Is writing about literature a WAC concern?

Here is discussion from WCENTER, the national Writing Center Listserv, relevant to grading academic literary essays:

One list member observed:

I have some instructors of 200-level literature survey courses that are coming to me dismayed by the writing of their students. The instructors assign essays, and when they get them, they find many, many problems, from not adhering to MLA style guidelines to simply writing a clear essay. It's not appropriate to run these surveys like a freshman comp class, and yet, one cannot assume that the students have mastered the skills of freshman English.

Another list member wrote:

My response here would be that writing instruction and an emphasis on process can be maintained in 200-level surveys and beyond if an instructor is willing to build (and carefully choreograph) peer-editing sessions into the course schedule. In this way, an instructor can both maintain that fine (and saving) balance between giving writers access to critical readers before the “high risk” stage, on the one hand, and relieving herself of the immense (and artificial) burden of being the only "one who knows" how to recognize and/or promote proficient writing. Providing careful guidance via peer-review questions and the like, an instructor is forced—in positive ways—both to sound her own depths about how proficient writing might be achieved and to declare implicitly her own evaluative criteria. This kind of reflection and disclosure can be more enabling for student writers than simply commenting on their rough drafts. This practice is one of those too-rare win-wins: it is better both better pedagogy and a more merciful procedure for the well-meaning teacher who, just the same, needs to hold off burnout.

A third member wrote:

I agree completely. While a literature survey has to spend a certain amount of time actually discussing the literature, there is no reason why one cannot spend two class periods discussing "the nature of the academic literary essay," which means talking about things like topics, organization, evidence, citing, and style, another session talking about how to do peer evaluation (which also lets you remind them of what you said earlier about the essay genre), and then two or three more on peer editing. Yes, that means "losing" five or six class hours out of the forty or so you get for each class, but one can space these hours out over the course. If students end up learning more and writing better, then maybe getting only five days instead of six to talk about Hamlet or Bleak House or Lyrical Ballads is not such a bad thing.

Questions:

1. What points seem reasonable to you in the above exchange—and why?
2. What points do you disagree with—and why?
3. What kinds of assignments do you ask your literature students to do?
4. What kinds of research do you expect from them?
5. What are the characteristics of good literary criticism, and what instruction do you provide to students for writing in this genre?