

# **Writing across the Curriculum: Authenticating Nursing**

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# Overview

- Quick overview of what this discussion is all about
  - What is WAC or WID
  - What about nursing and writing...how do they fit together?
  - Is it all just a Hill of Bean(s)??


# To begin...Take 5 minutes.....

1. What value do you-or might you put on writing in nursing?
2. Give examples of how you use writing as a learning tool in your teaching?



# WAC or WID??

- **WAC: Writing Across the Curriculum**
  - Writing activities useful in all courses, helping tools in learning all disciplines
- **WID: Writing within the Discipline**
  - Learning to write in a particular discipline/profession:
    - Means possessing knowledge of the discipline, & its ways of doing things ('insider knowledge')

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- Is there a relationship between writing ability, learning outcomes and thinking?  
(Poirrier 1997)
  - What value do we put on writing?
    - Writing to produce data, writing to demonstrate analysis, writing to describe student learning, writing to encourage reflection?
  - What kind of writing do we ask our students to do?
  - What are we hoping to accomplish with student writing?

# Why we care ..some questions


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- Appropriate for our discipline?
- Time away from content?
- Grading papers?
- Special expertise?



# Why we care..some answers

- ◆ Bean: integrating writing and other critical thinking activities into a course improves student learning
  - Also thinking skills for posing questions, proposing hypotheses, gathering & analysing data, making arguments.
- Activities must be planned & fostered throughout course
- Relationship between writing ability, learning outcomes & thinking skills??
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- Writing assignments are most flexible and most intensive way to integrate critical thinking tasks into a course
  - writing process itself entails complex critical thinking
  - Much attention given by Bean to class discussions, small group activities, & other strategies encouraging students to work collaboratively to expand, develop & deepen their thinking



# Strategies

- First of all....must have departmental 'buy-in' to succeed.
- Many possibilities for easy integration into classes....(Poirrier has great ideas!)
  - Formalised
  - Exploratory
  - Tasks for small group problem solving
  - Think-on-your feet in class
  - Focusing questions for class debates
  - Practice exam questions

# Strategies

- Create opportunities for active problem solving
  - Help students become engaged in the issues
  - Use formal assignments or 'one-minute' freewrites in class
- Present knowledge as dialogic not informational
  - Even in science many theories change or develop over time
- Give feedback on at least some writings..peers or teacher

# Formalised



- Short essay style
- Short write-to-learn assignments:
- For example: present a proposition that students defend or refute:
  - Bean: “Based on the attached case, the nurse manager should/should not honour the patient’s request that he be assigned a new nurse”
  - “Based on the article by A. Davis, indoor air quality is an important concern for nurses’

# Informal Exploratory



- Expressive, free-writing..thinking on paper writing...
- Journals, marginal notes in books, diaries, letters to colleagues etc.
- Guided journals
- Must explain the purpose
- In class ideas:
  - At start to probe a subject
  - At end to sum up a discussion or lecture
  - During class

# Informal Other ideas

- Bio-poems: Of Florence Nightingale?
  - First name
  - Four traits describing character
  - Lover of.....
  - Relative of
  - Who accomplished...
  - Who lived.....
  - Who fears...
- Metaphor games: “Nursing is to empathy...as medicine is to....”
- What 3 things would you like to change in the world?

# Informal: Time and Teachers



- uncollected or occasional in class freewriting
- Most time: reading and responding to journals



# Grading criteria

- Quality of narrative
- Quality of analysis (plausible and convincing arguments based on data)
- Readability (organisation, headings, clear sentences, no confusing passages)
- Grammar and correctness



# IDEAS.....??

- What have we tried
- What seems to work?
- What are the challenges and how do we deal with them?



# Other Ideas

- Admit slip for class on intro to nursing:
  - 2 paragraphs...10 minutes...”Nursing is...” In 5 years I will be doing...’
  - Repeated at end of session...
- Unsent letter: for class on trends or policies:
  - To tv producer to suggest how character could more accurately represent a professional nurse
- Exit Slip: Summarise class content in a short paragraph..10 minutes... “summarise nursing process”
  
- And valuing writing in other ways
  - Writing contest
  - Inviting nurse writers...and other writers



# References

- Bean, J. (2008). *Engaging ideas: the professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom.* University of California: Jossey-Bass.
- Poirrier, G. (1997). *Writing to Learn: Curricular Strategies for Nursing and Other Disciplines.* (National League for Nursing Series. NY: NLN Press.