

# Writing Across the Curriculum and Transfer of Learning

aka "WAC+Transfer"

ENGL 680, Bradley Dilger, Spring 2015

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Heavilon Hall 303B tentatively TR noon to 1:30pm, W 2:30 to 4:00pm and by appt

## Introduction

This graduate seminar turns towards two areas of rhetoric and composition which are undoubtedly important when considering our interface with the university community as a whole. Writing across the curriculum is an approach to learning which argues for the value of writing in all subject areas, with appropriate infrastructure and support for all involved, for example, imagining rhetoric and composition's role beyond service, and providing infrastructure to help all other departments teach writing. Recently writing transfer has seen a huge resurgence in interest among writing researchers, most using empirical methods to study transfer. Like many things in our field, this awakening to transfer began with a focus on first-year writing, but has now broadened to reach professional writing and other areas.

While the question of transfer is important for FYW, research which indicates writing skills, experience, and knowledge are context sensitive suggests transfer is even more important for WAC: without the ability to adapt prior learning, how are writers to learn the genres, rhetorics, subject matter, and content of discipline-specific writing as they move deep into their fields?

By its very nature, WAC demands a knowledge of writing outside of English studies, or at least not customary for it. With this in mind, our conversations will be designed to discuss not only transfer but WAC as well. Our understanding of their intersection will arise from study of both, meaning we will often read texts which focus on transfer with an eye to WAC, and vice-versa.

## Texts

Our focus will be six books, most short:

1. Bazerman, C., Little, J., Bethel, L., Chavkin, T., Fouquette, D., & Garufis, J. (2005). *Reference guide to writing across the curriculum*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press. 978-1932559422
2. McLeod, S. H. & Soven, M. (1992). *Writing across the curriculum: A guide to developing programs*. Fort Collins: WAC Clearinghouse.
3. Melzer, D. (2014). *Assignments across the curriculum: A national study of college writing*. Logan: Utah State University Press. 978-0874219395.

4. Nowacek, R. (2011). *Agents of integration: Understanding transfer as a rhetorical act*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. 978-0809330485.
5. Soliday, M. (2011). *Everyday genres: Writing assignments across the disciplines*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. 978-0809330195.
6. Yancey, K. B., Robertson, L., & Taczak, K. (2014). *Writing across contexts: Transfer, composition, and sites of writing*. Logan: Utah State University Press. 978-0874219371.

I will also distribute relevant articles via my course web site.

Please bring all relevant texts to class on the days we are engaging them. Paper and electronic versions are equally welcome.

## Objectives

1. Identify and become familiar with influential and important texts for writing across the curriculum and writing transfer;
2. Investigate appropriate research methods for studying WAC and/or transfer;
3. Improve ability to share scholarly information about writing with non-specialist audiences;
4. Participate in scholarly conversations and gain knowledge about the issues currently relevant for WAC and/or transfer.

## Assignments

1. **Class participation and engagement.** (20%) Participate in conversations and group activities which focus on our readings, leading our class discussion at least once during the semester.
2. **Online participation and engagement.** (10%) 150 minutes a week is not very much time, and classroom discussions are extremely low-output. (Ten of us listen while one speaks. Yes, listening is important, but 2,000+ minutes of one at a time?) Participate in online conversations which extend our time in the classroom. We will discuss the specific forms which appeal to you in our first two classes and begin this work in our second week.
3. **Explainer.** (I don't like this name yet.) (10%) Create a document or online resource designed to help a non-specialist learn about a concept relevant for WAC and/or transfer. Draft and then test your explainer with relevant audiences at Purdue, and make revisions accordingly.
4. **Semester project.** (60%) Conduct an in-depth investigation of an issue relevant for WAC and/or transfer, and produce a scholarly product which fits your research interests, plans for the future, and level of experience. Write a proposal, then share a preliminary draft, a draft, and a final project.

## Policies

The nature of graduate education suggests less need for the lengthy policy statements typical for first-year writing. Policies Purdue requires I share are below.

1. **Be nice.** Our classrooms and electronic spaces are places where everyone should feel welcome. When we work in the community, we should make people want to know more about us.
2. **Engage.** Participation is a requirement. Share your work early and often.
3. **Grading follows a standard 10-point scale.** If I have to consider anything other than an A for your work, there's a problem and we'll be talking about it in depth before midterm.
4. **Learning accommodations are gladly made.** If you have a special learning need, let me know ASAP and I'll do my best to make arrangements which are mutually acceptable and beneficial.
5. **Privacy matters.** Purdue is serious about FERPA. We don't email grades or discuss them in front of others. Office hours are best.
6. **Talk to me.** I text, web, tweet, Facebook, Skype, Gmail chat, etc. and welcome conversations with you in all those forms. Come by my office; if I'm there and not busy, I'm happy to talk to you. One caveat: I don't use voice mail due to my poor hearing. Please text or email me instead.
7. **Use technology wisely.** I invite you to bring a laptop or tablet to class and use it as you see fit. But don't get lost in it—or distract others around you.

## Purdue policies

*aka the fine print*

**Academic Integrity:** Purdue offers a detailed “Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students” at <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php>

**Attendance:** The Dean of Students has established a “Class Attendance and Absence Reporting Policy”; find it at <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/services/classabsence.php>.

“Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). GAPS Policy: Students will be excused for funeral leave and given the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for missed assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family.” The full policy is at <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/services/griefabsencepolicyforstudents.php>.

**Emergencies:** As per Purdue policy, “In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructors or TAs via email or phone. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis. For

more information about Emergency Preparedness, see [http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency\\_preparedness/](http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/).”

**Nondiscrimination:** “Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life.”

“Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a veteran. The University will conduct its programs, services and activities consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and orders and in conformance with the procedures and limitations as set forth in Executive Memorandum No. D-1, which provides specific contractual rights and remedies.”

**Purdue University’s Student Conduct Code** applies to all work related to our course (in classrooms, completing course work, etc.):

[http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student\\_conduct/index.html](http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student_conduct/index.html)

**Students with Disabilities:** “Purdue University is required to respond to the needs of the students with disabilities as outlined in both the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 through the provision of auxiliary aids and services that allow a student with a disability to fully access and participate in the programs, services, and activities at Purdue University. ... It is the student's responsibility to notify the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.purdue.edu/drc>) of an impairment/condition that may require accommodations and/or classroom modifications.”

## **Overview schedule**

For a far more detailed schedule, please see the course web site.