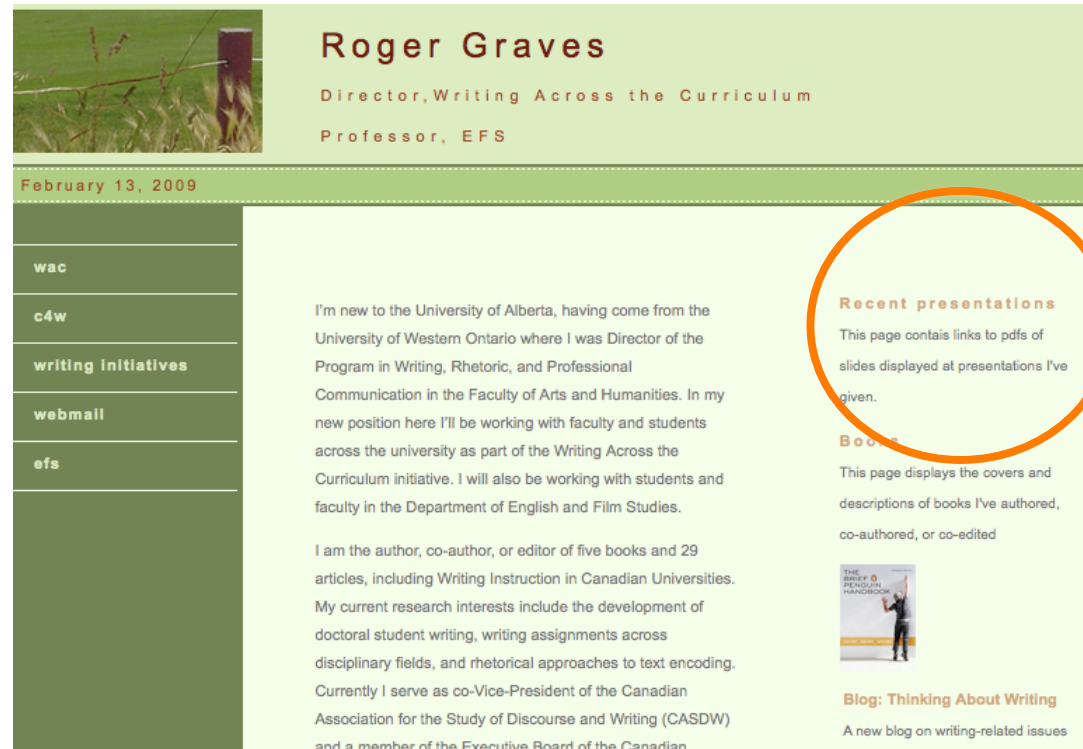


# **Writing the Research Proposal for Sociology 100**

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Professor Roger Graves  
Director, Writing Across the Curriculum

# Roger Graves



**Roger Graves**  
Director, Writing Across the Curriculum  
Professor, EFS

February 13, 2009


wac  
c4w  
writing initiatives  
webmail  
efs

I'm new to the University of Alberta, having come from the University of Western Ontario where I was Director of the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. In my new position here I'll be working with faculty and students across the university as part of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. I will also be working with students and faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies.

I am the author, co-author, or editor of five books and 29 articles, including Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities. My current research interests include the development of doctoral student writing, writing assignments across disciplinary fields, and rhetorical approaches to text encoding. Currently I serve as co-Vice-President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW) and a member of the Executive Board of the Canadian

**Recent presentations**  
This page contains links to pdfs of slides displayed at presentations I've given.

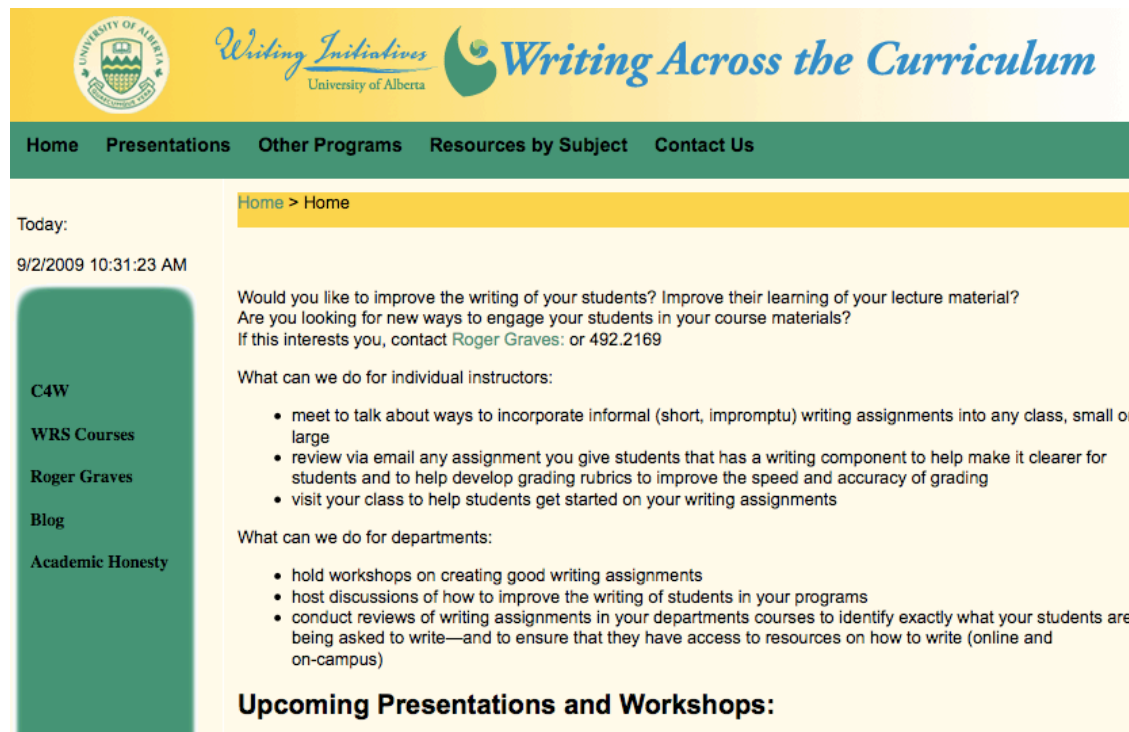
**Books**  
This page displays the covers and descriptions of books I've authored, co-authored, or co-edited



**Blog: Thinking About Writing**  
A new blog on writing-related issues

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/index.html>

# Writing Across the Curriculum



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Writing Across the Curriculum website at the University of Alberta. The header features the University of Alberta logo, the text "Writing Initiatives University of Alberta", and the main title "Writing Across the Curriculum". A green navigation bar contains links for "Home", "Presentations", "Other Programs", "Resources by Subject", and "Contact Us". The main content area includes a breadcrumb trail "Home > Home", a timestamp "Today: 9/2/2009 10:31:23 AM", and a sidebar with links for "C4W", "WRS Courses", "Roger Graves", "Blog", and "Academic Honesty". The main text asks if users want to improve student writing and provides contact information for Roger Graves. It also lists services for individual instructors and departments, such as workshops and reviews.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Writing Initiatives  
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Writing Across the Curriculum

Home Presentations Other Programs Resources by Subject Contact Us

Home > Home

Today:  
9/2/2009 10:31:23 AM

C4W  
WRS Courses  
Roger Graves  
Blog  
Academic Honesty

Would you like to improve the writing of your students? Improve their learning of your lecture material? Are you looking for new ways to engage your students in your course materials? If this interests you, contact [Roger Graves](#): or 492.2169

What can we do for individual instructors:

- meet to talk about ways to incorporate informal (short, impromptu) writing assignments into any class, small or large
- review via email any assignment you give students that has a writing component to help make it clearer for students and to help develop grading rubrics to improve the speed and accuracy of grading
- visit your class to help students get started on your writing assignments

What can we do for departments:

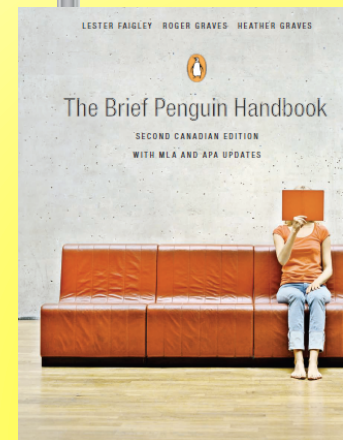
- hold workshops on creating good writing assignments
- host discussions of how to improve the writing of students in your programs
- conduct reviews of writing assignments in your departments courses to identify exactly what your students are being asked to write—and to ensure that they have access to resources on how to write (online and on-campus)

**Upcoming Presentations and Workshops:**

<http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/WAC/>

# Reflective journals

- Connect course material to world outside academia
- Focus on self-reflective and critical analysis
- Analysis = pull apart, study component pieces
- Reflect = share discovery of an experience, explore what the experience means
- *Brief Penguin Handbook* has chapters on Write to Analyze and Write to Reflect



# The writing process

## Getting started

- Explore the assignment
- Make rough notes
- Pick a tentative topic



## Getting feedback

- Make an appointment at a writing centre
- Get feedback on your draft/revise

## Revising

- Work on style and lower order concerns
- Proofread, consult checklist for assignment

# The Proposal Genre

- Problem
  - Solution
  - Plan of action
- Introduction
  - Definition (what is the problem?)
  - Background (how did it become a problem?)
  - Literature review (what have others said about the issue?)
  - Recommendation (what solution do you propose?)
  - Work plan (how will you implement the solution?)

# Research proposals

- Introductory summary (purpose, scope)
- Areas to be studied
- Methods of research
- Timetable for the research
- Request for approval
- References

# Your Assignment

The *critical steps* include

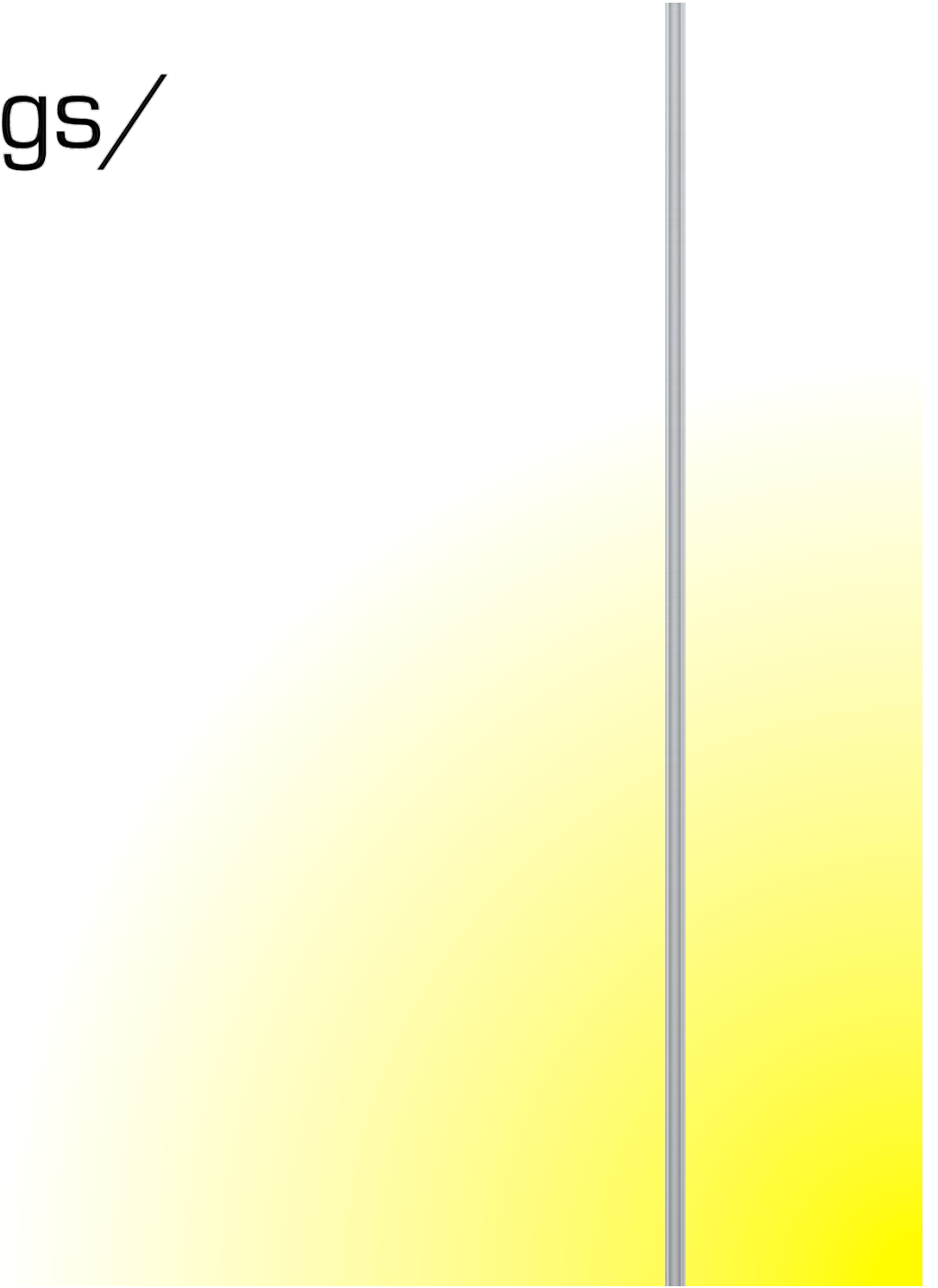
1. selecting an area of interest or a social problem of interest to you and relating them to sociology,
2. going to the literature to find out what has already been researched in your area of interest,
3. understanding what questions remain about your topic that require further inquiry, and finally
4. constructing the *what?*, *why?*, and *how?* of your potential project



# Caution

- Do not actually perform the research
- Do not write/hand in a research study
- Only write *the proposal* to potentially do such a study

Possible headings/  
organization



# Formulate a research question

- *WHAT* has already been said about your topic?  
[What does the literature tell you about it and what questions does it leave unanswered?]
- *WHAT* are you interested in researching and
- *WHAT* question are you trying to understand?

# Sample research questions

- “What programs and policies are effective in preventing homelessness in Edmonton?”

# Working thesis statements

- Specific
- Manageable
- Interesting

# Working (not final) thesis

Topic	Homelessness in Edmonton
Researchable question	“What programs and policies are effective in preventing homelessness in Edmonton?”
Working thesis	A solution to the complex problem of homelessness demands sophisticated solutions that include <b>three dimensions</b> : affordable housing; enough money to cover basic living expenses; and access to social services (Shelter House 2011).

<http://www.shelterhouse.on.ca/article/solutions-146.asp>

# Why is this issue important?

An explanation of *WHY* this thesis is of interest to other people.

- Why is this research study important or significant?
- How will it contribute to the literature on your subject, and how does that literature support your question (in other words, what 'gap' in the literature are you addressing)?
- What potential effects might your project produce in social, academic, economic, political or other areas based on your question and methods?

# Example description

- Your research might help identify flaws in existing areas or create better policies and programs to prevent homelessness.
- It may also inform the government and other funders to allocate more funds to existing programs
- Other ideas?



# Methods

- An outline of *HOW* this research will be ethically conducted, that is, the method that would be used if you were to conduct the research project.
- This will include a strategy for collecting your data and how this data will be analyzed. (ex. Sample characteristics, sample size, recruiting, analyzing data, etc.)
- Briefly refer back to Chapter 2: Sociological Research as a guide

# References

- A minimum of two references that you would use if you were to actually be conducting this study.
- These references should be the ones used in your literature review.
- Cite using APA citation guidelines

# Sample method

- Propose a qualitative study with four interviews at an organization in Edmonton offering programs to support those who are homeless
- Other ideas?

# Drafting/Revising

- Get a “trusted reader” to get feedback
- Consider using other students in the course or the writing centre for this
- Ask readers to read for specific purposes: thesis, structure, transitions, development of a particular paragraph or idea

# Don't hand in a first draft

Towards the due date, switch your focus from

**higher-order concerns** (arrangement, arguments, evidence) to

**lower-order concerns:** proofreading, grammar, citation format, grammar/spelling