



Resources for Teaching Writing Intensive Courses

Writing Intensive Requirements

- Writing Intensive (WI) courses will be defined as not only requiring substantial writing (12 pages or more), but as giving instruction in writing as well. At least one assignment will receive attention in draft form, from the instructor or from peers, in order to emphasize revision. One of the distinctive features of the WI courses will be a concentration on writing process. Instructors will pay attention to grammar, style, structure, and higher order analytical skills, as well as other elements of good writing in the discipline as defined by the department. The WI course in the major will allow each department to determine discipline-specific writing criteria and teach these to majors. Instructors in the majors will design these courses around the broad outlines given above; the Writing Program will provide resources to enable them to satisfy needs particular to the major. WI courses will be designated with a “WI” in the course catalogue and on BenU Live.

Find useful resources on the Writing Program website at

<https://www.ben.edu/college-of-liberal-arts/writing-program/>

- Writing Assignments for Writing and Writing Intensive (WI) classes
- Information about the [Writing Zone](#)
- Information on [plagiarism](#) and the [Honesty Policy](#)
- Information about [Writing Workshops](#) conducted by our Writing Specialist, Ms. Anne Marie Smith.

Consider using *St. Martin's* in your WI courses

- MLA, APA, CSE, and Chicago formats
- Writing in the disciplines sections
- Easy to use index
- Free e-handbook
- Exercise Central
- Teaching writing basics
- Grammar reference

Weekly Writing Tips: Best Hint?

○ *Writing a Strong Thesis or “Crux”* [1]

- “Crux” comes from the Latin word for “cross.” When used about a text, it refers to a point where things come together, an intellectual knot. Analytical writing deals with cruxes. It seeks to untie them and show their strands to the reader. It seeks to re-knot the strands in such a way that the relationships are clear to the reader.

- You may be familiar with the term “thesis.” A crux is a kind of thesis, but a crux demands more rigor. A thesis may be weak and descriptive and lead to a paper with weak argumentation. To write a good argumentative paper, you need to look for a strong thesis or crux, a genuine problem that requires explanation or analysis.
- A strong thesis or crux unifies and organizes your essay because all your other ideas can be arranged in relation to it. Therefore, condensing your main idea into a recognizable thesis or crux will keep your main idea focused and clear in your head.

- Here is an example of a weak thesis reformulated into a strong thesis or crux:
 - Weak thesis: In *The Secret Garden*, Burnett show how Mary and the garden grow together. [Obvious, isn't it? Leads to a description: Mary grows like this, the garden grows like this. Very dull.]
 - Stronger thesis: In *The Secret Garden*, Burnett uses the stylistic device of color description to show how Mary's emotional development parallels the growth of the garden. [Better. Will lead to an analytical essay tracing the use of color descriptions. But will still be mainly descriptive: On page X, Burnett uses “yellow.” On page X, she uses “red.” Solid, but not thrilling.]

- Crux: In *The Secret Garden*, Burnett's description of the parallel development of Mary and the garden points to a larger narrative characteristic. The plot of Burnett's novel can be seen to progress by a series of parallelisms: between Mary and the garden, between Mary's mother and Martha's mother, between Colin and his father. Yet the various parallelisms cannot be resolved into one simple pattern. Parallel characters can be compared, or contrasted, or they can exhibit a strange, symbiotic relationship.
- [Whew! That's long! But it does pose both an analytical point (stylistic, narrative) and an argumentative one (that none of the parallels are exact—that Burnett's story is more complex than it first seems.)]

- Incidentally, it took TWO full hours of thinking and re-reading the novel to come up with all that! This isn't easy! In fact, you will probably have to write all three kinds of theses before you get to your final, perfect crux. Notice that all three say basically the same thing: that parallelism is important to the novel. But each thesis says it differently. The final thesis just takes the same basic theme and gets more specific about it.
- ^[1] Department of English, Cornell University. *Sourcebook for New Instructors*. Ed. Alice Maurice. June, 1998: 367.

John Bean's Engaging Ideas:
The Professor's Guide to Integrating
Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active
Learning in the Classroom

- Perhaps the easiest way to use exploratory writing is to set aside five minutes or so during a class period for silent, uninterrupted writing in response to a thinking or learning task. Students can write at their desks while the teacher writes at the chalkboard, on an overhead transparency, or in a notebook. (Teachers who are willing to write with their students are powerful role models.)

- **Writing at the Beginning of Class to Probe a Subject.** Give students a question that reviews previous material or stimulates interest in what's coming. Review tasks can be open-ended and exploratory ('What questions do you want to ask about last night's readings?') or precise and specific ('What does it mean when we say that a certain market is 'efficient'?'). Or use a question to prime the pump for the day's discussion ('How does Plato's allegory of the cave make you look at knowledge in a new way?'). In-class writing gives students a chance to gather and focus their thoughts and, when shared, gives the teacher an opportunity to see students' thinking processes. Teachers can ask one or two students to read their responses, or they can collect a random sampling of responses to read after class. Since students are always eager to hear what the teacher has written, you might occasionally share your own in-class writing.

- **Writing During Class to Refocus a Lagging Discussion or Cool Off a Heated One.** When students run out of things to say or when the discussion gets so heated that everyone wants to talk at once, suspend the discussion and ask for several minutes of writing.
- **Writing During Class to Ask Questions or Express Confusion.** When lecturing on tough material, stop for a few minutes and ask students to respond to a writing prompt like this: 'If you have understood my lecture so far, summarize my main points in your own words. If you are currently confused about something, please explain to me what is puzzling you; ask me the questions you need answered.' You will find it an illuminating check on your teaching to collect a representative sample of responses to see how well students are understanding your presentations.

- **Writing at the End of Class to Sum Up a Lecture or Discussion.** Give students several minutes at the end of class to sum up the day's lecture or discussion and to prepare questions to ask at the beginning of the next class period. (Some teachers take roll by having students write out a question during the last two minutes of class and submit it on a signed slip of paper.) A popular version of this strategy is the 'minute paper' as reported by Angelo and Cross (1993, pp. 148-153). At the end of class, the professor asks two questions: (1) 'What is the most significant thing you learned today?' and (2) 'What question is uppermost in your mind at the conclusion of this class session?' in another variation, the professor asks, "What is the muddiest point in the material I have just covered?" (Tobias, 1989, pp. 53-54).

- --John C. Bean. Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001. pp. 105-106.



Tips on Integrating Process Writing

- Writing before reading
- Study questions
- Informal responses to readings (One-pagers)
- Structured written engagement with the readings coordinated with discussion.
- Idea maps
- Sequenced steps
- Thesis and question
- Drafts
- New audiences
- Essays that prepare for other essays

Barbara Walvoord: Make the Grading Process Time-Efficient

- When multiple choice will produce what you need to know, use it. Don't spend time reading student writing that could have been tested by multiple choice
- Focus your full-scale commenting-grading process on only a few assignments; use less time-intensive ways to reward other work: **one pagers**
- Leverage the greatest amount of student learning into the smallest written product: **question and thesis**
- Make your criteria and standards explicit from the beginning (i.e. rubrics)

- Provide student self-check and peer-check points (check lists)
- Ensure by timing and structure that your comments will be well-used
- **Don't spend the most time on the worst papers;** just comment on the basic misunderstandings or difficulties that led to the disaster
- Use early guidance to prevent disasters in the first place: **use conferences, check lists**
- Ensure that students have spent enough time to merit your attention
- Require students to organize their work for your efficiency

- Use what the student knows
- Separate commenting from grading and use them singly or in combination according to your purpose and student needs: **minimal comments on final products**
- Use only as many grading levels as you really need: **credit for completion**
- Don't give every student what only a few students need
- Comment in different ways for different situations
- Delegate the work: Peer Review
- Use technology to save time and enhance results

Aspects of the Learning Process

- First Exposure: Student first hears/reads/view new information/concepts
- Process: Student memorizes, synthesizes, evaluates, applies the information
- Response: Student receives feedback from teacher, peers, or others

Using Time and Space for Learning

	Students with Teacher (class)	Student Study Time	Teacher Alone
Using Class for First Exposure	First exposure	Process	response
Using Class for Process and Response	Process, response	First exposure	

Prioritize

- Focus on Higher-Order Concerns (HOC) first:
 - Thesis
 - Thinking
 - Structure
- Focus on **certain** Lower-Order Concerns
- Consider using Walvoord's [ESWE handout](#)



Policy for Use of Edited Standard Written English

Suppose a group of people were living on an island, all using the same language, until one day the island broke in two, separated by impassable water. In one hundred years, with no contact, would the people on both halves still use the same language forms? No. Human language is always changing. Language on each half of the island would evolve with different forms and rules. Neither would be better in any absolute sense – just different. Similarly, in the United States, language variations have developed among people separated by culture, socioeconomic status, or geography.

However, the language of the ruling class commonly comes to be regarded as standard. In the United States, the “standard” is the language of the white middle and upper classes. Forms of English developed by people of color and by people who have been poor or geographically isolated (as in Appalachia) are sometimes said to be “bad” or “incorrect” English, but such forms are only different, not bad. Each form of English has its own rules. People who say “she working” are not speaking “bad” English; they are using a different set of rules for forming the present tense.

One of the tasks of a good education is to make students aware of these facts about language. Another task of education, however, is to prepare students to function effectively in the world where readers generally expect writers to use Edited Standard Written English (ESWE). Thus, in this class, you must use ESWE. Here is the standard I will apply:

On **finished, final, formal papers** (not on drafts, in-class writings, or writing that I specifically label as informal), you must have no more than an average of two departures from ESWE per page, in any combination of the following areas:

- End-of-sentence punctuation (avoid run-on sentences, comma splices, fragments, or misuse of semicolon). Occasionally you may use a fragment or comma splice for a special effect. Label it in the margin.
- Verb forms (use ESWE rules for adding *-ed* and *-s*, for using helping verbs, and so on).
- Verb tense (avoid confusing shifts in verb tenses).
- Agreement of subject and verb.
- Pronoun form (use ESWE rules to choose between *I* and *me*, *she* and *her*, *who* and *whom*, and so on).
- Agreement of pronoun with antecedent (the antecedent is the word the pronoun refers to).
- Use of apostrophe *s* and the suffix *-es*.
- Use of quotation marks for all quoted words.
- Spelling (a typo counts as a misspelling).
- Proper sentence sense (no words omitted, scrambled, or incomprehensible).

Attend WAC Seminars:

April 27

3-4:15 p.m., BK 226:

Bonnie Beezhold

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Past WAC Seminars

- Joyce Jeewek—Education
- Zubair Amir—Grading. Efficiently. Effectively.
- Sue Bailey—MPH Program
- Sandra Kies—Multilingual Writers
- Elizabeth Kubek—Literature
- Eric Sanders—Business
- Luigi Manca—Communication
- Cindy McCullagh—Chemistry, Statistics

ESL/Core Faculty

Sandra Kies and Olga Lambert

- English for Academic Purposes for undergraduate and graduate students (ADU & ADG)
- Workshops
- Immersion experiences
- English for Specific Purposes

Writing Zone staffed with student
writing fellows & Writing Specialist
Anne Marie Smith

The Writing Zone

at Benedictine University

NEW EXTENDED HOURS!

The Writing Zone is for everyone! Whether you are struggling with WRIT 101 or finishing your application to medical school, we will read what you have and offer you feedback. Come to us as you

- |) **Brainstorm**
- |) **Research**
- |) **Draft**
- |) **Revise**
- |) **Edit**

We can help you learn to avoid plagiarism and document according to MLA, APA, or CSE guidelines.

Join us during regular Study Zone hours:

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 5-10 p.m.

in the GN 318

Justification for WAC: Studies show that students learn best when they write.

Martha Townsend, citing *The Harvard Assessment Seminars*, reinforces with research many of the principles of Writing Across the Curriculum:

- Students have remarkably clear and coherent ideas about what kinds of courses they appreciate and respect most. When asked for specifics, students of all sorts (strong and not so strong, women and men, whites and minorities, freshmen and seniors) list three crucial features:

- Immediate and detailed feedback on both written and oral work.
- High demands and standards placed upon them, but with plentiful opportunities to revise and improve their work before it receives a grade, thereby learning from their mistakes in the process.
- Frequent checkpoints such as quizzes, tests, brief papers, or oral exams. The key idea is that most students feel they learn best when they receive frequent evaluation, combined with the opportunity to revise their work and improve over time. (8-9)

- Of all skills students say they want to strengthen, writing is mentioned three times more than any other. When asked how they in fact work on their writing, students who improve the most describe an intense process. They work with a professor, or with a writing teacher, or with a small study group of fellow students who meet regularly to critique one another's writing. The longer this work-related engagement lasts, the greater the improvement. (8-9; Cited in Townsend, 447).



So process writing, peer critiquing, in-class writing assignments, use of peer tutoring, and even occasional quizzes continue to prove their worth as best practices, not only in Writing or Writing Intensive classes, but in every class. Student engagement with a particular class is more highly correlated with writing than with any other factor and particularly when “writing instruction is organized around a substantive discipline” (Light 35, cited in Townsend 448).