

TEACHING AND TUTORING WRITING ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

Spring 2006
Rhetoric and Composition 481/English 399
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Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:00; Wednesday 1:30-3:00

Course Objectives

This course combines two ways of knowing, the practical (“*how*”) and the theoretical (“*what*”). It will teach you how to tutor writing, offering you pedagogies, techniques, protocols and strategies that help students not only write better papers but also be better writers. It will provide you with a theoretical understanding of the field of Rhetoric and Composition broadly, and writing centers (including course tutoring) specifically. If all goes well, the two ways of knowing, practice and theory, will test each other.

This course requires you to navigate between many different ways of knowing, reading, writing and speaking. You may, at times, be confused and frustrated. One week you may understand that the best way to tutor is by doing x, and the next week you may be convinced of the political backwardness of x and the true path offered by y. If the course objectives are met, though, you will learn how to be flexible and willing to rethink, revise and re-theorize what you’ve learned and practiced as you are learning and practicing it. You’ll be doing all this while on the job. It may be daunting and intimidating, but it will also – hopefully – be exhilarating and rewarding, both for you (as tutor and student) and for the students you tutor.

Teaching and tutoring are both largely oral endeavors. Therefore, this course aims to improve your speaking and presentation skills.

Course Requirements

--Complete all readings before class begins, and to bring a hard copy of each reading with you to class.

--Attend all classes. If you miss more than four, you will not receive credit/pass the course.

--Participate in class discussions.

--Submit two portfolios:

First Module Portfolio: Two essays and one presentation. You will be assessed holistically upon the work. Due March 16. 40%

***Essay 1:** Write a 500 word essay on one important (formative? bad? unusual? funny? thought-provoking?) educational experience you've had while at Oberlin (that is, the experience had to do with education) (*note: please change names if necessary to avoid libel, slander and embarrassment...). Post to Blackboard by 12:00, Feb. 14*

***Essay 2:** Write a 1000 word essay on any topic related to the themes of the course thus far. This essay **must** incorporate observations of tutoring sessions with readings (ideally, in tandem: i.e. "this exchange reminded me of what x said in her essay...").*

You will need to observe at least two different tutoring sessions led by two different experienced writing associates. Please arrange with experienced associates via Blackboard listserv, 483 meetings or other venues to schedule a time to observe a session. Due March 2

***Presentation 1:** Your job is to lead an analysis of student writing. Samples of student writing are found throughout Sovin, or you could ask a tutee, friend, classmate, etc. for permission to use an essay. Please distribute copies to the class the class period before your presentation. You have exactly 10 minutes. You will be assessed on your oral skills, your demonstration, through practice, of the material we've covered thus far, and your ability to analyze writing. Sign up for March 7, 9, 14 or 16.*

Second Module Portfolio: One essay, one presentation and one resource to improve the Writing Associates Program. You will be graded individually upon each assignment. Due May 11. 60%

***Essay 3:** Write a 1500-2500 word essay on any topic. The rhetorical form, structure and focus is entirely up to you. Your requirements are the following: incorporate actual tutoring experiences, incorporate readings both on and off the syllabus (i.e. do outside research), go to the writing center for tutoring on the essay at least once during the process, and attend to your own writing style, clarity and correctness. Append a one-page discussion of your writing center experience to the essay. Due April 27 25%*

***Presentation 2:** Teach the class something. You have fifteen minutes. You will be assessed on your oral skills, advanced preparation, organization,*

creativity and consideration of audience. The topic is up to you, but you should teach your peers something you think they want to learn about tutoring, something you think they should know about tutoring or, ideally, both. You may distribute materials to the class in advance; if so, please have them ready the class period before your presentation. Sign up for May 2, 4, 9 or 11. 20%

Resource. *The Writing Associates Program is always improving and changing. You are the ones who help us do so. Contribute one resource to better our program, such as handouts for the Writing Center, materials for course tutors, pages for the website, etc. 15%*

Tutoring. You must either tutor for at least 6 hours a week at the Writing Center or assist a writing intensive course.

483: Tutoring Lab. You must attend every meeting of 483. All tutors working in the Writing Associates Program, including those who have already taken 481, will periodically to discuss assignments and schedules, tutoring successes and mishaps, readings and suggestions for improving the Program. As this is a required staff development meeting, you will be paid for your time: each meeting is equivalent to one hour of tutoring.

Course Texts:

Available in the Bookstore:

Hacker, *The Bedford Handbook*. 7th edition
Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*
Delpit, *Other People's Children*
Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*
Barnet and Blumner, *Writing Center Theory and Practice*
Soven, *What the Writing Tutor Needs To Know*

Syllabus

Feb 7	Introductions; Syllabus; "Spot the Error"
Feb 9	Discussion of Readings; Q&A Trubek, "Chickens, Eggs" (handout) Soven, Introduction, Chapter 1
Feb 14	Discussion of Readings/ In-Class Tutoring/ Essay 1 due

- Soven, Chapter 2
 North, "The Idea of a Writing Center" (Barnet/Blumner)
 North, "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center'"
 (Barnet/Blumner)
- Feb 16 Discussion of Readings/In-Class Tutoring
- Soven, Chapter 3
 Brooks, "Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All The
 Work" (Barnet/Blumner)
 Newkirk, "The First Five Minutes: Setting the Agenda in a Writing
 Conference"
- Feb 21 Discussion of Readings/Experienced Writing Associates Visit
- Hobson, "Maintaining Our Balance" (Barnet/Blumner)
 Murphy, "The Writing Center and Social Constructionist Theory"
 (Barnet/Blumner)
 Carino, "Theorizing The Writing Center: An Uneasy Task"
 (Barnet/Blumner)
 Riley, "The Unpromising Future of Writing Centers"
 (Barnet/Blumner)
- Feb 23 Discussion of Comments/ *Write comments on essays not discussed in
 class. Bring hard copies to class*
- Feb 28 Discussion of Readings/Clarity and Correctness; Spot the Errors Redux
- Soven, Chapter 4
 David Foster Wallace, "Tense Present: Democracy, English and
 the Wars Over Usage" (handout)
- March 2 Clarity of Expression: Circle the Verbs/ *Essay 2 due*
- Bedford Handbook: A Serious Skim Through It All
- March 7 Discussion of Readings/**Presentations**
- Soven, Chapters 5, 6 and 7
- March 9 **Presentations**
- March 14 Discussion of Readings/**Presentations**
- Rose, *Lives on The Boundary*

March 16 **Presentations/ Portfolios due**

March 21 Discussion of Readings/Grammar Redux: Our Errors

March 23 Mid-Term Reflections; Planning

SPRING BREAK

April 4 Tales from the Front: Tell Us A Story And What It Means

April 6 Discussion of Readings

Bruffee, "Peer Tutoring and the Conversation of Mankind"
(Barnet/Blumner)

Clark and Healy, "Our Writing Centers Ethical?" (Barnet/Blumner)

Shamoon and Burns, "A Critique of Pure
Tutoring"(Barnet/Blumner)

Trimbur, "Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?"
(Barnet/Blumner)

Murphy, "Freud in the Writing Center: The Psychoanalysis of
Tutoring Well" (Barnet/Blumner)

Kiedaisch and Dinitz, "Look Back and Say 'So What?'"

Walker, "Difficult Clients..." (Barnet/Blumner)

April 11 Discussion of Readings

April 13 Discussion of Readings

Delpit, *Other People's Children*

April 18 Discussion of Readings

April 20 Discussion of Readings

Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*

April 25 Oberlin High School and the Community-Based Writing Program

Readings tba

April 27 Discussion of Readings/ *Essay 3 due*

May 2 **Presentations**

May 4 **Presentations**

May 9 **Presentations**

May 11 **Presentations/*Final Portfolios due***