Resources for Teaching Writing: An Annotated Bibliography

About This Bibliography
This annotated bibliography includes articles for faculty and TAs of all disciplines who are interested in integrating writing into their college and university courses. It focuses on the following topics:

- How Writing Makes Better Learning
- How Writing is Different in the Various Disciplines
- Designing Writing Assignments
- Responding to Student Writing
- Rethinking the (Over)Focus on Grammar

Articles were chosen with an eye toward readability and each article is ranked: "highly accessible," "pretty accessible," "moderately accessible," or "accessible."

(A brief overview of all of the categories discussed here can be found in Kate Kiefer's "Integrating Writing into Any Course: Staring Points" at http://wac.colostate.edu/aw/teaching/kiefer2000.htm.)

How Writing Makes Better Learning
These articles focus on how writing can be used to increase learning in any discipline. In this sense, writing is not only the "product" of a course, but is also a tool in getting students to learn the content of a course.

Elbow, Peter. "Writing for Learning: Not Just for Demonstrating Learning." Writing for Learning: Now Just for Demonstrating Learning. Amherst: U of Massachusetts, 1994. 1-4.
—highly accessible

Elbow begins by providing a number of "low stakes" writing assignments, (such as journal writing, think pieces, portfolios, etc.), arguing that these more informal writing opportunities allow students to develop their understanding of course concepts.

Faery, Rebecca Blevins. "Teachers and Writers: The Faculty Writing Workshop and Writing Across the Curriculum." Writing Program Administration 17.1-17.2 (1993): 31-42.
—highly accessible

Faery explains the usefulness of using writing to further the goals of learning in various disciplines by narrating her experience in a faculty workshop. Faery argues that: (1) the idea that that writing "problems" are located in students must be challenged, (2) the differences between what counts as "good writing" in any particular discipline must be realized, and (3) instructors should be encouraged to move beyond "correcting" writing and focus on more substantive issues. Faery concludes by providing some feedback from faculty about their experiences in the workshop.

Herrington, Anne J. "Writing to Learn: Writing Across the Disciplines." College English 43.4 (Apr. 1981): 379-387.
—highly accessible

Herrington convincingly argues that writing can enrich learning, and she reports specific successful strategies employed by colleagues in various disciplines. These insights and examples were gathered during a long-term faculty workshop, where faculty members in various disciplines integrated writing into courses in their regular teaching load. Herrington suggests connecting assignments to course objectives, moving from less to more complex conceptual tasks, defining the assignment with a reasonable number of criteria, and placing less emphasis on mechanical issues. Herrington provides a number of useful examples, as well as samplings of student feedback about the newly writing-enriched courses.

How Writing is Different in Various Disciplines

These articles emphasize that what constitutes "good writing" differs from discipline to discipline.

Carroll, Lee Ann. "A Preview of Writing Development" and "A Concluding Look at Development." Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers. Carbondale: SIU Press, 2002. 1-28.
—moderately accessible

In this article, Carroll argues that different disciplines require different sorts of writing, and she closely examines the experience of four students from different disciplines (a sampling from a larger study). Carroll claims that writing assignments require high levels of literacy to interpret; that faculty are likely to underestimate how much writing differs from course to course; that training in first-year composition does not always inform students' later writing in their disciplines; that students writing may get worse before it gets better; and that standardized assessment cannot adequately capture the diversity of students' writing experiences.

Coffin, Caroline, et al. "Writing for the Different Disciplines." Teaching Academic Writing: A Toolkit for Higher Education. London; New York: Routledge, 2003. 45-72.
—highly accessible

Coffin et al pragmatically approach the different types of writing employed in various disciplines. Using the broader categories of sciences, social sciences, and humanities, the authors argue for explicit assignments and provide a number of useful examples. While this article can be assumptive at moments, its numerous examples provide good fodder for moving from theorizing disciplinary difference to taking responsibility for how it affects writing done across the curriculum.

Zhu, Wei. "Faculty Views on the Importance of Writings, the Nature of Academic Writing, and Teaching and Responding to Writing in the Disciplines." Journal of Second Language Writing 13 (2004): 29-48.
—pretty accessible

Zhu begins by highlighting the issues surrounding writing in different disciplines, including: the need to be able to employ discipline-specific writing in upper division courses; the transferability of skills learned in English composition courses; and the need for all disciplines to be responsible for teaching writing. For the bulk of the article, Zhu reports findings from interviews with ten instructors in business and engineering fields, and she notes that these instructors tended to view academic writing instruction as a skill to be learned in a writing course, or as a task to be jointly undertaken by language/writing and content course instructors.

Discipline-Specific Sources
There are a wide variety of sources that focus on writing in particular disciplines–too many to be listed here! Check out the following sites:

Center for Writing Excellence, Ohio University (very detailed list):
http://www.ohiou.edu/writing/teaching_resources.htm

Writing in Particular Disciplines, Doyle Online Writing Lab at Reed College:
http://academic.reed.edu/writing/disciplines.html

Writing Across the Curriculum, Christopher Newport University:
http://www.cnu.edu/wcenter/wac/disciplines.html

University Writing Program, George Washington University (selected disciplines):
http://www2.gwu.edu/~uwp/wid/wid-teachingresources.htm

For more specific resources, search for your own department or discipline – try typing "writing in the disciplines" and "[your discipline]" and/or "writing across the curriculum" and "[your discipline]" into academic and non-academic search engines.

Designing Writing Assignments
These articles focus on writing effective assignments and possible alternatives to the "research paper."

Larson, Richard L. "The 'Research Paper' in the Writing Course: A Non-Form of Writing." The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook, 4th ed. Eds. Edward P.J. Corbett, Nancy Myers, and Gary Tate. New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 216-221.
—highly accessible

After clearly extolling the values of research and teaching students to research, Larson succinctly criticizes the notion of the "research paper," noting that such papers are often only vaguely defined (and definable). Larson notes that the traditional focus on the library as the locus of research discounts the various other sorts of research performed across the curriculum, and he also questions the idea that English teachers can prepare students to write "research papers" in other disciplines.

Lindemann, Erika. "Developing Writing Assignments." A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995. 207-215.
—highly accessible

Lindemann argues that better student writing begins with more meaningful and well-designed assignments, and she explains how students can be presented with clear "rhetorical problems" which lead to effective writing. She notes that writing assignments should: engage student interest; be clear in purpose; have a defined audience; clearly spell-out the type of writing desired (which need not be the essay); and establish criteria for success. Lindemann also provides a detailed heuristic for instructors and a sample assignment.

Moulton, Margaret R. and Vicki L. Holmes. The Research Paper: A Historical Perspective. Teaching English in the Two-Year College, May 2003. 365-373.
—highly accessible

In this brief article, Moulton and Holmes explore the history of the research paper, questioning its ubiquitous appearance in writing classes. The article traces the "rise" of the research paper in the late 19th century, outlines debates over teaching the research paper, and offers a variety of alternatives. While the article is technically geared toward those who teach writing in English departments, its light-hearted approach to this widely applicable issue will be relevant to those using writing in other disciplines.

Speck, Bruce W. "Constructing Writing Assignments." Grading Students' Classroom Writing: Issues and Strategies. Washington, DC: Graduate School of Education and Human Development. The George Washington University, 2000. 11-26.
—highly accessible

Speck claims that three main concepts guide the construction of good writing assignments. First, he suggests carefully determining the purpose and audience, and he notes that faculty members might consider having students write for audiences that they specify—such as their other class members, other members of the discipline, or audiences in the nonacademic world. Speck also suggests clarifying what is essential and what is optional in the assignment, and not assuming that students know particular disciplinary conventions. Finally, Speck advocates that instructors clearly articulate what standards are used in evaluating the assignment, and he warns against over-focusing on grammar conventions and using vague terminology.

Walvoord, Barbara. "Giving the Assignment." Helping Students Write. New York: MLA, 1982. 43-56.
—highly accessible

Walvoord explains how to produce effective assignments, and she focuses on defining the audience for the assignment, helping students focus their topic (and hence their papers), and clarifying what would constitute successful completion of the assignment. (The larger book is the result of a seven-year naturalistic study.)

Responding to Student Writing

These articles provide theoretical and practical advice on responding to student writing.

Elbow, Peter. "High Stakes and Low Stakes Assignments and Responding to Writing."
Writing to Learn. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1997. 5-13.
—highly accessible

Elbow suggests that instructors employ both low stakes and high stakes writing in their classrooms, and he explains that low stakes writing is intended to get students to think, learn, and understand the material, while high stakes writing is typically polished writing that is graded. Elbow argues that low stakes writing improves the quality of later high-stakes pieces, gives a view of how students are understanding the material in a low pressure environment, and encourages students to keep up with assigned reading. Elbow also provides concrete approaches for responding to both low and high stakes writing, including supportive response, descriptive/observational responses, and high stakes critical response.

Herrington, Anne. "Assignment and Response." A Rhetoric of Doing. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1992. 244-260.
—pretty accessible

Herrington argues for more thorough and effective assignment design by examining a number of example assignments and teacher comments. Herrington argues that assignments will be more effective if they invite students to address an issue rather than write abstractly on a "topic," and she also recommends teacher consultation throughout the process of inquiry and writing. When responding to student papers, she suggests writing comments in a way that encourages revision and emphasizes the positive points in the paper – while still suggesting where the paper needs work.

Horvath, Brooke K. "The Components of Written Response: A Practical Synthesis of Current Views." The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook, 4th ed. Eds. Edward P.J. Corbett, Nancy Myers, and Gary Tate. New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 243-257 (with long bibliography).
—accessible (some knowledge assumed in the review of various articles)

Horvath takes the reader on a quick tour of seminal texts regarding responding to student writing. She endorses "formative evaluation," which "treats a text as part of an ongoing process of skills acquisition and improvement," rather than "summative evaluation," which typically justifies a grade and is relatively unhelpful for the student writer (244). Horvath emphasizes that productively responding to student writing places learning and responsibility in the hands of the student, and she notes that instructors need to be aware of the theories and assumptions that inform their responding strategies.

Sommers, Nancy. "Responding to Student Writing." CCC 33.2 (May 1982): 148-156.
—highly accessible

Sommers' advice grows from a study of the commenting styles of 35 teachers. She recommends focusing on a few substantive issues and not commenting on errors in usage, diction, or style, as attending to surface errors tends to diminish the effect of teacher comments on more substantive issues (when both are provided). Sommers also notes that teacher comments need to be specific to the particular student's paper and should provides strategies for responding to the critiques offered. Sommers provides examples from student papers to illustrate her points.

White, Edward. "Power and Agenda Setting in Writing Assessment." Assessment of Writing. New York: MLA, 1996. 9-24.
—accessible [and stimulating, if not immediately applicable in the classroom]

White situates instructors' everyday practice in responding to papers in the larger frame of assessment by analyzing the varying stakes that different groups have in assessment. White examines what writing teachers; researchers and theorists; testing firms and governing bodies; and students want out of assessment, concluding that there must be more negotiation and compromise among these various groups.

Rethinking the (Over)Focus on Grammar
These articles discuss approaches to dealing with grammar issues in student writing, and many encourage striking a balance between fluency and "content" issues.

Bean, John. "Dealing with Issues of Grammar and Correctness." Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996. 53-60.
—highly accessible

Bean thoroughly explores the issues surrounding grammar – and marking grammar in student writing – in a way that appreciates the concerns of non-English faculty. In the first section, Bean notes the difficulty of teaching sentence correctness, questions what it means to know grammar, and explores the politics of grammar and usage. In the second section, Bean summarizes recent studies of error and offers strategies that will help students correct their own grammatical mistakes. In the final section, Bean offers policies and strategies for teachers, including shifting away from "correcting" papers and instead requiring students to revise their own work.

Bushman, Donald and Elizabeth Ervin. "Rhetorical Contexts of Grammar: Some Views from Writing-Emphasis Courses." The Place of Grammar in Writing Instruction: Past, Present, and Future. Eds. Susan Hunter and Ray Wallace. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1995. 136-158.
—pretty accessible

After exploring how grammar can be thought of more rhetorically, the authors analyze how twelve instructors from across campus responded to a error-prone student paper. Bushman and Ervin provide five "profiles" of how faculty responded, including: (1) "the advocate," who offers support but no strategies; (2) "the confirmed non-expert," who does not feel they can or should deal with grammar issues; (3) "the editor," who corrects the students' writing while responding; (4) "the general rhetorician," who vaguely and briefly comments on grammar issues; and (5) "the

contextual rhetorician," who has some sense of disciplinary requirements for writing. While the "solutions" offered at the end of the article are a bit brief, the "profiles" provide good sites for teachers to problematize their own practice.

Heyden, Todd. "'See Everything, Overlook a Great Deal, Correct a Little': Rethinking the Role of Grammar in Writing Instruction." English Journal 92.3 (Jan 2003): 15-17.
—highly accessible

In this brief article, Heyden light-heartedly confesses to being a grammar "correction addict" and explains his new approach, where he "sees everything" (reads over the paper completely), "overlooks a great deal" (decides that he can't mark all the errors), and then "corrects a little" (chooses one or two grammar issues to comment on). Heyden discusses the motivation to correct errors despite repeated studies that reveal that such correcting is not helpful, and he also emphasizes how teacher correction discourages students from relying on themselves.

Williams, Joseph M. "The Phenomenology of Error." CCC 32 (1981): 152-68.
—pretty accessible

The two decades since this article's publication have not lessened the force of its important and troubling conclusion: instructors find error in texts mostly because they are looking for them. Williams makes this point by exploring the unjustified fury over grammatical errors, by locating grammatical errors in grammar handbooks themselves, and through a somewhat entertaining presentation of charts and graphs. If one is going to read only one article about "the grammar debate" (and laugh), this is clearly the piece.

Zamel, Vivian. "Strangers in Academia: The Experiences of Faculty and ESL Students Across the Curriculum." The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook, 4th ed. Eds. Edward P.J. Corbett, Nancy Myers, and Gary Tate. New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 100-112.
—accessible (contains some jargon)

Zamel begins by examining two disparate faculty opinions on ESL writers in college classrooms, and she questions the assumption that issues of language fluency are best dealt with in some "other" class (typically a high school or college level English classroom). She critiques the deficit model" of language learning by presenting the perspectives of two ESL students. The chapter concludes with theoretical reflections on how faculty can better grapple with the important issues that various cultures bring to the classroom and university.

Other Bibliographies on the Teaching of Writing and WAC

WAC Clearinghouse "Bibliography of Bibliographies":
http://wac.colostate.edu/links/index.cfm?category=Bibliographies

Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing
http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/bb/contents.html

Indiana University, WAC Bibliography:
http://www.iub.edu/~cwp/lib/wacgen.shtml

Marshall University WAC Manual:
http://www.marshall.edu/wac/manual2k1/Section-J.doc

WAC Clearinghouse General Bibliography:
http://wac.colostate.edu/bib/index.cfm?category=Curriculum

University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Bibliographies by Discipline:
http://www.uwm.edu/letsci/edison/wn.html