Teaching Research Writing

A Showcase of Mini-lessons and Activities from across the Curriculum

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Sarah Wittman, Management, School of Business

Ron Mahabir, Computational and Data Sciences, College of Science

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Thomas Polk, Acting Director, Writing across the Curriculum

Session Agenda

1. Opening reflection
2. WAC @ Mason
3. Overview of Faculty Learning Community on Research Writing
4. Breakout rooms: Reflections and Exhibits of Artifacts
   a. Annotating Model Student Papers
   b. Scaffolding the research process
5. Community reflection

Opening reflection

- How do you currently teach research writing?
- What are your primary goals and objectives as a research writing instructor?
- What are some of the challenges *you* face when *teaching* research writing?
- What are some of the challenges that *your students* face when *learning* research writing?
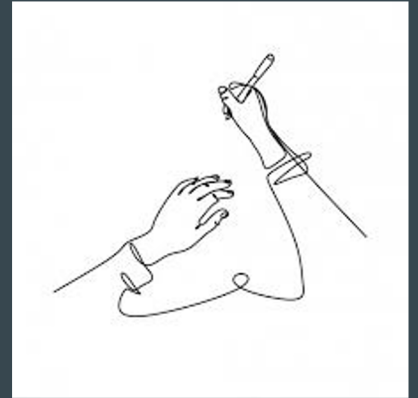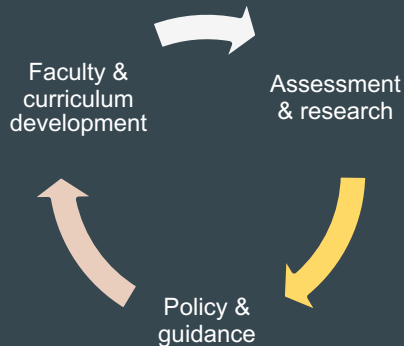
Please share one *of your answers in the chat.*

WAC @ Mason

Core Mission: fostering Mason's culture of writing

Core Values: embeddedness; lifelong learning; access & inclusion

Core Activities:

Faculty & curriculum development

Assessment & research

Policy & guidance

"[Because writing is] a matter of learning to participate in some historically situated human activity that requires some kind(s) of writing, **it cannot be learned apart** from the problems, the habits, the activities-- the subject matter--of some group that found the need to write in that way to solve a problem or carry on its activities."

-- Russell on embeddedness

Student experiences with writing at Mason

"To a degree, it's like flipping a coin. I think a lot of teachers look at good writing sort of based on their own writing, so I get a different impression from teacher to teacher."

"I'd like to be original, but I have no idea what my professors' ideas of originality are."

"It's just assumed you go in there [a WI course] already knowing how to write, so the professors don't really teach us what they're looking for."

Thaiss & Zawacki, *Engaged Writers & Dynamic Disciplines*

The 'transparency' of writing (development)

"Because apprentices in a discipline learn very gradually its written conventions as an active and integral part of their socialization in a community, the process of learning to write seems transparent."

-- Russell, *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History*

Because of the assumption of transparency, "student-writers often have to invent the voices that they have to respond to: these are the voices as institutionally acceptable content and wordings."

-- Lillis, *Student Writing: Access, Regulation, Desire*

How do we make our values and the values of our disciplines visible so that students don't have to *invent* them?

Making the invisible visible in Mason's WI research-writing courses

Learning Communities: Spring 2021

Teaching Research Writing: Building mini-lessons and activities to enhance your course's research writing goals   ⊖

This learning community is designed to help faculty think through the conventions of effective research and synthesis writing in their courses. Participants will first identify language moves in an exemplar student project from their research-intensive course and will then work backwards to build activities that target each of these moves. By the end of the community, participants will have a scaffolded research project ready to integrate into their courses.

The group will meet five times from 2pm-3:30pm on the following Mondays: February 8th, February 15th, February 22nd, March 1st, and March 8th. The FLC will be facilitated by Anna Habib, Associate Director of Composition for Multilingual Writers and Spring 2020 Teaching Excellence Award Winner.

Participants will receive a $500 stipend from the WAC program for their commitment to the learning community and their development of teaching materials that will be shared on the WAC website, the Stearns Center website, and/or at the Innovations of Teaching and Learning Conference in Fall 2021.

Interested in learning more? Contact Anna Habib at ahabib@gmu.edu

Interested in participating? Registration is now closed

WAC's Faculty Learning Community Goal

Teaching disciplinary expertise through explicit writing instruction
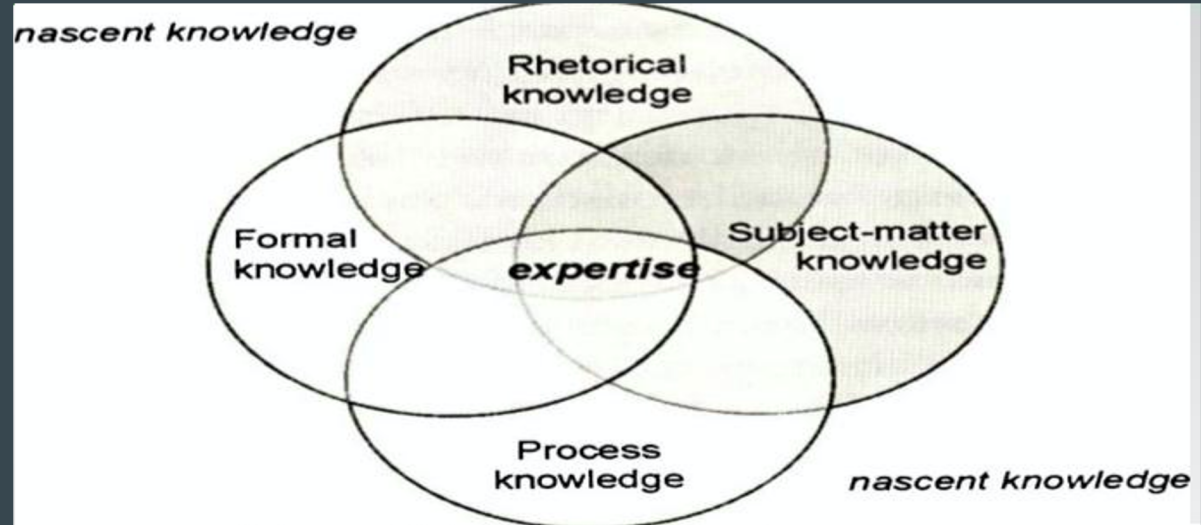

Tardy, C. (2009) *Building Genre Knowledge*

A showcase of mini-lessons and activities across the curriculum

Breakout Room 1 (20 minutes)	Breakout room 2 (20 minutes)
Annotations of exemplar student work	**Explicit scaffolding of research assignments**
1. Janet Ha, BIS, CHSS 2. Jennifer Ashley, Global Affairs, CHSS 3. Danielle Catona, Global & Community Health, College of Health and Human Services	1. Nathaniel Webb Smith, Economics, College of Humanities and Social Sciences 2. Maction Komwa, Geography and Geoinformation Science, College of Science 3. Sarah Wittman, Management, School of Business 4. Ron Mahabir, Computational and Data Science, College of Science

Closing reflection

- What are 1 or 2 approaches that you found compelling in the breakout sessions?
- How might some of these ideas help you address some of the challenges you identified earlier in your and/or your students experiences with research writing?
- What small change could you make in your course design to make research more visible to your students?
- What questions do you have for the larger group?

Please share one of your answers in the chat.
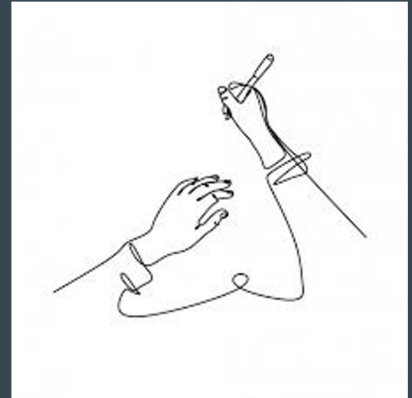
WAC Program: In the works ...

- New Learning Outcomes for WI Courses
  - Review process for WI courses and outcomes
  - Instructional guides for WI outcomes (including materials we reviewed today)
  - Written Communications outcomes for Mason Core / WE courses
- What is Mason's Core Writing Curriculum?
  - Analysis of data on student pathways for writing
  - Analysis of ~30 interviews with seniors about their experiences with writing @ Mason
- Ongoing Faculty Development: workshops, FLCs, online resources, consultations
  - Faculty writing community

Email us! wac@gmu.edu or tpolk2@gmu.edu

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