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Director, Writing Across the Curriculum  
Professor, English and Film Studies

● **THE SCHOLARLY  
ESSAY:  
Biology 108**



# Roger Graves



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Director, Writing Across the Curriculum  
Professor, EFS

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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>

# Centre for Writers



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Publications:

## Welcome to Centre for Writers

We offer **free** one-on-one writing coaching and support to all students, instructors and staff at the University of Alberta - in any faculty or at any level of study.

Our writing coaches are available to assist clients with higher order concerns in their writing, such as thesis formation, organization and idea development, as well as more specific details, like grammar and documentation style. Clients can bring in any writing project at any stage of development: essays, lab reports, creative pieces, scholarly articles, thesis drafts, application letters - and more. Our coaches will also help students read instructor comments on already-graded papers. ESL and EAL students are welcome!



<http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/>

# C4W




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# Writing Across the Curriculum



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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/>



# The assignment

The deliverable:

- 500 word essay (roughly 1 pg, single-spaced, Times, 1" margins)= 5 paragraphs
- Body: structure within it seems open; do you have to answer all these questions or are they meant to be suggestive? What does the rubric suggest?
- Answer 3 questions plus “discuss”(with evidence)



# The writing process

## Getting started

- Explore the assignment
- Make rough notes
- Make an appointment at the writing centre
- Get feedback on your draft/revise
- Work on style and lower order concerns
- Proofread, consult checklist for assignment



# The process: Not specified

How should you get started?

Prewriting strategies:

- Brainstorming
- Note-taking
- Sample thesis statements
- Talking, **reading**—see suggestions in assignment: **Zimmer + textbook**
- **Start by reading Zimmer**





# Reading Zimmer

## Key passages:

- “Here to stay” section discusses prevalence of sexual reproduction (c)
- “The Road to Sex” paragraphs 3 and 4 discuss diploid genomes (a); paragraphs 7 and 8 discuss life cycles that first evolved
- **Instructors: advice? Don't trust me on the biology**



# Zimmer

- Notes about diploid genome-textbook plus notes
- Life cycles—see textbook
- Hypotheses=article
- Bring in knowledge from class plus textbook




# Topics to thesis statements

Three questions to ask about a working thesis:

1. Is it specific?
2. Is it manageable for this assignment?
3. Is it interesting for your readers?

Sample thesis for this assignment:

- 
- Focus on biology
  - Why did it happen? Interesting: it hasn't always worked this way
  - SR is really inefficient
  - AR is efficient, so why doesn't it dominate? Shouldn't it confer evolutionary advantages?



# A sample thesis

As new research appears in the study of eukaryotes, some argue that we need to re-think our understanding of why sexual reproduction evolved. New research offers multiple explanations for the relentless rise of sexual reproduction. For example, Zimmer (2009) argues that there are three main explanations for the evolution of sexual reproduction—the “good (speed),” the “bad (harmful mutations),” and the “ugly (parasites).” Based on Zimmer (2009) and Campbell et al (2008), the “good” or speed of reproduction seems to be the most important factor.



# Thesis ideas

- Content in the thesis: summary of the questions (topic)
- Introduce the info that comes later
- Subtitles in the article—important to elaborate—what is sexual vs asexual reprod.; road to sex—not always the way things were done; here to stay—inefficient but permanent



## Organization—Paragraph 2

- But before deciding which of these three factors explains the rise of sexual reproduction, we need to understand how sexual reproduction evolved.

[This is the focus of the assignment—to show you understand the biology behind the arguments]

- In this paragraph talk about how life cycles appeared that included sexual reproduction



## Paragraph 3

- Talk then about appearance of the large diploid genome
- Diploid: two sets of chromosomes (originally just one)
- How an early step?—how appeared, then why important
- AS/SR: get variation; meiosis; splitting or separating—diploid to haploid=variation





## Paragraph 4

- Talk about how life cycles appeared that included sexual reproduction



# Conclusion 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



## Next steps: Drafts, books, C4W

- Towards the due date, switch your focus from higher-order concerns (arrangement, arguments, evidence) to lower-order concerns: proofreading, grammar, citation format, grammar/spelling
- Make appointments at C4W
- Consider getting a handbook to help you with your writing