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Greetings to the Faculty!

Thank you for helping to make Communication Across the Curriculum a signature program at UNCG. Achieving this goal has required the active participation of every department and every academic program on campus; I’ve appreciated that participation, and I am proud of it. With publication of the third edition of the Guide for Faculty, I’m asking every faculty member to stay committed and every academic department to stay active.

The benefits of Communication Across the Curriculum stand visibly before us:

- The program moves training and practice in oral and written performance to the center — not off to the side — of the educational experience.
- It helps to ensure that each of our graduates will leave us with the communication skills that should mark an educated person.
- It creates the opportunity for intense, interactive learning experiences, in small-class settings, for students in every discipline.
- For faculty, it is a powerful engine of continuous improvement in teaching.
- For students, it is a powerful engine of intellectual, social, and personal growth.

Thanks for making these things happen. Thanks for making Communication Across the Curriculum a success at UNCG!

Cordially,

David H. Perrin
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Preface

Welcome to the third edition of Communication Across the UNCG Curriculum: a Guide for Faculty. Its purpose is to offer information, suggestions, and resources to help UNCG faculty understand and participate in our campus-wide CAC program.

The Director of the program, Walter Beale, begins by describing its aims and rationale. A short section on procedures then presents guidelines and sample proposals for Speaking-Intensive and Writing-Intensive courses.

Separate sections on Speaking Across the Curriculum and Writing Across the Curriculum offer advice on developing Speaking-Intensive and Writing-Intensive Courses. These sections describe the strategies that experienced faculty members have employed to teach these courses successfully.

The directors of the University Speaking Center and the University Writing Center outline the services they offer students and faculty in support of CAC. Finally, proposal forms for Writing-Intensive and Speaking-Intensive courses can be found at the back of the booklet.

The success of Communication Across the Curriculum at UNCG results from the dedication and imagination of a large number of faculty teaching SI and WI courses. We offer special thanks to the colleagues who have shared their outstanding ideas and experiences in these pages. We hope this booklet will inspire and enable other faculty to join in this success.

The CAC Steering Committee
Walter Beale, Chair
Kimberly Cuny
Joyce Ferguson
Sara Littlejohn
Jennifer Whitaker
Sarah Wilde
and
Melissa J. Richard, Editor
What are We Doing? And Why?  
An Introduction to CAC at UNCG

Walter H. Beale, Director

I’m proud that UNCG’s Communication Across the Curriculum program has been a strong success since its inception in 2002. We have developed a full array of Speaking-Intensive and Writing-Intensive courses across campus— in general education core and in every academic major. We’ve also developed a strong program of faculty development and faculty support, with hundreds of faculty participating in workshops and program activities every year, and state-of-the-art speaking and writing centers, offering a broad array of student and faculty services. More broadly, as a campus we have embraced writing and speaking as tools of teaching and learning, and communication as a theme of student and faculty development. In order to maintain this success, we need to hold sharply in view the values and goals of the program.

We know that speaking and writing skills are important, and we know that they need to be learned in application and in context, as well as through formal study. That’s the concrete rationale of required writing-intensive and speaking-intensive courses. But there are broader values and benefits as well: First of all, writing-intensive and speaking-intensive methods are powerful instigators of student engagement—in fact, for general purposes they are the most accessible and effective agents of active learning obtainable.

Not incidentally, therefore, they are great tools of effective teaching. Second, writing-intensive and speaking-intensive approaches are powerful generators of critical thinking, a process that begins and ends with the application of reason and imagination to specific problems and contexts, and in which the processes of discovery and communication are intertwined. Third, they are powerful engines of intellectual and social growth, linked indisputably to development of leadership skills; to the ability to work in teams and institutional contexts; to the kinds of poise, maturity, and intellectual and social responsiveness we want to see in a college graduate.

For all of these reasons, Communication Across the Curriculum goes beyond course development. It encompasses a continuous program of faculty development, embodied primarily in our annual series of faculty forums and workshops as well as in our consultant services to students, housed principally in the University Writing Center and University Speaking Center.
The purpose of this booklet is to make every faculty member at UNCG aware of Communication Across the Curriculum, and also to provide specific guidance in developing courses and making use of program resources. Your suggestions and criticisms, as well as your participation, are very much appreciated. Please visit our web site (www.uncg.edu/cac) and please feel free to call or email me or any member of the CAC Steering Committee.

Walter Beale is Professor of English and Director of the Communication Across the Curriculum program.
WAC and SAC Procedures
The General Education Curriculum now requires that all UNCG students take two writing-intensive courses and two speaking-intensive courses, one of each being in the student’s major. The College of Arts and Sciences requires an additional two writing-intensive courses. (See the Undergraduate Bulletin for additional details.)

In order for students to receive WI or SI credit for a course, two things must happen in advance:

- The course must be approved as a WI or SI course by the appropriate GEC committee.
- The course must be listed with a WI or SI attribute in the semester’s Schedule of Courses.

A course can carry both WI and SI credit, if it has been approved by both committees and been listed in the schedule with both markers.

The approval process is not difficult. Following the writing-intensive or speaking-intensive guidelines (printed on pages 9 and 15), the faculty member who plans to teach the course submits a proposal to either the GEC Writing-Intensive Committee or the GEC Speaking-Intensive Committee, outlining how he or she will incorporate writing or oral communication instruction and practice into the course. (Proposal forms appear on pages 74-75 and 76-77 of this booklet or can be downloaded from www.uncg.edu/cac.)

Both committees offer two options: individualized approval for an instructor who is the only one teaching the course or who wishes to teach it differently from others who might be approved to offer WI or SI credit; or blanket approval, which allows anyone in the department to teach the course for WI or SI credit, as long as they agree to follow the approved proposal.

Once the appropriate committee approves WI or SI status for the course, the approval process does not have to be repeated in subsequent semesters. The approved instructors may offer the course for WI or SI credit whenever they, in consultation with their department heads, choose to do so. However, the WI or SI credit is never automatically assigned to the course or any section of it. In the case of multi-section courses, departments may want to offer some sections as WI or SI and others not. Or an instructor may choose to teach the course with the WI or SI designation some semesters but not others. Therefore, rather than assuming that the course, once approved, will always be WI or SI, the department head, in submitting the course schedule for a given semester, must specifically identify the sections that are to be WI or SI with the appropriate marker.
Guidelines for a Writing-Intensive Course

The following Guidelines provide a broad definition of the WI marker courses that will be offered to satisfy the General Education Core Requirement of two writing-intensive courses, at least one of which must be in the major. The purpose of these Guidelines is to ensure that these courses meet a stated learning goal of the General Education Program: “ability to write . . . clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication to one’s audience.”

1. A writing-intensive course has a special responsibility for improving students’ ability to write in the context of learning about a particular discipline. It treats writing as a means of learning as well as a skill to be learned. A writing-intensive course does not necessarily require lengthy research papers. Intensive refers to the integration of writing into the course rather than to the sheer amount of writing involved.

2. The course makes substantial and continuous use of writing as a way of engaging students with important questions and problems of a particular subject. Students may become familiar with the material of the course through a variety of writing assignments throughout the semester, including both formal (graded) and informal (ungraded) work. The work required should be selected to be appropriate to the subject being taught.

3. One important aim of a writing-intensive course is to show students how to use drafts of a paper to shape its form and content, incorporating comments and ideas from readers. Every writing-intensive course must include guided revision as a requirement. A proposed course in which students will have an "opportunity" to revise papers, or in which papers "may be resubmitted" for a higher grade, will not meet this requirement. Rather, each proposed course must include at least one substantive assignment in which all students submit at least one draft for comments from the instructor and then revise the draft to take account of those comments.

4. The instructor not only assigns and evaluates writing but also provides instruction and coaching as students write. In particular, he or she comments on the students’ control over the subject matter, as well as on clarity, organization, correctness, and effectiveness of expression. Grades for writing assignments reflect an assessment of both quality and improvement in students’ writing.

5. The aim of the course is to use writing as a tool for learning about the subject matter and to introduce ways of writing within the discipline, rather than to provide formal instruction in basic writing skills. Students can be referred to the Writing Center for consultation as they revise drafts of a paper.

6. Because of the personal attention and guidance that students will receive, class size should not exceed 25 unless additional resources (teaching assistants, release from other duties, etc.) are made available to the instructor.
Sample Writing-Intensive Proposal

GER 308: Topics in Central European Studies Pre-1900

A. This class uses two types of writing assignments: 2-3 page reaction papers and a 6-8 page research paper. Students will write bi-weekly reaction papers (a total of 6) in which they communicate their first impression of a text that will be discussed in class. These papers will be part of class discussion and will receive written feedback from me. Students will write two longer research papers, which will be subject to a revision. The first paper should be around 6 pages long. For the revision, I may ask students to expand the paper up to 8 pages. The second research paper is about 8 pages, and I may ask students to expand this paper up to 10 pages.

B. Because of the reaction papers, students will have ongoing writing assignments. This continuous writing process is necessary for helping the students build linguistic structures for writing complex research papers. Some students will also have to read their reaction papers at the beginning of class; therefore, the reaction papers will provide material for class discussion. The reaction paper is also a valuable tool that gives me immediate feedback on how students respond to the class material as well as how they improve their linguistic abilities. The research papers are designed to introduce students to a rigorous analysis of cultural artifacts and will enable them to express themselves on a more sophisticated, scholarly level. The students will have to revise their papers based on my comments. These revisions will not simply consist of correcting grammatically errors, but will further encourage students to expand their stylistic repertoire as well as extend their research.

C. The reaction papers will give me a preliminary impression of the students’ intellectual and linguistic skills. Based on these reaction papers, I will recommend that students review certain grammatical topics in order to cultivate the linguistic skills necessary to write their research papers. The research papers will be subject to revision. My feedback will consist of comments and symbols that do not simply provide the correct language, but ask that students reflect on their mistakes. I will also suggest stylistic improvements and further sources or scholarly articles that should be incorporated in the essay. I will also discuss the essays with each student in a one-on-one conference.

D. I will focus on the improvement that the students make in their essay writing. For addressing this, the grade for an essay consists of 40% for the first version and of 60% for the revised version.

The first research paper is worth 20% of the final grade, while the second paper is worth 25% of the final grade. The structure tries to emphasize the progress students make from their first to their second paper.
Sample Writing-Intensive Proposal

GEO 306: World Economic Geography

A. Three assignments will provide an exercise in applying critical thinking skills to a practical problem in economic geography. Each assignment progressively builds the students’ ability to examine and write about a current issue in a structured way using a geographic perspective. Exercises are based in part on several suggested in Sharma, M. and G. Elbow (2000) Using Internet Primary Sources to Teach Critical Thinking Skills in Geography.

Students will first be introduced to key questions used to critically examine an issue (Supporting arguments for positions? Source of evidence? Issue presented accurately / completely? Assumptions made? Whose viewpoint? Other approaches to issue? What and why do I believe?), assigned to read a website on thinking critically about internet resources (www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/webeval), and then directed to pick a current article on an aspect of globalization (the first three class readings) which they will critically examine in 3-5 pages.

For the second project, students will be directed to choose one of several categories from global trends in trade, environment, and development. They will be given associated websites that provide data and background information. Students will then consult data resources and perform one writing activity in their selected global trends area.

International Trade Example
Go to the website for the Industry Trade Data and Analysis, Office of Trade and Industry Information (http://ita.doc.gov/td/industry/otea/OTII/OTII-index.html). Consult data resources from “TradeStats Express” such as the chart on “Top U.S. Trade Partners.” Do one of the following exercises using data in this website:

1. With which countries has U.S. trade experienced the greatest increase? Decrease? Write a speech for Congress on the “State of the Nation’s Trade.”
2. Write discussion points for a trade conference with major trading partners. Include topics such as trade balances, tariffs, access to markets, and important domestic political constituencies.
3. Select two contrasting world regions, extract countries from the chart presented, associate them with top commodities involved with U.S. trade and account for the differences between the regions.
4. Create a flow chart showing the top 20 export markets and associated products for the state of North Carolina and write a letter to the governor addressing the importance of trade in these products to the state’s economy.
The third project will ask students to apply critical thinking skills (Project 1) by examining the problem set up in Project 2 and writing a paper of 8-10 pages that incorporates at least one general aspect of the topic covered in the textbook.

B. Each project has a separate due date for the first draft and for the final draft, based on revisions suggested by the instructor as returned to the student in the interim. Students should see improvement in their ability to think critically, apply geographic perspective, and write in a clear, mechanically correct and persuasive manner.

C. In addition to providing regular written feedback, students will be encouraged to make at least one appointment with the instructor in order to discuss their project. Classroom discussion will also elicit examples of student topics, hypotheses, research aids, and approaches to argumentation.

D. Assignments will be assessed based on: correct spelling and grammar; proper application of critical thinking steps taught prior to Project 1; use of a geographic perspective; appropriate use of internet and other research resources; and correct use of elements required in each project.

E. The Writing Center will be strongly recommended as an additional aid for these assignments. Time can also be set aside for students to work in groups based on similar topic areas to discuss approaches, problems, and suggest solutions while the instructor travels to each group.
Sample Writing-Intensive Proposal

PSY 311: Research Methods

A. Through a variety of writing assignments, students will experience science in many ways. In weekly lab journals, students will record the events that take place in the laboratory and “think about science.” Students will also summarize and annotate published research related to the labs students will be conducting and will write four or five formal laboratory reports. The structure of the assignments should lead to improvement of critical thinking and scientific evaluation skills.

The lab journals provide a means for students to record their lab experience and help with organization and observation skills. Journals also give students the space to brainstorm and “think about science.” Students will be asked to use journals as a means to think about some topic for 20 minutes. Students then note their reflections and make an outline of what they thought about during the activity. This outline guides students through the writing of a complete journal entry. Examples of topics include considering whether psychology is a science and thinking of an alternative explanation for a particular result from a journal article. In addition to helping students improve in organization and critical thinking skills, the journal assignments will serve as a link between the lecture and the lab.

The summaries and annotations allow students to practice understanding and articulating the scientific work of others. The summaries and annotations follow a very specific format intended to help students focus on the major parts of published work. After reading an article, students will be asked to summarize the article by identifying the theory guiding the research, the research question, the hypothesis, the method, the main result, and the author’s conclusion. In the past, this type of assignment has helped students as they begin reading primary sources.

An important aspect of scientific research is the communication of research findings to the scientific community. The laboratory reports will provide a means for students to begin participating in this process. Formal laboratory reports give students the opportunity to integrate their research in their writing and develop the logic of the research problem, state that problem, describe the method for approaching the problem, describe the results, draw conclusions based on the students’ own findings, and join these conclusions with previous work done on the problem.

B. The final grade will be calculated from the combination of laboratory and lecture assignments. The assignments described in this proposal will count for approximately 50% of the students’ final grades. The expectations for each assignment will be thoroughly explained to students, who will be evaluated based on performance in relation to these expectations. The basis for assessing the quality of various assignments includes these factors: thoroughness...
and clarity of explanations; correctness, quality, and interpretation of evidence; organization of material; clarity of presentation; integration of parts of writing into a whole; technical proficiency; demonstration of knowledge of the subject; appropriate use of technical terminology; correct use of conventions of the discipline; and adherence to conventions of grammar, spelling, and style. Each student's improvement is reflected in the final grade as a result of linked assignments—some assignments are linked in such a way that as mastery of the writing and thinking develops, the grade will improve.

C. Instruction and coaching will focus on the laboratory reports. Students will participate in prewriting activities to prepare for writing the reports. One prewriting activity is participation in discussions that result in the outline of the laboratory report. Some of the reports are linked so that the theory and related literature are the same, which allows students to incorporate earlier suggestions for revision into the later reports. This link also allows students to experience how a theory can lead to different research questions requiring different experimental designs. Students will submit a draft and receive comments on drafts of at least one laboratory proposal as it is being developed. Students will also have the opportunity to receive feedback on a “final” version by an instructor and fellow student similar to the review process for submitting a paper for publication. Finally, during the first part of the semester, students will complete “parts” of laboratory reports (introduction only or method section only) and will later complete the entire report. Dividing the reports in this manner will make the task more manageable and focus efforts on the specific report section. This will also provide “coaching” in the same spirit as the revisions.

E. The enrollment in the lab sections is 20. The instructors are graduate assistants, but the lecture instructors (faculty from the Psychology department) will be available to help the graduate assistants when needed.
Guidelines for a Speaking-Intensive Course

The following Guidelines provide a broad definition of the SI marker that will be offered to satisfy the General Education Core Requirement. Effective Fall 2002, students will be required to complete two speaking-intensive courses, one of which must be a requirement of the major, regardless of the prefix. The purpose of the Guidelines is to ensure that these courses will help each student develop the “ability to...speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication to one’s audience.”

1. A speaking-intensive course has two goals:
   • to enhance subject area learning through active engagement in oral communication
   • to improve a student’s ability in oral communication.

2. A speaking-intensive course treats speaking as a means of learning via one of a variety of oral contexts, including interpersonal communication, small group communication, and public communication (presentational speaking). The choice of oral context should be appropriate to the learning outcomes of the specific discipline.

3. A speaking-intensive course recognizes process and product by including both formal (graded) and informal (ungraded) assignments/learning activities.

4. A speaking-intensive course includes:
   • instructing students in effective oral communication
   • giving students informed feedback
   • providing opportunities for students to apply what they have learned to subsequent oral communication activities.

5. Assessment activities should be appropriate to each assignment and could include a variety of methods and products, emphasizing both quality and development of students’ skills. Students should be informed of the assessment criteria.

6. Assessment of oral communication should be sensitive to the effects of relevant physical, linguistic, and psychological disabilities on the assessment of competence (e.g., with appropriate aids in signal reception, a person with a hearing impairment can be a competent communication partner).

7. Students will receive personal attention and guidance in a Speaking-Intensive course; therefore, class size should be limited to 25 students unless additional resources (teaching assistants, release from other duties, etc.) are made available to the instructor.
Sample Speaking-Intensive Proposal

HDF 482: Administration of Dependent Care Programs

A. Students will complete two types of formal presentations: a synthesis of content from the previous class and a presentation of a portfolio item developed for the course. For the synthesis presentation, individual students will be responsible for summarizing and reflecting upon the material discussed in the previous class. In the portfolio presentation, students will formally present a project they have completed for the course. Each student will be responsible for completing these presentations twice during the semester.

Informal opportunities to process course content and practice oral communication skills will include class exercises, debates, case studies, and role-play situations. Ethical and practical issues commonly associated with administration of child development programs will provide ample opportunity for debate and discussion. Role-playing opportunities will include mock interviews with potential employees, conferences with disgruntled employees, and meetings with parents. Course content, application, and oral communication will be addressed throughout the course through informal exercises.

B. Tools provided by the Speaking Center will be used to address oral competency. The Oral Communication Evaluation form will be used to provide feedback for both types of formal presentations and half of the student’s grade for each assignment will be based on evaluation of the student’s oral communication skills. Peer feedback will be solicited for the portfolio presentations; students will use the Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation Feedback Evaluation form to provide feedback to their peers.

The Post-Meeting Open-Ended Reaction form and Plus/Delta debriefing techniques will be used to assess informal communication activities. Participation in the exercises/activities will be the basis for each student’s participation grade for the day.

C. During an orientation at the beginning of class, students will receive a copy of the “Eight Public Speaking Competencies and Criteria for Assessment” handout. These competencies/criteria will be thoroughly reviewed and expectations for the presentation assignments and for informal oral communication exercises will be discussed. The instructor will model various communication strategies throughout class meetings and will dedicate time within class to discuss strategies that she is using. Students will have the opportunity to practice their portfolio presentation within small groups prior to formal delivery. This will provide informal opportunities for peers to ask questions and provide feedback on the presentation. Following each of the synthesis presentations and portfolio presentations, students will receive a copy of a completed UNCG Oral Communication Evaluation form.
with extensive comments from the instructor on both the content and the communication competencies exhibited during their presentation. In addition, peer feedback will be provided on the portfolio presentation using the Competent Speaker Speech Evaluation form. Because students will complete each formal presentation assignment twice, they will have opportunities to incorporate feedback from their first presentation into their second presentation. Following informal communication exercises, class time will be set aside to debrief the exercise and discuss effective/ineffective communication strategies used during the exercise.

D. Enrollment for this class has historically been quite small (4-12 students) so it is anticipated that the class size will be well within the guidelines for speaking-intensive courses. The course enrollment is officially capped at 25 students.
Sample Speaking-Intensive Proposal

SES 486: Seminar and Practicum

A. SES 486 is the capstone course in Deaf Education for the Interpreter Training and Community-Based Services concentrations. The oral communication assignments scaffold these concentrations in that students are given the opportunity to articulate their knowledge of various topics in the field which they have learned throughout the program in the following sequence:

- Mock Interviews: Students are given 33 frequently asked questions related to topics in Deafness and their profession. After preparing their written responses, each student participates in a mock interview in which they articulate their responses.

- Small Group Orientation Meeting: Students develop a 30-minute orientation meeting for personnel they may be working with in the future, such as a group of teachers who will have a deaf child in their class. Members of the class assume the roles of the participants and as laypersons; they ask many of the same questions as above, giving the presenter an opportunity to improve their former responses.

- Formal Presentation (Workshop on Working with Deaf Individuals): In this activity, students will be working as a group, with each member responsible for presenting or answering questions about a particular topic. Topics are assigned based on students’ need for further practice in articulating an issue based on the previous two speaking opportunities. In the past, these formal presentations have been made to student teachers in the School of Education, private and public school teachers, library staff at UNCG and in Greensboro, and to employees of local agencies like Urban Ministries.

B. Oral communication competency will be assessed using a rubric completed by the instructor, fellow students, and the presenters themselves. Feedback is given after each presentation and then the presenter writes a reflection paper about the experience, including their areas of strength and their plan of action to address areas of weakness. Their speaking competency will constitute 25% of their grade.

C. Before the first speaking opportunity, the mock interviews, the instructor will discuss content, delivery, and evaluation components. After each speaking opportunity, students receive constructive feedback and have the opportunity to improve in the next activity, where the areas needing improvement are targeted.

D. Class sizes does not exceed 12 students.
Sample Speaking-Intensive Proposal

SOC 324: Criminology

A. This course will include informal, semi-formal, and formal speaking assignments.

*Informal:* The students will engage in weekly discussions in small groups and in pairs, and the topics will center on assigned readings or films. Other informal strategies will include a “getting to know you” exercise on the first day of class. Students will introduce themselves and tell the class something that will help their classmates remember their names. These questions will be incorporated into roll call for the rest of the semester.

*Semi-Formal:* There will be one debate during the semester on gun control, in which students will be assigned to argue a particular aspect of the pro or con side of the issue. Students will be required to support their argument with some empirical evidence. In addition to this debate, there will be a panel-style oral evaluation of a topical book, during which each group must synthesize chapters, link them back to the overall premise of the book, then critique the key ideas in the chapter.

*Formal:* In lieu of a final exam, formal presentations will be required at the end of the semester. Students will be assigned group presentation topics. Each group will be required to give a dry run of the presentation in the professor’s office before the official class presentation, which will give the group the opportunity to receive feedback that they can then incorporate into the final run. The final classroom presentation will include a peer and faculty evaluation.

Through these speaking assignments, students will be actively involved in their own educational process, which facilitates a deeper understanding of the course material. Students will be held accountable for knowing the course material, since they will be required to speak to the class about the subject matter. Also, students’ oral competency will be improved by the evaluation and feedback they receive throughout the semester.

B. Oral communication competency will be evaluated by:

1. Clear articulation of the topic, reading, or issue in question;
2. Organization of the presentations, which includes: development of an argument or theme, staying on topic, providing introductory remarks and conclusions;
3. Use of props to assist the presentations, such as handouts and visual aides;
4. The extent to which presenters appear coordinated, practiced, and professional;
5. The ability to field questions from the audience; and
6. Use of language, tone, eye contact, and body language during presentation.

Gwen Hunnicut,
Department of Sociology
C. Early in the semester, the professor will provide information on effective speaking techniques. The techniques will cover small group, informal, and formal speaking strategies. Students will be expected to incorporate these techniques into their classroom speaking. The grading rubric will be made available to students so that they are aware of the evaluation criteria.

Students will receive feedback at several points throughout the semester. Every two weeks the students will be given written comments regarding their progress. It is expected that students will incorporate this feedback into subsequent speaking opportunities and demonstrate progressive improvement throughout the semester.
Writing Across the Curriculum
Writing Across the Curriculum at UNCG

As a pedagogical and curricular movement, Writing Across the Curriculum offers two important benefits to UNCG students:

1. the benefit of writing instruction and practice extended beyond the composition classroom and enriched by its disciplinary context and 

2. the benefit of enhanced learning, brought about through the exploratory powers of writing.

Recognizing that good writing cannot be separated from good thinking or from the writer’s command of subject matter, instructors in writing-intensive courses help students improve their writing by engaging them with the content of their courses. The teaching of writing becomes inextricably linked with the teaching of subject matter. The course becomes “writing intensive” in the sense that writing about the course material intensifies the students’ learning.

Although WAC programs take very different forms in different universities, they stem from the recognition that written language can serve as a means for both stimulating and communicating thought. These dual functions of writing—exploration and transfer, the cognitive and the rhetorical—have led us at UNCG to design writing-intensive courses that combine two broad categories of assignments: informal and formal.

Informal Writing

The kind of writing activities usually described as “informal” function primarily to promote thoughtful exploration of the subject matter of a course. The theory is simple: writing does not have to be transmitted to an audience (or judged as a finished product) to have some value. Rather, the act of committing words to paper carries intrinsic benefit to the writer as a way of generating, exploring, and clarifying thought. Used as a tool of learning, informal writing can yield two concrete benefits: it engages students with the subject, thus promoting active learning and lively interchange of ideas; it also prepares them to write more thoughtful formal papers by helping them to gain control and understanding of the subject matter. Because informal writing requires very little response time from faculty—indeed, it is usually ungraded—it can be used to enhance learning in large as well as small classes.

Informal writing may be done either outside of class or in class—for example, for five minutes at the beginning of class to focus attention and encourage students to articulate their thoughts on a particular question, or for five minutes at the end to allow them to summarize or ask questions about the day’s material. It may be conducted as an on-line discussion in which students read and comment on each other’s posted responses to a question or a text. It may be fact-based or creative,
reflective or process-oriented, impromptu or carefully sequenced. But it is not just busy work; the tasks should be problem-based and thought provoking, directly connected to the methods of inquiry and the building of knowledge in a particular course. Here are a few examples of the kind of informal writing tasks that can promote critical thinking in many different kinds of courses:

- **Microtheme**: An “essay” short enough to fit on one side of a 5 x 8 note card.

- **Reading Journals**: May be open-ended responses to an assigned text, or answers to particular or generic questions posed by the instructor about the text.

- **Double-Entry Notebook**: A reading journal divided in half. On one side students either summarize an assigned reading or select a striking passage from it; on the other side, they respond to the material in some way.

- **Believing and doubting**: Students are given a controversial thesis and told to brainstorm a list of reasons in support of and objections to it.

- **Process Writing**: Students describe the process they used to solve a problem or carry out a task related to the course work.

- **Multiple Choosing**: Students devise a multiple choice question for an upcoming test and explain why one answer is better than the others.

- **Posing Problems**: Students compose a word problem from data supplied by the instructor.

- **Data Analysis**: Students are given raw data from which they draw inferences in writing a brief argument or analysis.

- **Teach a Buddy**: Students write an explanation for an absent classmate of some task or concept taught in the class.

- **Role Playing**: Posing as a political or historical figure or a literary character, students write an imaginary letter or diary entry reflecting on an event or decision in that person’s life. Or they write an imaginary dialogue between two figures.

- **Scenarios**: Students decide on a course of action in response to a realistic situation described by the instructor. (Or they construct scenarios that pose problems for other students to solve.)
Responding to Informal Writing

Most instructors collect, read, and comment briefly on some informal writing assignments to gauge their students’ processing of the course material and to give them credit for attempting it. In other cases, they may select students to read aloud or summarize what they have written as a way of initiating class discussion. Or students may exchange and discuss some of their informal writing in small groups and report a consensus to the class.

Whatever the instructor does collect and read should be considered a record of the students’ engagement with and exploration of the subject matter, perhaps an indication of their willingness to take intellectual risks, but not a test of either writing skills or knowledge. To “grade” informal writing as if it were a finished product intended for an audience is to compromise its value as a tool of learning and discovery.

Some may worry that students will not be motivated to take informal writing assignments seriously unless they are graded; however, it is possible to hold students accountable for the work simply by giving them credit for doing it, and perhaps devising extra rewards for those who do it with particular enthusiasm and effort. And it is possible, even without grades, to make the informal writing a valuable and integral part of the learning in the course by, for example, using it to initiate discussion or to help students prepare for exams.

Using Informal Writing to Prepare for Formal Writing

Some instructors like to design a sequence of informal writing tasks that feed directly into the production of a formal writing project. For example, as a series of exploratory steps leading to a formal argument essay, students might be asked to do the following:

1. Write a paragraph identifying the issue you will address and why it is controversial.

2. Explain your personal interest or stake in the issue and the particular contribution you want your paper to make to the larger debate.

3. Write a profile of your audience, including the viewpoints you would anticipate having to confront.

4. (After doing research), brainstorm as many arguments as you can on both sides of the issue, and then identify the common ground between them.

Informal writing exercises of this kind force students to spend more time on the
invention or “pre-writing” stage of a formal writing project than most would do otherwise. Instead of waiting until the last hectic days before a paper is due to start thinking about their topic, they have spent a few weeks doing informal writing that allows them to consider their subject from different perspectives, probe it at some depth through focused questions, familiarize themselves with it, and either pursue or retreat from various avenues of inquiry. As a result, they should be in a position to turn in a thoughtful “first draft.”

In classes where students need to organize their material and learn to write according to the conventions of a particular discipline, informal writing can provide practice with discrete writing tasks. For example, in a laboratory course where students will be preparing research reports, they may need practice in recording observations, describing procedures, or developing hypotheses.

Other informal writing tasks designed to prepare students for using certain conventions might include the following:

- preparing an annotated bibliography using MLA or APA citations;
- writing practice paragraphs that quote or paraphrase and then comment on an excerpt from a text;
- summarizing and comparing two historians’ methodology;
- writing an abstract, or better yet analyzing the structure of an article that is a model for a paper they will be writing, such as a comparative book review or a scientific research report.

**Formal Writing**

As valuable as informal writing can be to stimulate thought, it is only half the equation in a writing-intensive course. Students also need the experience of putting together more extended, substantive pieces of writing that go through a process of planning and multiple revisions before they are graded as performances. These “formal” writing assignments are intended not just to explore ideas but to communicate those ideas to an audience; they are evaluated on the basis of their effectiveness in conveying information, presenting an argument, or accomplishing some other assigned task. The role of the instructor is not only to grade the finished product, but to design the assignments and then provide guidance along the way so that the act of taking the assignment from beginning to end is itself a learning experience for students.

**Formal Writing in the Disciplines**

Exactly what form a formal writing assignment might take depends on what kind of writing is appropriate, common, and useful within a particular discipline or
discourse community. A key premise underlying Writing Across the Curriculum is that the teachers and practitioners within a given discipline are best suited, by experience and knowledge, to introduce students to the kind of writing that they read and do.

Writing the particular discourse of a discipline—whether it is a comparative book review in a history course, a case study in management, a research proposal in psychology, or a patient assessment in nursing—teaches students the thought processes as well as the writing conventions used in the field. Coaching students through the production of these formal pieces of writing becomes a means of initiating them into the modes of learning and communicating common within an academic or professional field.

More specifically, an individual instructor can tailor formal assignments to the learning goals of a particular course. “Successful assignments,” says WAC pioneer Art Young of Clemson University, “are embedded in the unique goals of each course and are integral to the building of knowledge in that course.” Hence in my introduction to poetry course, where a primary goal is to teach close reading of poetry, I might assign a series of explications and analyses of individual poems, while a colleague teaching a chronological survey of the literature of a period may want students to write about the influence of one poet’s work on another’s. Meanwhile, the same students may be writing laboratory research reports in a biology class and reviewing plays in a drama appreciation class. In each case, the writing assignments are tied to particular learning goals and particular ways of writing and thinking in a discipline.

Designing Assignments

Because students are asked to produce different kinds and styles of writing in different courses, it is essential for instructors to provide clear instructions. Probably the most important feature of any assignment is that it be designed to help the student identify a particular problem to address or an action to perform, rather than simply a topic to cover. Examples of such “problems” or “actions” might include the following:

- review options and make recommendations in a case study
- devise a marketing strategy
- recommend a particular book for inclusion in a course
- investigate and take a position on a controversy touched on in class
- summarize and choose among different interpretations of a text or a phenomenon
- propose a research project to a funding agency
The possibilities are as diverse as our professional and disciplinary modes of inquiry. Indeed, the best way to link writing to learning— to make a writing assignment an integral and useful means of teaching a subject— is to devise assignments that engage students in precisely those modes of inquiry that are essential to our disciplines.

The most helpful instructions for formal papers of any type include the following features:

- **a rhetorical context**, including a situation that calls for a written response, a purpose for the writing to serve, and an audience that could benefit from reading it.

- **specific guidelines about format**: approximate length, structure, component parts, appropriate style, and other conventions associated with the genre.

- **advice about the process** or sequence of steps that you would take, as an experienced writer of this kind of prose.

- **evaluation criteria**

Here, by way of example, is an assignment created by Dennis Leyden for his Economics 201 class. It comes with specific information about the case in question and a particularly helpful webtext that takes students through the thought processes and writing conventions appropriate for the discipline:

Write a report to Congress on your understanding of the nature of the electricity crisis in California and your recommendation concerning price controls. Your reply should be based on your analysis of the California Electricity Crisis Case. The paper should be typed and should have the structure described in the webtext Thinking Critically in Economics. Be especially sure to use headings!

Your grade will be determined as follows:

- **Structure**: 30%
  How well does the structure of your paper fit the structure described in the webtext Thinking Critically in Economics?

- **Economic Argument**: 30%
  Does your paper demonstrate an ability to integrate economic arguments and concepts from the textbook and classroom into your paper?

- **Prose**: 20%
  Is the quality of your prose clear and appropriate for a professional audience?

- **Presentation**: 20%
  Is your paper neat, typed, and otherwise presented in a professional manner?
The Term Paper

Although it is just one kind of formal assignment, the traditional term or “research paper” endures as a common writing project in many classes—especially in the liberal arts, where professional, task-oriented assignments do not come naturally. The term paper can be a valuable apprentice act of scholarship if students see it as an opportunity to investigate an issue or question that interests them and to argue a position or present information that is of some real value to an audience. If what they are asked to do instead is to choose from a list of topics, gather information (which their instructor-audience already knows) and demonstrate that they have used the requisite number of sources, then the term paper can become an artificial, alienating exercise—a dumping ground for vaguely-related facts collected through rather pointless research, and an invitation for papers that are uninspired at best, plagiarized at worst.

As academicians, we know that the scholarly writing we are asking students to emulate comes out of a dialogic process of responding to recent developments or controversies in a field—arguing a position or filling a gap in the knowledge of a real audience of one’s peers. It’s the need to convince or inform that real audience that gives our academic writing a sense of purpose. We can duplicate that kind of writing situation for our students by helping them to formulate research topics in response to gaps, questions, or issues that arise in lectures, readings, or class discussions and by encouraging them to write to an audience of their peers—their classmates. They can read and learn from each other’s work by responding to classmates’ drafts in class, posting their papers on line, or making oral presentations to the class, or creating an in-class publication.

Intervening in the Writing Process

The design and instructions for a formal assignment can go a long way toward teaching students to produce meaningful, effective writing. In addition, faculty can play a valuable role in coaching them toward success as writers by intervening as they work through the writing process. Many instructors establish “checkpoints” during the production of a formal assignment: deadlines for turning in such in-process steps as a prospectus, annotated bibliography, or outline. Others hold quick mid-point conferences with students, in person or by email, to discuss progress on the assignment or provide class time for groups of students to talk about their work. Such interventions not only give instructors an opportunity to help students make mid-course corrections, but also make retail-style plagiarism much less likely. However, the most significant role an instructor can play is that of coach—not editor, but knowledgeable, friendly reader willing to offer suggestions for improving a draft of a paper.
Responding to Student Writing

According to the GEC Guidelines, a writing-intensive course at UNCG includes “at least one substantive assignment in which all students submit at least one draft for comments from the instructor and then revise the draft to take account of those comments.” The purpose of this feature is not to punish students (or their instructors!) but to teach them what every experienced writer knows, namely that writing is a process. Not only does it involve considerable effort in the prewriting and planning stages – effort that instructors can generate through a sequence of informal assignments and checkpoints – but it also involves considerable rethinking, reshaping, and rewriting along the way in order to become as clear, coherent, and effective as possible.

Most experienced writers trust knowledgeable but detached readers (friends, colleagues, editors, and so on) to help them identify places in their writing that need revision. Surely our students, who are just learning to write in a variety of academic genres and disciplines, can benefit from the same kind of guidance, and more, from us. To grade them on a paper that has not yet gone through the revision process is like judging a musician on the basis of his practice tapes.

Responding to drafts in helpful ways does take time, which is one reason that the enrollment in writing-intensive courses is normally capped at 25, but it can result in final products that are much improved. Some instructors find that they get higher quality drafts, requiring less response time, through a variety of strategies that place responsibility for improvement on the students themselves. For example, a “checklist” developed by the class or provided by the instructor can help students to take account of their own strengths and weaknesses. Both the Writing Center and peer review groups in class allow writers to try out an initial draft of a paper on other readers. Either way, students can then make adjustments to their “rough drafts” and give the instructor more readable intermediate or late-stage drafts – what I call “first submissions.”

Providing Constructive Coaching

Studies of revision show that while skilled writers usually see it as an opportunity to reformulate their ideas and construct new meaning, novice or unskilled writers rarely go beyond editing and proofreading unless they get direct advice on more substantive revision (Sommers, 1980; Faigley & Witte, 1981; MacAllister, 1982).

To revise in a meaningful way, students need guidance, and we all know that providing that guidance takes time. The question is, what can we do to ensure that it is time well spent? What kind of responses to drafts are most likely to make the revision process a learning experience for the student and result in genuine improvement in the paper?
Fortunately for both the students and us, the time-consuming process of marking every error and criticizing every misstatement is not the answer. A considerable body of research on revision has demonstrated that if students feel overwhelmed by too many comments, they simply give up, turning in revisions that are perfunctory at best (Harris, 1979; Lamberg, 1980; Dohrer, 1991). Those who “revise” by simply typing our corrections into their original papers learn very little—except perhaps that they shouldn’t put much effort into the first draft, since a dedicated faculty member will take over their bad writing and turn it into something passable. The feedback that we provide on works-in-progress needs to be selective rather than exhaustive.

It also needs to be instructional and advisory rather than primarily evaluative. It’s best to withhold judgment of the paper until the final version is turned in. At the draft stage, what the writer needs is a detached and helpful reader who can identify places that need clarification and suggest alternative approaches. There will be plenty of time to act as judge” when the final version of the paper is submitted.

Finally, our responses should be encouraging. When responding to drafts, we need to concentrate on a paper’s potential for success. Comments that focus entirely on a paper’s flaws are not only dispiriting but unhelpful. Writers need to know what they are doing well—what to keep and how to build on it—as well as where they need to improve.

Hierarchy of Responses

In deciding how to respond productively to students’ writing, it can be useful to recognize three levels or categories of writing issues, based roughly on the sequence in which they should be addressed in the revision process.

1. Global or “first response” features involve questions like these about the paper as a whole:
   - the focus and purpose (Does the paper have and stay centered on a recognizable goal? Is it consistent with the assignment?)
   - its organization (As a reader, can you follow a logical progression of thought from beginning to end? Does the overall structure make sense?)
   - its ideas (Does it make a valid argument? Does it show a reasonable grasp of the subject matter?)

What we hope, of course, is that our early intervention techniques—including the design of the original assignment and a series of pre-writing activities—will have helped the student deal successfully with these fundamental issues before writing...
the draft. If not, it may be necessary to discuss the paper in a conference rather than trying to explain the difficulties in a written comment. The paper will require major rethinking, and that needs to take place before we call attention to other problems with the writing.

2. **Local** or “mid-level” concerns, which pertain to the parts of the whole, might include such things as
   - wording and clarity of the thesis
   - effectiveness of the introduction and conclusion
   - support and clarity of individual points
   - paragraph-level organization and coherence
   - proper use of sources
   - adherence to conventions associated with the genre or assignment
   - use of a “voice” that is both authentic and appropriate for the assignment

If the paper is relatively successful on the “global” level, then these “local” issues can be fruitfully addressed in brief but specific written comments. Marginal notes can call for evidence to support a particular claim, point out a confusing contradiction in one paragraph, or suggest the need for transitions to clarify the relationship between two ideas. The key is to respond as a coach, not a grader, helping the writer see what an audience needs by way of clarification. It’s still important to be selective, though, and to point out some places where the writing is effective as well as where it is defective.

3. **Surface** or “end-draft” features usually focus on such issues as:
   - stylistic concerns
   - word choice
   - sentence-level clarity
   - adherence to conventions of standard edited English: grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, etc.
   - the mechanics of documenting sources

These problems are easy to notice and tempting to identify on a first reading, but they sometimes camouflage the more fundamental issues that need to be addressed first. (It is simply not efficient to spend time correcting and rewriting sentences that may, in fact, need to be deleted from a new draft.) This is not to say that the “packaging” of a piece of writing—its sentence level clarity, its style, its
use of accepted grammatical forms — is unimportant. However, excessive com-
ments or corrections of surface features can be counter productive because they
direct students’ attention and energy away from more substantive improvements
(Dohrer 1991). Research indicates that overall improvement in revised papers oc-
curs when the instructors’ comments have focused on “content” rather than
“surface” issues (Olson and Raffeld, 1987).

Does this mean we should simply ignore or permit, for example, errors in gram-
mar and usage? Not by any means. It does mean that we shouldn’t line edit our
students’ drafts for them. They should be held responsible for producing their
own clear, readable prose. That’s a large part of what makes writing effective.

The best way to help them write more effectively is to encourage more fundamen-
tal revisions (at the global and local levels) first. Many sentence-level problems are
actually caused by the cognitive difficulty of coming to terms with challenging
subject matter. Students who can write a quite satisfactory and almost error-free
personal narrative seem to regress when they try to explain Marx’s economic theo-
ries. If we can help them get control of the subject matter and give them an oppor-
tunity to revise, some of their sentence-level errors will resolve themselves, espe-
ially if we make it clear that as a last, significant step in the revision process, they
must be sure their sentences are clearly written and free of the kinds of errors that
will prevent the reader (i.e., the grader) from concentrating on their ideas. Stu-
dents should know that we will not accept “revised” papers that are riddled with
disturbing errors and unclear sentences. They can get assistance and instruction
in identifying and correcting their errors in the Writing Center.

**End Comments**

Some instructors refrain almost entirely from writing marginal comments on the
theory that they promote piecemeal revision. They rely instead on end comments,
possibly in the form of a letter to the writer, outlining quite clearly their reaction as
a reader to the draft as a whole and offering their advice for improving it.
Whether or not combined with marginal notes, end comments are important as a
way of summarizing both the strengths of a draft and the areas that need improve-
ment. If the original instructions for the assignment included criteria for evalua-
tion, the end comments can indicate which of those criteria were successfully met
and which were not. Anne Herrington (1997) lists the following traits as character-
istic of effective end comments:

1. They are addressed to the writer as a person and are responsive to
   the concerns and questions the writer has identified in a “cover
   sheet” with the draft.
2. They are “constructive in tone and substance,” pointing to “what is
done well.”
3. They make specific suggestions about what the writer should do
   next.
4. They “resist taking over the project” (pp. 73-4).
It’s easy, when we think about students’ writing, to dwell on the problems and difficulties of designing effective assignments and maintaining our patience in the face of discouraging results. And yes, the results are discouraging at times. But the truth is that reading students’ writing can also allow us to witness some remarkable minds at work, wrestling with important issues and finding a way to express themselves clearly, sometimes even brilliantly. If we were to abandon the effort—to stop assigning papers because they are so much trouble—neither we nor our students would experience the satisfaction that can occur when a writer has both a reason and a desire to communicate something he knows and cares about to an audience he believes is paying attention.

Learning to write is a long developmental process, and not all students will make impressive progress in one course or one semester—though some will. As members of this faculty we are engaged in a long-term effort to contribute what we can, in a given course, to each student’s growth.

References


A Teaching Strategy

Using Peer Review in Nursing

Mona M. Shattell, School of Nursing

Nursing Care of Individuals with Psychosocial Problems (NUR 310) is a 5-credit, service-learning designated, required course for upper-division nursing majors that is taught over 7 1/2 weeks (half of a semester). Students spend 6 hours a week in class and 12 hours a week in community sites. Students learn about mental illness and nursing care of individuals who have mental health or psychosocial problems. Through students’ service to persons immediately affected by mental illness and coursework (classroom lecture/discussion, readings, case studies, written reflections, scholarly paper), students increase their understanding of the challenges faced by those with mental illness as well as the community organizations who serve them.

This course is team-taught by me, Cheryl McNeill, and Lillie Granger and is designated as writing intensive. We include both informal and formal writing assignments that students complete throughout the semester. Informal writing includes brief in-class writing (e.g., “what does mental health mean to you?”) and more time-intensive, written reflections about clinical experiences (e.g., “What are your thoughts and feelings regarding this experience?,” and “What personal and/or societal myths have you encountered during this experience?”) that students complete outside of structured class and clinical time.

Formal writing includes a scholarly paper on a topic related to the course, chosen by each student and approved by one of the course instructors. Possible topics are behaviors, interventions, or social justice issues related to mental health such as stigma of mental illness, the nurse-patient relationship, anxiety, or parasuicidal behavior/self-injury/cutting. Once students choose a topic, they are required to compare and contrast how their topic is viewed from the Western medicine/biological model (US dominant culture) and from that of another culture or philosophy (e.g., Native American, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Latin America, Pagan, Ecopsychology, etc.). Students describe how the two cultures or philosophies differ related to causes, manifestations, and treatments.

An adequate and appropriate database search is required for the formal scholarly paper. Two strategies that assist students are an in-class teaching/learning ses-
sion with a librarian and written guidelines on how to review a research article. At the beginning of each semester, the School of Nursing’s library liaison (Lea Leininger) meets with the class (during class time) in a computer lab (preferably at the main library) to review scientific database searches. To help students read and synthesize the research articles that they locate through their searches, we have developed an “Article Summary Form” that guides students through each research article. This form requires students to describe the problem/significance, purpose, hypothesis (if any), methods, significant findings, and author’s recommendations.

In order for a course to be designated as writing intensive, students must receive and use feedback to revise their written work. In our course, students get feedback on their scholarly papers from course faculty and from their peers through a formal peer-review process. To introduce students to the peer-review process, the course team works with the UNCG Writing Center to schedule a one-hour peer-review workshop during class time, conducted by the Writing Center Staff. The peer-review workshop prepares students to review the work of a peer and to accept a review from a peer. Shortly after the workshop, students choose a classmate who will serve as their peer-review partner. Students work on their papers and then submit their second draft to their peer-review partner for feedback. [We believe that no one should have to read a first draft.] Each partner reads their peer’s paper and writes a review using a peer-review guide that is then submitted to the partner and course instructor. Students use this feedback to revise their papers. Students then submit a third draft to a course instructor with a cover letter addressing the following questions: How do you think you have met, or have not met, the spirit of the assignment? What changes have you made to the paper based on previous feedback from your instructor and peer? What feedback did you choose not to use and why? Peer-review partners then meet in pairs with a course instructor to discuss both papers. During these conferences, students read their own papers aloud. While students often feel awkward reading aloud, they later say how beneficial it was to the overall quality of their final draft. After these triad (instructor and peer-review partners) conferences, students revise their papers one more time before submitting their final draft and cover letter to a course instructor and to their peer-review partner. Students are graded on the whole process. Each aspect of the assignment (e.g. drafts, cover letters, peer-review) has associated points that students earn upon completion. Although this is a long process, students gain from peer-review, revision, and open conference with faculty.

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A Teaching Strategy

Dance History Students Produce Writing Portfolios

Ann Dils, Department of Dance

In DCE 305W: History of Dance in the United States, each student develops a portfolio of research papers and essays about the life and work of an American choreographer. Through a series of three to five page papers, students work to build the research, writing, observation, description, and critical analysis skills important to dance historians and other dance professionals.

First, students write five-page biographies of their choreographers, combining biographical detail and a personal assessment of the choreographer’s contributions to American dance. Writing the biography provides historical perspective important to the remaining essays and analysis projects. Next, students write three-to-five-page essays describing and exploring a visual image of the choreographer or one of his/her works. Students then write five-page structural analyses and descriptions of a portion of a dance. These documents might include spatial diagrams, diagrams detailing relationships between movement and musical score, images of costumes and sets, figures that represent movement sequences, and description. Using the same dance and keeping in mind discoveries from their structural analyses, students write three-page critical analyses, briefly describing the dance and discussing its social and cultural messages (images of race, class, sexuality, national identity, or gender, for example), meaning for the viewer, or place within the choreographer’s oeuvre. Finally, students write five-page personal statements, detailing what they take from this process as writers, choreographers, teachers, or performers.

As an introduction to the project, students complete a library exercise in which they use recommended sources, hone their abilities to find articles on dance through electronic databases and the New York Public Library’s online Dance Collection catalog, and create a bibliography using a consistent style. Through this exercise, students determine if sufficient research materials exist for their subjects, and commit to that subject. In-class writing projects and discussions and work with Laban Movement Analysis, a means of analyzing movement style, give students practice and tools helpful to their portfolio projects. Critical facilities are strengthened by our readings and discussions concerning dance and gender,
sexuality, race, class, and the like. We also discuss readings as writing samples, as containing authorial strategies that might be emulated or avoided.

Historical study helps dancers and choreographers situate themselves in the dance professions, refining their aesthetic sensibilities and providing inspiration for the production of new art and for the construction of their own dance lives. The most important benefit students experience from this project lies in discovering the utility of historical study and, sometimes, in recognizing the choreographer they study as a kind of mentor, someone who can remain a source of inspiration and ideas as they pursue their own careers.

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Associate Professor Ann Dils is the Graduate Coordinator in the Department of Dance and teaches courses in dance history, appreciation, research/writing, and pedagogy. Co-editor of Dance Research Journal and of the reader Moving History/Dancing Culture, she is currently working on a book about the legacy of modern dance choreographer Doris Humphrey.
A Teaching Strategy

“Ordering the Chaos” in Intro to Poetry

Jennifer Whitaker, Department of English

Nothing kills poetry faster than boring discussions that ignore the fact that poetry is a place for writers and readers to pick apart, analyze and struggle with the big questions in life. My biggest fear in my Introduction to Poetry (ENG 106) course is that students will leave and say, “Gosh, I used to like poetry!” My goal is to get students to see that rather than being the “boring” part of poetry, elements of craft (in terms of line breaks, form, tone, diction, and so on) give poems their ability to change us in fundamental ways.

Over the course of the semester, students develop a portfolio of semi-formal and formal papers (revised multiple times based on feedback from me and from peer review) that serves not only as a tangible representation of their progress through the semester, but also as a place to delve into the questions that matter in poetry, and to see how the poets we study affect and manipulate us (in good ways!) as readers.

Daily in-class responses give students the opportunity to focus their thoughts on a particular aspect of the day’s reading. While informal, these responses aren’t formless; rather, the short time period (5-10 minutes) in which to respond requires that students hone in quickly on substantive areas of analysis and response. This daily practice helps them to feel prepared for six semi-formal critical/creative papers, one-to-two pages each. These tiny papers are intended to encourage understanding of poetic elements through both practice and analysis. Here, I ask students to approach a variety of topics, some generated from their daily informal responses and some designed by me to encourage them to consider particular elements of craft. For instance, I often ask students to do a tone-change exercise in which they choose a poem from our book and change the tone of the poem (without significantly changing the content). They then explain and analyze how they characterize the original tone and how they characterize the new tone, describing how they created that change. Other times students do a closed-verse exercise, in which I give them a sonnet, a villanelle and a sestina (each in un-lined form), and ask them to indicate line and stanza breaks and to explain their choices. My hope is that these semi-formal essays will engage students with texts and poetic elements from both a craft standpoint and a critical standpoint, allowing them first to understand poetic devices through practice, then to strengthen their writing through analysis.
From these semi-formal craft papers, students develop two formal papers (four pages each) that they work on and revise throughout the semester. Their first formal paper is often a close analysis of a poem of their choice (making sure to focus on how the varied elements work together to form the heart of the poem, giving them an opportunity to expand on analyses begun in semi-formal writings). And because one of the best ways to get students to look critically at poetry is to have them engage in the process of writing a poem themselves, I often have the second formal paper focus on a poem of their own. For this paper, they would include their poem with significant draft revision and then do a close analysis of their poem, accounting for choices in diction, line length, stanza breaks, rhythm, tone, title, enjambment, and use of figurative language.

Through practice and analysis, through daily writing and revision, students can leave Intro to Poetry believing, to paraphrase Wallace Stevens, that poetry is a way of ordering the chaos, and that it’s in the close study of poetry that we can reach a brief, startling clarity about questions that truly matter to us as readers, thinkers, and people.

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A Teaching Strategy

Writing Review Essays in Environmental Law

Susan Buck, Department of Political Science

In my Environmental Law class (ENV/PSC 312), I try to have students teach themselves how to write review essays through an inductive, imitative process.

Early in the semester, students are required to read three review essays from three different academic journals of their choosing. After providing the full bibliographic citation for each review essay, they use what they have read to develop a set of instructions on “How to Write a Review Essay.” This begins with a list of items to be included and the order in which they should be presented. (For example, the first item would be the full citations for the books being reviewed…or would it be the essay title?) The second list is a series of questions that a review essay might address. (For example, what are the main ideas in each book? What do the books have in common? How do the authors’ ideas differ or conflict?) Not every review essay will answer every question; this list is the universe of possible questions arranged in an orderly manner. The final part of “How to Write a Review Essay” discusses how a review essay may be organized. (For example, are the books discussed one at a time and the comparisons added at the end of the essay? Or are the main ideas the organizing factor, with each book discussed within the context of the ideas?) On the day this assignment is turned in, we discuss the students’ findings and develop a set of guidelines to help them in writing their own review essays.

In order to put into practice the guidelines they have developed, students then write review essays of their own. This part of the assignment starts with the selection, by each student, of three books on related environmental topics from a bibliography in their text. (I think it is important to generate the list of books for them. They are doing enough work without asking them to skim a number of books to identify logical groups to review.) For each of the three books, they write a brief report that includes a full citation, a one-page summary, and a preliminary discussion based on some of the guidelines that we developed in class.

Writing these three separate reports prepares the students for the next step in the process: writing the first draft of their own review essay, which synthesizes the three books and follows the guidelines for review essays that they developed earlier in the semester. That first draft goes through two peer reviews as well as my
review, which means that students get practice in critiquing other reviews as well as revising their own in response to feedback from a variety of readers. The second draft of their review essay is the one that I grade, though they do have the option of revising further.

To encourage solid preliminary work, I grade this project in stages:

- 100 points for “How to Write a Review Essay,”
- 150 points for Book Reviews (50 points each),
- 100 points for the reviews of other students’ drafts, and
- 100 points for the final draft.

As you can see, this project is a major part of the class grade. However, I feel this is justified because they are not only learning a new skill, they are also learning the content and concepts in the books they review.

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Associate Professor Susan Buck, winner of the 2002 Alumni Teaching Excellence Award, chairs the Environmental Studies program and teaches courses on environmental law and policy. She is currently working on the third edition of Understanding Environmental Administration and Law (Island Press) and on a book about federal-state relations in wildlife management.
A Teaching Strategy

Writing the Master’s Thesis in IAR 631

Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll, Department of Interior Architecture

The development of a proposal for a master’s thesis is the primary focus of IAR 631, the second research methods course Interior Architecture graduate students take. Inherent in this process is ongoing refinement and revision of a thesis proposal throughout the semester. Although the final product is a 20-25 page document, I break it down into a series of smaller assignments, hoping to prevent students from becoming intimidated or rigidly committed to a lengthy document too early in the semester. The phased assignments also provide ample opportunities for peer and faculty review as student ideas evolve. Enrollment in the class is small and the investment in each other’s proposal is critical to maximize the value of the class as a support group. Early in the semester, I invite the Writing Center Director to conduct a writing revision workshop tailored to the class to help them build their peer review skills so they can give more effective feedback.

Last semester, students first wrote a two-page proposal explaining their preliminary thesis ideas in terms of what (topic), so what (significance), and how (methodology). The short proposals were circulated to their class peers and to three outside faculty in advance of a class session devoted to discussing each proposal with the entire group. Thus, my students received substantive feedback on a global level.

To generate a review of literature for their thesis topic, students were asked first to create an annotated bibliography. They added at least ten articles or book chapters to this bibliography each week for the first five weeks of the semester. As the bibliographies expanded and their topics became more focused, they were asked to group the annotated bibliography entries by subheadings that, in turn, helped them develop the organization of their literature review section in the thesis proposal.

As the students continued to expand and revise their thesis proposals on a weekly basis, periodic peer review assignments were given to help students focus
specifically on the organization and clarity of the draft. One week, for example, they were asked to read only the first sentence of each paragraph to see if there was a clear logical order and sequence in the overall proposal. As the drafts expanded in length, they were asked to focus exclusively on the literature review section one week and the methodology section another week. At this point in the semester, the peer reviews became more specific and detailed.

Finally, during the last few weeks of classes, the students created an illustrated PowerPoint presentation of the proposal with an accompanying script. The 10-12 minute PowerPoint document had to significantly condense the content of the full thesis proposal but ensure that the expanded audience (other graduate students and faculty at the final presentations) would clearly grasp the key concepts and ideas of their proposal. Class time was taken to critique a preliminary PowerPoint presentation in terms of clarity, content, and graphic quality a week before the final presentation and students used the feedback to refine their work. Based on the comments and questions made at the PowerPoint presentations, the students were given one last week to make final revisions to their written thesis proposals.

The various interim assignments were successful in keeping students engaged in the development and revision of their thesis proposals over the entire semester, and also eliminated some of the anxiety often associated with such a major paper.

Jo Leimenstoll is a professor and the Director of Graduate Study for the Department of Interior Architecture. She is a preservation architect by training and teaches advanced interior architecture studios as well as courses in preservation theory and architectural conservation. She maintains a small architectural practice specializing in the restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings. She also consults with local governments on design guidelines for historic districts and preservation-related planning issues.
Speaking Across the Curriculum
UNCG focuses on two goals for speaking-intensive courses. The first goal is to improve ability in oral communication. Students need instruction in principles and techniques of oral communication, constructive feedback, and opportunities for practice and improvement. The second goal is to enhance learning through active oral engagement. Our program recognizes that oral communication is more than an added skill; it is a way for students to become actively engaged and interested in the course content, so they learn and remember more.

To succeed in both the university and the careers that await them, our students need to be able to communicate effectively not only in public presentations but also in interpersonal and small group situations. The guidelines for speaking-intensive courses acknowledge the importance of all three communication contexts, leaving it to individual instructors to decide which activities are most appropriate for their own courses. As a result, an exciting variety of interesting and innovative assignments has been developed, some of which are described in the course proposals and Teaching Strategies section of this booklet. Despite the variations, however, all speaking-intensive courses include instruction, informed feedback, and opportunities for improvement.

**Oral Communication in the Disciplines**

Speaking Across the Curriculum at UNCG acknowledges that the academic disciplines are themselves distinct communities of discourse. Because all students are required to take one speaking-intensive course in their major, each discipline has the opportunity to prepare its graduates in discipline-specific ways of speaking. By gaining an understanding of what it means to communicate as a mathematician, an historian, or a nurse, the student gains a deeper understanding of the discipline itself.

Different disciplines have different expectations; what constitutes effective evidence, organization, or presentation style in one discipline may not carry the same weight in another. The first question in each discipline should be: What are the desired outcomes of oral competency for this discipline? Once outcomes are established, strategies for meeting them can be developed.

A glimpse into classrooms might reveal the following genres of oral activities:

- **Social Work**: learning to interview clients
- **Nutrition**: explaining scientific terms to a lay audience
- **Dance**: interpreting and critiquing a dance performance as a member of a panel
Informal Speaking: Process Orientation

Speaking-intensive courses encourage activities that are informal and process-oriented (ungraded) as well as formal (graded) presentations. In addition to the opportunities they provide for active engagement in subject matter, there are several benefits to informal process activities. First, they help to reduce anxiety and build confidence by providing frequent opportunities for students to speak without fear of evaluation. Second, they help to build community. As students become more comfortable in sharing and hearing opinions, they build relationships with other students. Finally, informal oral interaction provides instructors with insight into students’ habits and patterns of thinking, allowing them to discover and correct misconceptions.

As instructors, we have many opportunities to engage students in informal speaking moments. They can summarize material from a previous lecture, offer reflections from a reading, lead a small group discussion, begin a class with a Quote of the Day, or share opinions regarding local or national issues.

Examples of Process-Oriented Activities

• **Pairing and sharing** – in the middle or end of a lecture, students respond to questions or a problem by talking with a partner, then sharing with the class.

• **Problem-posting** – exploring a problem before instruction to find out what is known and what experiences the students have had with the concept.

• **Calling roll with questions** - beginning with “getting to know you” questions and moving toward questions regarding the course content.

• **Impromptu responses** – to questions typical of those asked in the profession.

• **Debates** - arguing ethical, historical, economic, philosophical, or other viewpoints. Students might choose their side of the debate, or might be
assigned to debate the opposite viewpoint. This activity gives them practice in presenting evidence, identifying logical fallacies, and respecting diverse opinions.

• *A brief progress report* - a concise report summarizing progress for a later in-depth presentation.

• *Question and answer* - requiring audience members to develop questions following a presentation. Involving students in question-answer sessions helps the presenter think and sharpens the listening skills of the audience.

• *Role-playing* - literary characters, historical figures, or client or parent interviews.

• *The Hot Seat* - presenting an argument to a small group, with the audience playing the role of devil’s advocate.

• *Student announcements* - Each student has an opportunity to begin the class with announcements accompanied by a PowerPoint slide or an overhead transparency. These might include class announcements (due dates for papers, assignments, quizzes) or interesting campus and/or community events.

Process activities can extend beyond pure engagement with course content to include instruction in presentation skills. Because students often have problems with “off the cuff” speaking, we can help them speak more clearly by teaching them to use an organizational pattern such as the Four S structure:

- **Signpost** (I am going to point out the problem with...).
- **State the point**.
- **Support the point with examples, explanation**.
- **Summarize the point**.

We can also call attention to delivery skills during the informal moments. Students giving a one-minute response can be reminded to assume a confident posture and look directly at the audience. We can remind them to project their voices or to use a pause instead of “um.” If we call attention to important delivery skills throughout the semester, students are not as overwhelmed when they make longer, formal presentations.

**Formal Presentations**

Informal oral activities can be important stepping stones toward confidence in formal, graded oral assignments. Although many classes include traditional “oral reports,” formal graded activities do not have to be limited to such presentations.
Below are examples of graded oral activities that are appropriate for different classes and disciplines:

- Technical talk
- Research presentation
- Group presentation
- Panel discussion
- Panel critique of a performance
- Group teaching a class
- Individual teaching a class (leading discussion as well as lecturing)
- Presentation of a design project
- Debates
- Mock conference with a client or parent
- Counseling interview
- Demonstration lessons
- Summary of articles
- Group or individual presentation of case study

**Characteristics of Oral Discourse**

Students are generally unfamiliar with oral communication principles when they enter UNCG. Even if they have given reports in high school or had experience speaking to organizations, most have had little, if any, instruction in how to prepare and present effectively. Guiding them through the process can help them to reach success in oral communication. That guidance begins with an understanding of the special characteristics of oral communication.

Although we recognize the similarities between oral and written communication, we also need to point out the differences. An oral presentation is not a stand-up essay. We can steer students toward thinking differently when preparing presentations by pointing out three characteristics identified by Backlund, Brown, Gurry, and Jandt (as cited in Backlund, 1994).

The first characteristic is the **relational dimension**. Effective speakers connect with the members of their audience. The content of their presentations is centered around the interests, attitudes, and knowledge level of the audience. They maintain direct eye contact with their audience members, showing interest in the audience and the topic through friendly facial expressions and authentic gestures. They sound enthusiastic. They use an oral style which includes short sentences, sometimes sentence fragments, and personal pronouns. Audiences enjoy speakers who sound natural and who show interest in them.

A second characteristic involves the **dimension of time**. When we read a passage that is unclear, we can read it again. If our mind wanders during a videotape, we can rewind and play it again when we are concentrating. When we write, we can
revise as much as time permits to clarify our message. Speakers, on the other hand, do not have the luxury of another chance. Effective speakers recognize that they must capture the attention of the audience and maintain it until the conclusion, because the event is immediate. When a speaker loses the attention of his/her audience, the moment is lost. In teaching students, we need to emphasize the importance of clarity, relevance, and interest at that moment. If the audience cannot follow the speaker, perceives no relevance in the comments, or finds the speaker uninteresting, they will stop listening.

The dimension of time presents another concern. When invited to speak at a meeting or at a conference, we know the time limit for our comments. We need to help students prepare for the same type of situation. Whether the expected length is two minutes, five minutes or twenty minutes, we can help students succeed by setting time limit expectations and by reminding them to practice aloud with a clock.

A third characteristic involves the medium. On the printed page, combinations of letters, italics, bold-faced fonts, font sizes, indentations, margins, and other devices not only present the message but also help organize the material for the reader. In oral communication, the speaker relies on nonverbal signals to help convey the verbal message. Skillful speakers use pauses, gestures, changes in vocal inflection, and movement to help the audience follow the content. Facial expressions, direct eye contact, clothing, and even the time of day become important. We must help students realize that well-organized and interesting content will not by itself guarantee success when the medium is oral communication.

Helping Students Achieve Clarity, Relevance, and Interest

The General Education Program at UNCG specifically identifies clarity, coherence, effectiveness and audience adaptation as proficiencies that students need to develop in oral and written communication. Even though different disciplines adhere to different expectations, styles and oral communication genres, certain characteristics of effectiveness cross the disciplinary boundaries. Regardless of the discipline or the format, students have to make their presentations clear, relevant, and interesting.

The first step in helping students with clarity is to provide clear expectations of the assignment.

• What is the purpose?

• Who is the audience? (the class, members of the department, members of a profession)
Part of understanding the assignment involves narrowing the topic. For example, presenting a fifteen-page research project in seven minutes involves decisions; only the most important points can be covered. We can point out that audiences handle three to five chunks of information well. A common problem with oral communication is information overload.

The next step in achieving clarity lies in choosing an appropriate organizational pattern. Because listening is difficult, a clear pattern is critical for success. For example, a problem-solution presentation has an obvious pattern. A research presentation should follow the expected pattern of research presentations in that discipline, but students will need guidance to know what that pattern is. They also need to understand the importance of including transitions. Transitional phrases, such as “now that you can see the reasons for the situation, let’s look at possible solutions” are critical in guiding the audience.

Another problem with clarity can stem from the lack of supporting material. Instructors can point out the need for definitions (the audience does not have instant access to a dictionary, as a reader does), examples, or comparisons and contrasts. Or the presentation may need visual aids. Students need to understand what visual aids are most appropriate for their presentation, when to use them and how to use them.

One strategy for helping students achieve clarity is to require drafts of presentation outlines. As with writing instruction, multiple drafts and conferences can be beneficial in working through problems with structure or content. Furthermore, peer groups can be useful in the preparation phase. For example, students might bring their outlines to class and have their peers point out possible problems with organization or development of points.

Finally, the way the speaker delivers the message affects clarity. A speaker can lose the audience by speaking too fast, speaking at the same rate without pauses, or not articulating well. Videotaping is an excellent method for helping students identify strengths and weaknesses in their delivery skills. The University Speaking Center is equipped to videotape students as they prepare their presentations and to offer constructive critiques.
Relevance involves remembering the questions that go through the head of every audience member: What’s in it for me? How will this information benefit me? Effective speakers tell the audience why the information is relevant and useful, and adapt the content to their audience, making choices based upon the knowledge level, interest, and attitude of their listeners. Students preparing a presentation for their classmates should emphasize their common perspective and connection. Throughout the presentation they might use inclusive language and make references to shared classroom experiences. Practice sessions with a few classmates can help identify problems in this area.

Finally, effective speakers maintain the interest of their audience, partly through the content. Is the material unknown? Current? Useful? Is there enough variety? Is the language vivid? The other critical factor in maintaining interest involves the use of effective delivery skills.

Helping Students Improve Delivery Skills

Effective delivery skills can be learned. Requiring students to videotape their practice sessions at the University Speaking Center or videotaping the presentations in class is an excellent way for them to see and hear themselves as their audience members do. Seeing themselves on tape is not only the first step toward correcting problems, but it can also help to build confidence. For those who exaggerate their weaknesses, seeing a tape gives them a more realistic perspective. Seeing themselves on videotape allows students to focus on specific areas such as vocal expression or lack of eye contact. After each viewing, students can write self-critiques to assess their strengths and weaknesses and to set goals.

We must recognize that progress in delivery takes time. We can help students become successful by emphasizing specific aspects of delivery during short oral activities. For example, during a one-minute summary of a field observation an instructor can remind students to stand in a relaxed, yet poised manner with no distracting movements. During the next activity, the instructor might remind the students to practice maintaining eye contact with the audience.

We can begin teaching delivery skills by pointing out the importance of the overall impression a speaker makes: the dress, the posture, the confident manner. First impressions are formed by nonverbal cues. Then we can focus on the eyes and face, the voice, and effective gestures. The following handout contains some useful reminders for speakers.

Tips for Delivery Skills

| **Eye Contact:** | Talk *with* your audience members and show interest by focusing on them, only glancing occasionally at notes. Maintaining eye contact also helps you *look* more confident and *feel* more confident. Use the feedback from the audience's expressions to adjust your comments. |
| **Speaking rate:** | Beginning speakers often speak too fast. Practice speaking at a comfortable rate. A key component is to include pauses. Allow the audience to think. In your notes, write in the word *pause* at important points. |
| **Volume:** | The person on the last row in the back of the room needs to *hear* you. Practice projecting your voice. |
| **Vocal expressiveness:** | Your voice needs to reflect your interest in the topic and in the audience. You need to sound genuinely interested in conveying your thoughts to the audience, not just “going through the motions.” Think about how your voice sounds when talking with a friend; use the same type of expression for an audience. |
| **Vocal fluency:** | The use of vocal fillers (such as “um,” “like,” and “you know”) is a distracting speech habit. Awareness of the problem is the first step for improvement. |
| **Facial expressiveness:** | Your whole manner—eyes, face, body, voice—needs to show an interest in the audience and your topic. Be animated and communicative. When you first walk to the podium or center of the room, look at the audience and smile. Show them you are friendly. |
| **Movement:** | If movement is appropriate, use it purposefully. Avoid pacing. Be still when making an important point; too much movement can be distracting. A little bit of walking, however, can help calm anxious speakers. |
| **Gestures:** | Be natural and spontaneous. Allow your gestures to follow the meaning of your words. Avoid clutching your hands behind your back. Take your hands out of your pockets. |

**Helping Students Cope with Anxiety**
Anxiety about public speaking is normal; many surveys show that public speaking is one of our top fears. Our challenge in speaking-intensive courses is to help students manage their anxiety.

First, openly recognizing that speaking in front of others typically causes anxiety helps students understand that they are not alone. Research on communication apprehension notes that one cause of apprehension is the feeling of dissimilarity (Beatty, 1988). Asking students to raise their hands if they feel anxious when speaking will quickly show them that their fears are shared.

Besides recognizing that anxiety is normal, we can talk about the physiological symptoms. People are staring at us; our adrenal glands react. An instructor might ask the students to describe the physical sensation. Common responses include sweaty palms, increased heart rate, dry mouth, weak knees, or flushed face. We can then point out that adrenaline produces energy and vitality. We speak better when we feel a spark of energy. Our challenge is to help students realize that increased adrenaline can be beneficial if they learn to manage the symptoms. (Keep a glass of water nearby, breathe deeply, take a few steps, use stiff cards instead of paper.)

Another approach to the discussion of anxiety is through cognitive restructuring. By asking students to describe their fears (fainting, classmates laughing, looking stupid), we can systematically dispel each fear by talking rationally about real and imagined reasons for anxiety.

Just the novelty of speaking in front of a group is reason enough for anxiety, especially if the speaker feels he/she is being judged. The more opportunities we can provide for students to face a classroom audience for brief moments without grading, the more comfortable they become. However, evaluation is inevitable in a speaking-intensive course, so students need to realize that the more prepared and confident they are about the substance and organization of their talk, the less anxiety they will feel. Two strategies for improving the quality of content — making evaluation criteria known and requiring preliminary drafts — have an additional benefit of helping to reduce anxiety.

Finally, the more supportive the atmosphere in a class, the less anxiety individuals will feel when it is their turn to present. An attentive, responsive audience helps the speaker. Work on building classroom community.

The following handout, adapted as you see fit, may be helpful to your students.
Tips for Coping with Anxiety

- Practice in small bits, then put the whole together.
- Practice the introduction, each point, and the conclusion separately. Put it together. You are building a talk.
- Visualize giving a successful talk.
- Use positive self-talk. Tell yourself you know what you are doing!
- Spend extra time on the introduction. The rush of adrenaline is worst during the first 30-60 seconds. By knowing your introduction well, you give yourself a chance to become calm. Then you can become more spontaneous.
- Concentrate on the audience, not on yourself.
- Never call attention to your anxiety. You want to appear calm. The audience cannot hear your heart beating!
- Engage the audience. Ask a question. Take the attention off yourself for a moment. Take a few steps. Leave the podium.
- Engage in small talk with audience members beforehand. When you begin speaking, look at those friendly faces for reassurance.

Evaluating Oral Communication

One of the most challenging aspects of teaching oral communication skills involves evaluation. Because of the interactive nature of oral communication, perfection is not a realistic goal. The effectiveness or appropriateness of communication depends upon the situation, the discipline, and the culture. However, certain principles are generally useful, especially if we keep in mind that the real goal of evaluation is to help students learn from the communication experience.

Clearly state the learning outcomes. Each instructor needs to specify the learning outcomes in oral communication that would be appropriate to his or her class.

Examples of specific outcomes:
- To present information clearly to a lay audience
- To persuade an audience to accept a proposal for funding
- To respond to questions “off the cuff” in a poised, articulate manner
- To demonstrate effective teamwork: accepting divergent views, managing conflict, and using leadership behaviors.
After the learning outcomes are clear, the evaluation methods should focus on them.

*Clearly communicate the criteria for evaluation.* Explain your evaluation method. If organization is going to be counted heavily, tell the students. If visual aids are significant to the evaluation, be clear about your expectations.

*Keep the evaluations as individualized as possible.* Oral communication is closely tied to self-concept and the presentation of self. Helping each student improve and develop competence involves recognizing individual skills and helping the student improve those skills.

*Consider the process.* Effective oral communication does not occur overnight. The skills are complex and demanding. Experienced teachers of public speaking generally agree that teaching in incremental units is the most successful method.

*Point out the most critical areas for improvement.* An instructor must balance the need for pointing out problems with the value of encouragement. To begin systematic improvement, choose three or four of the most serious problems. Leave the rest for later.

*Offer specific suggestions.* Instead of saying only that the point was not clear, suggest the addition of a transition phrase or examples.

*Direct comments to behaviors.* Because public speaking creates anxiety in many students, isolate the behaviors from the student. Do not infer reasons for the problems.

*Begin with the positive.* Do not minimize the problems, but give positive feedback before addressing the difficulties.

*Focus on progress.* Success creates confidence. The more students recognize progress by keeping a process log, engaging in self-critiques, and setting goals, the more confidence they will acquire.

**Evaluation Forms**

Several evaluation forms can be found on the CAC website (www.uncg.edu/cac). Even though the rubrics may look different, most evaluation forms will touch on the same general areas. Oral communication evaluation should include both verbal and nonverbal aspects. The form needs to address the specific outcomes valued by the discipline.
The National Communication Association has developed an evaluation form that addresses eight areas of competence. In evaluating the following eight areas, there is always the question of appropriateness to the audience and the occasion. Using these areas as a guide, instructors can develop their own evaluation forms, making adjustments as needed for their particular courses and assignments.

- Topic (appropriate for audience and occasion, including time)
- Thesis (clear and appropriate for the audience and occasion)
- Supporting material (content and development of points; use of evidence)
- Organization (use of organizational patterns, clear introduction and conclusion, transitions to make it easy to follow)
- Language (appropriate—no slang or jargon; vivid)
- Vocal variety (pitch, rate, intensity)
- Pronunciation, grammar, articulation
- Physical behaviors (eye contact, body movement, facial expression, gestures)

The Competent Speaker Evaluation form can be found on the website. Often forms will include a separate category for visual aids, if that is an important element. Forms might separate the content into specific areas, such as review of the literature, explanation of methodology, and so on. Instead of using rubrics, some instructors prefer to write an evaluation in narrative form. Whatever the format, the evaluation form needs to provide constructive feedback for student improvement.

References


A Teaching Strategy

Helping Students Learn How to Present Ideas and Opinions

Shelly Brown-Jeffy, Department of Sociology

People may have strong ideas and be knowledgeable about a subject, but no one will know the extent of their knowledge or beliefs unless they are able to effectively articulate them. The goals of my courses are not simply to impart information upon students, but to help them process that information and then be able to articulate the knowledge they have obtained. Thus, all of my classes involve some type of class discussion of the social aspects/issues that face us in our daily lives. Occasionally the discussion is formal, but often it is informal. The speaking strategies used in these classes are diverse and adapted to the size and level of the class, the nature of the subject matter, and the needs of the students.

Class participation is part of the student grade for all of my classes. While some students love to voice their opinions, others are much slower to talk in class. For those who are not “big talkers,” I use targeted but easy-to-answer questions to get them to participate. These simple questions get students comfortable with talking, but also help stimulate the class discussion. For example, I will ask the shy student “How do you ask for a glass of water?” to start the discussion about cultural differences in language expression. I use this simple subject matter to reel students into the comfort of speaking before we grapple with the more difficult subjects.

Students learn a lot from hearing each other speak. In many classroom discussions, students have to defend their position regardless of which side they take. Students must use logic and reason to develop positions and counter positions. This approach forces students to think about the reasoning behind their responses. If there is disagreement within the class, the situation becomes a learning opportunity in which I try to help students understand the importance of perspective in creating one’s view of a situation. To further push the students intellectually, I often play “devil’s advocate” to help students see an alternate view, but also to help them better defend their own views. We learn best how to present ourselves when we have to reason through our beliefs and support our position.

Some classes, however, have a formal speaking component built into the class

“teaching … is about presenting ideas, concepts, theories, and empirical material to students in ways that allow them to incorporate this information into their own lives and then be able to present this information to others.”
where all students must participate. The major speaking-intensive component of SOC 362 (Sociological Perspectives on Education) is the debate. Each student participates in four classroom debates. The debate consists of two teams of three students on each side of the debate (the pro or the con side). Each student must negotiate their part of the pro or con argument with two other teammates. After each side presents their initial arguments, the students must then prepare to offer a rebuttal to the other point of view. Through this activity students learn not only how to articulate an argument, but also how to defend that argument within the time constraints of the debate (two to four minutes per person). Students are surprised that they often learn valuable information about a point of view that is different from theirs. Although they may not change their minds about their points of view, they are now able to see the merits of an opposing opinion. On-the-spot feedback of both presentation and content helps students prepare for their next class debate.

To me, teaching is not about lecturing to students; it is about presenting ideas, concepts, theories, and empirical material to students in ways that allow them to incorporate this information into their own lives and then be able to present this information to others.

Dr. Shelly Brown-Jeffy is an Assistant Professor in the Sociology Department at UNCG. Her teaching and research interests focus on the sociology of inequality. Her current research projects examine the effects of poverty and race on education (including the early years), particularly questions of when, why, and how the educational gap in achievement begins and widens as students continue through the educational process.
A Teaching Strategy

Talking about the Past in History 347: History of North Carolina

Christine Flood, Department of History

The island had many goodly woods full of deer, conies, hares, and fowl, even in the midst of summer, in incredible abundance...the highest and the reddest cedars of the world...

— Portions of Arthur Barlowe’s account to his employer, Sir Walter Raleigh, of the riches of North Carolina in July, 1584

History is a world of books and old, dusty documents. Historians are prolific writers who base their works on silent documents. Furthermore, history courses are usually lecture-based, with accompanying heavy reading assignments. Outside the classroom, not many students discuss history in their casual discourse, as they might discuss politics or psychology. When was the last time young adults debated with their friends whether or not John Wilkes Booth was truly captured and killed in the manhunt after Lincoln’s assassination, or if, as some documents suggest, Booth escaped to the Deep South? Does anyone (outside of me and my colleagues, of course) debate the lasting implications of the American Populist movement?

Given the above scholarly realities, coupled with the written and “past-tense” sense of History, the ideas of “speaking-intensive” and history courses don’t always go together. In History of North Carolina (HIS 347), the students and I work very hard to seek out the past through using presentation and discussion skills to further enhance the rich, four-century long story of North Carolina.

Using a primary source reader, The North Carolina Experience, students are able to interact with the past directly through diary, journal, newspaper, and documentary evidence of North Carolina’s past. Using this primary text, students are assigned both group and individual sources to work into oral presentations. In looking at primary sources, North Carolina History students ask themselves the following questions:

- What context existed surrounding the creation of the document?
To what audience was the document directed?

What message was the creator of the document sending?

What questions should we as historians be asking in reading this document?

How does this document shed light on events?

And, as a summation, what is key to take-away from the document?

Success in the speaking-intensive course is based on scores of previous experiences, experiences that either formed a comfort or trepidation about speaking in front of others. My goal as the instructor is not only to assist the hesitant student in finding their public voice, but also to challenge the student who is comfortable with speaking to push their boundaries and be more creative in their approaches to their audience. The simplest thing I can do as the instructor is to provide good content and materials with which the students can work and the environment for students to feel comfortable in testing their presentation skills. Using both group and individual presentations is enormously helpful—many students who struggle with the individual assignment will blossom as part of a 3 to 4 person group.

One question I always ask the students in my SI courses near the end of the term is, “Does this speaking-intensive requirement work for you? Did it help?” Without hard numbers in front of me, I can say, anecdotally, the majority of the students say “yes.” By bringing history off the page and into discussion and conversation, History of North Carolina tries very hard to fulfill the ideals of the SAC program.

I attempt to present a course that embraces the synergy between action and education, between dialogue and dialectic. The inclusion of speaking-intensive elements in my course has not only exponentially amplified my students’ engagement and interactivity in the course, but these same elements have extended both the efficacy of my teaching and the depth of students’ learning. Or so I hope!

Christine Flood is a lecturer and advisor in the History Department and the Coordinator of Residential Learning in the Warren Ashby Residential College.
A Teaching Strategy

Speaking in ART 403

Richard Gantt, Department of Art

Students in my Art History Research Seminar (ART 403) truly benefit from my inclusion of oral communication components in our sessions. There are the expected advantages for strong students who realize that they will be called upon to lead discussion groups and present research and projects should they enter either professional art fields or graduate study. Additionally, there have also been the classic cases of the poor speaker—nerves, inaudible delivery and other obvious difficulties—who improve, gain ability and confidence, and admit that the requirement of the class that they most dreaded became a truly positive experience.

The scholarly product of the seminar is a fully-formed, polished, scholarly paper of conventional conference length presented to the group. Students select research topics according to their personal art historical interests. Class discussions unravel and reweave the proposals. They are prodded and poked by the students and guided by my own experience. At mid-semester, each student is responsible for a scheduled trial presentation of their formal paper complete with the coordinated projection of digital images through our MDID system. Full bibliographies are required at this time. Oral and written critiques of their peers’ efforts are also part of each presentation session. During the last weeks of class, after substantive revisions to text, images, organization, and vocal practice, students present their papers again, each presentation followed by a final evaluation.

For my part, the most unexpected, although really obvious, benefit for the students lies in the practical acquisition of fundamental pronunciation. This involves not merely the correcting of the usual burps that are common in our oral exchanges, but in art history, we are saturated with proper names, words, phrases, and terminology from foreign languages both modern and ancient. As a professor, it is perhaps too easy for me to forget the evolving, accumulative acquisition of aural information that guides our speech about subjects. On written examinations students might write artists’ names, locations of works, and toss foreign terminology around twenty times, only to be repeatedly blocked from...
saying the same information in a discussion or presentation when they are confronted with the difficulty of speaking what they had effortlessly written. This feature of our seminar, the bringing of pronunciation into synchrony with the written word is, in my estimation, one of the most valuable and far-reaching consequences of the incorporation of the speaking-intensive component into my seminar.

I think that one of the communication structures that I find to be most impressive is the habitual engagement in critiques of oral presentations by the entire group. These have been the most productive when I offer my analysis only after all of the students have voiced their observations. To my pleasure, I often find that students take their job as critic seriously and in the most constructive spirit, and so it is often the case that there are few points remaining for me to add. Progress from the students noticeably accelerates after these sessions, and these exchanges have another important value as well: Nothing builds group identity faster and better than when I, as the professor, make frequent mention of something that students themselves have pointed out to their peers. Class identity greatly helps to underscore the purpose of the seminar and to develop momentum that lends valuable energy to our meetings. But in the end, the real attainment is that students realize something important about themselves; they have something of interest and value to say. And now they know how to say it.

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Richard Gantt is a lecturer in the Department of Art. His area of study is architecture, landscape and urban design in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Since he was trained in painting and drawing, employed early on in art professions, he has a keen interest in contemporary art as well. Objects of personal choice include an immoderate amount of North Carolina folk pottery and Arts and Crafts ceramics, which fill up his home.
A Teaching Strategy

Biology Students Learn Scientific Presentation and Reasoning Skills

David Remington, Department of Biology

Systematics is the study of the evolutionary history of groups of organisms. Students in Plant Systematics (BIO 354) learn how to infer evolutionary relationships among plants and the processes leading to the origin of new species, and they also learn to recognize the plant families and genera that are the result of these evolutionary processes. In teaching Plant Systematics as a speaking-intensive course over the years, Bruce Kirchoff, Elizabeth Lacey and I have experimented with approaches that help students both to understand and communicate scientific concepts. The centerpiece of our strategy is for the students to give 15-minute oral and slide presentations in class on particular plant families. Students are responsible for explaining the evolutionary basis for defining a particular family, describing its natural history, describing key features used to recognize plants in the family, and giving examples of how humans use the plants for food, clothing, medicine, and other benefits. The students work in pairs and give presentations on two families. After the first presentation, we meet individually with each team to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their presentations, addressing both content and presentation skills. We seek to develop the students’ ability to explain scientific concepts, to explain highly visual content by pointing out illustrations of key features on the slides, and to engage with the class rather than merely read from their notes. We typically see marked improvement in the quality of the second presentation. It is gratifying to see the effort students put into their presentations, which have included bringing in foods from their family and finding a video clip of Venus flytraps caught in the act of devouring an unsuspecting insect. The students seem to retain much more information when they go through the effort of preparing presentations, and the entire class benefits from the presenters’ enthusiasm.

In addition, this year Elizabeth Lacey and I also had the students read Michael Pollan’s book The Botany of Desire, and participate in 20-minute class discussions of each of the four chapters. This more informal and conversational setting gave students the opportunity to develop their reasoning skills by making arguments and counter-arguments about issues raised in the book. An important aspect of
leading these discussions is to draw out comments from students who are normally reticent about speaking up in class, thus ensuring that all students give voice to their insights and opinions.

The main trade-off for us in offering a successful speaking-intensive course is the need to limit class size. Enrollment in Plant Systematics is limited to 24 students, which allows enough time for all students to give presentations and provides a more intimate setting for discussions. However, offering a speaking-intensive course does not require that learning objectives be compromised. To the contrary, we believe the strategies we are using improve student learning of course content as well as their speaking skills, making it a “win-win” situation. In my own experience as a scientist, I have found that preparing to teach classes forces me to understand my own field better than I would otherwise. It makes sense, then, that providing opportunities for students to explain scientific concepts to their classmates also improves their learning of those concepts.

In addition to teaching Plant Systematics, David Remington teaches undergraduate and graduate-level courses in genetics and genome sciences, and conducts research on the genetics of adaptation in plants.
A Teaching Strategy

Speaking to Write in English 102

Melissa J. Richard, Department of English

In every composition course I teach, there are always several students anxious that they write like they speak. In English 102, a course taught as speaking intensive, this concern no longer hinders writing; it serves as a foundation for communicating the differences between writing and speaking and helps students see that they can actually “speak” to learn “to write.” Although the themes of English 102 courses shift from instructor to instructor, I organize class materials and activities around the idea of “performative rhetorics,” where we examine notions of language as action, reflect on the oral (or “performative”) moments in written texts, and analyze critical and creative elements that provoke oral performance of a variety of literary genres. In effect, the speaking component of the course compels students to reflect on the writing choices they make through the attention paid to oral communication.

My students initially believe that a speaking-intensive English course amounts to reading their papers out loud to the class. While they might share reading responses and participate regularly in class discussion, their oral assignments rarely involve a paper recitation. Instead, these assignments encourage students to look at a written text as something performative, as something that “speaks” from the page and makes certain demands of the reader depending on if he or she reads it aloud—or performs it, if you will—or reads it silently to him or herself. Lessons learned from the students’ oral performances influence their main class project, a multi-genre research paper, wherein they creatively synthesize the research and writing they would do for a normal research project into a variety of literary genres, one of which they perform for the class in a final presentation.

As practice for this final project, students “present” an oral interpretation of a poem early in the semester. They choose a poem, analyze the features that make it suitable for an oral presentation, perform it for the class, and then give a brief discussion of the rhetorical choices that they determined would steer the poem’s performance. This assignment usually comes at the end of a short poetics unit in which we focus on not only the content of poems, but also elements of craft that influence our reading of them (our interpretation of the meaning as well as how
we “read” them aloud, to other people, to ourselves. I ask students to think about line breaks, diction, and rhythm patterns that prompt readers to “orally interpret” a poem in different ways, and consider a variety of questions: Where should the reader pause, inflect, gesture? What words seem important to the poem’s meaning and so require some kind of vocal emphasis? What would the reader’s tone sound like (angry, sad, happy)? Then, through discussion and in individual conferences with students, we talk about how these elements link with meaning and the rhetorical choices authors make in order to promote some worldview, perspective, or argument. I model an oral interpretation for them, and we “critique” it together in order to cover elements of delivery and approach that will be important as they perform their poems.

Students are frightened of this assignment at first – and so am I, as I model it for them – but this, too, becomes part of our class discussions: it’s an excellent opportunity to address speaking and (in this case) performance anxiety. When the class is over, however, students tell me that the oral interpretation was their favorite assignment of the semester, as it made them think more carefully (and enjoyably) about how writers construct texts. A bonus to this assignment is that the creativity of my students usually gives us a good laugh or two, an effect that strengthens our classroom community.

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Melissa J. Richard is a PhD student and graduate teaching assistant in the Department of English at UNCG. She teaches English Composition and Intro to Literature courses and currently serves as the English 102 liaison to the Speaking-Intensive GEC Committee.
Support for Students
The University Writing Center offers UNCG students, staff, and faculty the opportunity for individual consultation on any writing project at any stage.

The Writing Center is staffed by a combination of graduate and advanced undergraduate student consultants. All are experienced writers and alert readers, trained to help writers clarify their intentions for a piece of writing and find strategies to fulfill those intentions. Most consultants are from the English department, though in recent years we have been delighted to welcome graduate students from several other departments to our staff.

Depending on where writers are in their writing process and what their major concerns are when they visit the Writing Center, a consultation might involve deciding how to approach a particular assignment, identifying a thesis and sculpting a rough outline, reading a rough draft to check for general coherence and clarity, incorporating new material into a revision, addressing problems of grammar and sentence structure, learning how to cite sources properly—or any of a myriad of other questions about writing. The staff conducted over 5,600 conferences last year, and each one was different because each writer and each piece of writing is different.

Most conferences last about an hour. Even though some writers make several visits to work on different aspects of the same paper, a staff consultant rarely sees a finished product; it is up to the writer to apply the strategies they learn and implement the decisions they make about their work in the Writing Center. It’s important to remember that, just as it is difficult to teach a subject in the span of 15 weeks, writing is a process that takes more than one or two Writing Center sessions to perfect. Each visit to the Writing Center helps students improve their writing process.

Within a session, the emphasis truly is on the decisions that the student writer makes. The Writing Center provides the space and opportunity for people to focus attention on their own writing, while providing encouragement, advice, instruction, and resources to help them gain confidence and competence as writers.
However, the Writing Center does not provide drop-off editing and proofreading services, assistance with content or subject matter, or evaluation of student writing. The staff understands that the responsibility for the paper lies with the student writer, and the responsibility for evaluating it lies with the instructor.

Writing Center consultants are qualified and willing to provide individual instruction in basic writing skills as needed, but the program is not by any means limited to “remedial” services. Any writer can benefit from the opportunity to discuss the different directions that a piece of writing might take, receive feedback from a trusted reader, clarify potentially confusing passages, or correct embarrassing errors.

The Writing Center staff routinely sends notification to faculty members when their students visit the Center (unless the student asks them not to). The best way to encourage students to use this resource is to let them know how pleased you are to receive those notices. It can also be helpful to include information about the Writing Center on syllabi and assignment sheets, or arrange to bring groups of students to 3211 MHRA for a brief introductory orientation.

Here are a few reminders as you encourage your student writers to visit the Writing Center:

- Instruct students to bring a written copy of the assignment.
- Indicate your expectations for writing in your discipline.
- Indicate the name of your preferred citation style, if applicable.
- Instruct students to bring any previous feedback that you have provided.
- Remember that one visit to the Writing Center can’t produce a perfect paper, but it will help students become better writers over time.
- Ask that students think about what they want to work on before they go to the Writing Center, as this will help focus their writing efforts and get the process of self-reflection started, which, as we know, is an instrumental part of the writing process.

All of these elements will help our consultants help your students become better writers, and although we always encourage and recommend writers to come into the Center, requiring your whole class to visit has both positive and negative consequences worth considering before you make a decision.
The Negatives:

- Many students will wait until the last minute to fulfill that requirement, overwhelming the staff with their numbers and leaving virtually no time to make significant changes in their papers. I have seen students visit us 15 minutes before the paper is due, in order to “fulfill” the requirement.

- Some students, erroneously believing the Writing Center to be remedial in nature, will be resistant to help and disengaged with the process. It is very helpful for them to hear from you, as their instructor, that the writing process is rarely a completely solitary venture. Professional writers look for guidance from peers and colleagues, and the Writing Center is a way for writers to receive that guidance.

The Positives:

- Most students, once they come in and experience the positive dialogic and non-judgmental atmosphere of the Writing Center, find it to be a safe and supportive space to work on their writing.

- Sometimes, it takes an initial requirement to “prime the pump” and help students recognize that support for their writing is easy to access, free, and very helpful, which trumps initial student resistance.

Because of the teaching benefits of one-on-one conferencing, individualized instruction will always be the primary function of the Writing Center because it is the best way to help students grow as writers. However, our staff is also available to work with faculty in developing class workshops or presentations that target particular writing issues. If you would like to discuss the possibility of designing a workshop for your class, or if you have other questions or suggestions about the Writing Center, please feel free to send email to sjlittle@uncg.edu.

Teaching at UNCG since 2003, Sara Littlejohn holds a faculty appointment in the English department and has a bachelor’s degree in Art, English, and Business, a master’s degree in literature, and a doctoral degree in Rhetoric and Composition. She also currently serves as the Writing Across the Curriculum Faculty Development Coordinator.
The University Speaking Center

www.uncg.edu/cst/speakingcenter

Kimberly M. Cuny, Director

The University Speaking Center provides oral communication assistance to UNCG students, faculty, and staff. These services are designed to support our clients with their ongoing process of becoming more confident and competent oral communicators. Located in 3211 MHRA Building, we offer consultations and workshops in three areas: organization and delivery of public speeches; development of knowledge and skills in interpersonal communication; and overall group or team communication success.

Our consultation support is designed to respond to the needs of individual clients. In the Center, undergraduate communication consultants work with clients who are seeking to build upon their knowledge and skills in oral communication. We are pleased to report the feedback from our consultation clients continues to be superior. Many faculty members have told us that, during classroom presentations, they can tell the difference between their students who have come to the Center for help and those who have not.

This consultation assistance is available both individually and in group settings. Clients seeking consultation support can make an appointment to come to the Center where we are happy to work with them no matter where they are in the process of speechmaking. We ask that students looking for our support with course assignments schedule their appointments to take place no later than two days before the final in-class presentation is due. Students need not be enrolled in an SI course to seek help from the Speaking Center. Many of our clients receive assistance with oral communication situations present in their everyday lives.

Our workshop services take the form of dynamic and interactive training sessions on a variety of oral communication topics. We average 100 client-specific workshops each academic year. We facilitate our workshops to UNCG classes at the request of faculty from any discipline, to UNCG student organizations, student services, employee groups, and to nonprofit community groups. We continue to receive praise in audience feedback for our workshops. We are happy to design workshops that teach any public speaking, interpersonal, or group communication topic. Requests for workshops need to be made no later than two weeks before the desired facilitation date to allow our staff members to properly research and
develop the content and related materials. It is never too early to make a request by selecting workshops on our Website.

The University Speaking Center represents UNCG’s commitment to supporting oral communicators. Our services include orientations, an open enrollment evening workshop series, tip sheets, and answers to quick questions via AIM (uncgspeaking). Faculty or organization leaders can request a 10-15 minute informative orientation to our signature services for their group or a 20-25 minute orientation, which includes an activity that helps to identify the source(s) of communication apprehension. Our Strictly Speaking Workshop Series features one-hour interactive learning on a variety of oral communication topics each semester. Our Website features 24/7 support by way of tip sheets and other resources for improving oral communication skills.

Our consultants are undergraduate student employees of the University Speaking Center. Upon faculty recommendation, consultants are trained through an intense three-credit course (CST 390) on pedagogy, peer tutoring, training, and the particulars of public, interpersonal, and group communication. This training provides consultants with the skills and knowledge to do peer tutoring as well as to develop and facilitate our client-specific workshops. Consultants, who must maintain a 3.0 minimum GPA, are recruited from the entire student body to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of UNCG’s speaking-intensive program. All consultant workshop development is completed under the direction of CST faculty and supervised by our directors. In meeting the needs of our clients, most communication workshops can be facilitated in or out of our state-of-the-art training room.

At the Speaking Center, we believe that overall success, in both the workplace and our personal relationships, hinges upon the ability to communicate effectively. Our services are open and available to the entire University community. How can we help you?

Kim Cuny holds a faculty appointment in the Department of Communication Studies. Her research and creative interests include teacher communication in the classroom, teaching tolerance, storytelling, character development, and faculty development. Her publications include articles and teaching ideas in the International Listening Journal, Successful Professor, and Teaching Ideas for the Basic Communication Course. She is the recipient of an Excellence in Teaching Award for her work in the public speaking classroom. In the fall semester of 2008 Kim will serve as Faculty Development Coordinator for SAC.
Forms
Request for Writing-Intensive Credit

____Existing course never approved for WI credit

____New or substantially revised course

This form must be completed by any instructor planning to teach a course for which General Education Program Writing Intensive credit (WI marker) is requested. Normally, the GEC Writing Intensive Committee will certify instructors to offer individual sections of courses with the WI marker unless a special request is made to the Committee to allow all sections of a course (with different instructors) to be taught as Writing Intensive. In the case of existing courses, send this form as a cover for the items indicated below to the Chair of the General Education Core Writing Intensive (GEC WI) Subcommittee. If the course is also to be considered for GEC category credit and/or for another marker, also submit appropriate form for that action. In the case of new or substantially revised courses, send this form in a packet that also includes a course proposal, to the relevant School or College curriculum committee, who should forward the proposal to the UCC.

Department: ____________________________________________________

Phone: ______________

Name of person initiating request:
_____________________________________________________

Course number and title:
____________________________________________________________

WI credit is sought for:

___ the course as approved when taught by (instructor name): _________________

___ all times the course is offered as proposed.

Attach to this form a full explanation of how the course satisfies the WI guidelines (See University Curriculum Guide). That explanation should address points A - F below:

A. Indicate the range of writing assignments you will use (i.e., their types and approximate number and length).

B. Explain the ways in which those assignments will both help students improve their writing and promote learning of class material.

C. Describe ways in which you will provide coaching for students, including guidance in the required revision of at least one substantial paper or other major writing assignment.
D. Explain how assessment of quality and improvement in students’ writing will be included in the final grade.

E. Because of the personal attention and guidance that students will receive, class size should not exceed 25. In exceptional cases where this must be exceeded, specify what additional resources (e.g. reduced teaching load, graduate teaching assistant) will ensure that students receive the attention needed for a WI course.

F. If WI credit is sought all times the course is offered as proposed, explain what will be done to ensure appropriate faculty preparation to maintain the integrity of the course.

I. Department

Course Number and Title ____________________________________________________________

Department/Program ____________________________________________________________

Submitted by ________________________          Date____________

Department Head/Chair __________________________________

Date_____________________

Send form to:
Office of Undergraduate Education
215 Mossman Building

II. General Education Program Writing Intensive Sub-Committee

Approved for Writing Intensive Credit:
   ____ whenever offered as proposed
   ____ for one instructor only: ________________________________

Comments:

Chair ___________________________ Date Approved ______________

GEC WI Sub-Committee
Request for Speaking-Intensive Credit

This form must be completed by any instructor planning to teach a course for which General Education Program Speaking Intensive credit is requested. Normally, the GEC Speaking-Intensive Subcommittee will certify instructors to offer individual sections of courses with the SI marker unless a special request is made to the Committee to allow all sections of a course (with different instructors) to carry the SI marker. If the course is also to be considered for GEC category credit and/or for another marker, also attach the appropriate GEC form and send it to the correct council or committee.

Department___________________________________________

Phone: ______________________

Name of person initiating request:

_____________________________________________________

Course number and title:

____________________________________________________________

SI credit is sought for

____ the course as approved when taught by (instructor name):______________

____ all times the course is offered according to the guidelines submitted by these instructors or others: _________________________________________

Attach to the form an explanation (limit 250 words) of how the course satisfies the SI marker guidelines. (Refer to the Speaking-Intensive Guidelines in the Curriculum Guide.) The explanation should address points A-D below.

A. Attach a proposed syllabus with at least one specific focused learning objective tied to oral communication competency. The syllabus should also reflect instruction time for developing oral competency prior to speaking opportunities, and the grading distribution should reflect graded oral assignments (beyond regular class participation grades).

B. What types of oral communication assignments and activities will you use? Describe in detail the type of assignments (e.g., individual presentation, small group project, small group presentation, counseling interview, debate) you will use. How will these activities both help students improve their oral communication competency and promote learning of class material?

C. How will you assess oral communication competency? What are the methods you will use and how will they impact upon the final grade? Please include a rubric or other device that you will use to assess oral communication competency. See the CAC website for examples.
D. How will you provide instruction, constructive feedback, and opportunities for improvement? Be specific.

E. Because of the personal attention and guidance that students will receive, class size should not exceed 25. In exceptional cases where this must be exceeded, specify what additional resources (e.g., reduced teaching load, graduate teaching assistant) will ensure that students receive the attention needed in a Speaking-Intensive course.