

Taking the Leap:

Implementing Writing Across the Curriculum

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Writing Intensive Course Requirements

A WI course is generally defined as a “course that has content as its primary focus but also reinforces writing skills in a substantial way to enhance learning” (from Indiana University of Pennsylvania).

The WAC Steering Committee at NECC has determined that the following WI requirements make sense for NECC:

- At least three writing activities per semester (exclusive of in-class quizzes and exams) totaling 16 - 20 pages
- 50% of required written work is formal, edited, proofread
- Student must receive timely and detailed critique including the ways the writing can be improved. Revision is integral to the formal writing assignments.
- Quality of student writing must be an important component in determining student’s course grade
- Courses will include some informal, ungraded writing (such as journals, freewriting, reading logs, questions, proposals, response papers . . .), in order to encourage regular practice with writing, to help students reflect on and synthesize course material, and to provide opportunities for students to discover promising ideas for formal papers.
- The course syllabus will explain the writing-intensive nature of the course and contain a schedule for writing assignments and revisions.

WI and Introduction to Anthropology

- Why WI?
 - To improve student writing
 - Courses were already heavy on writing assignments
 - “Conceptual” nature of anthropological material is best evaluated through written work (e.g. cultural constructedness of gender or racial categories)
 - Lower enrollment cap of 22 in WI courses
 - Smaller classes = better quality discussions and friendlier rapport, which contribute to an improved learning experience

WI and Introduction to Anthropology

- What changed?
 - Before
 - 3 or 4 short (2-3 page) papers, each on a different specific topic (approximately 1/3 of grade)
 - 4 exams with multiple choice and short answer questions (approximately 2/3 of grade)

WI and Introduction to Anthropology

- After:
 - 4 quizzes over vocabulary, names, etc. (20% of grade)
 - Weekly discussion board posts (*informal* writing) on Blackboard companion site (30% of grade)
 - 3 short (3-4 page) “thought” papers (*formal* writing), each on a different specific topic (30% of grade)
 - One longer (5-7 page) final paper (*formal* writing), which consists of a revision and expansion of one of the shorter papers (20% of grade)

WI and Introduction to Anthropology

How WI Improved My Course
The *New and Improved* Final Paper Assignment

Your final assignment will be a *research paper* in the form of a *revision and expansion* of one of your Thought Papers.

You will expand on your original paper by incorporating material from Chapter 16 of your textbook, *Culture Change and the Modern World*, as well as outside scholarly sources, to *discuss the ways in which the societies you've chosen have changed over time, and how they are situated in the modern, globalized world.*

WI and Introduction to Anthropology

Results: *What Has Worked and What Hasn't?*



Students in f2f classes are very resistant to doing assignments on Blackboard!

*Need to find a more effective approach to *informal* writing*

WI and Introduction to Anthropology



Assessment more heavily weighted on writing =
Improved ability to assess learning outcomes



Improvement in quality of student writing over the
course of the semester!



Revision, expansion, and research incorporated into
final assignment gives students a deeper, more
holistic, and global/historical understanding of
subject matter!

WI and Introduction to Anthropology

Thanks to WI changes, my course better prepares students to meet the Core Academic Skill: *Global Awareness!*

WI and Introduction to Entrepreneurship

- Course is already writing intensive
- Students write a business plan, generally 40-50 pages (group assignment)
- Instructor feedback on individual sections of the business plan, some shorter writing assignments, and the use of presentation software were added last semester to meet WI criteria

WI and Introduction to Entrepreneurship

- Before WI
 - Major focus on business plan, little on other information or other writing
- After WI
 - Students required to complete weekly case studies
 - Students required, as a group, to complete electronic and verbal presentations

WI and Introduction to Entrepreneurship

- After WI
 - Students expanded understanding of business principles, ethics, and the variations from business to business
 - Through less formal writing and discussion, students improved ability to work together and appreciate others' perspectives

WI and Introduction to Entrepreneurship

- After WI
 - The process of writing electronic presentations and completing oral presentations:
 - improved student understanding of the material
 - improved student ability to use this understanding to present information to the class and at the final presentation to a panel of judges



WI and Introduction to Entrepreneurship

Thanks to WI changes, my course better prepares students to meet the Core Academic Skills:
Communication and Information Literacy

Student Response

- “[A Writing Intensive course] has helped me to improve my writing skills as well as practice them.”
- “[The writing aspect] helped me to remember the content by writing and really thinking about it.”
- “Being in a WI course has improved my writing skills and also made longer papers less frustrating/intimidating for me.”
- “I think writing about something helps me learn. When you spend time researching, writing, editing, the information stays with me. I retain more.”
- “The more writing, the more research was necessary. I learned a lot through assignments in this class.”

Thank you

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Writing Across the Curriculum Committee

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