



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TOLEDO

WAC'ED

Today's workshop is designed to do two things:

- Introduce new faculty to the principles and practices of WAC
- Engage experienced WAC faculty in discussions of their own best practices

Summer 2018



Five Goals for WAC

- Sustain the writing of students across their academic careers.
- Increase student engagement with learning
- Improve student writing proficiency
- Create a campus culture that supports writing
- Create a community of faculty around teaching and student writing by moving out of our silos

Writing Intensive courses are considered high impact practices by the American Association of Colleges and Universities.



Writing to Learn-Learning to Write

- Writing to Learn

Writing to communicate—or what James Britton calls "transactional writing"—means writing to accomplish something, to inform, instruct, or persuade.... Writing to learn is different. We write to ourselves as well as talk with others to objectify our perceptions of reality; the primary function of this "expressive" language is not to communicate, but to order and represent experience to our own understanding. In this sense language provides us with a unique way of knowing and becomes a tool for discovering, for shaping meaning, and for reaching understanding. (p. x)

Short, low-stakes, impromptu, or informal. Often done in-class. Response depends on type.

Toby Fulwiler and Art Young (1982) explain in their "Introduction" to *Language Connections: Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*:



- Writing to Engage

Writing to Learn-Learning to Write

Surface Misconceptions



WAC approaches in Geology courses

Dealing with persistent misconceptions

A **gateway** question in Physical Geology

Physical Geology is a Gen Ed / Core Curriculum course

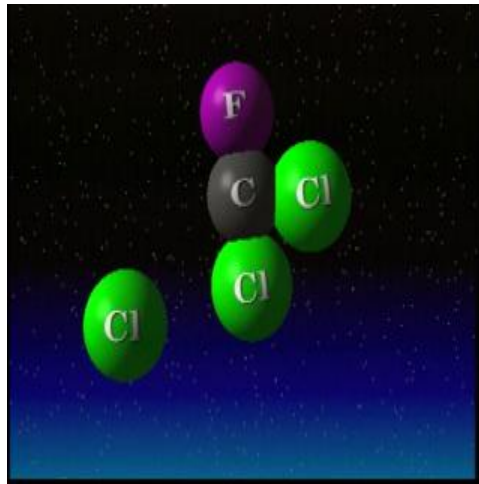
The writing prompt:

at the beginning of class, before discussing the topic

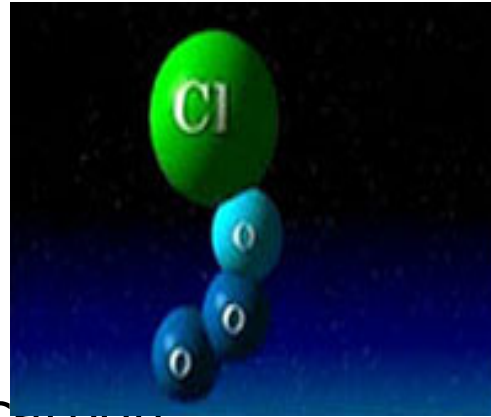
*Does carbon dioxide released by human activities
affect ozone in the atmosphere?*



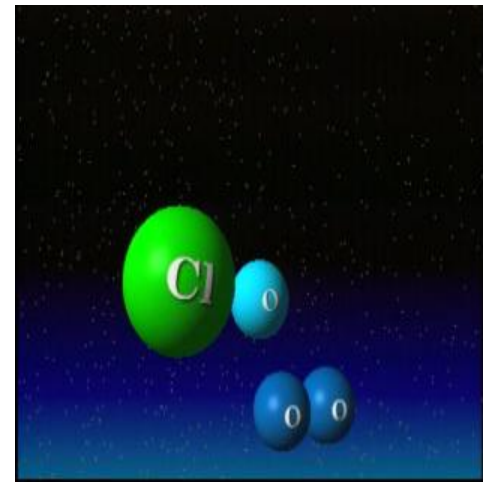
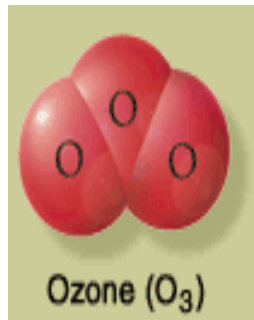
CFCs and ozone depletion



Discussion: *What are CFCs?*
How do CFCs degrade ozone?



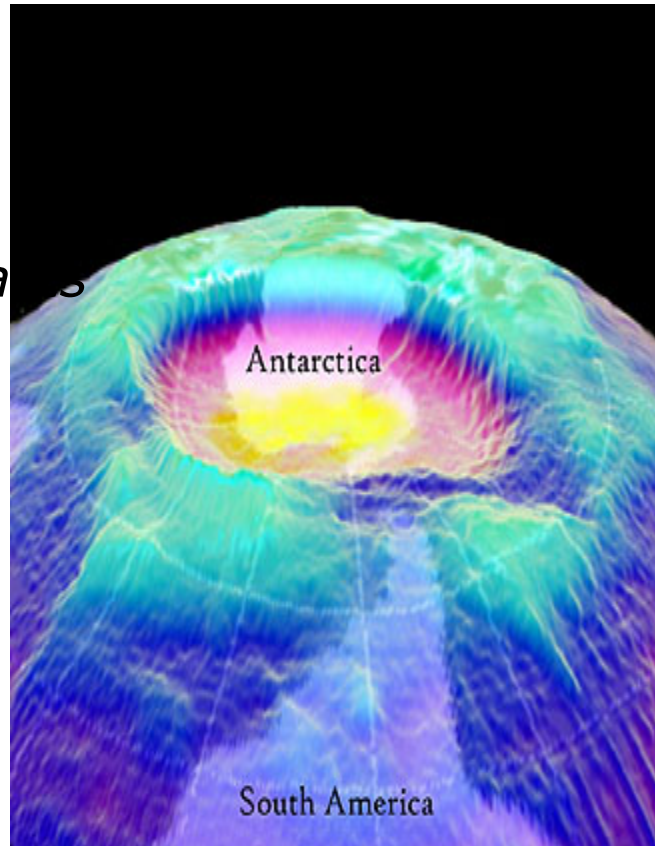
CFC = chloro fluoro carbon



Discussion: *What is ozone?*
Why is ozone important?

The Earth's ozone layer

Discussion:
Global impacts

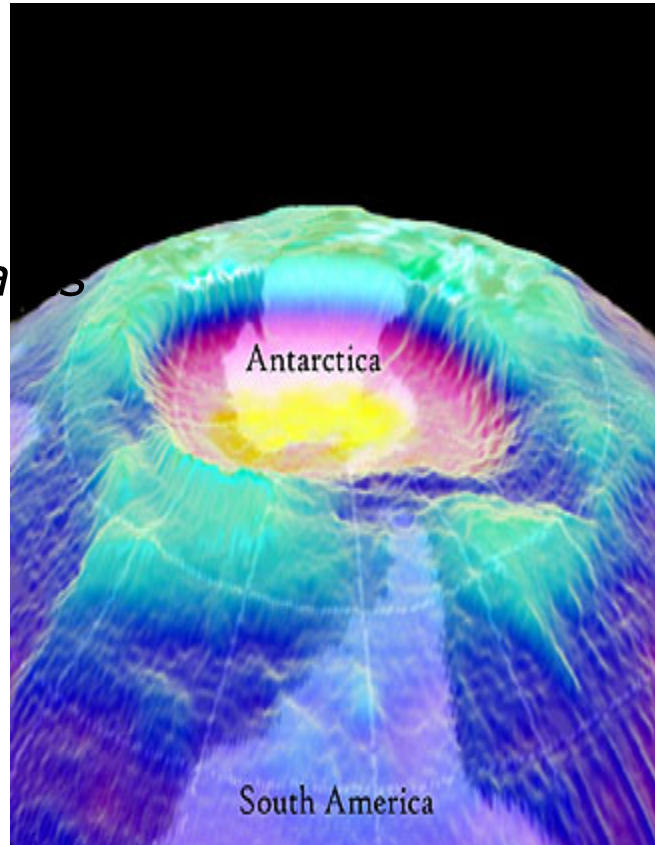


REALLY Important Point:

Ozone depletion IS NOT the same issue
as Global Climate Change

The Earth's ozone layer

Discussion:
Global impacts



Another REALLY Important Point:

Carbon dioxide DOES NOT deplete ozone

**** *This written response reappears on the next exam***

Writing to Learn-Learning to Write

Surface Misconceptions

Surface Prior Learning



Writing to Learn-Learning to Write



- Before beginning a lesson or a unit, ask students to free write about the topic for three to five minutes.
- Allow for whole class or small class discussion afterwards.
- Allows you to correct misperceptions early on, and allows students to connect new knowledge to old

Writing to Learn-Learning to Write

Surface Misconceptions

Surface Prior Learning

Clarify content and answer questions



Writing to Learn-Learning to Write



Use one minute notes at the end of class to give students a chance to ask for clarification on a point they didn't quite get, or further information on that topic.

Review and select a few to open the next class.

- These notes can also serve as formative assessment for you. They can teach you what you thought you taught but didn't quite...

Writing to Learn-Learning to Write

Students can also use writing to learn AFTER the test. Here is Kevin Egan's approach:



Exam Review

- Exams are primarily an evaluation exercise
- Exams are a wonderful opportunity to be a learning exercise
- Students get up to 1/3 points back for explaining in writing:
 - why their answer was wrong
 - what the right answer is and why, showing all steps
 - Including multiple choice questions
- 1/3 Points back offers a good balance



Benefits of Exam Review

- Time in-class focuses on most difficult questions after exam reviews
- Many students say they are not good exam takers; here is their chance
- Grade distribution can be the same with final grade better indicator of effort



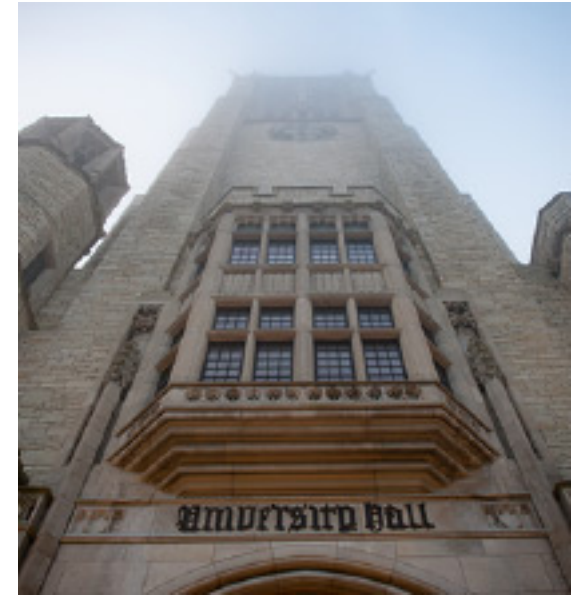
Writing to Learn-Learning to Write

- Define the vocabulary
 - Ask students to define a key term in their own words and then use it in a sentence. Report out.
- Summarize
 - A reading selection
 - A video
 - A field observation
- Rhetorical analysis
 - What is the writer's purpose? Who is their audience? Why does it matter? What evidence do they provide?
- Translate to a new audience
 - Explain a technical text to an English major. Explain a poem to an electrical engineer.



Writing to Learn-Learning to Write

Staged writing projects decrease performance anxiety, allow on the spot teaching and learning, and help students synthesize learning.



[Staged writing projects](#)

[WAC resources](#)



Writing Assignments Best Practices

1. Writing should meet teaching goals.
2. Who are your students writing for? What rhetorical situation are you creating in your assignment?
3. Manageable steps.
4. Process information and format requirements
5. Evaluation Criteria. Most important learning demonstration should get the most points.

Writing assignments should be in writing.



Responding to Student Writing

- Low stakes writing—writing to learn—requires minimal response.
 - Check marks Use in class Points
- Peer review
 - Structured
 - Instructed
 - Graded
 - No one writes alone
- Purpose of Response
 - To guide revision? To justify a grade? To clear up a misconception?



Three Approaches or how to WAC anything

- These are my personal favorites:
- Surfacing prior knowledge
 - Ask students to write for three minutes everything they already know about whatever topic you are going to address. Set it aside.
 - Present the lesson.
 - Ask students if anything on their sheet has changed, if I didn't cover something they already knew, or to identify anything I said that calls into question what they thought they knew.
- Summarizing class
 - At the end of class, ask students to spend three minutes writing down the key things they learned. Collect them. Read them. Select the key elements you wanted students to remember and read them at the beginning of the next class.
- Questioning class
 - At the end of class ask students to write an exit pass. What was discussed in class or covered in the readings that is still unclear? Explain at the beginning of the next class.



Responding to Student Writing

- Hierarchy of Rhetorical Concerns
- Audience, Purpose, Occasion
- Focus: Thesis, Reasons, Unity/Coherence
- Development: Reasons, Evidence, Explanation
- Style/Mechanics/Conventions: Readability, Care and Polish, Patterns of Error

- Too much detail exhausts both reader and writer.



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The WAC class syllabus

- Student Learning Outcomes identify what you expect students to be able to do with writing as a result of your class.
- Include a calendar that shows the staging of writing through the course as well as the variety of writing.
- Demonstrate inclusion of revision and peer review opportunities
- Create opportunities for written reflection
- Identify the course as WAC



Peer Review

Peer Review Guide for WAC Syllabi

- How does the syllabus explain to students that this is a WAC course? Will students understand how writing is being used?
- What aspects of writing are included in the learning objectives for the course? Are they explicit enough?
- What major assignments are described in the syllabus? Are they writing related? Content related?
- What comments about grading does the syllabus include? Do they seem appropriate? Are revisions allowed? When and how?
- What writing activities appear on the calendar? Will students be able to see the staging or the scaffolding for any major assignments?
- What variety of writing activities are visible from the syllabus?
- Where does the syllabus invite reflection? Suggestions?
- Tips you would like to share?



Critical Reflection

How it can work:

Assessing one's own performance of the learning objectives

Critically reflecting on changes in one's point of view

Connecting learning to previous and anticipated experiences

Taking an outside perspective on oneself

How it can help: Metacognition and transfer

