# TIME TO WRITE

HISTORY WITH THE HOOD UP

SARAH THAL AND ROBERT GROSS
HISTORY DEPARTMENT

For several years, the History Department has known that, even by their senior year, many History majors lack the research and writing skills necessary to successfully conduct and convey the results of independent research. Many students report that their advanced, research-based capstone courses, which are required of all History majors, are the first time they are required to do independent research, as opposed to the more typical heavy doses of assignments in historical analysis and argumentation. How can we ensure that every one of our more than 300 history majors a year—regardless of the specific courses he or she takes while on campus—arrives in the final seminar fully prepared for a senior capstone research experience?

"The Historian's Craft" responds to this long-identified problem. This new, intermediate-level lecture and discussion course, first offered in fall 2011, prepares students to conduct original historical research and convey the results in effective writing. As one of the course faculty, American historian Steve Kantrowitz, commented, the course explicitly sets out to help students experience "history with the hood up." Students visit libraries and archives in order to locate sources and improve their database searching skills. They read secondary sources not just to analyze arguments, but to assess evidence, study citations, and explore how authors construct narratives. They practice organizing fragmentary and contradictory primary evidence into patterns that they discover themselves and then write about. In sum, the course aims to demystify the historian's craft. As the goals for the

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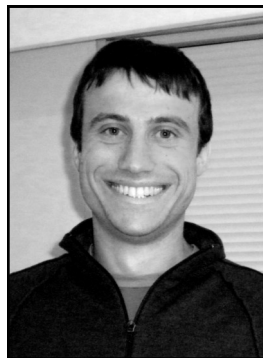
TA ROBERT GROSS

course, included in the syllabi, explicitly state, we want students to look beyond historical content in order to study and practice how scholars produce history: how they frame their questions, define their chronological and geographical scope, mount their evidence, and construct their narratives.

The course, which varies by topic, teaches skills of historical research and writing—a task usually reserved for small seminars—to groups of 45 students at a time. Taking advantage of resources from the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates, we assign an experienced teaching assistant to each lecture, allowing the creation of three discussion sections of 15 students each. Depending on the professor's preference, Historian's Craft courses are structured in one of two ways. So far, most instructors have opted for the most common structure in the department: 150 minutes of lecture and 50 minutes of TA-led discussion each week. However, a new structure has also proven very fruitful: 100 minutes of lecture and 100 minutes of discussion a week. In either case, the extended small-group work facilitates intensive faculty-student interaction focused on research, analysis, and writing.

Putting Writing at the Center of Learning

The Historian's Craft teaches research by putting writing at the center of student learning. Students write throughout the course, producing multiple drafts of summaries, bibliographies, outlines, and essays. Such exercises build toward what is often the final assignment in this course: a research proposal. In the Historian's Craft course "Native Americans and White Expansion," taught last fall by

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IN THIS ISSUE

7 Tips for Making Peer Review Work

Kirsten Jamsen
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After many semesters using peer review in my own composition classes and helping colleagues in Geography, Women's Studies, Political Science, Slavic, and Art use peer review successfully in their classes, I have several specific suggestions for instructors trying peer review for the first time or refining their own methods of using peer review.

Dr. Kirsten Jamsen

1 Set realistic goals for peer review and explain them fully (and often) to students.

Before you decide to do peer review, it's essential that you consider your pedagogical reasons for using it. After my first unsuccessful attempt at peer review, I realized that I could not expect my students to respond to each others' papers as well as a trained instructor could. Rather than see peer review as a substitute for my comments, I now value peer review as a way to get students actively involved in their own learning. By having my students read their peers' writing and talk together about the processes of drafting and revising, I want to encourage them to become more self-conscious about their own writing process and to begin to take control over that process.

The primary reason that students struggle with peer review is that they don't understand what they are supposed to do and why they are doing it. If students don't understand the purposes of peer review, they will see it as mere busy work. *Before*, *during*, and *after* peer review sessions, take time to explain your goals for peer review. My main goal for peer review is to emphasize to students that writing is fundamentally a form of communication between real people. Talking face-to-face about a paper can help writers articulate what they are trying to say in their papers. It is also a chance for real readers to tell writers what they're hearing and what isn't coming across clearly.

Just as important, I stress to students that peer review teaches them to be critical readers. As they learn to read their peers' work with a "critical eye," they can begin to apply that "eye" to their own drafts. In addition, reviewers can give each other encouragement and share new ideas and new strategies for writing.

2 Do peer review more than once.

Being able to read and respond to papers effectively takes practice. If you plan to do peer review, I strongly recommend that you do it more than once. With practice, students will learn how to give each other constructive feedback, and additional peer reviews will reward the initial investment you put into preparing your students for the first one.

3 Guide your students with central questions and focused tasks.

To help our students learn how to do peer review, we need to clearly explain what we want them to do. Often peer review doesn't work because we give our students too many things to concern themselves with. Feeling uncertain about their ability to "teach" their peers anything about writing, peer reviewers will give up before they even begin. Giving students a few central questions or a brief set of guidelines will help them focus their responses to one another. Depending on the purpose of the writing assignment, you may want students to discuss the writer's articulation of a research question, statement of a hypothesis, use of evidence, interpretation of data, explanation of biological rationale, development of a central claim, or something else entirely.

Giving students a few central questions or a brief set of guidelines will help them focus their responses to one another. I often ask reviewers to consider two central questions. In the case of an argument-driven assignment, for example, two central questions might be:

1. What is the writer trying to argue in this piece?

2. How can s/he make this argument more effective and persuasive?

4 Help your students see the difference between revision and editing.

For most students, revising means editing. To prepare students for peer review, I lead a discussion on the differences between revision and editing, describing the large-scale changes they should suggest to one another: tightening up or shifting focus, clarifying purpose, cutting, adding, reorganizing, using the conclusion as a new introduction and starting over, etc. Until they've talked through large-scale issues, I outlaw discussion of grammar and mechanics, reminding students that it's a waste of time to polish a sentence that they later decide they don't need.

> "My main goal for peer review is to emphasize to students that writing is fundamentally a form of communication between real people."

5 Encourage both honest responses and constructive advice.

I remind students to be "real readers" who tell the writer honestly what they are hearing as the main ideas, what they like, what confuses them, etc. To make the criticism constructive and positive, I outlaw "shoulding" on each other ("You should do this…"). Instead, I ask them to phrase their responses in "I" language ("I hear…, " "I'm confused when…," "I'd like to hear more about…," etc.).

To help students apply this honest discussion to their revision process, I ask that each writer sum up the advice they heard from others and their plan for revision before moving on to the next writer.

6 Give students a clear format for peer review and require written reviews.

In many Communications-B and writing-intensive courses, you probably won't have time for students to read drafts aloud in class. Instead, set a firm draft date to have groups exchange copies of drafts. Students then read the drafts and write reviews outside of class. To encourage students to take the reviewing process seriously, consider grading the reviews as a separate writing assignment. The following class period, have students discuss their reviews in small groups, making sure to give them clear guidelines on what you want them to discuss.

I write a procedure to follow on the board:

1. Divide time evenly among group members.

2. The writer of each piece presents main concerns (which may have changed after seeing other papers).

3. Each reader gives the writer an honest response to her/his piece, making sure to articulate what s/he thinks the writer's main idea is ("mirroring").

4. After the writer's main purpose is clear, move into open discussion of questions and suggestions for the writer.

5. The writer sums up suggestions and tells the group her/his plan for next draft.

I remind students that they have different roles. The writer keeps the group focused on her/his concerns and leads the discussion. Readers are honest and constructive, using questions to help the writer talk through her/his ideas.

7 Observe group work and coach students on becoming better reviewers and writers.

By observing how your students work in their groups and intervening to encourage careful listening and questioning, you can coach them to become better reviewers and writers. I recommend "hovering" around the groups to keep them on task. If the students are doing peer review for the first time, they will probably finish early and need to be prodded to spend more time on each paper. They may also be "too nice," avoiding tough questions and honest responses. Talking afterwards about what the groups did well—sharing good written reviews and using a skilled group as a model—can help students improve as peer reviewers.

As teachers, we should remember that, for the writer, often the very process of explaining his or her ideas to a peer group helps to clarify those ideas. In fact, research in composition studies has shown that such talk can help students to better develop their papers and to better understand the genre in which they are writing. ◊

Join us for these fall workshops for faculty, academic staff, and TAs!

- **Designing Effective Writing Assignments**
- **Conferencing with Students about Papers in Progress**
- **Responding to and Evaluating Student Writing**

For more information or to register,
contact Stephanie White at smwhite2@wisc.edu

Professor John Sharpless and teaching assistant Marcus Bacher, students wrote essays dissecting various aspects of the historical works they read, from scholars' rhetorical stances to their use of sources. In "The July Crisis, 1914, and the Coming of the Great War," under Professor David McDonald and teaching assistant Ben Raiklin, students first summarized a single primary source, then constructed narratives built around multiple, conflicting sources. With this scaffolding in place, students approached the final assignment as veterans of historical research, writing, and analysis.

Designing the Course

The course emerged out of several semesters' worth of planning and conversations that, to various degrees, involved everyone in the History Department. In fall 2010, a faculty committee articulated the goals of the course and the core competencies we hoped it would give students. In spring 2011, we refined these goals, producing a list of course requirements to help develop and standardize course assignments across the different Historian's Craft topics. Finally, in an attempt to improve our assessments of student learning, we developed an online skills survey that Historian's Craft students take upon entering and exiting the course. Students entering senior capstone seminars also take this survey. Preliminary results of the survey from fall 2011 have already shown impressive improvement in both the research skills and the confidence of students in the Historian's Craft courses. Moreover, the few students who entered the capstone research seminar in spring 2012 having taken the first Historian's Craft courses the previous semester enthusiastically reported feeling much better prepared for their research experience.

Throughout the course development process, we relied on the expertise and guidance of others, especially those involved in the Writing Across the Curriculum program, the libraries, and the History Department's Undergraduate Council. WAC's Brad Hughes and Rebecca Lorimer helped us think through requirements and assessments, suggested a course structure with two discussion sections, and met with future Historian's Craft faculty to discuss successful strategies for teaching writing. Given the course's emphasis on research and library information skills, we benefited immensely from meetings with librarians and archivists from Memorial Library and the State Historical Society. Steven Baumgart, Harry Miller, Nancy Mulhern, and Rick Pifer suggested best practices for ensuring student access to primary sources; Sarah McDaniel and Lisa Saywell also helped with the online assessment of library information literacy. Finally, our own Undergraduate Council and the department as a whole provided essential feedback about where the Historian's Craft course fit within the goals of the major.

The Future

Each year, we add more Historian's Craft courses to the timetable. By 2014 or so, we hope to have enough courses developed to consider making it a required course for History majors. We have been systematically assessing the research papers produced in the capstone seminars, and hope to see their quality improve as more students enter the seminar having taken the course. The department will use these assessments, as well as results of the online testing, when it decides whether to make the Historian's Craft a requirement for the major. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that students come out of the major with the ability not just to analyze history, but to research and write it for themselves. ◊

Sarah Thal is the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of History. As the MIU-funded Historian's Craft Coordinating teaching assistant, Robert Gross conducted much of the preliminary planning for the course. He then helped coordinate the offerings, and fine-tune and conduct the assessments, during the first semester the course was offered.

GOALS FOR HISTORY 201: THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT

The following excerpts from the goals for History 201 demonstrate the range and depth of what students can learn in this course:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be prepared to undertake substantial historical research and writing in a variety of courses, including the History 600 seminar. Specific goals for this course include learning to:

1. **Ask Questions**: Develop the habit of asking questions, including questions that may generate new directions for historical research.

2. **Find Sources**: Learn the logic of footnotes, bibliographies, search engines, libraries, and archives, and consult them to identify and locate source materials.

3. **Evaluate Sources**: Determine the perspective, credibility, and utility of source materials.

4. **Develop an Argument**: Use sources appropriately to create, modify, and support tentative conclusions and new questions.

5. **Plan Further Research**: Draw upon preliminary research to develop a plan for further investigation.

6. **Present Findings**: Make formal and informal written and oral presentations tailored to specific audiences.

WRITING WITH WIKIS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

STEPHANIE WHITE
WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

The definition of a wiki, according to the most famous wiki of all, is "a website whose users can add, modify, or delete its content via a web browser."[1] Essentially, wikis are online spaces where multiple authors can contribute information and multiple users can access that information. By taking advantage of the collaborative and flexible nature of wikis, many faculty and instructors at UW-Madison have developed new assignments that accomplish a range of learning goals. Through wikis, students can learn about course content, collaboration, and communicating with various audiences. Some instructors use a private, password-protected site restricted to members from a single class, while others capitalize on the public writing that occurs when students contribute to wikis like Wikipedia.

In this article, we showcase how faculty in disciplines as far ranging as Pharmacy and Byzantine History use wiki-based writing assignments effectively. In a Pharmacy course, a wiki lets students practice conventions of writing medical records while working collaboratively with their peers. Wikipedia assignments in a Byzantine History course challenge students to join real research communities, and the assignment sequence also highlights the advantages of building process into research and writing.

Writing with Wikis in Pharmacy

Professor Beth Martin's Introduction to Pharmacy Practice Experience is a required two-credit course for first-year Doctor of Pharmacy students. The main goal of this carefully designed course is to help students understand what it means to be a pharmacist, both in the ways they interact with clients and in how they write reports about those interactions. And, according to Martin, a wiki is crucial for helping students accomplish this goal.

Students in this course take part in an innovative program that partners groups of three Pharmacy students with residents of the Oakwood Village Retirement Community. The Pharmacy students offer their community partners advice, motivation, and accountability for successful aging. They pay ten visits to their partner over two semesters, and after each visit, they use a portfolio system on the course wiki to write and revise written records about these visits.

Through these assignments, students experience "a sampling of what an electronic medical record system might be like," according to Martin. Throughout the year, they use the wiki to draft and revise their records, learning to make them "accurate, concise, and focused" while they "show continuity of care," Martin explains. They also learn to follow governmental health confidentiality regulations (HIPAA). Students read

PROFESSOR
BETH MARTIN

PROFESSOR
LEONORA NEVILLE

guidelines and samples of records on the wiki, including faculty-authored initial drafts and revisions of those drafts, to determine how to make their own records successful. Through feedback, they also learn what to emphasize in their reports, weeding out information that is irrelevant and adding in essential information about their partner's health-related goals. Students receive this feedback when they meet with faculty during their first semester to talk about their writing. In the second semester, they do a peer review with another group and continue to write and revise their records.

Martin explains that using a wiki—developed through an award from UW-Madison's Engage program—is essential for this record writing because it provides an online, protected, collaborative writing space for groups to write and access their reports, comment on each other's writing, revise their work, and get feedback on their records from faculty and peers. Because students are still learning HIPAA regulations, it's vital that they are able to make mistakes in an environment that protects their community partners. And since students write their records in groups, it's important that they have access to their group's records. In addition, the Moodle platform the wiki is housed on holds other course documents, streamlining the course materials.

Because of the wiki, Martin says, she's been able to build in other writing around the visit records, such as reflections on professionalism issues, responses to peer review suggestions, and questions for discussion. And this writing has interesting effects on how her students participate. One compelling change Martin has noticed since she began using wikis is that her male students respond in more detail to reflection questions on the wiki than they did when she asked these questions only in class. By providing a space for practical instruction as well as critical reflection, this course wiki has helped Martin achieve her learning goals for students.

Writing for Wikipedia in History

In History 313, an introduction to Byzantine History, Professor Leonora Neville teaches her students that Wikipedia has become one of the best resources for basic information in this field. Her students may be surprised, but Neville is clear: she says Wikipedia is "far easier to access and it's more comprehensive than other resources." She contrasts Wikipedia with the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, which was "limited when it came out, and is now hopelessly out of date." To add to the wealth of valuable historical information about Byzantium that's on Wikipedia and to give her students a chance to share their new knowledge with a wide audience, Neville requires her students to write or edit a Wikipedia entry.

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[1] Wikipedia contributors, "Wiki," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*,
http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wiki&oldid=491629701.

THE 2011-2012 WAC SOURCEBOOK FOR FACULTY

The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Sourcebook, a resource for faculty, academic staff, and TAs, has been newly revised this year. Updated every one to two years, the WAC Sourcebook highlights innovative ways to teach with writing in the disciplines. It includes advice, best practices, and sample teaching materials.

The 2011-2012 WAC Sourcebook features dozens of terrific assignments, samples of feedback on student papers, and materials for teaching with writing from departments A to Z—from Atmospheric and Oceanic Studies to Zoology!

Sections in the revised WAC Sourcebook include:

- Communication-B and Writing-Intensive Criteria and Courses
- General Ideas about Writing
- Sequencing Assignments in Your Course
- Designing Effective Assignments
- Coaching Students to Succeed with Assignments
- Teaching Multilingual Writers
- Conferences and Student Peer Review
- Writing in Service Learning
- Responding, Evaluating, Grading
- Locating and Using Sources
- Teaching Oral Communication Skills
- Assessing Your Course
- Resources for Instructors and Students
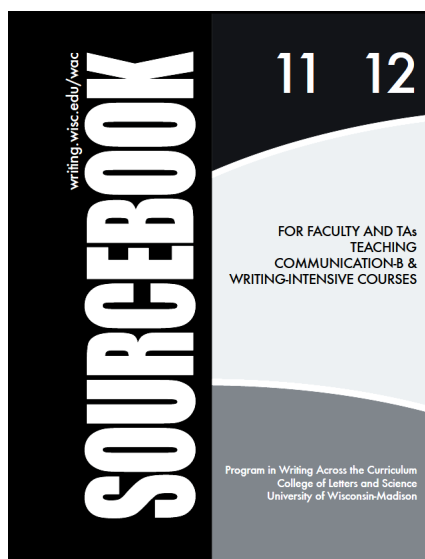
Among many exciting additions to the 2011-2012 Sourcebook are the following, from colleagues across campus:

- **An updated section on multilingual writers**
- **A new section on writing in service-learning courses**
- **New samples and criteria for evaluating writing projects, including:**
  - Sample comments on a student paper in Biocore
  - Vocabulary for evaluating new-media assignments in any discipline
  - A rubric for evaluating persuasive presentations in Engineering
  - Student self-evaluation criteria for a storyboard assignment in East Asian Languages and Literature
  - Using Turnitin to teach students about plagiarism
  - Using Feedback Manager to respond to short writing assignments in large lecture courses
- **New assignment samples, including:**
  - Wikipedia paragraphs in History
  - Portfolios in Biology 151/152
  - Multimedia projects in East Asian Visual Culture
  - Analyses of textual echoes in Literature
  - Final projects and presentations in Asian American Studies
  - Analyses of photographs in Rhetoric and Visual Culture
  - Writing about archives in Library and Information Sciences
  - Analyzing multiculturalism in Journalism
- **New writing activities, including:**
  - Using oral debates to find an argument
  - Crafting a thesis statement
  - Revising paragraphs
  - Supporting undergraduate writing through research and publication

writing.wisc.edu/wac

SOURCEBOOK

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FOR FACULTY AND TAs
TEACHING
COMMUNICATION-B &
WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSES

Program in Writing Across the Curriculum
College of Letters and Science
University of Wisconsin-Madison

**We'd be very glad to send you a copy of the 2011-2012 WAC Sourcebook!
For a copy, please contact:**

Brad Hughes: bthughes@wisc.edu or 263-3823

Stephanie White: smwhite2@wisc.edu

INTRODUCING THE NEW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF WAC

S tephanie White was thrilled to join the Letters and Science Program in Writing Across the Curriculum in August of 2011. She jumped into her role as a consultant for faculty, instructional staff, and teaching assistants in a range of disciplines. Stephanie carries on the excellent work of her predecessors, most recently Rebecca Lorimer, Beth Godbee, and Kate Vieira.

Stephanie is a doctoral student in the Composition and Rhetoric program, based in the English Department, and she completed minor coursework in Curriculum and Instruction. She has taught Communication-A and Communication-B courses in addition to teaching in the Writing Center and with the Madison Writing Assistance program. Stephanie has twice received the University Housing's Honored Instructors Award, has developed instructional materials for the English 100 program, and has participated in the Teaching Academy's Summer Institute. Her dissertation research focuses on service-learning and writing across the curriculum.

STEPHANIE WHITE

This year, Stephanie has been working closely with faculty, instructors, teaching assistants, and peer mentors in Psychology 225, Biocore, and First-Year Experience seminars. She co-taught and consulted with faculty and teaching assistants in Plant Pathology, Library and Information Studies, Geography, Political Science, Comparative Literature, History of Science, Social Work, and Spanish. After her first year on the job, Stephanie says, "The most exciting aspect of this position is hearing about the impressive work faculty and TAs do with writing in their courses across the university and sharing what I do, too."

Stephanie is eager to talk with you about designing writing and speaking assignments, responding to student writing, supporting multilingual writers, conferencing with writers, and motivating students to succeed with assignments. If you would like to talk or have questions about teaching with writing, please contact Stephanie at smwhite2@wisc.edu. ◊

WRITING WITH WIKIS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM *CONTINUED*

In addition to building resources that other historians will use, Neville's goal for her Wikipedia assignment is to help her students learn about objective historical writing. Her first two assignments in the course are argumentative historical papers, while the Wikipedia entries are, in contrast, objective statements. In order to write their Wikipedia assignments, students must complete a sequence of assignments, including a review of a current article based on the grading rubric for their own assignment. This review helps them understand what makes a Wikipedia article credible and successful, and they "immediately see that they shouldn't have an argument" in their own articles. In other words, critically analyzing examples on Wikipedia helps students understand why and how to write objectively.

Along with the review of a current article, students must write annotated bibliographies of primary and secondary sources for their article, give an oral presentation about their topic, and submit drafts of their article throughout the writing process. Along the way, the class learns to judge the credibility and appropriateness of sources, and they discuss differences between argumentation and objective narratives. This assignment sequence, Neville explains, "gets students to gain ownership of the research process" while also making the writing process manageable. Finally, the class gets training from one of UW-Madison's Wikipedia ambassadors, a current student whose part-time job is to help students across campus tackle the logistics of actually publishing on Wikipedia.

Neville has been very pleased with the results of this assignment, because she's seen her students learn about writing in history while also contributing to the field. For example, one of her students this semester is revising the current Wikipedia article about the Battle of Adrianople. Neville explains that, "if he does a good job, people will read it." Another of her students is writing about the law collection Ecloga of Leo III, which currently has no Wikipedia entry. Neville has seen her students become motivated by more than their grades, since they know their writing could be public. In fact, one student last semester posted her entry on Wikipedia as soon as she had finished it and then called all of her relatives to look at her published work before it was edited by other Wikipedia contributors.

> " The assignment isn't innovative because it's Wikipedia, but because it's asking students to uncover the real truth about the past. "

As she continues to refine and develop the assignment, building in more steps along the way to guide her students through their research and writing, Neville is glad she's found a method to teach what it means to do history. However, she doesn't believe this assignment is ground breaking because it uses Wikipedia—in fact, she says, history faculty elsewhere have said these assignments are "old hat." Rather, the novelty lies in finding a way to teach students how to determine realities about history. Neville says, "This assignment isn't innovative because it's Wikipedia, but because it's asking students to uncover the real truth about the past." ◊

Thanks to Comm-B TA Fellows!

Jeremiah Yahn
Zoology

Sandy Peterson
Theatre and Drama

Mai Yamagami
Journalism
and Mass
Communication

Gina Spitz
Sociology

Melissa Adler
Library and
Information Studies

Katalin Dósa
Zoology

David Houston
Slavic Languages
and Literature

Honored for their outstanding teaching in
Comm-B courses, these seven TAs helped
plan and lead the August 2011 and January 2012
training in Writing Across the Curriculum for over
100 new Comm-B TAs from across campus.
Thanks for your incredible work!

The Newsletter of the
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