

I. Writing Plan Cover Page

Please fill in the gray areas on this form.

June 8, 2017

First Edition of Writing Plan

Subsequent Edition of Writing Plan: previous plan submitted SEM/YR, First edition submitted SEM/YR

Department of Anthropology

WEC Unit Name

Anthropology

College of Liberal Arts

Department

College

Kieran McNulty

Professor

WEC Faculty Liaison (print name)

Title

kmcnulty@umn.edu

x50058

Email

Phone

Writing Plan ratified by Faculty

Note: This section needs to be completed regardless of Writing Plan edition.

Date: 06/17/2017

If Vote: 14 / 17
yes # total

Process by which Writing Plan was ratified within unit (vote, consensus, other- please explain):

The Writing Plan was ratified by a vote of all the tenured and tenure-stream faculty. Because of the timing, this had to be done online during the summer break – a time when the majority of anthropologists are in the field. **ALL** of the responses were in support of the Writing Plan. Three faculty members did not respond.

II. Unit Profile:
Anthropology

Please fill in the gray areas on this form.

Number of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty:

<u>6</u>	Professors
<u>10</u>	Associate Professors
<u>1</u>	Assistant Professors
<u>17</u>	Total

Tenure-stream or tenured professors teach nearly all of the courses in the anthropology major.

Major(s) <i>Please list each major your Unit offers:</i>	Total # students enrolled in major as of Spring/2017	Total # students graduating with major AY 16-17
Anthropology	164	~45
Total:	164	~45

WEC Process	Date	# participated	/	# invited
Initial WEC Survey	9/15/16	125	/	215
M1	10/17/2016	26	/	50+
M2	12/05/2016	21	/	50+
M3	2/06/2017	19	/	50+
M3a (Undergraduate Committee)	2/27/2017	6	/	6
M4	3/06/2017	17	/	50+
			/	
			/	
			/	

III. Signature Page

Signatures needed regardless of Writing Plan edition. Please fill in this form.

the gray areas on

If this page is submitted as a hard copy, and electronic signatures were obtained, please include a print out of the electronic signature chain here.

WEC Faculty Liaison

Kieran P. McNulty

Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies

WEC Faculty Liaison (print name)

Title

Kieran P. McNulty

06/07/2017

Signature

Date

Department Head/Chair

Karen-Sue Taussig

Associate Professor and Chair

Print Name

Title

Karen-Sue Taussig

07/05/2017

Signature

Date

Associate Dean

Gary W. Oehlert

Print Name

Associate Dean

Title

Gary W. Oehlert

Signature

7-17-2017

Date

IV. Writing Plan Narrative, 1st Edition

Please retain section headers and prompts in your plan.

Introductory summary:

Briefly describe the reason(s) this unit (department, school, college) become involved in the WEC project, key findings resulted from the process of developing this plan, and the implementation activities are proposed in this Writing Plan. (1/2 page maximum)

There has been widespread concern among the department faculty about the level of writing proficiency displayed by our undergraduate students and particularly by students in the anthropology major. This became especially obvious during the last few years as the department undertook a self-assessment of student learning outcomes. There are several challenges to improving the writing skills of our majors. A primary difficulty is the breadth of scholarship that makes up the discipline of anthropology; anthropologists in our department span the hard sciences, social sciences and humanities, and hence our students are exposed to – and trained in – all of these writing styles. Related to this, the diversity of courses offered in the department means that student can navigate through the major without necessarily getting all of the necessary skills, or without getting them in a sensible progression. A final challenge is that much of the writing in our courses is assessed by graduate students, some of whom may not have sufficient training in writing or writing assessment.

There were three key findings that resulted from the first year of the WEC process. First, we found a significant disconnect between students' assessments of their own skill level and faculty assessments of student proficiency. Second, the faculty discovered that the writing abilities with which we want our majors to graduate are remarkably similar across subdisciplines. The way these abilities manifest in different disciplinary genres does vary, but fundamentally we all want our students to learn a similar set of skills. Third, a review of our curriculum revealed that many of the writing skills valued by the faculty are only rarely given explicit instruction in our courses.

We propose three initiatives for the first year of our WEC implementation plan. First, we will hire two WEC Research Assistants to create a diverse set of teaching tools (based on departmental writing samples) that will target specific writing abilities and can be implemented in courses across the curriculum. Second, we will hold several luncheon workshops to present these teaching exercises and provide faculty and graduate Teaching Assistants opportunities to comment. Third, we will hire two WEC Teaching Fellows to conduct a senior capstone course that will coordinate research and help students develop their theses through writing instruction, peer review, and drafting/revising text.

Section 1: DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC WRITING CHARACTERISTICS

What characterizes academic and professional communication in this discipline?

Anthropology has always been a multidiscipline in that its practitioners span the hard sciences, social sciences, humanities, and critical theory. Anthropological writing is informed by all studies of human conditions and expressions – without restrictions on cultural origin – but also encompasses the breadth of species and depth of time framed by humanity's prehistoric and contemporary relatives. Hence, the ontological and epistemological landscapes encountered within different subdisciplines of anthropology are quite distinct. Nevertheless, there are several characteristics of writing common to all anthropologists, reflective of both the historical inertia of the field as well as the nature of the evidence we collect.

At its core anthropological writing is descriptive, conveying complex subject matter in ways that allow the reader to experience a situation, see patterns and relationships, visualize an object or artifact. The primary data of anthropological discourse are most often distal to the reader's experience, and hence accurate and detailed description is the necessary foundation upon which arguments are propagated. Anthropological writing is also analytic in nature, emphasizing the logical examination of subjects often through the juxtaposition of ideas, behaviors, artifacts or even species. Finally, anthropological writing is interpretive. It situates evidence within specific contexts – cultural, geographic, temporal, phylogenetic – and seeks to understand how each context, individually or in combination, interacts with both the primary data as well as current and previous observers.

Section 2: DESIRED WRITING ABILITIES

With which writing abilities should students in this unit's major(s) graduate?

The faculty identified the following writing abilities with which we would like anthropology majors to graduate:

Students should be able to...

- articulate specific, relevant, and compelling research questions and theses that are appropriately scaled to the assignment.
- situate their writing within the broader questions and themes of the discipline.
- weave analyses of direct, specific data into a coherent text that directly addresses the thesis/research question.
- convey observations in specific, accurate, and rich detail.
- contrast and synthesize multiple lines of evidence.
- strategically employ figures and tables to enhance argumentation.
- cite sources appropriately, distinguishing primary sources from general knowledge.
- draw specific conclusions based on a thorough assessment of the strengths and limitations of evidence and alternate interpretations.
- recognize the impact of assumptions and biases.
- engage ambiguity and uncertainty.
- formulate and express independent ideas that deeply interrogate the literature.
- utilize correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation to reinforce the intellectual content of their writing.
- recognize and write to multiple anthropological genres.
- engage in recursive writing processes involving self-assessment of drafts and revision.

Section 3: INTEGRATION OF WRITING INTO UNIT'S UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

How is writing instruction currently positioned in this unit's undergraduate curriculum (or curricula)? What, if any, course sequencing issues impede an intentional integration of relevant, developmentally appropriate writing instruction?

Writing assignments are evenly distributed throughout the undergraduate curriculum, across all course levels and subdisciplines. However, writing-intensive courses are heavily concentrated in sociocultural and linguistic courses, with only one each in archaeological and biological anthropology. Hence, developing additional writing intensive options in these subfields will help to canalize writing instruction across the major.

A large factor that impedes the intentional integration of writing instruction is related to the breadth of anthropological subject matter. Many of our majors have an affinity for only one or two of the anthropological subfields. Such students often narrowly focus their coursework for as long as they can, going back to "fill in" the subfield distributive requirements just before graduating. This makes it difficult sequentially develop writing skills across the variety of styles employed by anthropologists.

A final obstacle to fully developing our students' writing potential is the informal process by which our capstone experience is implemented. Currently, students undertaking a senior thesis (or Honors senior thesis) contract with faculty supervisors who assists them in planning, researching, and writing original manuscripts. This process works very well for some students, but others struggle to make steady progress in a manner that allows significant instruction and improvement in writing skills.

Section 4: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT WRITING

What concerns, if any, have unit faculty and undergraduate students voiced about grading practices?

Please include a menu of criteria extrapolated from the list of Desired Writing Abilities provided in Section 2 of this plan. (This menu can be offered to faculty/instructors for selective adaptation and will function as a starting point in the WEC Project's longitudinal rating process.)

A consistent response from students in the WEC survey was that they often find the grading criteria for writing to be ambiguous or inconsistently applied. From the faculty, many voiced the difficulty in evaluating students' descriptive, analytical, and interpretive abilities when the fundamentals of writing (grammar, punctuation, coherent structure, etc.) were lacking. There was a specific tension between students wanting explicit grading standards but faculty not wanting to be confined (or, likewise, to confine their students) with grading criteria that limit one's capacity to support and critique creative or extrapolative writing. Interposing our dialog between student and faculty concerns resulted in a menu of grading criteria that, we think, provides both concrete direction to student writers as well as a solid foundation from which faculty can substantively advance writing tuition:

The text...

- articulates a specific and compelling research question and/or thesis that engages the reader and is directly relevant to the discipline.
- articulates a thesis or research question that is appropriately scaled to the size and time-frame given for the assignment.
- situates writing within the field so that the reader can connect the work to relevant previous research.
- exhibits a coherent underlying structure that is organized to effectively and directly address the thesis/research question.
- conveys observations using specific, accurate, and rich details, such that the reader can envision the situation or object.
- brings multiple lines of evidence into dialogue to convey the strength of support for specific ideas, arguments or conclusions.
- integrates relevant figures and tables with the writing, citing them appropriately in the text, to enhance or substantiate the argument.
- uses citations appropriately by documenting sources of each unit of knowledge or information, including using multiple citations for ideas/evidence found in more than one place.
- clearly differentiates conclusions based on ethnographic, experimental, or observational data from those derived from the literature or considered to be general knowledge.
- draws specific conclusions based on considerations of the strengths and limitations of evidence.
- contributes to a broader anthropological dialogue by putting thesis/research question into discussion with relevant disciplinary theories, ideas, and perspectives.
- explicitly addresses how the author's assumptions/biases relate to the thesis or results with regard to alternative interpretations.
- engages ambiguity and uncertainty such that multiple, even contrasting, possible interpretations interact rather than compete to provide explanations.
- includes fresh insights, ideas, or conclusions that are informed by the literature but original to the writer.
- utilizes grammar, spelling, and punctuation that allows information, ideas, and reasoning to communicate directly and easily to readers.
- is written in a consistent anthropological genre and/or style that is appropriate to the topic and material.
- in its multiple drafts, evidences thoughtful and substantive revisions that address all of the feedback provided by the instructor and apply that feedback to further revisions of the entire text.

Section 5: SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION PLANS, including REQUESTED SUPPORT

What does the unit plan to implement during the period covered by this plan? What forms of instructional support does this unit request to help implement proposed changes? What are the expected outcomes of named support?

Our plan for the first year of WEC implementation is directly related to the obstacles to teaching writing that were noted in Section 3, informed by the curriculum map put together by the WEC team. Noting deficiencies in the explicit instruction of important writing skills, faculty members were excited by the possibility of developing a series of course-specific writing lessons (five-minute workshops, hereafter 5MWs) that could be used to teach those writing abilities which correspond directly to our new grading criteria. In addition, we plan to convene a 1-credit senior capstone course which will serve to formalize and augment the work already being done by faculty thesis supervisors.

To implement this plan, we are requesting support for three initiatives. First, we intend to hire two 25% WEC Research Assistants during Fall 2017. They will be tasked with reading through former paper submissions and pulling out a large number and variety of writing examples to create 5MWs that can be incorporated at multiple class levels across our curriculum. Their initial focus will be creating materials for our 3xxx-level “foundations” courses since these comprise a set of requirements that all majors must fulfill. When those are completed, the RAs (in consultation with the WEC liaison) will map out other courses in the curriculum for pedagogical materials in order to fill in gaps where desired writing abilities are either not taught or need reinforcement. Two 25% RAs (rather than one 50% RA) are preferred in order to adequately evaluate papers from across the anthropological subdisciplines. In conjunction with this, our second initiative is to convene several catered luncheon workshops throughout the year to familiarize faculty and graduate TAs with the 5MW instructional materials, provide opportunities for feedback and discussion, and strategize future work in this regard.

Our third initiative is to hire two 25% WEC Teaching Fellows (WEC RAs) during Spring 2018 to run a senior capstone course. Whereas students will still work directly with faculty advisers on their senior thesis research, the capstone course will provide a formal and structured process to facilitate the writing process and writing instruction. Responsibilities of the WEC Teaching Fellows will include setting a firm timeline for making progress on research and writing, facilitating formation of writing groups, helping students structure their theses, enabling peer-review at multiple stages of the writing process, providing feedback on thesis drafts or partial drafts, leading 5MWs and discussions, and monitoring student progress. Again, two RAs are needed to mentor students across the disciplinary diversity of anthropology.

The anticipated outcomes of these initiatives are as follows. First, the teaching materials put together by the WEC RAs will form the basis for broad implementation of writing instruction across all levels of our curriculum. By specifically targeting our 3xxx-level “foundations” courses, we can manage and track exactly to which writing abilities our majors are likely to be exposed. From there, we will target additional teaching materials for courses based on writing abilities that are not covered in the “foundations” courses or those that faculty deem to need reinforcement. In this manner, we will create specific teaching tools to cover all of the anthropological writing abilities identified by our faculty, and deploy them in our curriculum to ensure that these lessons are received by the majority of our majors.

The luncheon workshops will provide WEC RAs an opportunity to present and explain the teaching materials that they construct, will provide faculty and TAGIs with a chance to comment and add to them, and will provide a forum for discussing additional courses to target for instructional materials. Periodic workshops such as this are important for maintaining cohesion among RAs, coordinators (WEC liaison, DUS), faculty and graduate teaching assistants.

The outcome of hiring WEC Teaching Fellows to oversee a capstone course will be a consistent process by which all students can develop and write their theses. It will provide a forum for instruction and discussion of writing, for learning to draft and revise text, and for developing peer writing groups. Further, shifting some of the writing instruction to a formal course led by WEC Teaching Fellows will enable faculty supervisors to provide better feedback on the content on the theses.

Section 6: PROCESS USED TO CREATE THIS WRITING PLAN

How, and to what degree, were a substantial number of stakeholders in this unit (faculty members, instructors, affiliates, teaching assistants, undergraduates, others) engaged in providing, revising, and approving the content of this Writing Plan?

Many stakeholders in anthropology were involved in providing and refining the content of this writing plan. Nearly all of the faculty, plus many of the graduate and undergraduate students in the department participated in the initial WEC survey; even faculty on sabbatical were able to provide input through email contributions. This contributed to a broad profile of writing instruction in the department: the ways writing is implemented in our curriculum as well as the different perceptions among students and instructors about the importance of writing skills. This rich source of information was a strong guide for developing this Writing Plan.

Five formal WEC Meetings, plus portions of three regular faculty meetings were devoted to discussing and developing the content of this plan.

Meeting 1 focused on establishing the characteristics of anthropological writing and to a lesser extent the writing abilities that we want our students to learn, framed around the results from the WEC survey. There was a great deal of discussion about which activities constitute *writing* as well as how one interprets writing characteristics across the subdisciplines (e.g., what does “analysis” mean in an ethnographic study versus an anatomical study?).

Meeting 2 was intended to cover both a refinement of the writing abilities as well as a discussion of the current and future landscape of writing across the major. However, discussion of the writing abilities required the greater portion of meeting time, as faculty really dug into the definitions to debate how they can and should be worded in the context of anthropological writing. There was also a conversation about whether we can or should teach “anthropological” writing at all – that the writing we teach is “good” writing but not necessarily limited to anthropology. This was contrasted with student survey results which clearly showed that our students want to be writing and researching *as anthropologists*; they want their assignments to be characteristic of the work done by professional anthropologists.

Meeting 3a focused on the curricular map of writing in the anthropology major: which skills are important, which are the focus of specific instruction, and where in the sequence of courses are writing abilities taught. The disconnect between faculty expectations (what we want students to learn) and what we explicitly teach was evident from the curricular maps, and much of the conversation centered on how implicit teaching methods could be made more explicit. Three faculty members shared their processes for instructing and improving writing abilities.

Meeting 3b was held for the undergraduate committee only. Because we were behind in the WEC process, this extra meeting was scheduled to workshop the faculty-generated writing abilities into a list of specific gradable criteria. The undergraduate committee comprises four faculty members, one graduate student instructor, and the undergraduate adviser. About half of the writing abilities were translated into grading criteria, and the other half were completed by the WEC Liaison.

Meeting 4 provided a forum to creatively discuss implementation of the WEC process during the first year. Several different options were weighed, but the two activities thought to be most beneficial, initially, were 1) development of specific instructional tools to work with students on writing abilities, and 2) formal support for senior thesis writing.

In addition to regular WEC meetings, portions of monthly faculty meeting were devoted to updating faculty on the WEC progress and discussing any details that were not resolved. Based on all of this information, the WEC Liaison compiled and wrote the Writing Plans. It was sent to faculty members to comment and approve.

V. WEC Research

Assistant (RA) Request Form

This form is required if RA funding is requested. If no RA funding is requested please check the box below.

No RA Funding Requested

RAs assist faculty liaisons in the WEC Writing Plan implementation process. The specific duties of the RA are determined in coordination with the unit liaison and the WEC consultant, but should generally meet the following criteria: they are manageable in the time allotted, they are sufficient to their funding, and they have concrete goals and expectations (see below).

RA funding requests are made by appointment percent time (e.g., 25% FTE, 10% FTE, etc.). Appointment times can be split between two or more RAs when applicable (e.g., two 12.5% appointments for a total of 25% FTE request). Total funds (including fringe benefits when applicable) need to be calculated in advance by the liaison, usually in coordination with administrative personnel¹.

Please note that, outside of duties determined by the liaison, WEC RAs may be required to participate in specific WEC activities, such as meetings, Moodle discussion boards, and surveys.

RA Name (Use TBD for vacancies): TBD

RA Contact Information: email TBD, phone TBD

Period of appointment (Semester/Year to Semester/Year): Fall/2017 x2; Spring/2017 x2

RA appointment percent time: 25% each

Define in detail the tasks that the RA will be completing within the funding period:

Two WEC RAs (Fall, 2017) will be responsible for creating instructional tools for implementation in a variety of classes at different levels and in different subjects. The goal is to assemble a library of Five-minute Workshops that can be integrated into key courses but also used as templates for faculty to create new tools for additional classes. The initial focus will be creating materials for our 3xxx-level “foundations” courses since these comprise a set of requirements that all majors must fulfill. When those are completed, the RAs (in consultation with the WEC liaison) will map out other courses in the curriculum in order to fill in gaps where desired writing abilities are either not taught or need reinforcement. The specific duties of the RAs are as follows: 1) attend redaction training so that they can anonymize writing samples; 2) read through writing samples to find good teaching examples to illustrate each writing ability in at least two anthropological subfields; 3) perform any necessary redactions and develop the writing sample into a specific instructional exercise; 4) present exercises at departmental Luncheon Workshops; 5) work with faculty to integrate exercises into existing syllabi.

Two WEC Teaching Fellows (WEC RAs; Spring, 2018) will be tasked with overseeing a capstone course to help students developed and complete their senior theses. Each student participant will still work directly with a faculty research adviser, but the capstone course will provide a formal setting to focus on the *processes* of research and writing. Responsibilities of the WEC Teaching Fellows will include: 1) setting scheduled benchmarks for student progress; 2) forming peer writing groups; 3) helping students structure their theses; 4) enabling peer-review at

multiple stages of the writing process; 5) providing feedback on thesis drafts or partial drafts; 6) discussions, and monitoring student progress.

leading 5MWs and

For both WEC RAs and Teaching Fellows, two are needed to represent both the humanistic and the scientific anthropological perspectives.

Define deadlines as applicable (please note that all deadlines must be completed within the funding period):

WEC RAs will complete the instructional tools by the end of the Fall 2017 semester. Their goal will be to provide materials for the “foundation” courses, with the hope that there will be time for additional course materials as well.

WEC Teaching Fellows will be working within the Spring 2018 semester, and will adhere to university grading deadlines.

Describe how frequently the RA will check in with the liaison:

The WEC Liaison will meet with RAs and Teaching Fellows weekly for the first three weeks of each semester, and then every two weeks after that (unless additional meetings are deemed necessary).

Describe in detail the RA’s check-in process (e.g., via email, phone, in-person, etc.):

Initial meetings will be conducted in person, but digital communications may be used later in the semester if necessitated by travel.

ⁱ An example for determining funding for appointments can be found on the WEC Liaison Moodle. This is for planning and example purposes only and cannot be used to determine final budget items for the Writing Plan.

VI. WEC Writing Plan Requests

Unit Name: **Anthropology**

Financial Requests (requests cannot include faculty salary support) *drop-down choices will appear when cell next to "semester" is selected*

Total Financial Request: **\$24,743.48**

Semester 1: Fall 2017

Semester 2: Spring 2018

Semester 3: Summer 2018

Item	Cost	Item	Cost	Item	Cost
Graduate Student WEC Research Assistant (ABD - 25%)	\$5,885.87	Graduate Student WEC Teaching Assistant (ABD - 25%)	\$5,885.87		
Graduate Student WEC Research Assistant (ABD - 25%)	\$5,885.87	Graduate Student WEC Teaching Assistant (ABD - 25%)	\$5,885.87		
WEC Luncheon Workshops (2)	\$480.00	WEC Luncheon Workshops (3)	\$720.00		
Semester 1 Total:	\$12,251.74	Semester 2 Total:	\$12,491.74	Semester 3 Total:	\$0.00

Rationale for costs and their schedule of distribution

Two senior graduate students Research Assistants (ABD) will create a diverse set of teaching tools to implement throughout the curriculum. RAs will redact identifying information from submitted papers, pull out examples to develop into instructional tools, and present these at Luncheon Workshops. Two Teaching Fellows (ABD) will be hired to oversee a capstone course wherein students develop and write their senior theses. RAs and Teaching Fellows will be hired at 25% time at an hourly rate of \$23.58 plus \$1288.37 for fringe and tuition. Five Luncheon Workshops will be used to integrate instructional tools into the curriculum. These will include up to 20 people at an estimated cost of \$12/person.

Service Requests *drop-down choices will appear when a cell in the "service" column is selected*

Semester 1:

Semester 2:

Semester 3:

Service	Qty	Service	Qty	Service	Qty
Workshop	2	Workshop	3		
Other	2				

Description and rationale for services

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We request to have someone from the WEC team present at the Luncheon Workshops to facilitate translating the new instructional materials into specific class exercises within our courses. In addition, we request redaction training ("Other") for the WEC RAs at the beginning of Fall Semester.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Office of Undergraduate Education

August 11, 2017

To: Kieran McNulty
From: Robert McMaster, Office of Undergraduate Education
Subject: Decision regarding WEC plan funding proposal

The Department of Anthropology recently requested the following funding to support its Writing Enriched Curriculum:

Fall 2017	25% ABD Research Assistant	\$	5,885.87
Fall 2017	25% ABD Research Assistant	\$	5,885.87
Fall 2017	WEC luncheon workshops (2)	\$	480.00
Spring 2018	25% ABD Research Assistant	\$	5,885.87
Spring 2018	25% ABD Research Assistant	\$	5,885.87
Spring 2018	WEC luncheon workshops (3)	\$	720.00
TOTAL		\$	24,743.48

All items above have been approved by the Office of Undergraduate Education, for a total of **\$24,743.48**. The committee looks forward to reviewing Anthropology's second plan in the future, and seeing how the current efforts have been assessed.

Please email Pat Ferrian (ferri004@umn.edu) and Molly Bendzick (mollyb@umn.edu) within 30 days of the receipt of this letter with the EFS account string in your department that will receive these funds. **Pat will transfer the full amount of \$24,743.48 during FY18.**

CC: Molly Bendzick, Dan Emery, Pat Ferrian, Pamela Flash, Matt Luskey, Heather McNeff, Bryan Mosher, Jennifer Reckner, Rachel Rodrigue, Leslie Schiff