Writing Matters

Writing Across the Curriculum
Southwestern Community College

Announcements

Thank you to the faculty members who participated in the Fall WAC Training Workshop!

- Delphia Birchfield
- Carol Tucker
- Wendy Buchanan

WAC Workshops Available!

The WAC Coordinator is available for workshops in your classes to help support student writing. The following workshops are available, though we can work together to create a workshop that best works with your class goals.

Research Skills

APA/MLA/or Chicago Styles

Editing and Revising

Short Answer and Essay Exams

Evaluating & Using Academic Sources

Contact Jenn Hippensteel at ext. 4264 or jb_hippensteel@southwesterncc.edu

Writing Assignments and Your Course Goals

When planning anything—a course, a paper, a vacation—it is not unusual to be encouraged to "begin with the end in mind." This certainly is a good practice to maintain while teaching, particularly when it comes to course or program development.

Learning outcomes—the goals we have for our students—help to guide our instruction, inform our practices, and improve our courses from one semester to the next. They are targets we help students to hit, and the success of our students (or the lack thereof) can be valuable feedback when considering course or program design.

Good learning outcomes are specific goals that are based upon the students' needs, often answering the question, "What do my students need to know or know how to do when they complete my course?"

Writing can be a powerful way to help your students reach your course goals and to assess their knowledge at the end of the semester. Because writing helps our students create thought, it encourages them to deeply learn the material about which they are writing. If you have specific skills and knowledge sets that your students need to have at the end of the semester, it makes sense to create writing assignments (both formal and informal) that push students towards attaining those goals.

By clearly and concisely stating the learning outcomes you have for your course and/or program, you are practically creating writing assignments that you can integrate into your classroom. Be creative, and see how writing assignments can help your students achieve their goals.

Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.
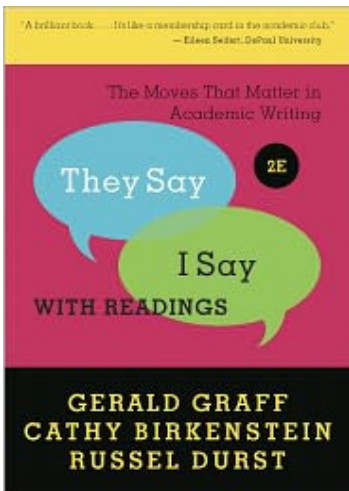—Thomas Jefferson

Book Review: *They Say, I Say: With Readings*

> "A brilliant book . . . It's like a membership card in the academic club."
> — Eileen Seifert, DePaul University

The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing

They Say

2E

I Say

WITH READINGS

GERALD GRAFF
CATHY BIRKENSTEIN
RUSSEL DURST

Published by W.W. Norton & Company, 2011.

This past March, I reviewed the first book in this family, *They Say, I Say*. This companion text contains not only the information from that first book but also readings from a wide variety of sources that encourage students to think critically about the choices made by the authors.

We have all witnessed the difficulty that most of our students have with writing research papers. This text offers a practical way to introduce students to writing with sources.

Authors Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russel Durst have created a text that gives students the words for research. By following the "they say/I say" construction, students can interact with sources and create research papers with purpose and focus.

Further, the readings included in this version offer students a chance to analyze how other authors do this "academic move" in their writing. The readings provide quality examples of how to write research by integrating source material.

This text is useful for any of us that assign research writing in our classes. It can begin the conversation for our students in a real and practical way that they can understand.

Food for Thought

An excerpt from *How Writing Shapes Thinking: A Study of Teaching and Learning* by Judith Langer and Arthur N. Applebee (1987, National Council of Teachers of English):

"Historians who have studied the development of literacy have cited the acquisition of writing within a culture as a fundamental factor in the development of modern thought—promoting in particular those types of discourse (and those types of thinking) we label "rational" or "scientific." They attribute this development to the fact that the act of writing facilitates a logical, linear presentation of ideas, and to the permanence of writing (as opposed to the fleeting nature of talk), permitting reflection upon and review of what has been written. Written language not only makes ideas more widely and easily available, it changes the development and shape of the ideas themselves" (Langer and Applebee 14).