

## **That's WAC: Pedagogically Defining Writing Across the Curriculum**

McLeod, Susan. "The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum." A Guide to Composition Pedagogies. Ed. Gary Tate, Amy Ripper, and Kurt Schick. New York/Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

### **Overview**

- ❖ "Why can't you people teach these students how to write?" (McLeod 150)
- ❖ Writing to Learn *and* Writing to Communicate
- ❖ The Writing Center and the Faculty Workshop

### **Terms, Ideas, Themes, Scholars**

- ❖ WAC: "These programs vary widely in scope and method, but most attempt to accomplish essentially the same thing: to improve student learning and writing by encouraging faculty in all disciplines to use writing more often and more thoughtfully in their classrooms" (Young and Fulwiler 1).
- ❖ Writing to Learn: Writer based writing; "students use of informal, speculative, personal writing to make sense of the course material with the teacher acting as prompter and guide" (McLeod 152).
- ❖ Writing to Communicate: Reader based writing; "the writing is therefore revised, crafted, and polished" and uses the "formal language of a particular discourse community" (McLeod 153).
- ❖ Writing in the Disciplines (WID): The branch of WAC associated with Writing to Communicate.
- ❖ Process Approach: The view that writing is an ongoing conversation and not just the product of a single moment. This view entails "not only allowing revision of student work, but requiring it, often using peer groups in the classroom to respond to drafts" (McLeod 158).
- ❖ Genre Theory: Associated with WID; Berkenkotter and Huckin say, "[g]enres are the media through which scholars and scientists communicate with their peers. Genres are intimately linked to a discipline's methodology, and they package information in ways that conform to a discipline's norms, values, and ideology" (qtd in McLeod 156).
- ❖ Susan McLeod: the author of this chapter. McLeod has written extensively about the many facets of WAC. She is on both the WAC Clearinghouse Publications board and the Network Board of Consultants (International Network of WAC Programs).

### **Classroom Assignments**

- ❖ Write to Learn Assignment: The Journal  
Students in a literature course are to keep a reading log containing both a summary of what was read and their reactions to the reading. This initial interaction with the text is intended to inform the literary critique they will be assigned later.
- ❖ Write to Communicate Assignment: The Peer Review  
Students in the same course are to bring a draft of the assigned literary critique to class, wherein they will trade drafts with their peers. They will be given a specific set of questions to answer during their discussions.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

Anson, Chris M., ed. The WAC Casebook: Scenes for Faculty Reflection and Program Development. New York/Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.

The WAC Casebook is a compilation of case studies ranging from interesting to problematic. Originally intended for use in classes like English 400, The WAC Casebook, says Barbara Walvoord in the foreword, will prove helpful in many discussions, whether between faculty and graduate students or among faculty members of various disciplines. Discussion questions and suggestions for further reading are listed at the end of each case study; these are useful for facilitating discussion and referencing in crisis moments. Available at KSL.

Fulwiler, Toby, ed. The Journal Book. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987.

Toby Fulwiler both contributes to and edits the collection of essays found in The Journal Book, which documents and examines nearly every conceivable use of a journalistic writing style in the classroom at multiple age levels. Of particular interest for those exploring WAC is an essay by Pat D'Arcy entitled "Writing to Learn," in which D'Arcy makes the case for using both the journal and informal writing in general as a tool in the classroom. Although published in 1987, this book would be helpful for one looking for ways to integrate journal writing in her classroom. Available at KSL.

Hilgers, Thomas L. and Joy Marsela. Making Your Writing Program Work: A Guide to Good Practices. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1992.

This is the How-To guide for creating a writing program. It does not service WAC programs specifically, but it does make reference to them in its discussion of possibilities. I found this book most helpful in better understanding what Sages is and how it might have come to be (see gray box on pages 269-70). "Indeed, it is not fidelity to the model [one of two described as succeeding one another, of which Sages is the latter] but provision of services to students that drives writing program development" (270).

Maimon, Elaine P., et al. Writing in the Arts and Sciences. Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1981.

This is a textbook, to be used as "an introduction to academic writing, reading, and studying." It reveals its WAC roots by dividing itself into two sections: "Writing to Learn" and "Learning to Write." Each section includes both questions and exercises reinforcing its subject matter. It is an older book, and some of the citation information may need updated, but there are no bad pictures to date it, and there are plenty of helpful diagrams and figures to actually illustrate what it is the student is being asked to do.

McLeod, Susan H., Eric Miraglia, Margot Soven, Christopher Thaiss, eds. WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001.

Some of the most prominent minds of the WAC movement come together to discuss WAC's origins, its development, and its future, which they agree exists. Elaine Maimon, in the foreword, says another component of the book is to clear up discrepancies between what WAC means and what people have taken it to mean over the years. Essays cover

such topics in relation to WAC as technology, service learning, ESL students, and writing centers. This book is useful for documenting the changes that have and have not taken place as WAC has grown older.

Walvoord, Barbara E. Fassler. Helping Students Write Well: A Guide for Teachers in All Disciplines. New York: MLA, 1986.

In the first chapter of Helping Students Write Well, Barbara Walvoord refers to the text as a handbook; so it is intended to be, and so it is. Divided into two broad sections (“Coaching the Writing Process” and “Responding to the Student Writer”), the text covers a wide range of situations arising both within writing and in interacting with students. The first chapter tips Walvoord’s hand as a proponent of WAC pedagogy, in that she encourages teachers who have little time to teach writing to try to do something. It seems a helpful text for professors outside of English to use in incorporating writing into their courses.

Young, Art and Toby Fulwiler, eds. Writing Across the Disciplines: Research Into Practice. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook, 1986.

Writing Across the Disciplines defines, insofar as is possible, the WAC movement, documents the process and results of implementing WAC at Michigan Technical University, and offers up “Problems and Perspectives” encountered or gained during the experience. The book is a comprehensive look at WAC as it stood in 1986 (or, presumably, just before). Although it is now more than two decades old, I suspect the process of implementation remains largely the same; therefore, this account remains a valuable learning tool. Available at KSL.

Zinsser, William. Writing to Learn. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

“I saw that ‘writing across the curriculum’ wasn’t just a method of getting students to write who were afraid of writing. It was also a method of getting students to learn who were afraid of learning” (ix). So says William Zinsser in Writing to Learn, which is as much a case for the idea itself as it is Zinsser’s log of his own journey to the conclusion that writing and learning are inescapably linked. Chapter 2, “Writing Across the Curriculum,” shares the story of one college’s move to this pedagogy, as well as Zinsser’s views of why WAC is important. Zinsser both argues for and exemplifies Writing to Learn as he looks at various ways writing is used by specific professors and disciplines. While it seems a good read, it may not prove as handy a reference tool as other texts on this list. Available at KSL.

### **Of Interest on the Web**

- ❖ Susan McLeod’s homepage: <http://www.writing.ucsb.edu/faculty/mcleod.htm>  
Susan McLeod’s online CV:  
<http://www.writing.ucsb.edu/faculty/mcleod/documents/mcleodCV.html>
- ❖ SAGES homepage: <http://www.case.edu/sages/>
- ❖ The WAC Clearinghouse (as mentioned in McLeod’s chapter): <http://wac.colostate.edu/>.  
This is *the* website for information about WAC, and it is the official website of the International Network of Writing Across the Curriculum Programs. It includes several full-text versions of “Landmark Publications in Writing Studies.”