grade so much, and thus are limited in the amount of writing they can ask students to do. And the second is that the whole process is not actually always good for the students it is aimed to help. Many feel unclear, even mystified about why they are writing or how to improve as well as fearful about getting response. That fear can lead in turn to ignoring comments or even to growing angry and frustrated with the faculty’s grading.

One solution to this set of problems is to use peer review to involve students in the reading and evaluating of papers. Unfortunately, however, peer review has often won a bad name for itself. Faculty complain that students don’t really “review” so much as skim and praise, and students who have been asked to be peer reviewed may complain that the comments they received were useless. From both sides the verdict has sometimes been that peer review is simply a waste of time.

My view, however, is that when peer review does not work it is usually a case of bad peer review—a process in which students have not learned how to be observant and helpful, and faculty have not known how to change that. Good peer review can in fact do wonders for both students and faculty—even if it won’t make your work load zero or make students learn better writing habits at warp speed.

The keys to good peer review are:

1. Effective criteria
2. Full understanding by students of what the criteria mean
3. A peer norming exercise to ensure that students can apply criteria intelligently and helpfully

I’ve had very good experience using peer review, but only when I’ve used peer norming as well. Properly done, a peer norming exercise sets a safe environment for students to try out making and discussing informed grade-like judgments of their own, and offers faculty a way to demonstrate that grades are not just a matter of “opinion.”

Among peer review and peer norming’s potential virtues:

- When students know other students will be reading their work, they very often are more careful about what they hand in.
- Peer review’s a way of sharing the paper load—especially with low stakes writing and with drafts of high stakes work. In some circumstances peer review can provide all the feedback necessary to validate an assignment; in others your commenting can be more efficient because you have one or more student comments to draft off.
- Having to read other student work on an assignment they themselves have also written helps students develop the capacity to read their own work more critically. That is not easy for them. Criteria are lifeless and formulaic until they are used, tested and talked about. A norming exercise of some sort helps that happen.
- When students see how others solved the same assignment problem they themselves have solved, they often both increase their understandings of the course material that was central to the writing and give themselves something of a contrastive template with which to return to their own.
Peer Review—three ways to do it.

So if you are willing to give it a chance, here are three of the many, many ways to organize a peer review.

I. Peer Norming. The steps?

- One. Share your assignment criteria with students, using examples.

- Two. Either as an overnight or as an in-class assignment, have students read the sample to be normed, and assign a number score from 1 to 5 (you can use word-labels if that works better for you—like Very Strong, Strong, Functional, Still Working on it, Not yet Functional) for each of the criteria.

- Three. The next day put students in groups of 3-4 and have them come to consensus about their number scores. Tell them that if they don’t agree, then each of them should locate in the paper the specific reasons they had for assigning the score they did. Those conversations are very important, and they prepare students for the next step.

- Four. Write the group scores on the board, one criterion at a time, and look for discrepancies. Locate the big discrepancies first, and ask the groups to explain what they saw in the paper that led them to the decision they made. This offers you the chance to help them see better, to avoid mistaking weak evidence for strong—whatever comes up—but it does so by modeling reasoned and careful judgment.

- Five. Look at the criteria scores where people agreed, too. Ask them about these. If everyone agreed on a three, for example, you can play devil’s advocate and ask why they didn’t assign it a one, say, or a four. Again, the point is to have them articulate their reasons for assigning value as a way to increase their critical understanding of the kinds of thinking you are asking them to do.

This exercise can be done first with a model paper from other sections, or with excerpts you yourself have written. Then you move on to using class examples. When I use examples from the class, I avoid weak papers. Using them could be embarrassing to the student; it might also give the exercise a negative tone. Given how negatively many students think about their writing in the first place, there’s no reason to reinforce that here. I avoid very strong papers, too, since I want to have students talking about ways something good can be made better. So I choose a paper that has both strengths and some things that can be profitably improved. If I have time I’ll use two with contrastive strengths. I also write the student a note first either asking if it’s ok to use his or her paper (unless this is a writing class where everyone already knows they’ll be expected to share their work), and explain that this will give them terrific feedback on how to make their already strong paper stronger. I explain that the exercise will be done anonymously. Most students are fine with this—most in fact are actually flattered by the attention.

I usually budget from 50 minutes to an hour for this exercise, and I have learned NOT to rush it. That seems a lot of time, but believe me, this hour can be extraordinarily effective in helping students actually understand what you want them to do—and (depending on how fully integrated your assignment is into the whole course) often not just on the single paper, but also in the course as a whole.

Last bit of advice: Once your students have learned to apply your criteria, you can ask them to use these criteria to pre-grade their own work. If you assign two papers, they can learn your criteria on the first and then use them on their second. I do this by having them write on the back of their paper before turning it
in. I’ll ask two questions, and then ask them to give themselves criteria scores. The questions are usually: What do you think you did particularly well in this paper? And: What did you find to be the most challenging part of writing this paper? I find that reading these responses is easy and quick, and it eases my commenting by making it possible to begin by responding briefly to what they have written.

II. The Quick Exchange. (To make this one work you should be sure to let them know ahead of time what you are going to ask them to do.) Professor Jan Sjâvik (Department of Scandinavian Studies) worked this out as a method for dealing with a series of seven short in-class writing assignments in a class of 68 students. His purpose in giving these short writes was to offer students the opportunity to write low stakes trial-runs of possible examination questions:

“I prepared and showed overhead slides with individual questions, of which the following is a sample:

Is there really any truth in Ludvig Holwer’s play Erasmus Montanus?
Should the old Norse poem “The Lay of Thrym” be read as a story about a victory over evil, or as a story about genocide?
What is the author’s purpose in Alexander Kielland, “At the Ball?”
Do you see any problems with creating a coherent interpretation of Jonas Lie, “The Cormorants of Andvaer”?

“The students wrote for seven minutes, then traded papers with someone sitting close to them and provided peer feedback. By instruction, the feedback was to call attention to one positive aspect of the paper and to mention one thing about it that could be improved, but only if the suggestion would be stated in a positive manner. The students were given three minutes to provide the peer feedback. At the end of the term the students were asked to submit their in-class writing assignments as a portfolio, which counted for five percent of the course grade. Students who had missed one or more assignments were allowed to submit make-up work.

“In slightly different form, ... several of the topics for the brief writing assignments in class showed up on the midterm and final examinations. The low-stakes writing clearly worked as intended, for the quality of the exam essays was much higher than what would be expected according to past experience.”

[An addition to this very simple design: after the write but before the response, stage a short full class discussion of what one might have written. Then ask students in their two comments to be guided by the class discussion.]

III. The Read Around. Have everyone bring in their drafts (whether for rewrite or to turn in) (I ask for two copies so I can keep one on file). Put one copy of all the papers in a stack in the middle of the room, or on the table up front. Ask each person to take a paper, and read it. Then ask that when they finish reading the paper they write two comments: first, a noticing of something that seemed strong—that means something specific and connected to the criteria. Second, something they didn’t follow or understand or find convincing. No marginal comments. No grammar corrections, no instructions—only description. I then ask everyone to sign their comment.

Depending on the length of their papers, students will need 10 to 15 minutes per paper. When they have finished the first paper, they then return that paper to the stack and take another. (I sometimes have to give out a couple of my second stack to keep people reading.) They repeat this for 45 minutes to an hour.

At the end of the allotted time, every paper will have had two or three or sometimes four readings, with comments. Students will have seen a range of other student work, will have had some practice applying criteria, and will also have seen other students’ comments as they read their second and third papers.
I then often close the exercise by asking them to write (on a separate piece of paper) for five minutes about the experience. I’ll help them by asking questions like: What surprised you most in the papers you read? What was the greatest strength in the papers you read? What did you think people had most trouble doing? Or: If you were me, what piece of advice would you give the class as a whole about how they could produce stronger writing next time?

A special bonus of this enterprise is that many students realize for the first time how hard it is to read a set of papers. Having taken 45 minutes to an hour to read three or four papers they end up with some appreciation of a part of your job that is otherwise invisible.

As for my own next steps, if these are final drafts I will read the comments along with the paper—and put question marks by those I don’t follow or agree with, and comment on the comments when appropriate.

My students have liked this exercise a lot, especially when preceded by a criteria norming session to help them understand how to recognize strengths and weaknesses in a paper in the first place. Indeed, my most recent use of this exercise was with a set of drafts that students had been asked to revise, and almost exactly half of the 34 person class ranked the Read Around as the single most helpful thing we did to enable them to rewrite effectively.
On the Challenges of Working with the Writing of English Language Learners

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I’ve been teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) in writing classes for a very long time, and I think I’ve actually become pretty good at it. And lately, in our Early Fall Start offering English 108: Writing Ready, I’ve been teaching especially large numbers of ELLs, and they, at least, have told me I’ve done well by them. But though this may be true, I still must admit that every time I enter a writing class that has non-native speakers enrolled I face a moment in which I must work through two fears.

One is about what I should be teaching versus what I seem to find myself faced with teaching. They seem not to align. How, I ask myself, can I possibly work on higher order critical thinking skills like inquiry, argument design, evidence assessment, and rhetorical analysis when the paper in front of me “has no verbs!”—as one frustrated dean lamented a few years ago. I find I can get a kind of sinking feeling that I must abandon my pre-planned curriculum in order to deal with my students’ basic fluency and correctness issues. I feel alienated from my own course design and from what I understand the purpose of my class to be.

My second conflict comes on the heels of the first. If I have to spend time supporting my students in their L2 language skills, what, exactly, am I actually supposed to do?! I know a lot of things about the English language, but other than point out to a student where they could insert articles or which of the five forms of every English verb they should use in a certain place, I don’t actually know how to explain in a systematic way where to use "a" instead of "the," or how to choose which form of a given verb in a given instance.

I have been teaching long enough that I can’t even remember how many times this sense of potential failure has washed over me. Yet most of the time, I still work something out, and most of the time, it’s pretty effective. I manage to do so by first reminding myself of two truths:

1. Most of the “error” in ELL writing is a lot like an accent in ELL speaking. Sometimes it slows understanding a bit, on occasion it misfires big time, but very rarely does it actually prevent one from getting the writer’s drift. Once you get accustomed to the “accent,” you can in fact read through most error of this sort, and look to the underlying conceptual issues and challenges that are for your ELLs, as for your native speakers, the real point of a writing class.

2. If we think of the language in ELL papers as a form of accented English, we are actually much closer to truth than many may think. For much error arises in ELL papers not from laziness or poor editing skills, or even lack of time studying English. Rather it is from the enormous difficulty ELLs face in mastering a language that in many respects differs structurally as well as phonologically from English. Take Chinese. It is what linguists call a “synthetic”
language, while English, and all of the European languages related to it, are “analytic” languages. That means that English, like German or Greek or Spanish, depends upon “inflections”—verb and noun endings that change with either tense or number.

So what? Only this: for speakers of a synthetic language like Chinese which has no inflectional endings at all, it is very, very difficult to develop an intuitional sense of when to use “go” or when to use “goes” or “going.” For a native English speaker that choice is so deeply ingrained that most of us never even give it a thought, but for the speaker of a language that has just one and only one form for any given verb, developing intuitions for when to use which of the several forms as we do in English is a problem for which nothing in their language experience provides a model.

Moreover, we tend to be tough taskmasters: we forgive foreign speakers who can’t pronounce properly the “th” sound in “that.” Few other languages have it, and ELLs whose first language is French, or German, or Chinese often use a “d” or a “z” to approximate it. For conversational purposes, it turns out that that’s close enough. We native speakers can adjust our ears to what we hear, and everything is just fine—and that’s true in spite of the fact that even after twenty years of life in the United States, many non-native English speakers still cannot say that initial “th” the way a native speaker will.

But if the phonology of English remains forever difficult for some non-native speakers, the syntactic difficulties that show up in writing are no easier to master than are its sounds. Indeed, often they are conceptually more obscure. Compared to the mysteries of verb forms (or how to use the English articles “the,” “an” and “a”—another feature of English for which Chinese has no counterpart), learning to pronounce the voiced interdental fricative (as a linguist would describe the opening sound in the word “that”) is a walk in the park. That doesn't mean students don't have to learn them; rather it just means that getting control of such matters cannot be done rapidly. In any case, it is certainly NOT a sign that your students are lazy or careless or disrespectful of your standards.

So, what can I suggest? Four things:

1. **Learn to read through error.** You are not their English language teacher, you are their English writing teacher (or their Chemistry, or History teacher). They are going to have an accent for a while in their writing whatever you do, and thus your time will usually be better spent in helping them make their writing more understandable and more interesting—to themselves and to their readers—than in helping them eradicate all traces of their first language’s dissonances with English.

2. **Try not to correct errors on early drafts.** Even if you would like your students to make fewer errors, correcting errors on drafts really will only reinforce many of your students’ fears that their biggest writing problem is English grammar. But that’s just not true. Their biggest problems are pretty much the same problems all your first year students will have: invention, argument, inquiry, evidence. Moreover, for ELLs as well as for native speakers, corrections defeat revision. Indeed, if you are asking for a rewrite, the surest way to get a bad sentence back from a draft, virtually unchanged, is to make a grammar correction in it. Nor should this be
surprising. As writers students often feel very unsure, even mystified, about what they are
supposed to be doing, and thus when a teacher corrects something they tend to say, “Aha!
something that I now know is correct!” What sense would it now make for a student to remove
from a paper the one word or sentence in a given paragraph that a teacher has certified as right?!

3. Help students find appropriate supports in order to work on writing issues over time—
such as hardcopy handbooks, or online resources, or a writing center that knows how to help
students develop an error profile. Though it sometimes seems as if there is no rhyme or reason
to the errors ELLs make, in fact there usually are patterns. Chinese speaking ELLs, for example,
have great trouble with verb forms, and similar difficulties with articles and plurals (which, like
verb inflections, Chinese has none of).

4. Develop a minimal marking system to guide students in the preparation of a
“presentation draft.” After students have completed as well as possible the thinking-heavy part
of writing (when my students’ brains’ working capacity has been completely devoted to
planning, organizing and so on), I’ll offer students the chance to do a last draft of the paper (or
sometimes just a page of it) in which they work exclusively on upgrading their surface
correctness. All substantive change is prohibited—only words, verbs and sentence structure
revisions.

My minimal marking practice is to underline in a page of the ostensibly final draft the errors
worth fixing. I offer to talk with students about what has gone wrong, but I don’t fix the errors
myself. Students can work with a writing center or with online sources, or often they can just
consult their own knowledge which has not been deployed effectively (just as with native
speakers, thinking hard can get in the way of grammatical correctness). And if there are
particular issues that concern many students, I may spend 10 minutes in class with two or three
examples, either using sentences from the group or making them up myself.

Minimal marking, being minimal, actually takes little time, and though I do have to explain some
things to students, much they do on their own, and the process has not only proven at least as
effective as any other method I’ve tried, it also gives students and teacher alike the mental space
necessary to concentrate as fully as possible on the intellectual issues involved in writing
academic prose. (The term "minimal marking" comes from Rich Haswell's article "Minimal
Marking," College English 45, no. 6 (1983), 166-70.)

In the end, then, my judgment about ELL writing is that we have to be realistic. Perfecting one’s
knowledge of a foreign language takes years, not weeks—and very few people ever actually
reach “perfect.” I am certainly convinced that I can help students make some progress towards a
more fluent and well-edited style in a single quarter, but I also know that I would be fooling
myself to think that their written accents will have disappeared—or even will have been more
than moderately modified—by the end of finals week.

(For more on the differences between Chinese and English, see: “Some Differences between
English and Chinese: Five grammar errors native Chinese speakers can easily make when
writing English,” at: http://faculty.washington.edu/cicero/metacognitiveteaching.htm#Some
Pragmatics:
Scalability in Going Writing-Integrated

Working out how to design and implement fully writing-integrated classes can take time. The concept itself isn’t that complex, nor are the various tools and strategies it requires. But as in anything to do with teaching, one change often leads to another, and it may take a course or two before you have figured out how best to proceed. Once you have introduced a series of short writing assignments into your course, for example, you may then need time to figure out how to manage the resulting surge of student papers before you implement a fully integrated course project.

That does not mean that you won’t get good results from the very beginning. Assigning as few as two or three ungraded papers can make an enormous difference in classrooms anywhere across the curriculum, and most faculty can add such assignments even within the frame of courses they already teach. Similarly, developing clear criteria for assignments, and finding ways to make those criteria public, can make a huge difference in the quality of the work your students do.

But while all of us generally know our material backwards and forwards, we still may need two or three goes before we can articulate exactly what we want from students in ways that they themselves will understand.

Fortunately, the Writing-Integrated Course Design process is scalable. You can begin by implementing one set of elements, and then extend that set in subsequent courses. One such implementation sequence might look like this:

1. Introduction of low stakes writing and of new paper management techniques.
2. Development of assignment criteria and grading rubrics, along with experiments with peer review.
3. Full re-design of the course with high stakes writing based on concepts central to the learning goals of the course and supported by both a clear set of assignment criteria and an effective sequence of low stakes papers that help students develop the sub-skills needed to succeed with the high stakes writing.

That is one path. Some faculty have started by developing explicit criteria for assignments they already use, and then moving on to introduce appropriate low stakes papers. As in much else, it’s less the route you take that counts than the place you finally arrive.
Dealing with Plagiarism by Knowing it, Teaching it, and Out-smarting it

Faculty complaints about plagiarism are legion, and there is no doubt the internet has made finding help with anything from a sentence to a whole paper a lot easier than it once was. But while most academics see “plagiarism” as a clear-cut matter of cheating, there is actually a lot of scholarship that explains how the issue is more complex than that. In this short primer on the REAL issues of plagiarism, I’ll touch on some of the conceptual problems students and teachers alike face, and then suggest some practical measures to deal with them.

Plagiarism as a Learning Issue

First, we should realize that students frequently don’t see the issue the way we do—and in many ways it’s we academics who are in the minority. Outside academia, very little writing pays any obvious attention at all to where it gets its ideas, and as a result few of our students have much experience with models of how to make appropriate use of words and ideas borrowed from sources. (If you doubt how rarified the culture of citation is, wander through any bookstore’s general book section and leaf through a hundred books chosen at random. The number you’ll find with anything but the most rudimentary of citations or footnotes will be tiny.)

So the first thing you can do to prevent plagiarism is to help students understand what plagiarism is: using the words or ideas of others without citing sources appropriately. But we need to go further if we are to impress upon students how important this concept is to us. For the source-based nature of academic writing is one of the major differences between academic and other kinds of writing. For us, the question is not whether we will use the work of others, but how. As a result, we academics have become expert at tracking and citing our borrowings, and for very good reason: they are our way of protecting the original thinking and articulations of that thinking that are our most important products. In a very real sense, the issues surrounding plagiarism go to the very heart of what we do.

Failure to document borrowings is thus for us a very big deal, but the only way many students will find that out (or get straight on it again two years after they were introduced to it in First-year English) is if you and other writing-friendly teachers are able to help them.

That’s one issue. A second is that even those students who do know something about citing the work of others may have bizarre notions of what is permissible and what is not. Some really do think it’s ok to quote up to 25 words without attribution; others know that that’s wrong, but think it’s ok to use anything at all, just so long as you change the wording a little.

That said, how can one prevent plagiarism?

After making sure that students understand what plagiarism is, and what conventions they should follow to document and credit their uses of sources, the best way to prevent plagiarism is via assignment design. Assignments that are motivated by and integrated into a specific course’s context (so that only a person actually in the course will know how to write them), and managed
as a process that begins relatively early in the quarter and continues through appropriate stages to completion, make plagiarism virtually impossible. If students have to write and critique a paper proposal in week four or five, submit a précis of two articles they have will use in their paper by week six, and a draft of the final product by week eight to be re-written for the final class, there will simply be no way that any of them could go on line to find a paper to copy. More important, because you’ve moved them by stages into and through the project, and thereby helped them through those parts of the writing process they otherwise might not have understood, neither will they have reason to think they have to.

**Plagiarism as Misconduct**

All of what I’ve said above addresses plagiarism as a learning issue, and not as a behavior issue. And in my own experience, that’s the biggest part of the problem. But it’s not the whole problem. Some students do cheat—or may if they can see how. What about them?

First, you’ll be best prepared for this eventuality by addressing plagiarism in your syllabus. Explain that you will not accept work that includes any plagiarism. Should a paper show up that you think is plagiarized, you should meet with the student, explain what you see, and ask for an explanation. When I have had this problem (which actually hasn’t been often), I have told the student that he or she can get credit for the assignment only by going back to write it again—this time without illicit help. I will then accept the paper, but it will at that point be late and subject to my late paper policy. I penalize late papers .2 grade points a day. Depending on the student and the reasons for the plagiarism, I may negotiate accommodations with the extent of the penalty.

Other faculty will want a stronger solution. There is University policy on this score, and it is on-line at [http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm). If you wish to deal with plagiarism under this policy, you would contact Gus Kravas, UW Vice Provost for Student Affairs. Many faculty have found this a good solution—this does indeed get students’ attention, and in all cases in which misconduct is established, the Office of Student Affairs ensures that students undergo appropriate disciplinary action.

In sum, students who plagiarize do so for very different reasons, some more forgivable than others, and there is no single remedy that fits all cases. I think what matters most is that we keep about us a just sense of proportion. I have talked with faculty who have actually stopped assigning writing to any of their students for fear of (or anger about) receiving plagiarized papers from a few, and I do understand their frustration. But plagiarism isn’t in fact a necessary evil—it is a phenomenon that can be all but eliminated through foresight and good assignment design.
Three Courses Re-designed to Include Writing-integrated Elements


- *Traditional writing assignment:* an 8-10 page term paper due at quarter’s end.

- *Results:* functional writing without much investment by students of enthusiasm or imagination.

- *Writing-integrated assignment:* a course-long sequence of writings beginning with weekly short papers, each written as a letter from the student to a mentor or peer, real or imagined, about the work of literature read for the week, and eventuating in an 8-10 page interpretive essay. As a final project students submitted a portfolio of all their writing along with a final self-reflective essay about their learning in the course.

- *Results:* significantly higher student interest in writing assignments, along with high ratings for the course as a whole. The interpretive papers were stronger both because (students explained) the letters engaged them more fully in their course learning, and because the instructor built into the new course design occasion for students to revise their first drafts.

*Instructor’s comment:* “The consistently positive feedback from students in their end-of-quarter ‘self-reflective essays’ – not to mention the enthusiastic emails thanking me for the course – made this one of my most (if not, the most) rewarding teaching experiences at the UW.” (Professor Marianne Stecher-Hansen)

2: Mathematics 441: Topology

- *Traditional writing assignment:* none beyond weekly problem sets.

- *Results:* writing made no contribution to student learning, and the course did not contribute to Department’s larger goal of enabling students to graduate as effective writers of mathematical argument.

- *Writing-Integrated Assignment:* a three-paper sequence of written proofs in addition to weekly problem sets, each including peer review and revision of first drafts.

- *Results:* students' proof-writing skills improved significantly, even on the weekly problem sets not evaluated for writing style. Students also seemed to acquire a deeper understanding of what constitutes a valid proof than had earlier students.
Instructor comment:  *[I feel] adding writing-integrated assignments in virtually any upper-level math course will dramatically enhance the quality of our students’ education.* (Professor John Lee)

**3: English 330: Literature of the Romantic Age (1796-1835).**

- *Traditional writing assignment:* a 6-10 page paper in which students read criticism, and then made their own argument about a work studied in the class.

- *Results:* an uneven level of performance and of student engagement. Many students saw reading older literature only as “school learning,” not as learning for real life purposes.

- *Writing-Integrated Assignment:* a series of un-graded short papers that related older literature to modern culture, and culminated in “The Romantic Survival Project”—a 5-7 page graded paper in which students connected their learning about 19th Century poetry within the course to examples of contemporary culture outside the course.

- *Results:* student-initiated papers that demonstrated how much they had learned about the Romantic Age by articulating connections of course readings to recent movies. The course’s best paper: a comparison of Wordsworth’s 1802 poem “Resolution and Independence” with the Coen brothers’ 1991 movie *Barton Fink.*

Instructor comment:  *Students learned more in this course than in any class I’ve ever taught.* (Professor John Webster)
Resources

“Dealing with Plagiarism: Knowing it, Teaching it, and Out-smarting it.” [http://faculty.washington.edu/cicero/plagiarism.htm](http://faculty.washington.edu/cicero/plagiarism.htm)

Web Resources

Miami of Ohio Writing Center: [http://www.units.muohio.edu/cwe/Faculty.html](http://www.units.muohio.edu/cwe/Faculty.html)
University of Hawaii, Manoa: [http://mwp01.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources.htm](http://mwp01.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources.htm)
Colorado State University: [http://writing.colostate.edu/teaching_guides.cfm](http://writing.colostate.edu/teaching_guides.cfm)

UW Campus Resources:

**College of Arts and Sciences Writing Program**

**Teaching and Learning Center.** A faculty friendly campus consulting group for support with teaching and learning issues, writing among them. [http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb](http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb)

206 543-6588
[http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/WritingTools.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/WritingTools.htm)

**Interdisciplinary Writing Program** 206 543-2190