

## **Department Development Grant Proposal**

### **Anthropology Summer 2011**

The Department of Anthropology is seeking a development grant to support its initiative to offer the Intellectual Foundations course, Introduction to Anthropology, as an option within the University Writing Across the Curriculum program. This course is offered in a lecture with discussion section format. Our proposal to offer ANT 2000 as a WAC course, converting the discussion sections into writing sections, has already been presented to the WAC committee and has received favorable reviews (see attached materials). The WAC committee's suggestions point to the need for developing departmental infrastructure for the training and supervision of graduate student teaching assistants who will lead the sections. This proposal seeks funding to address that need.

#### **Potential Impact**

Introduction to Anthropology is offered year-round at FAU. Two courses are run each Fall and Spring semester, making available total enrollments of 360 students per semester. Six discussion sections are offered per course, with enrollment caps at 30. In Summer, one course is offered per term and enrollments are generally reduced to between 100 and 120 students. For the full calendar year, Introduction to Anthropology offers about 920 seats.

The course is structured as a lecture/discussion format. The course instructor carries out two hours of lecture per week. GTAs lead one hour discussion sections. Our WAC proposal is to integrate writing into the course, primarily in the discussion sections, secondarily in the lecture course. The enrollment caps in the GTA sections would reduce to 26 to meet the WAC guidelines. Our hope is to create a "complete" course for FAU students, one which demands declarative knowledge gains as well as critical analysis and writing skill development.

Typically, a GTA leads two sections per term and we propose to maintain this format. What we have added and elaborated is the writing component for the sections. Those components were largely addressed in our earlier course proposal to the WAC committee.

The proposal before you seeks funds for the development of the departmental support system that will train GTAs in leading effective writing sections and offer guidance to the instructors in supervising the process and ensuring its consistent application across sections and courses. The course is taught by four different faculty members and six to eight GTAs annually. Whether or not a WAC designation will lead to larger enrollments

is an open question. What is sure, however, is that the reduction in course seats/section will necessitate a slightly larger GTA support base.

In order to seriously embark on a WAC component introductory course the department is committed to develop a semester-long training program for its GTAs. The benefit to the WAC course is obvious: specifically trained-in-writing GTAs will provide coherence across the sections taught. The benefits to the GTAs themselves should also be substantial: training specifically focused on teaching and writing methods will aid both their own writing at the graduate level and their pedagogical repertoire in their future careers as educators. The benefit to the department overall will be an increase in quality at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. We are excited to embark on this process.

### **Project Objective**

The grant will be used to develop a one-credit, semester-long seminar to train our GTAs to teach writing in ANT 2000.. Professors Michael Harris, Clifford Brown, and Arlene Fradkin will work together to explore the types of training associated with writing effectiveness. We will be goal driven: by the end of the summer we will have in place a GTA training-in-writing program and an orientation process for faculty instructor supervision of the GTAs.

### **Project Plan**

Professors Harris, Brown, and Fradkin begin the third week of May to initiate the work and will meet at least weekly for six weeks. The project is divided into five phases: 1) reaching agreement on goals and structure for the training course, 2) carrying out research on teaching and writing strategies in anthropology, 3) developing modules and materials for the professional development of GTAs, 4) finalizing the writing modules as a series of steps in a semester-long sequence, and 5) developing an orientation for faculty supervision of the GTAs in department WAC courses and developing an assessment format. It is expected that consultation and collaboration with Writing Center staff will be critical in phases 2 and 3, as the staff is already familiar with GTA training and associated pedagogical issues. Although we do not wish to anticipate in advance too much of the modules themselves, it is expected that the following types of issues should be addressed: identifying the key genres of writing we wish to teach in anthropology and their salient attributes, providing the rationales for the writing exercises, developing effective prompts, developing strategies for evaluating writing assignments, adhering to rubrics, and providing meaningful feedback to students. We

fully expect more topical treatments to be fleshed out in our research and development process.

### **Assessment Strategy**

The department's assessment strategy will be twofold: assess the performance of its professional development training and assess the performance of its GTA-led writing sections. The latter is concerned with undergraduate student outcomes and can be folded into the WAC assessment process itself, with the collection of student portfolios and their review by the faculty at the end of the course. We can consult with the WAC committee on the assessment methods they recommend and utilize those measures.

The performance of GTAs in our professional development trainings will be measured over a three year cycle in the following manner: pre- and post-tests focused on the fundamentals of good writing, such as the development of a thesis, organization, argumentation, use of evidence, style, and tone. These areas can be analyzed from a number of perspectives: GTA improvement in skills and knowledge over time (e.g., one semester) as well as GTA cohort performance over a three year period. Additionally, GTA performance should include in-class assessment or review of teaching by faculty supervisors. Performance issues will be identified and improvements will be formulated on the basis of these annual reviews, and modifications to the GTA training will be instituted. We remain open to developing effective assessment strategies and collaborating with the Writing Center in this regard.

### **Team Members**

Michael Harris, Associate Professor and Chair

Clifford Brown, Associate Professor

Arlene Fradkin, Associate Professor

Each of the above team members teach ANT 2000 and are especially effective undergraduate teachers with WAC training.

**Schedule:**

Week 1

1) reaching agreement on goals and structure for the training course,

Weeks 1 and 2

2) carrying out research on teaching and writing strategies,

Weeks 2 and 3

3) developing modules for the professional development of GTAs,

Weeks 3 and 4

4) finalizing the writing modules as a series of steps in a semester-long sequence,

Weeks 5 and 6

5) developing an orientation for faculty supervision of the GTAs in department WAC courses and assessment strategies.

**Budget**

Summer salary supplement	
3 team members X \$666	\$1998.00

**Report and Presentation**

The team will write a report detailing its GTA training program and present its first year of assessment results after the completion of an academic year's experience with the GTA training and WAC delivery of Introduction to Anthropology.

**Department Signature**

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*Michael S. Harris*