

UO Composition and OER: A Post-COVID Discussion of Sustaining OER Adoption in First-Year Writing Programs

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UO Composition: A Snapshot

Students

- 7,000 students each year take a course in required first-year writing sequence (WR 121 + WR 122/123)

Instructors

- 60-75 instructors are graduate employees studying English, creative writing, comparative literature, and folklore and public culture -- one section/term and about 40% total courses
- 25-30 instructors are career faculty with opportunities for promotion -- teach three sections/term and about 60% of total courses

Pre-COVID Textbook Policies

Curriculum and Textbooks

- Focus on ethical argumentation
- WR 121 courses use in-house pamphlet *Reading, Reasoning, and Writing* and digital handbooks for instruction on writing and rhetoric
- In-house casebooks and “readers” from publishers (Norton, Oxford, MacMillan) provide “cases” or “conversations” for content of argumentative essays and models of writing

Textbook Policy: To support a shared experience of undergraduate students across sections, all teachers must adopt a program-approved textbook or casebook for use in writing classes.

Existing OER Initiatives and COVID Impacts

Individual instructors funded since 2018 through statewide and institution grants to convert and develop in-house open digital casebooks for use in the program: four digital “casebooks” added to textbook adoption form, at least two under development. Includes Ecology of Place

Remote teaching during COVID:

- sped up digital conversion and development efforts
- raised questions about accessibility and digital materials
- required us to revisit textbook policies

Post-COVID Program Goals

1. Make a recommendation for program-wide policy about OER use in writing classrooms.
2. Develop criteria for evaluating all course materials to meet program objectives and address textbook affordability and accessibility.

Exploring OER In Writing Classrooms

- Pilot Textbook Adoption Policy encourages experienced instructors to develop their own reading units following fair use guidelines.
- Textbook Subcommittee and Textbook Affordability Working Group researching OER best practices and use in other writing programs.
- Participating in Oregon Writing and English Advisory Committee survey about textbook and OER use and adoption in first-year writing across the state.
- Surveying our own instructors.

Draft Criteria For Evaluating New Course Material

- **Comprehensiveness:** The best materials provide multiple options for teachers to introduce students to relevant and engaging fields of controversy and work toward course learning outcomes. The materials represent a range of genres in which students might encounter arguments (print, digital, video, podcast, etc.)
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** The best materials align with the program's commitment to culturally responsive teaching which includes (but is not limited to): including of multiple perspectives and voices, especially BIPOC writers; material that supports student engagement with difference, agency, and power; and draws on and honors students' experiences.
- **Accessibility:** The best materials align with UO's textbook affordability priorities (cost) are well organized easy for instructors to use, and offer both print and digital formats for all material.

Next Steps: Some Questions For Consideration

- **Sustainability for Program:** How do we assess and improve “emergency” digital options for permanent adoption? How do we maintain program integrity as new material is developed? How can we assess track what teachers are using to improve our offerings? What is the right number of OERs to have approved at any one time?
- **Accessibility for Students:** How can we apply lessons learned about the accessibility of digital format(s) during remote teaching? Do the formats we used during remote teaching support student ability to engage with the kind of reading required in writing classes?
- **Accessibility for Teachers:** How do we train our full range of teachers (new graduate instructors, seasoned faculty) using materials created during COVID, especially if we are encouraging remixing and reusing of material? How do we involve our full range of teachers in the OER initiative?