

SHORTER WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

For Shorter Courses

Bates

WRITING @ BATES

- ❑ WHAT ARE YOU TEACHING THIS FALL?
- ❑ WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT FOR WRITING?
- ❑ WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT IMPLEMENTING IT IN THE SHORTER COURSE FORMAT?

Assigning less total writing is ok.

- **MCLEOD, HORN, H., + HASWELL (2005)**
 - FREQUENT WRITING IS OFTEN USED TO KEEP STUDENTS ENGAGED
 - THIS IS LESS OF A CONCERN IN COMPRESSED COURSES, BECAUSE WHEN WE'RE SEEING OUR STUDENTS MORE FREQUENTLY THERE'S LESS OF A NEED TO KEEP THEM FOCUSED ON THE COURSE: THIS TENDS TO HAPPEN NATURALLY.
 - REDUCING THE OVERALL AMOUNT OF WRITING CAN ALSO MAKE THE PACE OF THE COURSE LESS BURDENSOME FOR STUDENTS.
- **ROSE (2007)**
 - COURSE OUTCOMES SHOULD GUIDE ALL WRITING THAT IS ASSIGNED
 - THE GOAL FOR COMPRESSED COURSES IS NOT TO "RUSH" STUDENTS THROUGH A CURRICULUM BUT TO GUIDE THEM TO A DESTINATION.

Break up large assignments into smaller ones.

- FLOYD (2016) AND ALBA (2016)
 - BREAKING UP LARGE, FORMAL ASSIGNMENTS INTO SMALLER, LESSER FORMAL ONES AS A CORE STRATEGY FOR TEACHING WRITING IN COMPRESSED COURSES.

BREAKING UP LARGE, FORMAL ASSIGNMENTS INTO SMALLER, LESS FORMAL ONES GIVES US MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE FORMATIVE FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN BUILDING UP TO A LARGE RESEARCH PAPER DUE AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER, STUDENTS MIGHT CREATE A NUMBER OF SHORT, INFORMAL PIECES OF WRITING THAT ALLOW THEM TO EXPLORE IDEAS IN A SCENARIO WHERE THE STAKES AREN'T AS HIGH, AND ALLOW YOU TO CHECK IN ON STUDENT'S THINKING ABOUT COURSE CONCEPTS AT A STAGE WHERE IT CAN STILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE FINAL PRODUCT.

Shift writing towards in-class activities.

- **MCLEOD, HORN, + HASWELL (2005)**
 - THE MORE FREQUENT CLASS MEETINGS OF COMPRESSED COURSES CREATE BETTER CONTINUITY FOR IN- CLASS WRITING TASKS (I.E., STUDENTS EASILY PICKED UP WHERE THEY HAD LEFT OFF IN THE PREVIOUS CLASS) AS WELL AS MORE COHESIVE COLLABORATIVE STUDENT GROUPS (STUDENTS GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER QUICKLY AND WELL BY SEEING EACH OTHER MORE FREQUENTLY).

THIS APPROACH ALLOWS YOU TO USE WRITING AS AN ACTIVE ACTIVITY TO BREAK UP THE LONGER CLASS PERIODS OF COMPRESSED COURSES!

The Leverage Principle (Bean 2013)

LARGE AMOUNT OF THINKING, **SMALL** AMOUNT OF WRITING.

- OPPOSITE OF USUAL PATTERN FOR COLLEGE WRITING
- TEACHES CONCISION
- FOSTERS CRITICAL THINKING, DEEP ENGAGEMENT WITH COURSE IDEAS, AND USE OF WRITING AS A TOOL FOR THINKING THINGS THROUGH
- EASIER AND FASTER TO GRADE!

An hourglass is being weighed on a sensitive balance, first when sand is dropping in a steady stream from the upper to lower part and then again when the upper part is empty. Are the two weights the same or not? Write an explanation supporting your answer to this question. Write to a fellow student who is arguing for what you think is the wrong answer.

Think of examples from your own personal experience to illustrate the uses of vector algebra. You might consider such experiences as swimming in a river with a steady current, walking across the deck of a moving boat, crossing the wake while water-skiing, cutting diagonally across a vacant lot while friends walk around the lot, or watching a car trying to beat a moving train to a railroad crossing. Use one or more of these experiences to explain to a friend what vector algebra is all about. Use both words and diagrams.

Explain to your mother why water stays in a pail when swung in a vertical circle around your head.

Read the accompanying handout on how historians evaluate the credibility and reliability of primary documents. Based on the criteria set forth in the handout, determine whether Pericles's Funeral Oration is/is not reliable evidence.

To what extent do the attached economic data support the hypothesis “Social service spending is inversely related to economic growth”? First, create a scattergram as a visual test of the hypothesis. Then formulate a verbal argument analyzing whether the data do or do not support the hypothesis.

Based on yesterday's discussion, our class hasn't resolved the question of _____. Several of my classmates argued that _____. I agree with them that _____. However, they are mistaken when they _____. In contrast, I argue that _____.

To solve the problem of homelessness in America, we must realize that not all homeless fit into the same category. In fact, we ought to specify X categories of homeless. First, [development]... Second, [development]... Third... Fourth...

*Look at this prehistoric cave painting
[attached reproduction of a photo].
Imagine that you are the Ice Age artist
who created the animal painting on
the cave wall. What could have
motivated you to create such a
painting?*

Write a short dialogue (two to three pages) between a neo-elitist power theorist and a pluralist. First take the role of the neo-elitist (be an intellectual son or daughter of Ganson) and explain to this poor, unenlightened pluralist the meaning and importance of the concepts of predecision politics and the mobilization of bias. Respond to this radical fluff in the role of a Yale pluralist. Continue the dialogue by alternating roles; be sure to respond in the role of one theorist to the arguments raised by the other.

- WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CORE IDEAS THAT STUDENTS EXPLORE IN YOUR COURSE, CLOSELY RELATED TO YOUR COURSE OUTCOMES?

- WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CORE IDEAS THAT STUDENTS EXPLORE IN YOUR COURSE, CLOSELY RELATED TO YOUR COURSE OUTCOMES?
- WHAT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS MIGHT ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO DEVELOP AND ARTICULATE THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THESE CONCEPTS, AND GIVE YOU THE CHANCE TO CHECK IN ON THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THEM?

Sequencing (Flower 1998, Lindemann 2001, Bean 2013)

- ASSIGNMENTS BUILD ON STUDENT SKILLS IN STAGES AS AN ASSIGNMENT UNFOLDS
- STUDENTS ARE SCAFFOLDED AS THEY PROGRESS FROM SIMPLE TO MORE DIFFICULT TASKS
- MANY MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON LOWER-STAKES WRITING
 - MORE CONNECTION WITH STUDENTS OVER THEIR IDEAS
 - GRADING ON FINAL PROJECTS IS MUCH FASTER

Ways of Sequencing

- **DRAFTING**
 - ZERO DRAFT, THESIS DRAFT, ORAL DRAFT, CONFERENCING DRAFT, REVISED DRAFT, EDITING DRAFT
- **CONSISTENT RHETORICAL TASK, INCREASING DIFFICULTY OF READINGS**
 - STUDENTS GET TO KNOW A GENRE WHILE MASTERING MORE COMPLEX READINGS
- **CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO INVESTIGATE GRADUALLY MORE COMPLEX SUBJECTS**
 - STUDENTS DEVELOP AN INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED VIEW OF A TOPIC
- **VARY THE AUDIENCE**
 - STUDENTS DEVELOP AWARENESS OF DISCIPLINARY MODES OF ARGUMENTATION AND WRITING
- **ALTER THE GENRE**
 - SIMPLER → MORE COMPLEX MODES OF DISCOURSE (E.G. FIELD DATA, SUMMARY, ARTICLE)
- **REFLECT ON LEARNING**
 - STUDENTS REVISIT TOPICS TO TALK ABOUT HOW THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF IDEAS HAS CHANGED

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- ❑ WHAT LARGE, HIGH STAKES ASSIGNMENTS ARE YOU DEEPLY INVESTED IN AS WAYS FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN-TO-WRITE?
- ❑ HOW CAN YOU BUILD UP TO THEM WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO WRITE-TO-LEARN?

THANK YOU! CONTACT US: WRITING@BATES.EDU

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