

Introduction to the Teaching of Writing

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SYLLABUS

COURSE INTRODUCTION

In *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, Erika Lindemann writes “Teaching, like composing, is a process of communication, characterized by rhetorical choices (254).” While I agree with Lindemann that teaching is about rhetorical choices, it is also about ideological and philosophical choices. The ways we understand and experience the world around us directly inform and shape our approaches to teaching writing and the ways we see ourselves as teachers of writing.

This course is designed to assist you, as current and future teachers of writing, to make choices about how you will teach writing. By examining many different theories and practices related to the teaching of writing, we will endeavor to understand what it means to teach writing and who we are as writing teachers so that we can make informed choices about our pedagogy. We will also strive to develop, evaluate and refine our teaching practices and to articulate the theories that support those practices we choose to use.

The following questions will guide our investigation of the choices teachers of writing make when developing their pedagogical philosophies and approaches:

- What is writing?
- What does it mean to teach writing?
- How do people actually teach writing?
- What does it mean to assess writing?(commenting, conferences, rubrics, student-directed assessment)
- How do people actually assess writing?
- In what contexts to people teach writing?

COURSE GOALS

- An increased awareness and understanding of the theories and practices of teaching writing
- Development of materials for teaching writing in a variety of contexts
- An increased understanding and development of one’s personal approach to teaching and one’s personal teaching philosophy

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

- *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* by Erica Lindemann
- *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook* edited by Edward P.J. Corbett, Nancy Myers, & Gary Tate
- *The Norton Book of Composition Studies* edited by Susan Miller
- Additional readings as assigned and provided by the instructor

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignments

The major assignment for this course will be a teaching portfolio. Your portfolio will include the following:

Textbook Review

You will investigate a textbook used for teaching writing. Your review should address the pedagogical approach of the book (reader, genres, research-based, etc.), courses the book appears to be designed for, topics covered in the book, design features in the book, cost of the book, some evaluation of the book in terms of usefulness and appropriateness for teaching writing in particular contexts.

Conversations about the Teaching of Writing Project

You will investigate an on-going conversation in about the teaching of writing and present the multiple voices in that conversation to gain an understanding of the multiple perspectives that make up that particular conversation. Possible topics include use of literature in the teaching of writing, service learning, audience, digital writing, process pedagogy, teaching of research or research papers and teaching of grammar.

Assigning & Responding Project

This project has 4 components. (1) You will design a short assignment and means of assessment. (2) You will exchange assignments with a classmate and complete each other's assignments. You will then respond to each other's completed assignments based on the rubric. (3) You will discuss the assessment you received from your classmate and reveal any concerns or misunderstandings that arose when you completed the assignment or received your assessment. (4) You will write a reflection of the experience that discusses how your experiences designing the assignment and assessment materials, assessing your classmate's response to your assignment, and evaluating your assessment with your classmate.

Teaching Philosophy

You will compose a teaching philosophy that describes your approach to teaching writing. Topics your philosophy addresses might include beliefs about what writing is/does, theoretical approaches to teaching, assignments, assessment, classroom environment, and classroom management. Your philosophy should make connections between classroom practices and the theories we encounter throughout the semester.

Course Plan

You will design a writing course, any level, that demonstrates your knowledge of the theories and practices of teaching writing. For your course you must provide (1) a complete syllabus with assignment descriptions, assessment procedures and course policies; (2) a 15 week calendar; (3) a reflective afterword that describes your rationale for the course design with explicit connections to the work we've done this semester.

The design, layout, and content of your portfolio are up to you. We will workshop each piece of the portfolio during the semester, with the expectation that you revise each element to fit the overall vision of your portfolio.

Participation

As this is a graduate level course, you are expected to participate by arriving prepared to discuss any assigned readings and with any requested materials completed. There are two graded activities that fall under participation.

Discussion Facilitation

This is a collaborative project where you will, in pairs, lead the discussion of the assigned readings for a given week. You will be responsible for creating questions for discussion and/or activities that help us, as a class, engage in the readings for the week.

Blogging

We will maintain a blog for this class on which we will have space for engaging with the readings and connecting them to our own teaching and learning experiences, posting pertinent sources not on the weekly reading, and interacting with one another. You will post (250-300 words) at least once a week in response to the readings. You should also take time to interact with your peers' posts throughout the semester.

Workshop Participation

There are two parts to participating in the workshops. First, you must have your own work-in-progress ready for the workshop period so that you can receive feedback from your peers and instructor. Second, you must actively participate in giving feedback to your peers during the workshop time.

Attendance

Attendance is expected. However, I do understand that scheduling conflicts and illnesses occur. Missing one class will not negatively affect your grade. Missing two classes may negatively affect your grade and missing three classes will certainly affect your grade and your ability to produce and complete quality work for this course.

ASSESSMENT

The portfolio comprises the majority of the grade for this course, but you will also receive credit for the three items listed under participation. The breakdown for grades is as follows:

Component	Points Possible
Attendance/Discussion Facilitation/Blogging	25
Workshop Participation	25
Final Portfolio	50
	100

For portfolio items, you will receive feedback from me within one week of the workshop period when it is due or the period when you do your digital demo. We will also meet in individual conferences to discuss the portfolio as a whole.

For items that fall under participation, you will receive feedback as follows:

Blogging: At midterm and the end of the semester

Discussion Facilitation: Within one week of facilitating

Workshop Participation: Within one week of the workshop with your portfolio item feedback

MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES

Mobile Devices

In a class on digital writing, it seems contradictory for me to inhibit your use of cell phones, computers, etc. So I will leave it to you to police yourselves and your classmates. I do ask, however, that you minimize the intrusion into other people's class time by putting your phones on silent or vibrate so that Lady Gaga or Taylor Swift don't announce every time you get a text, e-mail or phone call.

Classroom Decorum

This classroom, both brick and mortar and virtual, is a place where ideas are exchanged. We will spend much time in discussion, both as a class and in small groups. You may hear ideas and opinions that you do not agree with. Disagreements and disputes can provide lively and productive discussion about many issues. However, any time you disagree with a classmate, you must take the time to listen to his/her position and if/when you respond to that position, you must do so respectfully for any disagreement to be a positive exchange that challenges us to think beyond our existing opinions.