

# Working with Student Writers at San José State University

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Writing Across the Curriculum Program

[www.sjsu.edu/wac](http://www.sjsu.edu/wac)

# Tell Us a Bit About Yourself

So we know who we are.

# Resources for Faculty

The good stuff first. So you can do all the cool things we're gonna talk about today.

# Writing Across the Curriculum Program

- This presentation is available at:
  - [www.sjsu.edu/wac](http://www.sjsu.edu/wac)
- Faculty development opportunities:
  - Workshops
  - Research and Resource Projects
  - Calls for Proposals
- Two excellent, downloadable resources:
  - Designing Effective Writing Assignments and Assignment Sequences
    - <http://www.sjsu.edu/wac/pages/seminars-and-workshops/workshops-f16/handouts-and-notes/cook/cook-writing-assignments/index.html>
  - Providing Feedback on Student Writing
    - <http://www.sjsu.edu/wac/pages/seminars-and-workshops/workshops-f16/handouts-and-notes/cook/index.html>

# Bad News

Uh oh...

# There is No Writing Pill

- No grammar shot.
- And writers seem to forget much of what they've learned – much of what they might be good at – when faced with new and challenging writing tasks.
  - Especially when they move from high school, more “school-focused” forms of writing, to college-level, more professional forms of writing in their disciplines.



# Why Do They Forget?

## Transfer of Writing Skills

- Writers need cues and reminders to activate previous writing skills and apply them to new contexts.
- And every new context requires some new skills, too.
- So no writer will ever come to your class fully prepared and ready to go.
  - Ever.
  - Never.
- They will never “take care of all that” in another class before they get to you.

# So Good Luck

And welcome to SJSU!

# Not Really

There's a lot we can do to help our students develop as writers.

# Talk About the Ways We Write in Our Disciplines as Unique Genres

- With unique rules and expectations.
- Here is a handy, customizable guide you can use to teach students about your discipline's genres.

### Genre Analysis

Genre analysis focuses on how new knowledge is made and shared in a field, and how writers participate in their disciplinary discussions as professionals and/or academics. It includes considering the processes and strategies for making new knowledge in a discipline and the processes and strategies for sharing that knowledge with others.

#### *Process for Analyzing a Genre*

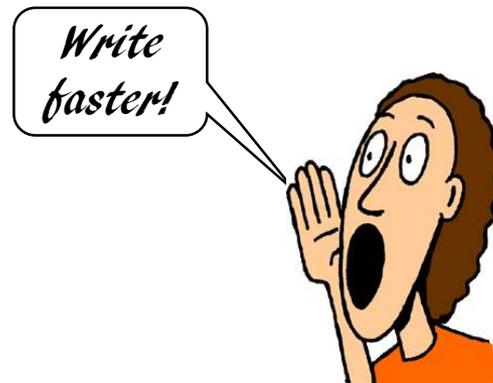
1. Collect samples that represent a genre. These samples should include professional and student versions of the genre.
  - Questions to consider when collecting samples for analysis: What kinds of “texts” – articles, reviews, essays, bibliographies, commentaries, podcasts, websites, etc. – do people in this field produce?
2. Analyze the samples and identify substantive and stylistic features that are shared among them.
  - Questions to consider about substantive features (content): How do people do research in this field? What kinds of research designs do people in this field use? What kinds of things do they study? How do they study these things? What kinds of “data” do they collect? What counts as “good” data or ideas in this field? What doesn’t really count as usable data in this field? What kinds of arguments do they make with their data? How do they make them?
  - Questions to consider about stylistic features (organization and style): How do people in this field write them? How do they make arguments? How do they contextualize their work within the field? How do they organize their documents? How do they write them? What is the appropriate tone? Language use and style? Length? Format? Citation system?
3. Talk to writers who produce texts in these genres and find out how they go about their work.
  - Questions to consider when talking to writers about how they work: How do writers tend to do research in this field? What are the typical methods / procedures for coming up with new ideas and/or generating and collecting usable data? How do writers tend to produce texts in this genre? What are the typical processes? How do they begin? Do they write alone or with others? How do they structure / schedule / organized their working together and/or alone? What are the typical phases of the process?
4. Formulate the organizing principles of the genre. Once you are all done, you can write up a set of rules for a genre, specifying the substantive and stylistic features that define the genre, as well as the processes for creating and sharing new knowledge in the genre. Some examples:
  - “If you want to write a research report in Sociology, here’s what you do…”
  - “If you want to write a literature review in Engineering, here’s what you do…”
  - “If you want to write a personal essay in a Stretch English course, here’s what you do…”
  - “If you want to write a research proposal in Education, here’s what you do…”

#### *A Couple of Deep Thoughts*

- Genres are typical ways of doing things with texts in certain situations. Writers in similar situations (recurring situations) make similar rhetorical choices (rhetorical actions) which readers come to expect (typified). That’s a genre. And we can distill the basic rules of genres using Genre Analysis.
- Genres change and evolve over time. The “rules” of a genre are always loose (the rules are not absolute), flexible (the rules can be bent, though usually not broken completely), and ever changing (they change over time). But you can see basic patterns.
- Genres both enable and constrain. They enable us to communicate in different disciplines because they set up a common set of expectations between readers and writers. You know what to expect so you can learn the expectations as a reader and a writer of a genre. They constrain because they encourage us to meet those expectations.

# Think of Teaching and Mentoring Writing as Coaching

- Students learn how to write in new genres *in process* – while they are doing it.
- Just like a coach, we can't just show film and put them in the game and expect them to succeed.
- Nor can we just run drills (grammar drills!) and put them in the game and expect them to succeed.
- But we can – just like a coach – break down the process and engage with our student writers as they write real documents for real audiences.



# Practical Things That Seem to Be Helpful

Which is kinda like good news.

# Give Students Samples and Examples

- And methods for thinking about them that help writers see the expectations of the genre.
- Use the Genre Analysis guide, customized to your particular genre (like lab report, dissertation, or proposal, for example).
- An Idea: Collect and share your students' work from previous semesters, both good and bad examples. (I like to share B-/C+ examples – it drives my students nuts.)

# Give Students Clear Expectations for Written Assignments, Projects, and Articles

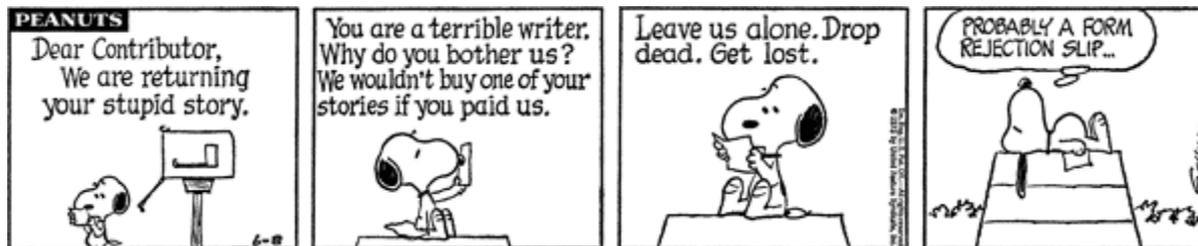
- Give them the usual stuff about length, format, audience, purpose, sources, research, etc.
- But also give them, and talk about, genre expectations, using the vocabulary and language in the Genre Analysis guides.
  - Both the substantive and stylistic features of the genre.
  - How people in your discipline go about making new knowledge and sharing it with varied audiences.
  - And what the expectations are for each particular genre.

# Give Students The Chance to Write – And Have Their Writing Responded to – As a Recursive, Iterative Process

- Break assignments and projects down into parts (abstracts, introductions, methods, results, analysis, discussion, implications, etc.) and phases (invention, organization, drafting, polishing).
- Give writers opportunities to get feedback throughout the process.
  - From us instructors and their peers.
  - And what I like to think of as “Super Peers” – like embedded writing tutors or writing center tutors.

# Why?

- The most productive writers:
  - Regularly share drafts and partial drafts with teachers and peers.
  - Understand that writing is an iterative, recursive process. It is not a one-shot process, and it is not linear.
  - Receive feedback designed to help them make progress from where they are now. Not feedback designed to inform them how far they are from acceptable.



# So What Should We Do in Our Teaching and Advising?

A few things.

# Give Students Samples and Examples

- From our own students.
- From our discipline and our own writing.
- And discuss the samples with students. Discuss what works in the sample, what doesn't work, and how it could be improved.
- Don't just pass out a good sample and say, "Write like that!"
  - That's why mediocre samples are also good.

# Discuss and Articulate the Expectations of the Genres

- Using the language in the Genre Analysis guide.
- Talk about both substantive and stylistic features.
  - How do people do research in this field? What kinds of research designs do people in this field use? What kinds of things do they study? How do they study these things? What kinds of “data” do they collect? What counts as “good” data or ideas in this field? What doesn’t really count as usable data in this field? What kinds of arguments do they make with their data? How do they make them?
  - How do people in this field write them? How do they make arguments? How do they contextualize their work within the field? How do they organize their documents? How do they write them? What is the appropriate tone? Language use and style? Length? Format? Citation system?
- And the processes people in your field use to produce texts.
  - How do writers tend to do research in this field? What are the typical methods / procedures for coming up with new ideas and/or generating and collecting usable data? How do writers tend to produce texts in this genre? What are the typical processes? How do they begin? Do they write alone or with others? How do they structure / schedule / organized their working together and/or alone? What are the typical phases of the process?

# Coach Our Writers Through the Process

- Break up assignments and projects into parts and engage with our writers early and often. Don't just assign a project and collect it ten weeks (or four months) later.
- Give content and organization feedback first.
- Save correctness feedback for later drafts.
- Set lofty goals that they will have to achieve to pass the class or have you sign off on their dissertations, but work ***with them*** to get there.
  - Give developmental feedback based on where they are at and how they can make progress.



# Learn More Through Writing Across the Curriculum Seminars

- We offer a variety of one-day workshops and extended, paid seminars every semester.
- And faculty can propose workshops, seminars, and research projects to help us improve writing instruction at all levels, in all disciplines, all across campus.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM  
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

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## Seminars and Workshops -- Spring 2018

*Paid seminars meet once a week (for 1 hour and 15 minutes) for four or five weeks. Work outside seminar meetings is usually 1-2 hours per week. Unpaid 1-day workshops meet for 1 hour and 15 minutes (and, obviously, involve no extra work).*

Please sign up using the link below.

**Sign Up Link:** <https://qoo.dl/forms/NJRR3atD64ufyKuA2>

Available All Semester Long  
**The WriteSquad: eCampus Writing Instructor Helpdesk**  
With Maria Judnick, English Department and University Writing Center

The GeekSquad is great and all but this semester you can work with SJSU's "WriteSquad" (eCampus Writing Instructor Helpdesk). In one-on-one sessions, Maria Judnick can troubleshoot many of your writing classroom problems with Google applications, Canvas questions, or other instructional technology. So whether you're looking to set up an assignment/course on Canvas, hoping for new ideas for in-class work, or wishing you could grade more efficiently, set up an appointment with Maria today  
at: [maria.judnick@sjsu.edu](mailto:maria.judnick@sjsu.edu).

Begins Week of February 19, Ends Week of March 19  
**Annotated Bibliography: Addressing Challenges of Writing about Professional Sources**  
With Alesya Petty, Health Professions and English Department

The Annotated Bibliography assignment is often undervalued as a tool that can help students critically read, summarize, and evaluate academic sources. Join a conversation about the challenges of mastering professional academic prose and about the strategies for developing useful practices for evaluating sources in preparation for research. Share your own effective methods and learn from others about their successful teaching practices. Everyone will benefit from gaining more insights into the classroom-tested approaches that can enhance students' academic skills. By the end of this 4-week seminar, participants will create an annotated bibliography assignment that will help students become more efficient readers and proficient writers in their courses.

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BACK to Spring 2017 Seminars and Workshops  
Seminars and Workshops -- Spring 2018

### What We Talk About When We Talk About Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum

With Ryan Skinnell, English Department

Teaching writing is an increasingly important responsibility for faculty across the disciplines. Even in classes where it isn't the main task, faculty are still asked to teach writing, to help students practice writing, and to advance students' abilities to write meaningfully. This five-week, reading-intensive seminar introduces participants to what writing studies specialists know about the best practices for teaching writing across the curriculum. Participants will study research on writing pedagogy, discuss our own writing processes and teaching practices, develop strategies for incorporating meaningful writing tasks into various courses, and rethink some common beliefs about teaching writing that may actually undermine the goal of helping students become better writers.

Seminar participants will be paid \$500.

### Reimagining Writing Assignments: A Series of Hands-On Workshops

With Sarah Prasad, English Department

Many instructors want to try out different writing assignments but few have the time and energy to take on new technology. In this series of workshops, Sarah Prasad will teach you four newish technologies and give you some advice and best practices for them, but most of the time will be spent learning how to use the technologies and practicing teaching them. We will look at: blogs, websites, memes, and TED Talks. The main goals are to wrangle with the technologies, to ask lots of questions, and to leave with something you can implement into your curriculum. Bring your bravest mindset and your laptop.

**Workshop Dates and Times:**  
Monday, February 12: 10:30AM-11:45AM (Topic: Blogs)  
Tuesday, February 27: 12:00PM-1:15PM (Topic: Websites)  
Monday, March 12: 9:00AM-10:15AM (Topic: Memes)  
Thursday, April 5: 9:00AM-10:15AM (Topic: TED Talks)

### Writing About Current Societal Events and Challenges

With Kendall Barrett Sooter, Communication Studies Department

With all that is going on in our current social and political climate, have you wondered how the students are responding? This one-day workshop will help you identify some potential writing activities that can provide students with an outlet for current events and attitudes towards societal occurrences and attitudes. We will cover ways to design assignments, in-class activities, and canvas-based discussions to create a space for student voices and opinions in a beneficial way. We will work together to create one full-length assignment that reflects the ideas we discuss. Participants should feel free to bring in any information or knowledge regarding current events that you may like to work on for your

# Encourage Our Writers to Make Use of All Our Writing Support Resources on Campus

- Meetings with you for content and organization feedback.
- Meetings with peers for content, organization, and correctness feedback.
- Meetings with Writing Center tutors and other “Super Peers” for content, organization, and correctness feedback.

# Thank You!

Questions, comments, discussion?