Common Place Views...
see “WRITING” as, a matter of correctness, a reflection of thinking ability, or even a mask for poor thinking.

Better understanding...
sees WRITING as a complex intellectual activity, a set of social practices associated with different areas of life, as purposeful and embedded in social goals and cultural practices, as constantly changing, and as a skill acquired and developed over time through processes of formal and informal learning (Barton and Hamilton 8).

Courses that engage students in learning are assignment-centered rather than text- or lecture-centered. Goals, methods, and evaluation emphasize using content rather than simply acquiring it. Problems, questions, or issues are the point of entry into the subject and a source of motivation for sustained inquiry. (Bean 5)

“Write-to-Engage” Activities

One of the best ways to engage students in the intellectual activities of a course is to regularly assign informal, exploratory writing in response to disciplinary problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Freewrites”</th>
<th>Journals</th>
<th>Link to “formal writing”</th>
<th>Others…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… to gather thoughts</td>
<td>o Open-ended</td>
<td>o Rapid first drafts</td>
<td>o Outline text structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… to refocus lagging discussion</td>
<td>o Write every day</td>
<td>o Practice essay-exam questions</td>
<td>o Write out predictions of the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… to pose questions or concerns</td>
<td>o Response to teacher questions</td>
<td>o Thesis statement writing</td>
<td>o Rewrite text for a different audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… to summarize understanding</td>
<td>o Response to current events</td>
<td>o Paragraph templates</td>
<td>o List assumptions prior to reading, compare assumptions with information after reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Double-entry Response</td>
<td>o Abstracts</td>
<td>o Concept Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Précis</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When using writing in your classes, you have many options for the writing tasks you assign. The activities listed above can be used to help student achieve specific learning outcomes for your course, while others may be used to help students learn, experience, and understand the thinking and writing processes in your field.

“Writing in the Discipline” Activities

“Recent findings about the nature of genre suggest that genres are context-specific and complex and cannot be easily or meaningfully mimicked outside their naturally occurring rhetorical situation and exigencies. […] Disciplinary genres are tools used to accomplish work central to a discipline. In the university, those genres arise from specific work done in disciplinary classrooms—that is, lab reports arise from and are shaped by the need to record lab work and share results.” (Wardle, 2009, p. 767)

Writers acquire and strategically deploy genre knowledge as they participate in their field’s or profession’s knowledge-producing activities. (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995, p.3)

In a rhetorical view, “learning to use genres requires much more than learning text types and forms; it requires learning the social contexts, actions, and goals that give genres their meaning” (Tardy, 2009, p.12)

“As new users of genres attempt to find the preferred ways of constructing genres and texts within a social setting, they often turn to previous texts that they have encountered” (Tardy, p. 14)
Types of Genre Knowledge

Assignment Sequences that engage students in the meaning making practices of a discipline are most effective when they enable students to develop process knowledge, form knowledge, rhetorical knowledge and Subject-matter knowledge (Tardy, p. 21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form Knowledge</th>
<th>Rhetorical Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refers to the structural elements of genre: discourse conventions; contents or structural moves common to the genre, modes and media through which the genre may be communicated; the textual instantiation.</td>
<td>Formal and process may overlap with rhetorical knowledge, which refers to the genres intended purposes, what the genre is intended to do, readers’ purposes and processes of reading the text, what they expect for and value regarding the text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Knowledge</th>
<th>Subject-Matter Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refers to all the procedural practices associated with the genre: processes to complete intended action, distribution of the genre to its audience, and reading practices of receivers of the genre.</td>
<td>Is often overlooked but important; in some genres, subject-matter knowledge is more important (e.g., a research article in bioengineering) than others (e.g., a resume).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tardy found that these dimensions of genre knowledge became increasingly integrated as students’ develop disciplinary expertise (22).

Creating Writing Assignment Sequences

1. Determine, as well as possible, the essential features and strategies of the writing task.

   **Generative Questions**: What is the purpose of the writing task? What kind of writing does the author need to produce? Have students written in that way before? How is it similar or different from what they have written before? What do students have to know/learn in order to complete the writing task? What do students need to know how to do in order to complete the writing task?

2. Invent gateway activities that enable students to engage in those strategies by encouraging inquiry and generating knowledge of discourse features (Hillocks 149).

   “Gateway activities” are activities that “involve students in appropriate strategies for inquiry and ways of generating discourse features” (149).

3. Develop sequences that are engaging, building, integrative, and lead to independence. These sequences should prepare students for and reinforce the gateway activities, which in turn, enable students to develop the full range of strategies and writing processes, required by the writing task.

   “Standard activities” would include teacher explanations, discussion of readings, reading “model” student essays, writing an essay, peer feedback, revising (149).

4. Put sequence into practice and re-evaluate the full sequence before any redesign as necessary.
## Writing Assignment Handouts

| Draws on **CURRENT COURSE OBJECTIVES** | Effective writing assignments draw upon course materials and practices learned in the course or previous courses.  
**Step One:** Don’t focus on the *writing*, but what you want students to *learn*.  
**Strategic Questions:** What do you want the assignment to accomplish? What do you expect students to *do* with writing:  
- display understanding?  
- produce a specific genre?  
- develop new knowledge?  
- some combination of goals? |
|---|---|
| Clearly defines **WRITING TASKS** | Effective writing assignments ask students to address or formulate disciplinary problems.  
**Strategic Question:** What specific cognitive and communicative processes do you want students engage in? How do those processes relate to the field? |
| **Explains RHETORICAL PURPOSE** | Effective writing assignments explain the rhetorical purpose of the writing tasks: Students need to know *why* they are writing: *To inform* readers? *To persuade*? *To entertain*?  
**Effective writing assignments also specify the method of development:** Are students to *summarize*, *describe*, *illustrate*, *demonstrate*, *define*, *compare*, *explore*, *discuss*, *explain*, *interpret*, *analyze*, *critique*, *argue*, or some combination? |
| Identifies a specific, authentic **AUDIENCE** | Effective writing assignments clearly identify an authentic audience for the writing.  
**Strategic Question:** Who, besides the professor, can be a real audience for the writing?  
Consider the following:  
- In-class peer review  
- Team A/Team B roles  
- Exchange with other classes |
| **Describes expected GENRE CONVENTIONS** | Effective writing assignments explain to students what conventions to follow.  
**Strategies:**  
1. Articulate expectations about length, manuscript format, documentation style, etc. |
2. Provide models for students to analyze so that they know what they are expected produce
3. Compare writing assignments with the readings of the course

**Effective writing assignments address students’ prior learning.**

**Strategic Question:** What do the students already know about the type of writing you are assigning? If your expectations and their experiences are out of synch, what instruction do you need to provide to bridge the gaps and help them to link their past writing experiences to your assignment?

**Articulates Evaluation Criteria**

**Effective writing assignments explain how student writing will be responded to and evaluated.**

**Strategies:**
1) offer multiple opportunities for response, both from peers and teacher;
2) offer opportunities for revision based upon feedback;
3) describe your assessment by designing a scoring rubric that explains the features of writing you value and prioritizes those features according to their order of importance.

**Reading**

“There is a growing consensus in our field that reading should be thought of as a constructive rather than as a receptive process: that "meaning" does not exist in a text but in readers and the representations they build. This constructive view of reading is being vigorously put forth, in different ways, by both literary theory and cognitive research. It is complemented by work in rhetoric which argues that reading is also a discourse act. That is, when readers construct meaning, they do so in the context of a discourse situation, which includes the writer of the original text, other readers, the rhetorical context for reading, and the history of the discourse. If reading really is this constructive, rhetorical process, it may both demand that we rethink how we teach college students to read texts and suggest useful parallels between the act of reading and the more intensively studied process of writing.” (Hass and Flower, 1988)
Reading Strategies

✓ **DO NOT** use reading quizzes; quizzes encourage surface reading for correct answers
✓ **DO NOT** lecture over readings; students will need help with difficult passages, but they must see that being an engaged reader is an expectation of their work outside of class (Flipped classes)

Instead,

- Model “rhetorical reading”; help students see how difficult texts (textbooks, articles, book chapters, etc.) are structured, how they address a specific audience, how the authors’ own viewpoint and assumptions are visible
- Describe your own reading strategies for different types of texts
- Show your own note taking strategies; students will benefit from seeing how you do it
- Talk with students about the meaning of the text, but also what the text does; emphasize how a reading works to help students understand what they need to do in their writing and then they also have a model for how to do it themselves
- Link reading and writing assignments:
  - Margin note taking
  - Reading logs/journals
  - Responses to teacher-posed questions
  - “Précis” assignment
  - Graphical Reading Maps

References & Resources


Wardle, Elizabeth. (2009). “‘Mutt Genres’ and the Goal of FYC: Can we help students write the genres of the university” *CCC 60.4* 765-789.

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