

## WAC News and Events

### Campus-wide Workshop

#### Successful Writing in Large Classes

Looking for ways to incorporate writing in a large class without creating an overwhelming paper load?

Writing Across the Curriculum invites you to attend a free, campus-wide workshop on successful writing in large classes. The workshop will include practical techniques for creating assignments especially designed for large classes, informal "write-to-learn" writing alternatives, and time-saving advice for responding to student writing.

The workshop will take place on **Wednesday, February 25**, from 12:00-1:15 p.m. in the Orchard Suite of the University Union. Appetizers and refreshments will be served.

To RSVP, please contact Dan Melzer, University Reading and Writing Coordinator, at [melzer@csus.edu](mailto:melzer@csus.edu) or 278-6925.

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## Designing Successful Writing Assignments

On November 20, 2003, Writing Across the Curriculum presented a workshop on designing successful writing assignments. At the workshop, forty teachers from across disciplines discussed effective writing assignment design. For those of you who couldn't attend the workshop but are interested in tips for designing writing assignments, below are some of the characteristics of effective writing assignments discussed in the workshop, followed by an example assignment on page 2.

### Characteristics of Effective Writing Assignments

- **The assignment has a clear purpose.** Connect the assignment explicitly to course goals, the students' goals, and disciplinary and professional writing and thinking.
- **The assignment has a sense of audience.** Most school writing is to the teacher as audience. Consider creating hypothetical audiences (for example, having students write a memo to the CEO of a company or an article for a psychology journal), real audiences (for example, having students write opinion pieces for the Bee or publish websites), or audiences that the students choose themselves.

- **The grading criteria of the assignment are clear.** Consider using grading rubrics (see <http://www.csus.edu/wac/rubric.htm> for an example rubric), listing criteria in the assignment description, and providing students with examples. Match grading criteria with the purpose of the assignment.

- **The assignment accounts for the writing process.** Consider using peer response, responding to drafts, and encouraging students to visit The Writing Center (128 Calaveras). Break large and complex assignments into smaller, more manageable stages.

- **The course assignments ask for a variety of modes and genres.** Ask students to write in a variety of modes: summarizing, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, arguing, etc. Give students practice in a breadth of assignment types: informal writing, disciplinary genres, "real-world" genres, etc.

For an example writing assignment that exemplifies this advice, see page 2 of this newsletter.



## Example Writing Assignment

The following example writing assignment is from Professor Sheri Hembree's Child Development 133: Research Methods in Human Development. The assignment is a perfect example of the advice for effective assignment design on page 1: the assignment has a sense of purpose and provides students with a "live" audience (other students during oral presentations); it considers writing as a process (students are given the option to turn in rough drafts and get feedback); it breaks up a large assignment into smaller, more manageable tasks; and it asks students to perform a variety of writing and thinking tasks (summarize, hypothesize, analyze, discuss). It also gives students a clear format and a clear sense of how each criterion will be weighted in the final grade.

### Research Project

This assignment will give you the opportunity to engage in experimental research. Through the course of the project you will plan and implement an experimental procedure and collect, manage, and report data.

The class will be divided into groups (of 3 or 4 people) to conduct simple research projects. Each research team will conduct a replication of an experimental study (using classmates as subjects) and report your findings (orally and in writing).

**See the Steps to Completion chart on Page 3.**

### Paper Format

Your 10 -12 page report will include the following sections, written in APA style (*see Chapter 15 and your writing text for more information about the format of your paper*):

#### *Title Page*

**Abstract** — a summary of your study (100 words)

#### **Introduction (20 points, including abstract):**

This is essentially a 2-3 page summary of the relevant parts of the study you are replicating (in your own words). You may cite the same studies that the authors cite, and make the same points that the authors make to justify your study, but be careful to use your own words and cite appropriately. Cite only articles you have actually read. At the end of the introduction, summarize the study you are replicating and state that you are replicating it, then state the hypothesis/hypotheses you are testing.

#### **Method (15 points):**

Include sections for participants, apparatus/materials (if applicable) and procedure. Be sure to go into as much detail as necessary so that I (or anyone else) could replicate your procedure. Include your materials in an appendix, if applicable.

#### **Results (10 points):**

Report descriptive statistics in a table (i.e., means or frequencies). Restate your hypothesis, what test you conducted, the results of that test, and whether it supports your hypothesis. Be sure to use APA style in reporting statistics.

#### **Discussion (15 points):**

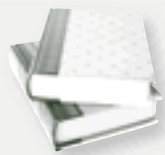
Restate the results, then discuss what they mean, with reference to past literature on the subject (i.e., how do your results relate to previous research on the topic - research you discussed in your introduction). What conclusions can you draw from your results? If your results are consistent with the study you replicated, then you may make conclusions similar to the researchers' conclusions. If you had non-significant or contradictory results, explain why you think this is so (e.g., sample not similar, slight changes in procedure, not enough subjects, etc.)

An additional 10 points will be assigned for APA style, grammar, organization and 10 points will be assigned to your presentation.

**For more help with designing effective writing assignments, check out John Bean's *Engaging Ideas*, reviewed on Page 3.**

### Steps to Completion

	Date due
1) Provide any requests for group members during first class session. As a group, select a topic and an experimental study to replicate.	9/17 & 9/22, in class
2) Read your study and research the topic by reading other relevant articles (i.e., articles cited in the article). As a group, discuss your hypotheses and what part of the study you will replicate. Define your variables and discuss how you measure them.	9/24
3) As a group, plan your experimental procedure. This may include scripts of instructions for participants as well as the data collection procedures you plan to employ (i.e., what procedure will you use to collect data?).	10/13
4) Conduct your study with your classmates as subjects.	10/22-10/29, in class
5) Conduct appropriate descriptive statistics (usually means and standard deviations) and inferential tests (usually t-tests or Chi-square).	11/12
6) Share results in the group and write up your study (see below). This may be done individually or with a partner after sharing statistical results.	Rough draft of final paper due on or before 11/26 (optional, but encouraged) Final paper due Tuesday, December 16th by 5 p.m.
7) Each group will make a brief (8-10 minute) presentation summarizing their study (hypotheses, method, results, discussion)	last week of class



#### Recommended Reading

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

Looking for help designing a lab report assignment for your biology course? Need some advice for responding to that big pile of history research papers? Want to provide some variety to your political science lectures by mixing in some informal writing, but not sure how to do it?

John Bean's *Engaging Ideas* is an excellent resource for any teacher who wants to use reading and writing more effectively. *Engaging Ideas* is a nuts and bolts approach to assigning and responding to writing in every discipline. In *Engaging Ideas* you'll find helpful advice about critical thinking and writing, responding to grammar, designing formal and informal assignments, helping students read difficult texts, writing effective comments on student papers, and much more.

*Engaging Ideas* is just one of the books available for check-out from the CSUS Writing Across the Curriculum Program in Calaveras 151. The WAC Program also maintains a resource file of articles on a variety of aspects of reading, writing, and teaching.

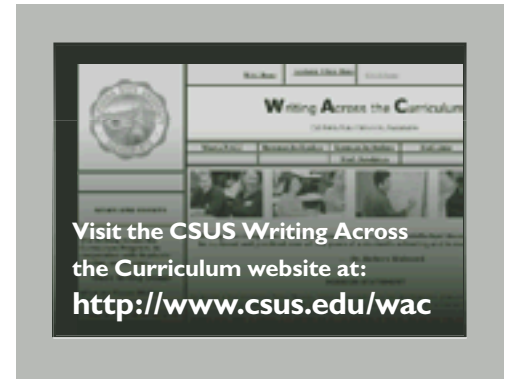
Writing Across the Curriculum has copies of **Engaging Ideas** to loan to CSUS teachers. If you'd like to borrow a copy, please contact Dan Melzer at [melzer@csus.edu](mailto:melzer@csus.edu) or 278-6925, or stop by 151 Calaveras.

## Writing Across the Curriculum on the Web

The CSUS Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program encourages you to visit our website at <http://www.csus.edu>. The website was created in the fall of 2003, and each semester more resources for both teachers and students are added to the site. Currently, the CSUS WAC website has the following resources:

- **WAC news and events**
- **Resources for teachers** (grading rubrics, advice for assigning and responding, help with departmental assessment, dealing with plagiarism, etc.).
- **Resources for students** (researching and citing sources, The CSUS Writing Center's website, writing for specific disciplines, etc.).
- **Past issues** of the CSUS Writing Across the Curriculum newsletter
- **General Writing Across the Curriculum links**

The WAC program is always looking for material from CSUS instructors to add to its website. If you have material about reading or writing that you would like us to add to the website, please contact Dan Melzer, University Reading and Writing Coordinator, at [melzer@csus.edu](mailto:melzer@csus.edu) or 278-6925.



### Writing Across the Curriculum

To schedule a workshop or consultation, or to find out more about Writing Across the Curriculum, contact:

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Coordinator

151 Calaveras

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**To: CSUS Faculty**  
**Re: The WPE, Your Students, and Increasing Your Income**

We'd like you to occasionally remind your students of the necessity of taking the WPE, required of all upper division students by the time they reach 75 units. The WPE is given five times a year: September, October, January, March, and May. Free workshops are available for signup before each exam. Workshops cover the scoring guidelines, sample passing and failing exams, strategies for writing under time pressure and more.

We'd also like to encourage you to help grade the WPE. Grading is open to all faculty at CSUS. All new readers are trained (by me) before they begin grading. Grading takes most of the day, but also includes a free breakfast, an after lunch snack, convivial chatter with colleagues from other departments, and a paycheck of \$210 for the day. We are always appreciative of new readers, and seek readers from departments across the disciplines.

To sign up to become a WPE reader, contact Jon Price at [price@csus.edu](mailto:price@csus.edu) or 278-6347.

**Jon Price**  
WPE Coordinator

Join us for the next  
Writing Across the  
Curriculum campus-wide  
workshop:

### Successful Writing in Large Classes

**Wednesday**  
**Feb. 25, 2004**  
**Noon-1:15 p.m.**

(please RSVP,  
see page 1 for details)