

Time to Write

The Newsletter of the L&S Program in
Writing Across the Curriculum

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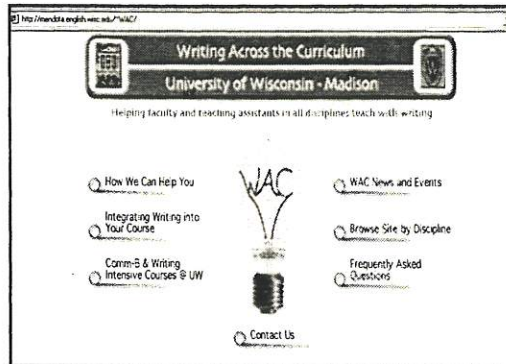
WAC Comes to You on the Web

Bonnie Smith & Brad Hughes, Writing
Across the Curriculum

Prepare to make a new bookmark on your web browser, because the WAC Program at UW-Madison is now a quick click away! After thoughtful planning and designing, after gathering advice and examples from faculty and TAs all across the UW-Madison campus, we are happy to announce that the WAC Web site is open for business. We've designed the WAC Web site not for writing teachers per sé, but rather for faculty and teaching assistants in all disciplines—at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and beyond—who want to find effective ways to use writing assignments in their content courses. So whether you're teaching history, anthropology, botany, literature, genetics, mechanical engineering, or any discipline—and whether you're a wily veteran or a first-time teacher—this UW-Madison Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Web site can offer you tested ideas, advice, and inspiration. The Web



Jean Heitz, Course Coordinator for Biology 151-152, takes the WAC Web Site out for a test drive at a party celebrating the public premiere of the site.



Here is what you'll see when you go to <http://mendota.english.wisc.edu/~WAC>, your home base for WAC on the Web at UW-Madison.

site includes hundreds of pages of advice and samples designed to help you create effective and innovative writing assignments, teach students about writing, coach students to succeed with assignments, or respond to student papers.

Here's some advice about what the site has to offer and a roadmap on how to get there:

- ✓ Aim your browser at <http://mendota.english.wisc.edu/~WAC> (and why not make a bookmark while you're at it?).
- ✓ If you're looking for **pedagogical advice about teaching with writing**, the best place to start is "Integrating Writing into Your Course." In fact, this section is the heart of the site.
- ✓ If you'd prefer to **browse by discipline**, choose "By Discipline." Please

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Time to Write is the newsletter of the College of Letters & Science Program in Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Correspondence should be addressed to *Time to Write*, L&S Program in Writing Across the Curriculum, Dept. of English, UW-Madison, Helen C. White Hall, 600 N. Park St., Madison, WI 53706. We can also be reached via phone at 608-263-2732 or via email:

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Integrating Speaking, Writing, and Reading in the “Jury Project” . . .

A Profile of David Fleming’s Innovative Course That Aims to Train Citizens to Deliberate and Decide

What *is* the educational project of a democracy? How *do* we teach students to be thoughtful, engaged citizens? These are questions that David Fleming, a professor in the Composition & Rhetoric area of the English Department, has been asking for years. And in the academic year of 1999-2000, Fleming was awarded the unique opportunity of a Lilly Fellowship, which allowed him to design a new Comm-B course and work with other UW professors who were designing new curricula. The course that eventually became Fleming’s “Jury Project”—a Bascom seminar in the English department—is an attempt to address the crucial questions above.

The Jury Project: Filling Three Specific Needs

The Jury Project evolved out of what Fleming perceived as three specific needs. First, Fleming has long been concerned with the ways that the academy tends to separate courses in writing from courses in reading, speaking and listening. In an essay on the Jury Project course, he has written about the frustrating way “‘languaging’ has been seen so separately from thinking; the way the general skills of the first two years of higher education have been divorced from the content and theory of the majors; the way the knowledge of those disciplines have been separated from ‘real world’ practice, purposes and values; and, finally, the way the individual so ‘developed’ has been alienated from his or her own community.” In the Jury Project, Fleming seeks to blur the lines forming these troubling disruptions between skill and content.

A second problem Fleming wanted his new course to address was the ways in which politics are handled in the classroom. Politics, Fleming believes, are viewed as an “attempt to make the classroom into space for revolution,” which, he maintains, can become too dramatic. Or, politics are seen as a spectator sport, which Fleming views as entirely too tame. A way to deal with political issues without making students feel like they had “to go to the barricades” would involve coming up with a more mundane, everyday way to think about political life and action.

And third, the very real, indescribably horrific events at Columbine High School in April of 1999

seemed to add a sense of urgency to the need to give young people an opportunity to deal with conflict, and, as Fleming says, “to live in a world where people are different and not to kill them.” Fleming notes that the boys who planned and executed the massacre at Columbine were given multiple opportunities to express themselves in writing classes; they had both written essays describing themselves carrying out violent acts, and they had both produced video documentaries about murders.

After the massacre at Columbine, David Broder and others commented on how effective an exercise like the mock trial could be for *dealing with conflict and then resolving it*. But the mock trial itself wasn’t an entirely satisfying option for Fleming: “Broder and others had spent too much time thinking about lawyers—not jurors,” Fleming decided. Many in the field of rhetoric have noted that the jury is the only form of direct, deliberative democracy we still have. So, really, Fleming concluded, *a primary goal of our educational system is to train good jurors*.

The Jury Project in Action

One particularly revealing detail about Fleming’s vision of the class itself is that he specifically wanted the course to take place around a very big table. He had to jump through some bureaucratic hoops to make that spatial detail a reality, and he has been extremely gratified to observe that it is around this big table where the actual work of the course gets done. In the Jury Project, students and teacher occupy the same space, share the same topic, and mull over the same resources.

During the fifteen weeks of the semester, “jurors” grapple with the details of three cases.

Fleming and his jurors select real cases, often from the Supreme Court docket, or they look at mock cases from the Georgetown University Street Law project, and he assembles the course readers by downloading briefs from the public domain of the web. All of the cases are actual problems—not abstract controversial issues like the death penalty or gun control. In the past, two of the cases jurors have considered include

After Columbine, Fleming saw an urgent need to give young people an opportunity to deal with conflict, “to live in a world where people are different and not to kill them.”

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remember, though, to browse widely through the disciplines represented here, because there are many wonderful examples from all sorts of fields waiting to inspire you and ready for you to adapt for your course and discipline. And make sure also to browse through the section on "Integrating Writing into Your Course," which is the heart of this site.

✓ Choose "UW Courses" if you're looking for information about **UW-Madison requirements for Communication-B and writing-intensive courses**

✓ If you'd like to have **conversations with experienced faculty and TAs across campus** who've volunteered to consult about anything to do with teaching writing in your course, look no further than the WAC Teaching Network. The Teaching Network is made up of faculty and TAs who are well-seasoned in the art of teach-

ing with writing and who are eager to share their experience and advice with you. You can access the WAC Teaching network in a variety of ways, but perhaps the most straightforward is to hit to the "We Can Help" button and click on "WAC Teaching Network—Advice from Colleagues." *Turn to page 5 of this newsletter for a list of current members of the WAC Teaching Network.*

✓ If you're not finding the kind of help you need on this site, please head to the "Contact Us" section and send us your question or concern. **We're always looking for good new materials to add to this site**, so if you have assignments or advice you'd like to share, please click on the "Contact Us" button at the left, and send us an email.

Please enjoy browsing, sampling, adapting teaching materials from, and talking with your colleagues about

UW-Madison's brand new Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Web site. . . In case you haven't yet figured it out, it was tailor-made especially for you!

Here are five of the many great pages of examples and advice on the WAC site:

1. Charles Cohen's syllabus for his Comm-B History 200 course

2. Women's Studies & Plant Pathology Professor Caitilyn Allen's form to guide and focus feedback

3. Ann Burgess' email to all her Biocore students encouraging them as they revise a difficult assignment

4. Rebecca Nowacek's advice on teaching revision

5. Greta Krippner's advice on orienting students to a new field



Mark your calendars. . .

Fall training for new Comm-B TAs
will be held on

Monday & Tuesday, August 26 & 27, 2002
from 9 AM - 12: 15 PM!

Registration is required.

You may register at <http://mendota.english.wisc.edu/~WAC> (click on "Events & News").

For more information, contact

Brad Hughes, Director of Writing Across the Curriculum,
at bthughes@facstaff.wisc.edu, 3-3823.



Integrating Speaking, Writing, and Reading in the “Jury Project” (continued from page 2)

Supreme Court case *Ferguson v. City of Charleston* (regarding urine testing and the privacy rights of pregnant women) and *Gratz v.*

Bollinger (a case on the affirmative-action policies at the University of Michigan which has been at the federal district and appeals levels). As a result of the actual and temporal nature of these specific problems, jurors must arrive at a solution—even if only it’s only temporary. Fleming and the jurors in his course deal together with the complexity of the law and of the cases; nothing is open and shut, jurors often change their minds, and many in the course agonize over the vote they will eventually cast.

Student-jurors make oral and written statements and arguments throughout the course of the semester. For one assignment, they are to write succinct, neutral representations of only *one* side’s stance. Another assignment involves writing a one-page synthesis map diagramming all the main arguments of the entire case. Student-jurors also acquaint themselves well with the case’s complexities by writing an analytical dialogue in which two imagined interlocutors go back and forth about how to handle a particularly vexing sub-issue of the case. And in yet another assignment training students to think carefully and responsibly about how their views are tied to the facts of the case, student-jurors make ten-minute oral arguments during which they present the very strongest position they can imagine.

Deliberation: The Heart of the Jury Project

The work of deliberation, though, is clearly the aspect of the course with which Fleming is most delighted. During deliberation week, student-jurors are arguing and reasoning together, and, it seems, looking more and more like the thoughtful, engaged citizens he wants them to be. As a professor, Fleming remains very hands-off during these crucial weeks of the course, and he remains committed to keeping his own position on the case under lock and key. “I try to be as open-minded as I want them to be,” he says. Rather than advocate for one side or the other, Fleming plays the referee and steps in when students seem to be talking past each other. If the tide is turning too much in one direc-

tion, he’ll step in and remind the jurors of something they’ve forgotten.

Matt Kebbekus, a Legal Studies major, remarked, “What has stuck with me the most from the Jury Project is the importance of discourse. . . I even convinced my advisors to include the class in the major.”

“He used writing to think!”

After deliberations, jurors vote, and the majority rules. This activity sounds uncomplicated, but, in reality, it’s far from easy. Sincerely invested in the decision they have to make and more aware of the ethical ramifications of their verdict, student-jurors (sometimes near tears) agonize over their vote.

Following the vote, student-jurors write formal opinions for their final papers in the class, papers that Fleming maintains are among the very best student-writing he’s had in any of his courses. The papers are detail-rich and extremely precise since everyone in the Jury Project knows the facts of the case so well. One student changed his mind as a result of writing this formal opinion. “He used writing to think!” Fleming says proudly.

Discourse: A Solution in Itself

Further sources of pride for Fleming are the facts that he has received the highest course evaluations of his career, the majority of students never miss a single day of class (no one has *ever* skipped on voting day), and students tell him the course is fun.

Ann Patten, a senior Biology major, commented that “the Jury Project showed me that I wielded considerable power as a jury member, and I was able to affect the conclusions our jury reached.” And Matt Kebbekus, a Legal Studies major, remarked, “What has stuck with me the most from the Jury Project is the importance of discourse. A number of my classes deal with the problems facing our modern society; I have consistently argued that effective discourse is a solution in itself. . . I wrote the best papers of my college career in Fleming’s class [and] I even convinced my advisors to include the class in the [Legal Studies] major.”

Fleming is adamant in reminding all of us that this course is not *about* the jury; neither is it a course to train lawyers. And it’s not a course about the *law*. “The point of the class,” Fleming insists, “is that the law, politics, and the details of democracy belong to us.”

The WAC Teaching Network at UW-Madison

<http://mendota.english.wisc.edu/~WAC>

Faculty, academic staff, and teaching assistants across the UW-Madison campus who have extensive experience teaching with writing are eager to share their experience and advice with UW-Madison colleagues. The faculty and TAs listed below have volunteered to consult about anything to do with teaching writing in your course. To learn more about the members of the WAC teaching network (including the writing-intensive courses they've taught and their specific teaching interests), check out the teaching network page on the WAC website. You can access this page a variety of ways, but perhaps the quickest is to click "contact us"; then, at the bottom of that page, click on "Learn about the WAC Teaching Network." The following names listed below are charter members, and we'd love to expand this teaching network. If you're a UW-Madison faculty or staff member or a TA and you'd be willing to share your knowledge and help colleagues, please let us know. Just write to the WAC director at bthughes@facstaff.wisc.edu and we'll take it from there.

Steve Ackerman	Professor	<i>Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences</i>	stevea@ssec.wisc.edu
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Teaching Tips

To help students feel more comfortable with public speaking, I always try to *engage them in the process as often as possible*. Ideally, this begins by giving students brief, informal opportunities well before I ask them to give a 15-minute final project presentation for a grade. To encourage students to speak in every class, I *pause about halfway through each lecture or lab demonstration and ask students to compare notes with their neighbor and discuss any questions they may have had but were reluctant to voice*. I then ask a group of students to share any questions they had and whether they resolved the question among the group. If something was unresolved in a group of students, I will *open the question up to the rest of the class and see whether the answer can be reached by the whole group*. This takes a little class time, but it helps me quickly determine if my own presentation has been effective.

Jeffrey Schell, TA, Department of Zoology

Teaching Tips is a feature of *Time to Write* in which we highlight tricks of the writing-teacher trade. If you have a tip you've found particularly successful and would like to share, please email Bonnie Smith (bonniesmith@facstaff.wisc.edu).

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