UCLA WRITING PROGRAMS

Writing as a Tool for Learning & Engagement in Online Courses

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July 24, 2019
Young Research Library Conference Room
https://tinyurl.com/Writing-in-Online-Teaching

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Special thanks to HumTech's Tom Garbelotti for his help and insights!

Workshop Learning Outcomes
1. To explore how aspects of the writing process can promote inclusive teaching and help all students (regardless of educational background) engage with course content and instructors in online courses
2. To draft a graded assignment/exam that could involve preparatory writing & devise a preliminary assessment tool
3. To practice designing writing activities and assignments that involve students in the writing process
4. To become familiar with online tools for writing and providing feedback
5. To discuss challenges of incorporating writing in online courses

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Workshop Agenda

PROBLEM

Potential issues with online courses:
- ○ Keeping students engaged
- ○ Gauging student learning (esp. for vulnerable students)
- ○ Ensuring academic integrity
- ○ Employing inclusive, student-centered teaching practices

SOLUTION

Incorporate writing, which is a *"high-impact educational practice"* (AACU)

OUR DEFINITION OF 'Writing' -- Not just formal essay assignments or research papers, but also in-class or take-home exams, including short answer questions or short-form essays. We also define writing as any assignment that asks students to engage with course content by articulating ideas in their own words or through their own lens. We consider "writing," in other words, as thinking that can be externalized in graphic or alphabetic form.

Consideration of student profile

1. PLANNING AHEAD --

1a. Use Backward Design (Starting with the End) to DetermineTypes of Writing to Assign and/or Ways to Use Writing: There are multiple ways to use backward design. At this stage, we highlight two:

a) start with learning outcomes -- to determine what types of assessment to adopt, use backward design to review the course learning objectives and/or the essential questions you want students to think/write about. Then, make decisions about the test or paper you will assign to promote these learning objectives or allow students to engage with the essential questions.

b) start with an assignment -- to determine whether the assessment you have adopted accomplishes the course learning objectives, use backward design to link the assignments to the course learning objectives and/or the essential questions you want students to think/write about.

Course Learning Objectives (LO)	Course Essential Question (EQ)	Graded Assignment (i.e. exam question or task; essay assignment; project) to Achieve 1 LO or to Engage Ss. in Answering 1 EQ
By the end of the course, students will be able to ….	Throughout the course, students will discuss the following essential questions:	Students will be assessed, using the following task:

Section 1a TASK: Reflect on the relationship between the forms of assessment and the course learning goals/outcomes:

Option 1: If you haven't planned the formal assessment tools for your course, reflect on the type of assignment that fits best with the topics and questions students will discuss in your course. What kind of assignments will best achieve the course learning objectives?

Option 2: If you have already designed a formal assessment to assign to students, how will it achieve the course learning objectives?

1b. Writing Clear Assignments: According to Univ. of Wisconsin Writing Center Director Brad Hughes, assessment of student work begins long before they submit it; "it begins with how you design [assignments] and how you integrate them into your course." A well-designed assignment can accomplish several course goals: 1) it can help students connect with the course content; 2) it can help students care about more than the grade; 3) it makes clear to students exactly what is expected of them.

Rationale/Benefits in Online Teaching	Components of Carefully Designed Assignments	Online Tools
● Employing inclusive, student-centered teaching practices	You should include: ● Your expectations & annotated examples of the assignment (e.g., what it is, why students are doing it, how it will be evaluated) ● The rubric that will be used to grade the assignment (more on this later)	Turnitin --- Rubric Manager Online Assignment Expectations -- LS 23L videos

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The sample essay assignment below begins with a succinct statement of the writing assignment. It then explains what the paper should contain and how it will be graded. This clear articulation of the assignment not only helps students know what they are expected to accomplish, but will also help the instructor provide focused feedback.

Writing Project #1 – Evaluation of a Writer's Argument

Assignment: Choose one of the following pieces we have considered this term and write a 3-page essay that evaluates the author's ideas about the influence of social media and communication via mobile devices.

> *Hiding Behind the Screen* – Roger Scruton
> *Could Those Hours Online Be Making Kids Nicer* – Shirley S. Wang
> *Why I Defriend the Old-Fashioned Way* – Joe Queenan
> *How Facebook Ruins Friendships* – Elizabeth Bernstein

Assignment Guidelines: Your essay should contain the following:

1. Some part of your essay must summarize the author's argument. You may think that this part is not necessary because, after all, everyone enrolled in the course has read the essay. Nonetheless, it is an important component because your summary will show how you have understood and interpreted the author's ideas. Make sure to include the author's main claim. Also explain the reasoning the author used and assumptions s/he made to support the argument.

2. The rest of your essay should answer the following question: Do you agree or disagree with the author's ideas? (If you focus on the author's reasoning, do you find his/her ideas reasonable and convincing? If you focus on assumptions, what are they and do you agree with them?)

Grading Rubric

❖ **Summary:** *captures not only what the author said, but the how and why of the arguments the author makes. It avoids listing ideas. It does a good job of selecting what to present. It does not omit important or key parts of the original source. It also does not include unimportant details.*

❖ **Evaluative Thesis:** *one or two sentences that serve as an "umbrella" for the entire paper. It evaluates the validity or reasonableness of the author's argument and "hints" at (rather than explains in great detail) how the writer will evaluate the author's ideas.*

❖ **Idea/Paragraph Development:** *evaluation is supported with quotations, ideas or examples from other experts OR from the writer's own experience. Both the author's ideas and the writer's are clearly explained.*

❖ **Proofreading/ Grammar & Vocabulary:** *limited typos, grammar or vocabulary problems. Errors do not distract the reader or make your ideas unclear.*

2. PRE-WRITING

    a. Writing-to-Engage Activities -- Google doc journal and other activities promote social belonging (Kizilcec & Halawa, 2015) and help instructors gauge student needs and learning

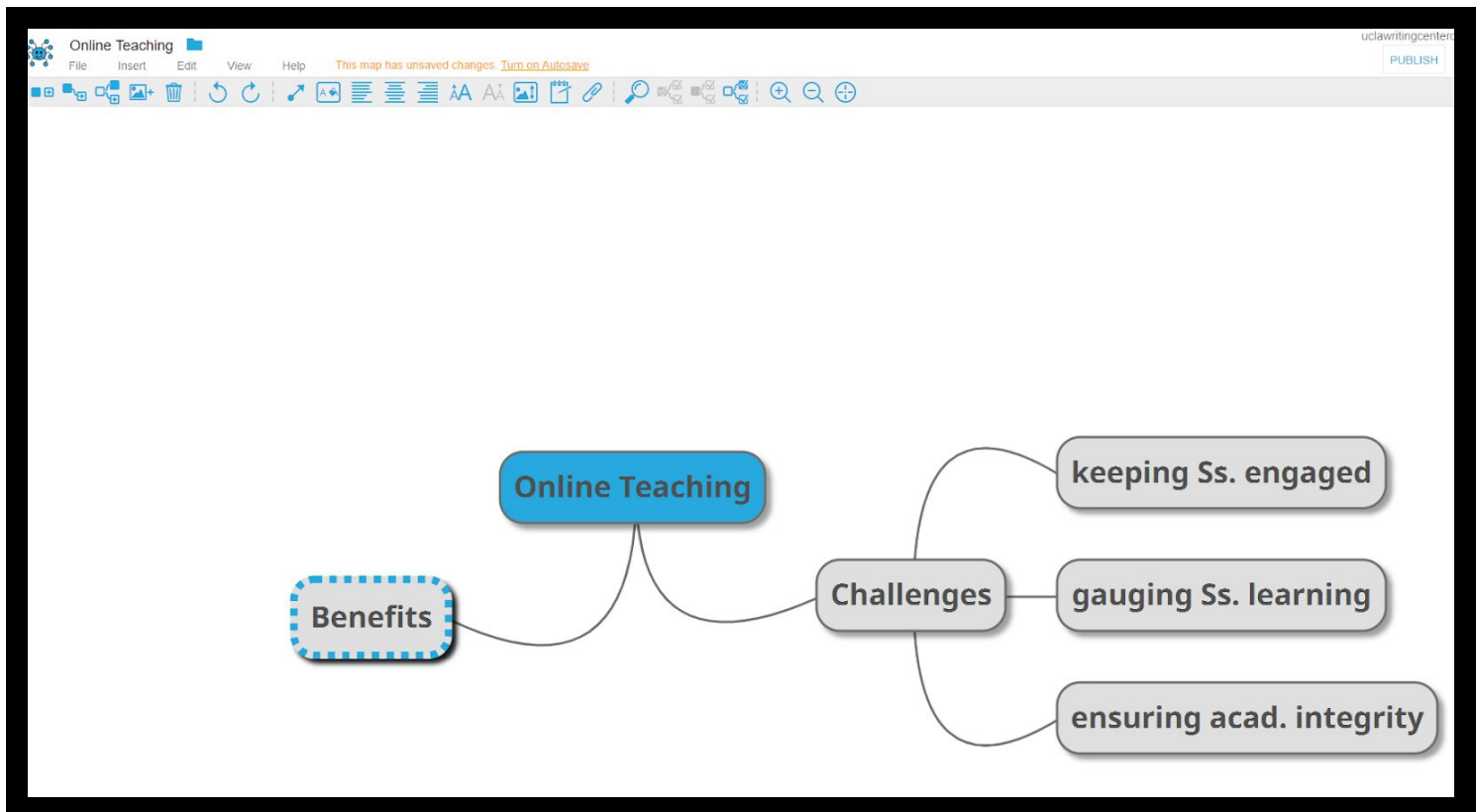| Writing-to-Engage Activities		
Rationale/Benefits in Online Teaching	**Examples**	**Online Tools**
• Keep students engaged • Employ inclusive, student-centered teaching practices	- Journaling - Reader responses - Reflections - Relevance Writing (students tell personal stories that show how their lived experience connects to what they're learning about) - Writing Process Discussion Forum - Discovery drafts (students write "think aloud" drafts or write their preliminary thoughts in the form of a letter) *For more writing-to-learn activities, see the [Writing Across the Curriculum Clearinghouse](#) and [Cal. State LA's list of active learning techniques](#) and the [University of Wisconsin Writing Across the Curriculum resources.](#)*	Google doc private journal b/w instructor & student

    b. Writing-to-Learn Activities -- These activities not only promote social belonging (Kizilcec & Halawa, 2015), but also allow students deeper engagement with course content, help prepare them for formal assessment tasks such as graded essays and exams, and help faculty gauge student needs and learning. As you think about projects and activities to prepare students for larger graded work, consider the following questions:

➔ What kinds of activities will aid students in thinking critically about the course material?

➔ What kinds of activities will help support the course learning objectives?

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➔ What kinds of activities will push students to engage with the course readings/content and communicate that information to multiple audiences, not only the professor/TA, but also to other less expert audiences?
➔ What kinds of assignments will help students prepare for the formal graded assignments?

Writing-to-Learn Activities (WTL) -- these assignments do double duty		
Rationale/Benefits in Online Teaching	**Examples**	**Online Tools**
- Gauging student learning (esp. for vulnerable students) - Ensuring academic integrity - Employing inclusive, student-centered teaching practices	- Journaling - Reader responses or annotations - Reflections - Observations - Concept Mapping - Summaries - **K**now -- **W**ant to know -- **L**earned Chart - Practice exam - I-Search Writing (students explore questions from the course that they care about or want to learn more about) - Relevance Writing (students tell personal stories that show how their lived experience connects to what they're learning about) - Writing Process Discussion Forum -- Crowd-source question generation to create a bank of exam questions or tasks or grading criteria For more activity ideas, go to Stanford Teaching Commons Activities to Boost Student Engagement UCLA Undergraduate Writing Center Handouts & Online Resources	Google doc learning logs b/w instructor & student Discussion boards Concept Maps -- Coggle (free), MindMaple, MindMUp (free), etc.

Example of MindMUp (Compatible with Google Docs)

Section 2 Option #1: Based on 2a, brainstorm ideas for writing-to-engage tasks (not formally graded) that will keep students engaged in the course (and each other) and keep you engaged with the students.	
Assignment Title/Type	**Writing-to-Engage Activities**

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Section 2 Option #2: Based on 2b, brainstorm ideas for writing-to-learn tasks (usually not formally graded) that allow students to explore a topic or prepare for some part of a larger assignment and that allow them to play with the content--and learn it better!	
Assignment Title/Type	**Writing-to-Learn – Informal / Preparatory Assignments**

3. RESPONDING to WRITING -- Peer Response & Instructor Feedback

Peer Response & Instructor Feedback		
Rationale/Benefits in Online Teaching	**Examples**	**Online Tools**
- Keeping students engaged - Gauging student learning (esp. for vulnerable students) - Ensuring academic integrity - Employing inclusive, student-centered teaching practices	-- Involve Students in Collaborative Learning (i.e., peer response, group problem-solving activities) -- promotes learning and social belonging (Kizilcec & Halawa, 2015) between peers **************************** -- Instructor Feedback For more information, see # 5 below. Also, see the College Composition & Communication blog on best practices for screen-cast feedback tools	CCLE Grouping Tool Training video on how to provide effective feedback to peers Turnitin -- PeerMark Zoom + Google docs Vacaroo VoiceThread *************************** Turnitin -- Feedback Studio Turnitin -- Quickmarks Turnitin -- Voice Comments (limited to 3 mns. of comments) in Feedback Studio Tools Audiofeedback -- PoodLL in Moodle or Vacaroo Screencast-o-matic

3a. Peer Feedback

3a.1. Turnitin Peer Mark

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3a.2. Turnitin Peer Mark Set Up

PeerMark Assignment

~~Additional Settings~~

❓ **Award maximum points on review**
○ Yes ◉ No

❓ **Students can view the names of their peers during review**
○ Yes ◉ No

❓ **Students without a submission can review**
○ Yes ◉ No

❓ **Automatically distribute papers for review:**
`2`

❓ **Students can self-select papers for review:**
`0`

❓ **Students must review their own paper**
○ Yes ◉ No

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3a 3. Peer Mark List of Reviews

PeerMark Reviews

Reviews

Search

Download Scaled Responses (xls)

Student ▲	Grade	Submitted	Received	Review
AN, SUNWOO	--	2/2	3	✎
CHENG, TZU-HAN	--	2/2	1	✎
DING, YIFAN	--	2/2	2	✎
GU, NAMJUN	--	2/2	2	✎
KELLEY, JEREMY	--	0/2	0	✎
LEE, SANG HUN	--	2/2	2	✎
LI, HAOCHEN	--	2/2	2	✎

3b. Instructor Feedback: Commenting on student work is not the same as grading it. Instructor written and oral comments are formative in nature, designed not so much to evaluate as to facilitate student learning and help students either revise their writing or improve their subsequent performances on a given type of task.

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Effective Commenting:

- Mirrors conversation with students and their ideas, communicating genuine interest and respect
- Is used by students to revise their performance on a task

- Engages with ideas and analysis with actionable comments instead of providing generic comments such as "the paper needs better topic sentences" or "the thesis is weak" or focusing only on grammar and mechanics.

- Identifies strengths and potential in student work
- Follows explicit evaluation criteria or grading rubric
- Identifies specific ways the student can improve/deepen their work
- Lays out priorities for what to focus on in subsequent work
- Is "doable" and not too time-consuming for the instructor

4. Creating Assessment Rubrics: As indicated above, when formulating graded assignments, it is also a good idea to devise the rubric you will use to evaluate them. The open-ended rubric below is an example of a rubric used to assess students' writing. It is the rubric used to assess the assignment provided in 1b above. The rubric is organized into 3 holistic grading domains (exemplary, proficient, and developing) and 3 demands of writing (conceptual, rhetorical, and technical). Here's a sample rubric:

	Exemplary	**Proficient**	**Developing**
Conceptual Demands This domain focuses on the ideas, thesis, analysis, and content knowledge. Weight: 40 %	*Exemplary writing focusing on conceptual demands.... The summary is accurate, analytical, and focuses on the author's reasoning and assumptions. The essay has a clear and evaluative thesis – one sentence that summarizes your point about the validity or effectiveness of the author's main claim, reasoning and assumptions.*	*Proficient writing focusing on conceptual demands.... The summary is somewhat accurate, analytical, and focuses on the author's reasoning and assumptions. The essay has an unclear thesis.*	*Developing writing focusing on conceptual demands.... The summary is inaccurate, and does not focus on the author's reasoning and assumptions. The essay has no clear thesis.*
Rhetorical Demands This domain focuses on the organization, voice, style, diction/vocabulary, and sentence structure. Weight: 40 %	*Exemplary writing focusing on rhetorical demands.... The essay develops its evaluation, using well-chosen quotations, examples, and thoughtful reasoning with clear explanation. The analysis of the chosen evidence is clear and comprehensive. All points*	*Proficient writing focusing on rhetorical demands.... The essay develops its evaluation, using quotations, examples, and reasoning with an explanation. The analysis of the chosen evidence is somewhat clear and comprehensive. Some points and topic sentences relate to this thesis.*	*Developing writing focusing on rhetorical demands.... The essay develops its evaluation, using minimal quotations, examples. There is little evidence of thoughtful reasoning and clear explanations. The analysis and topic sentences do not relate to the thesis.*

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	and topic sentences relate to this evaluative thesis.		
Technical Demands This domain focuses on the formatting, the spelling/grammar, the due date, and submission details. Weight: 20 %	*Exemplary writing focusing on technical demands....* *The paper has been carefully proofread. There may be a few typos and punctuation or grammar problems, but they do not disrupt communication between the reader and the writer. The paper is turned in on time and submitted in the correct format.*	*Proficient writing focusing on technical demands....* *The paper has been proofread. There are a few typos and punctuation or grammar problems that disrupt communication between the reader and the writer at times. The paper is turned in on time and submitted in the correct format.*	*Developing writing focusing on technical demands....* *The paper has not been proofread. There are many typos and punctuation or grammar problems. The paper is turned in late and submitted in the incorrect format.*
Summative Comments Provide overall feedback and suggestions, not simply justifications. Highlight the glows and grows. **Final Grade/Points=**	Glows:* Grows:*		

*You could also use terms such as "Strengths" and "Stretches" or other terms that give students 1) an idea of their proficiencies (which you could present as aspects you appreciate about their efforts), and 2) a concrete idea of areas for improvement.

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