



BMCC WAC DAY

February 6, 2019

Making WAC Work for Students; Making it Less Work for Faculty

Sandra Jamieson

Drew University

WAC Origins

“Extended habits of written expression cannot be influenced in [one term]” -- they need to be fostered over time (Alvin C. Eurich, NCTE, 1931)

“What your students need is not more instruction in writing but a few teachers of geology who are capable of describing not only geological phenomena but also of teaching their students how to think consecutively and logically about geology” (Oscar J. Campbell, *English Journal*, 1939)



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WAC Benefits: students

- Practice writing as a process (revision and drafts)
- Expand writing skills across contexts & genres
- Develop transferable literacies (reading, writing, research/information literacy)
- Deepen meta-analytical skills from reflection



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WAC Benefits: faculty

- Engage more fully with students
- Deepen your students' understanding of disciplinary knowledge through writing
- Monitor what your students do and don't understand
- Fulfil the mandate of higher education: educate!

WAC Challenges: Faculty

- Time
- Students' varied skills levels
- Students resistance to writing
- Grading content and writing skills
- **TIME!**

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Making WAC Work for students

- Develop a program-wide **community of practice** with shared values and goals (& language to discuss them)
- **Scaffold learning** within classes and repeat practices across classes (e.g.: writing as a process)
- Identify and teach the language and **threshold concepts** of the program, and the specific discipline of the class



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Threshold concepts

Liminal stage



- Writes drafts when told to do so
- Uses writing as a way to learn when it is assigned
- Participates in peer review

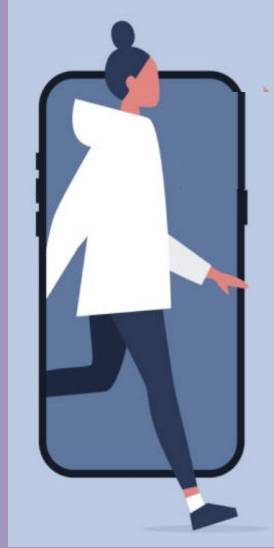
Threshold concepts

Liminal stage →

Absorbed



- Writes drafts when told to do so
- Uses writing as a way to learn when it is assigned
- Participates in peer review



- Conceives of writing as a process that includes revision
- Makes notes while thinking & planning;
- Seeks feedback on writing from peers

Threshold Concepts

Explanatory

Transformative

Integrative

Irreversible

Provisional (& bounded)

Troublesome

Shared language about writing/ threshold concepts

- Writing is a process of drafting and revising
- Writing is a mode of learning and exploring
 - Writing is a conversation
 - Reading is an active practice
- Each discipline has specific concepts and genres

Making WAC less work for faculty

- Focus on program-wide Threshold Concepts
- Use ungraded Write-To-Learn assignments
- Social annotations of Reading - google docs, hypothesis.is, group work



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Making WAC less work: focus on one Threshold Concept

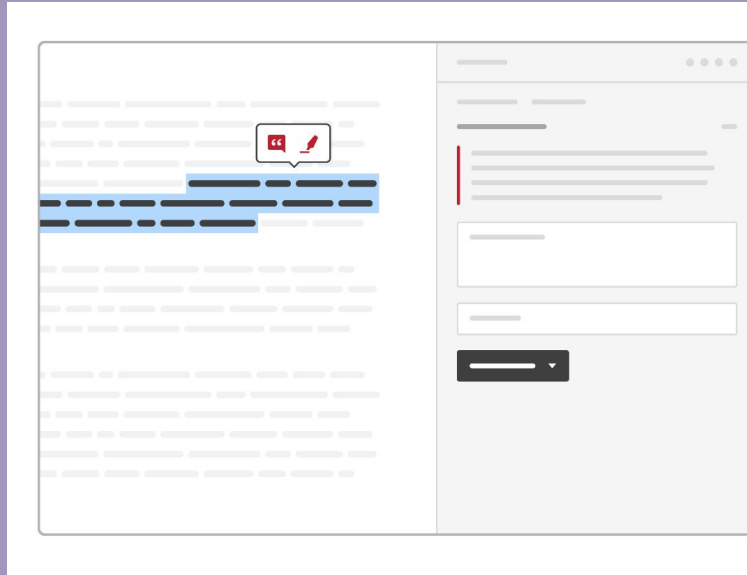
- Everything is a draft; writing is a process
- Brainstorm an idea in writing, then talk
- Revise a tweet -- 140 characters is difficult
- Write a response to feedback on papers

Making WAC less work: ungraded write-to-learn

- Write a question, read it aloud
- Explain a principle to your neighbor
- Restate the thesis in 140 characters
- Single-issue peer response

Making WAC less work: social annotation of readings

Hypothesis:
learn what
your students
understand as
they read
(write-to-learn)



Select text to annotate.

Add tags and post publicly or save privately.

Reply to or share any annotation.

Link to notes or whole pages.

Annotate together in groups.

Collaborate privately with others.

Search your notes.

Explore all public annotations and profiles.

Robin DeRosa

http://web.hypothesis.is

NARRATIVE OF THE THIRD VOYAGE, 1498-1500 (EXCERPT)

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

I have always read that the world comprising the land and the water was spherical, and the recorded experiences of Ptolemy and all others have proved this by the eclipses of the moon and other observations made from East to West, as well as the elevation of the Pole from North to South. But as I have already described, I have now seen so much irregularity, that I have come to another conclusion respecting the Earth, namely, that it is not round as they describe, but of the form of a pear, which is very round except where the stalk grows, at which part it is most prominent; or like a round ball upon part of which is a prominence like a woman's nipple, this protrusion being the highest and nearest the sky, situated under the equinoctial line, and at the eastern extremity of this sea. . . .

Ptolemy and the other philosophers who have written upon the globe thought that it was spherical, believing that this [western] hemisphere was round as well as that in which they themselves dwelt, the centre of which was in the island of Arin,

hghounsell

1 month

I have now seen so much irregularity

How did he even come to this conclusion? What experiences/ observations did he make? Can I hate Columbus even more than I already do?

1 reply

[Reply](#)

klariviere

1 month

that I have come to another conclusion respecting the Earth

what authority does he have to say this? I mean, come on.

psuamit Columbus

[Reply](#)

jtn1006

1 month

form of a pear

wow, this is a stretch of the imagination, at least so it would seem. I'm sure he had his reasons for this hypothesis, but it's hard to imagine

psuamit

[Reply](#)

sgriffiths8

1 month

or like a round ball upon part of which is a prominence like a woman's nipple,

um alright, interesting choice of imagery...

1 reply

[Reply](#)

3

4

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Sustainable WAC

- Faculty development, shared resources, conversations
- Community amongst the faculty
- Shared values about the teaching of writing
- Scaffolding learning (formal or informal)
- Shared language about writing / threshold concepts



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DISCUSSION

**Thank you for coming,
And thank you to the faculty and
students on the panels!**

If you have questions about BMCC's Writing Across the Curriculum Program, or want more suggestions for write-to-learn or other WAC activities, please email **Holly Messitt** (hmessitt@bmcc.edu) or **Rifat Salam** (rsalam@cuny.edu)

Or email me at sjamieson@drew.edu

