Course Design

Teaching as Text—The Pedagogy Seminar: LIT 730, Teaching Composition

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Course Description

LIT 730: Teaching Composition is a three-credit graduate seminar in American University’s Department of Literature for master’s-degree students interested in teaching composition. The Literature Department offers both an MA in Literature and an MFA in Creative Writing, and attracts applicants with a flexible “teaching concentration” option as part of their four-semester MA and five-semester MFA course work. The seminar functions as both a course in Composition Studies and an introduction to pedagogy for fifteen graduate students each fall.

Institutional Context

American University (AU) is a private, four-year, research-oriented institution located in a leafy northwest residential section of Washington, DC. Many of its 6800 undergraduate students come to the university for its location in the nation’s capital, but virtually all of them must complete a two-course sequence of first-year composition (FYC) in the department’s College Writing Program. With fifty-three master’s and ten doctoral programs, American University also serves about 3600 grad students, with an additional 1700 students in its nationally-prominent law school. The Department of Literature has no PhD program and attracts grad students who either plan to continue on into doctoral studies elsewhere or hope to support themselves by teaching in high school or community college.

For such a department, with no PhD or rhetoric/composition program, neither a TA-training class nor a full-blown composition theory course makes sense. LIT 730, like most such “orientation” courses, is not part of a series that gradually deepens students’ exposure to the field but rather is a singular course that seeks to ground future practice in theory and provide an intellectual foundation for teaching. It combines a theory-oriented Composition Studies course and a practice-focused Teaching Writing course for graduate students who want to acquire knowledge that can be translated into marketable job skills. After LIT 730, they may gain practical experience in the department as literature class TAs, College Writing classroom interns working with a writing faculty mentor, or Writing Center interns working with students one-to-one. So, unlike the literature department’s other courses in subject and purpose, LIT 730 operates in an adjunct intellectual space all its
own. Fittingly, perhaps, I have taught it for ten years as adjunct faculty (in addition to my duties as full-time director of the Writing Center).

When I took on the moribund Teaching of Writing seminar in Fall, 2000, I maintained the standard survey-course approach that my predecessor had set up and turned to my own graduate school staples: Edward P. J. Corbett, Nancy Myers, and Gary Tate’s Writing Teacher’s Sourcebook and Erika Lindemann’s classic, comprehensive A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers. But unlike my graduate school pedagogy course, LIT 730 is a stand-alone seminar, a one-shot survey that presents pressures for coverage. As Shelley Reid puts it, even as I stuffed the assignment list, “always there were more topics and tasks and articles, all waiting for me to cover them in my fifteen-week class” (15). And my frustration in trying to provide such “coverage” was matched by student frustration with the material. One student wrote in his end-of-semester reflection: “Weekly, it seemed I was bombarded with weighty discussions of the history and theory of composition and I reached a low point several weeks into the semester when I was forced to acknowledge in a journal entry that I had no idea what the readings were trying to say.” My initial impulse to douse students in reading gave way as I realized how these MA and MFA candidates, though eager to teach, were frustrated “when faced with significant, challenging reading and writing assignments grounded in an unfamiliar field of study often devalued in part because of its association with pedagogy” (Belanger and Gruber 123).

My students love writing, but many are brought up short at the entrance to Composition Studies by the different demands of its important texts. They must navigate readings grounded in social science, from the cognitive theory of Flower and Hayes to contemporary studies of composing on computers. Some simply balk at scholarly prose. Douglas Hesse captures their initial attitude with almost comical accuracy: “‘Why can’t these people write?’ they challenge … [S]tudents resisted material that was new to them … comparing these readings to texts as they imagined texts should be” (225). Many of my students seemed to stay polite outsiders, visitors to the rhetoric/composition kingdom, just looking to pick up some new skills. I needed to bridge the divide between students in literary studies and Creative Writing and this foreign field of Composition Studies. Like Reid, I have come to see the pedagogy course “as practice in a way of encountering the world rather than mastery of skills or facts, as preparation for a lifetime of thinking like a teacher” (16).

**Theoretical Rationale**

I redesigned LIT 730 to lead students more explicitly toward thinking like teachers by helping them make connections between personal and academic experience, engaging them explicitly in theorizing, and making our classroom a kind of laboratory in which we interact and then reflect on our interactions. Paul Kameen talks about “the textuality of the classroom and what we do there … as eligible for, even demanding of, our most careful, sophisticated, complex, critical scrutiny” (172). I present LIT 730 as such
a text, not so much a template for “real world” teaching but a construct, a matter of intentional artifice: let’s look at how I built this course; let’s examine what we’re doing, and, together, let’s figure out why we’re doing it.

With such meta-awareness in mind, I arrange the class to parallel the first-year writing course these graduate students are preparing to teach. Through class activities such as freewriting, small group work, and peer editing, the course demonstrates the pedagogical moves these would-be teachers might make in their own classrooms. In assigning reading response papers and two academic essays, I guide students toward more awareness of their own academic writing while sensitizing them to the struggles of their students to learn “the moves,” as Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein call it, of a new discipline. To further this goal, I recently added Graff and Birkenstein’s *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, a book that our College Writing Program faculty frequently assign in their FYC courses. The slim Graff and Birkenstein textbook offers both a writer’s guide to the “moves” of academic writing and a way of talking about how one teaches them in FYC. It is easy to forget that not all grad students have acquired skill in analyzing the “moves” academic authors make, much less the ability to bring that analysis to bear on what happens not only in their readings but also in a classroom.

My teaching of LIT 730 also has been influenced by compositionists’ calls for a more reflective stance in teaching and the need for paying attention to the personal in our pedagogy. In *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher*, Elizabeth Rankin outlines some key factors that influenced the graduate students she interviewed as they struggled to assume teacher identities: personal history, theoretical orientation, and expectations about teaching. Building on feedback from students and on current scholarship, I developed LIT 730 to target the student-to-teacher transformation in three ways: by demystifying composition theory, by putting students in conversation with composition’s key ideas, and by pointing them toward reflective practice.

From the outset, LIT 730 must make students aware of the need for a well-grounded, theorized practice, yet it must also help them realize that they “already have theories about teaching, rooted in contexts and experiences that may be obvious or long buried” (Reid 19). The first class opens by calling students’ attention to pedagogy: without any introductions, I march into the room and briskly demand that they take out pen and paper and write an essay about their experience with academic writing. After allowing them five minutes of dutiful scribbling, I interrupt to question my own imperialist introduction—and their acquiescence to it. My questions—*How did you know what to do? Why did you automatically obey me?*—both relieve the tension my bit of acting created and lead to exploration of the academic context in which we learn and teach. Later in that first class, students share anecdotes about their own literacy education in small groups and discover common themes about how writing is taught in the academy. The combination of active theorizing and self-reflexive awareness addresses students’ anxiety.
and even hostility to “theory,” and I conclude the class by noting that they have been engaging in theory-making themselves.

The initial reading and response assignment, which deals with the theory and practice of teaching in the academy, is an invitation to enter a conversation in unfamiliar territory for most of these students: it introduces the discourse of Composition Studies with David Bartholomae’s classic “Inventing the University” and Kathleen Blake Yancey’s call to teach “Writing in the 21st Century” and raises the notion of merging the personal and the academic with Mike Rose’s narrative essay, “I Just Wanna Be Average” from Lives on the Boundary. A chapter from Gerald Graff’s Clueless in Academe both defines academic discourse and illustrates ways of theorizing teaching by combining analysis and anecdotes. The response paper prompt and, later, the first more formal paper assignment both ask students to use their own experiences in the academy in conjunction with their insights from the reading as a way of examining academic literacy. Rose’s autobiographical essay offers a model to these budding fiction writers and literary scholars for taking academic literacy personally. An important task for the early writing assignments is to help students navigate between personal experience and scholarship, encouraging them to access the advantages of both as they discover that they complement rather than oppose each other. Like Bartholomae, I want students to find “some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the other hand” (3) in their response papers and that first essay.

Meanwhile, the course structure leads us from acknowledging the personal and professional contexts of composition to examining its theoretical underpinnings. We look first at literacy itself, asking questions like “what difference does writing make?” with selections from the classic—Plato’s Phaedrus—and contemporary—a chapter from Naomi Baron’s 2008 Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World. Next, we consider the composing process with Sondra Perl, Rose’s discussion of writer’s block (“Rigid Rules”), and a recent piece from RTE in which Anish Dave and David Russell discuss how composing on the computer has changed the nature of students’ composing habits. With an eye for intersections between their reading and their lived experience, students complete a questionnaire about their own writing habits before composing their response papers about their reading on composing. In her end-of-semester evaluation, one student concluded that this structure “provided me with a deeper understanding of classroom dynamics, the process of writing, and ideas for structuring my own classroom … [and] my consciousness of my own writing process lends insight into what I must teach.”

The next few weeks of the course are devoted to particular stages in teaching the writing process: invention (Elbow’s “Closing My Eyes as I Speak” and Ann Berthoff’s discussion of generating chaos in “From the Making of Meaning” are both in our anthology) and revision (classic pieces from Joseph Harris and Nancy Sommers). I ask students to use the assigned
Harris and Sommers articles to help them revise and then write a reflective page or two on their revision process as they turn in their first major essay. The complexity of commenting and evaluation appear next, as part of our survey of the writing process, drawing attention to the teacher’s process and the fact that evaluation is an inherent part of this academic writing context we’re working in.

At the midpoint of the course comes debate night. After reading Berlin, Bartholomae, and Elbow, students must first take on what I call a “teacherly self,” selecting one of the pedagogical approaches outlined by Berlin that seems to suit them best. Then they prepare for class by choosing a pedagogical stance that is different from one(s) they favor and outline arguments in favor of that stance. In class, they debate the merits of changing the direction of a fictitious university writing program, taking on the voices of faculty members and arguing for the approach to FYC that they didn’t favor. Each year, this complex reverse structure causes me anxiety (Will it work this time? Will they all choose the same side?) but then evokes my relief and respect as students invariably rise to the occasion. After the debate itself, we discuss how such oppositional discourse not only supports critical thinking but also helps participants recognize the strengths in the opposing points of view. In the ten-minute writing time that closes the evening, students can capture emerging teaching philosophies as they write down the most important insights they gained from the debate and try to craft “5 solid sentences about teaching writing.”

I take a Bakhtinian perspective on disciplinarity. I want students to view composition scholarship in terms of various voices engaged in conversation. The weekly reading assignments invite students to consider different angles on an issue. In-class activities such as the debate put students and scholarship in dialogue by “dramatizing the rhetorical space of the classroom so that the new teachers [will] think more carefully about their own positions as teacher-rhetors in the first-year writing classroom” (Stancliff and Goggin 15). Starting in the third week, pairs of students lead a 45-minute discussion on the week’s reading. They are asked not only to sign up for the week of their choice but also to prepare a lesson plan for engaging texts and classmates in lively dialogue.

Similarly, in the second half of the semester, the burden of guiding/prompting weekly response essays shifts to students themselves. Each week, three or four students write and post prompts of their own for everyone to respond to online (we use a discussion board platform in Blackboard, but this can be done on a blog or in any online discussion space). The writer may not select his or her own prompt to write on. By putting students in charge of the response assignments, I cede more authority to them and also mandate a kind of peer-reviewed tryout in the key skill of crafting writing prompts. Students must find the middle ground between withholding their own interpretations, on the one hand, and leaving writers to flounder around in generalizations on the other. I remind them, too, how lost they felt that first day with only a pe-
emptory command, “write an essay,” to follow. So this assignment to create assignments puts students in dialogue with me—representing the profession—as well as with each other, now representing both teaching colleagues and future students.

Later in the semester, I highlight the sense of professional dialogue with a panel/roundtable discussion featuring some department composition professionals: full-time faculty in the College Writing Program. It is sometimes a challenge to convince graduate students of the practicality in professional conversations about composition. Over the years, I have tried in various ways to inject the “real-world’ element into the course: sometimes requiring students to visit one or two college writing classes, some years scheduling serial visits from individual writing faculty to talk about classroom practice, but the panel/roundtable format has proved especially popular and effective. I invite colleagues who represent an array of teaching approaches and backgrounds to come to our class prepared to discuss the week’s reading assignments and their own practice with us. The faculty talk about their course syllabi, offer opinions in discussing the reading, and share anecdotes in response to students’ questions about “what happens when…” in FYC classrooms. Class discussion after the faculty leave raises issues of institutional expectations and programmatic demands as a rhetorical problem: teaching FYC means meshing one’s personal goals with those of the larger program.

Another way of drawing students into dialogue with the profession involves the other major writing assignment. This has taken a variety of forms over the years—book reviews, annotated bibliographies, reading reports—but it focuses invariably on recent publications in the field and urges students to become acquainted with professional journals while they pursue an interest in some specific teaching topic. I provide some focus in the form of quotations from composition scholars followed by broad prompts (e.g. “Which composition theorist do you think is most helpful and/or essential in preparing new teachers for a self-reflective practice?”). The assignment also requires students to make a lesson plan, create a handout, and “teach” a 15-minute segment of class, presenting their findings in an engaging way. Students have created lively mini-lessons using video, small-group work, and even role-playing.

The second half of the semester’s reading turns to contemporary ideas on teaching (Pratt’s essential “Arts of the Contact Zone,” Guy Allen’s account of his “Writing Experiment at the University of Toronto”), students (Mauk’s “Location, Location, Location,” Sommers and Saltz’s report on her longitudinal study of Harvard students), and teaching grammar and voice. Students enjoy reading Jeffrey Maxson’s updating/translation of Pratt, “Government of da Peeps” in week nine and trying out ideas for cultural studies classrooms. In class, we brainstorm for various metaphors for a classroom and then I ask them what they could “do next” with this activity. Jennie Nelson’s “Reading Classrooms as Text” in week ten is my perennial challenge to their assumptions about what students bring to a writing class.
and a model of double consciousness of student and teacher perspectives, especially in creating writing assignments. I bring teaching identity to the foreground in week eleven, with the title, “Transformations.” Here, Alison Cook-Sather, Dawn Skorczewski, and Jacqueline Jones Royster variously help us think about the roles we play, the assumptions we make, and the changes we undergo as students and teachers. Royster’s “When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own” provides a segue into week twelve and Fan Shen’s “The Classroom and the Wider Culture” as we confront questions about teaching grammar and acknowledge rhetorical positions—and voices—of Others in the classroom.

As we engage in such professional dialogue, most students quite naturally begin to speak in class as teachers (“I think we need to help students discover...”) rather than as students (“I didn’t learn brainstorming in school.”). To reinforce this transformative process and help students toward a more self-reflective way of thinking about teaching—and learning—I ask them to write a self-assessment when they submit their collections of weekly reading response pieces, noting their emerging approach to teaching and their progress over weeks of reading and thinking. Students also write reflections on their writing and revision of the two major essays, not only to help them develop awareness of themselves as learners but also to promote critical thinking about the processes and products of teaching. The prompts ask class members to go beyond reflecting on what they do to examine what our course does, to look at assignments and their outcomes.

Thus from the first class meeting, LIT 730 welcomes students “behind the scenes,” positioning them as teachers analyzing pedagogical strategies rather than as students in the usual outsider audience position. I seek to stimulate what Donna Qualley has called a “reflexive stance,” aiming prompts, readings, and class activities to involve students in “a dialectical engagement with the other—an other idea, theory, person, culture, text, or even an other part of one’s self” (11). I step back from teaching moments during class to review them like snapshots in a digital camera. We talk about the hunches, hopes, and mistakes that guided my choices for the course. Students have an opportunity to look at my teaching through the lens of their learning so that we become partners in this enterprise of learning about teaching. Comments from former students who are now teachers suggest that this approach plays a positive role in fostering thoughtful, reflective practice.

A few years ago, a bit of metacognitive description in one of these student reflections caught my attention. The writer succinctly described what I had designed as “a course about a course.” Now, as I have turned more and more toward explicitly teaching the course “about itself,” challenging students to participate with double vision and self-awareness, I see the reflexive mode must do double duty as an approach to student learning and a part of (my) teacher learning as well.
Critical Reflection

For the teacher of this course, as much as the students, awareness of what happens in classrooms feeds into what happens in this particular class. The teacher must fearlessly open her/his practice to examination, just as students must probe their past experiences in education, to determine what works, what doesn’t, and why. The teaching class becomes our experiment in how a classroom operates. It’s a scary, risky, and exhilarating way to teach a class.

The course continues to evolve around my main challenges in teaching it: the relationship to/with theory, the dialogue with current conversations in the profession, and the self-reflective awareness of moves and motivations in teaching. In my brief class lectures, I find myself favoring Friere one semester, focusing more on Bakhtin another, playing up rhetorical roots sometimes and emphasizing postmodern affinities other times. But the reading list is often the focus for my tweaking, as I wrestle with weaknesses in offering an overview of the shifting currents of our professional conversations.

One glaring gap is the dearth of material about teaching and technology in my syllabus. It stems partly from the inevitable obsolescence of much published material and partly from the lack of time and space in the schedule to do justice to this increasingly important topic. For students whose lives are entwined with digital technology, my efforts to include “relevant” reading have often fallen flat. More successful have been our forays online to conduct class activities. The electronic discussion board on Blackboard has proved an acceptable venue for the reading responses in the second half of the semester. Three or four students responsible for the week’s prompts open threads, and the responders can see each others’ posts.

I brought my concerns about the lack of “tech talk” to colleagues in our College Writing Program, some of whom are graduates of LIT 730. Several suggested meeting new teachers’ needs to learn about teaching with technology by incorporating hands-on experience and experimentation into their course work. So I assign students to consider how they can use classroom applications—from the old overhead projector to Powerpoint projection and video—as they lead discussions and make presentations. Since most of my students are “digital natives” and I am not, I hope that challenging them to take the lead will naturally bring technology into class discussion, raise their awareness of the need for making conscious classroom choices, and encourage them to connect their everyday online literacies with their teaching practice.

Another syllabus drawback I have wrestled with involves multicultural issues. It is difficult to avoid isolating discussion of second language writers, for example, in a designated week when we read articles like Fan Shen’s “The Classroom and the Wider Culture” and talk about teaching grammar and style. Dissatisfied with this conventionally Othering approach, I have sought advice from our writing program’s international student counselor.
to integrate ideas about language and cultural difference throughout the course. I have introduced ideas about contrastive rhetoric, for example, into our opening discussion of literacy. Now I am working toward putting such syllabus design issues in front of rather than behind the scenes. I hope that if such syllabus choices can be discussed openly, students can bring their own perspectives on—and experience with—difference into the discussion. But the problem of where and when to raise issues of grammar, style, and voice keeps me rearranging the syllabus from year to year.

Finally, the lack of a widely-accepted template for teaching composition provides a puzzle for instructors and students in this course. Such indeterminacy is at once stylishly postmodern and fiendishly frustrating for students still wedded to the traditional way that academic institutions present learning as finding a set of “right answers.” As Christine Farris warns, in our efforts to present the variety of new ideas in teaching composition, “we may find ourselves handing new teachers postmodern tools to do what is institutionally configured as a modern job” (99). In addition, the very reflexivity that fascinates me in this enterprise can discourage students who arrive inadequately prepared for such intellectual acrobatics. While I blithely goad my students to “read the course as a text” (about itself!), my own reading of the course syllabus raises difficult questions about my handling of Composition’s code words and conventions. Examining the (attached) LIT 730 syllabus through students’ eyes, I see that I am expecting them to enter a “conversation” with strangers who are scholars of a previously unknown discipline, to discover the difference between teaching as a verb and pedagogy as a noun (ie. turn an activity into an object of study), and to learn a new vocabulary—in some ways, take on a new identity.

No wonder they sometimes write about feeling overwhelmed.

And perhaps the biggest challenge for me in teaching this course comes from its very call for a reflexive stance: this course about a course demands double consciousness from its instructor as well as its students. Farris suggests a possible response to this challenge: we can “try to make visible the teaching moves we would like to see [students] making—just as we would make academic writing and cultural analysis moves visible to first-year undergraduates who might not intuit or invent them on their own” (102).

So I will continue to try to define what I’m doing in this course more explicitly, making the theoretical underpinnings of the course more transparent and showing students explicitly how the course operates. For example, future iterations of the weekly response prompts could include explanations of why the questions ask them to look at texts in certain ways and bring their own experience to bear in responding to reading. An explicit link between the “moves” we make in academic writing (as Graff and Birkenstein put it) and teaching choices as a matter of “moves” may help students cross the intellectual bridge from seeing classes as a student to thinking like a teacher.
Note

1. All quotations from student work, while anonymous, are used with permission.

Works Cited


Welcome. This teaching seminar is an introduction to Composition Studies, a field that includes the history, theory, and teaching of writing. It explores the nature of written language and the theoretical, social, and cultural contexts of teaching composition. You will discover spirited debates about why we teach, how we teach, and what we teach—academic writing. [Please note: this is not a “methods” course. Our focus will be on foundations rather than fundamentals of conducting a class.]

Course Goals

Through your work in the course, you can expect to

• better understand the way individuals construct—and are constructed by—writing.
• get an introduction to the field of Composition Studies, including principles of rhetoric and linguistics, theories of composition, teaching, and learning.
• understand the dynamics and demands of written discourse, of academic literacy, of the writing classroom.
• get a variety of perspectives on ways composition courses can be to designed and implemented; understand the major pedagogies used to teach composition.
• discuss the issues and strategies involved in assigning and evaluating writing and helping students carry out academic writing assignments successfully.
• refine your own command of the writing process and of academic writing through constant critical writing in a variety of modes and genres.

Course Texts

Like most other LIT courses, this class rests on regular—and substantial—reading.


Good news! This book of readings is provided free by the publisher. (I’ll have them for you at the first class meeting.)

Please purchase:


Additional articles are provided online [on Blackboard®].
Evaluation

Your grade in the course will be determined by your work on

1. Collected responses to reading (2 – 25% each) 50%
2. Essay on academic literacy 20%
3. Analysis essay and presentation 20%
4. Class participation/group work/leading class discussion 10%

1. Reading response [50% of course grade]

This reflective writing component is the heart of the course, the place where you explore and analyze the course material. You will respond to questions on the week’s readings (I write the prompts for first half; you write them in the second half of the semester). This is an important way of thinking through academic writing that we use in teaching as well. My reading and commenting in response to your responses allows us to establish a professional dialogue—in writing—that enhances the course for us both. You should submit your response either electronically or on paper by class time each week.

Evaluation: I’m looking for quality not quantity—but most people need 5-6 pages to create an adequate discussion. Please feel free to write your way into the reading, but then go back and prune it down to 5 pages or so.

The weekly responses are not graded individually but collectively—thus, you’ll have an opportunity to revise and submit them as a portfolio at midterm and at semester’s end.

2. Writing/research/teaching projects* [40% of course grade]

1.) Autobiographical essay 5-7 pages.

What is the path by which you developed academic literacy? To what extent does your own experience illustrate and/or give insight into the issues we have been talking and reading about in class? Based on your own experience and observation, write an essay engaging in the conversation about how “academic literacy” is taught in colleges and universities.

Due in Week 6, this essay represents your personal exploration of academic literacy.

It asks you to mine your own experience of learning academic writing in order to examine and understand your attitudes, assumptions, and outlook as a teacher of academic writing, then draw out the larger implications of your experience with reference to course reading.

**Revision:** You may revise the graded essay and resubmit a new version with the original within 5 weeks. I’ll give it a second grade which is averaged with the first.

2.) Analysis essay and presentation 6-8 pages

This essay responds to one of four “provocations”—quotations from
composition scholars that speak to issues, theories, scholars you’ll encounter in
the course.
You’ll pick one topic and discuss it, based on ideas you have developed during
the semester as well as reading/research in two or three articles chosen from
recent issues of our professional journals [eg. College English, College Composition
and Communication, Composition Studies, Kairos (online), and so on].
You’ll prepare a lesson plan and give a 15-min. presentation and a handout.
This assignment offers an opportunity to synthesize course material, read
recent scholarship, and formulate your own ideas about a particular topic, then
“teach” it.
* [Note: we’ll talk more about these writing assignments as we go]

3. Participation [10% of course grade]
Of course, your engagement is assumed and expected—but here are details
anyway.

Attendance is a must. Your presence and participation in class are crucial to the
success of this seminar. If for some reason you must be absent one week, please
make sure to contact me and a classmate so that we can at least see that you
get notes.

Group work: As you will learn in this course, collaborative learning is very
important in writing pedagogy. You’re expected to engage in “peer response”
and other group work.

Leading discussion: In week 2 of the course, I’ll ask you to sign up to lead the
discussion on the readings one week. We’ll have 2 leaders per class, so if you
see a particular topic or want to sign up with someone, be ready to do so in
the 2nd week.

4. Course Expectations
To teach at the college level, you’ll need to be able to demonstrate knowledge
of the discipline, make sound decisions in pedagogy, write clear, coherent
academic prose yourself, and share in a scholarly community. It is my conviction
that the best preparation for teaching writing in the academy involves plentiful
practice in reading and writing the genres you will be teaching: the essay,
rhetorical analysis, and scholarly argument.
This class involves a high level of reading—and a different kind of reading than
that found in most other literature classes. It consists of the varied, important,
and sometimes challenging analytical articles that have helped to shape our
discipline over the past 40 years. One thing that our anthology obscures is
the origin of these articles. They have all been published, discussed, and often
debated in the profession, usually in the pages of our two main journals, College
Composition and Communication and College English. Both journals are published
by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)—a professional organization which you’ll want to become acquainted with [www.ncte.org].

Some advice on the course reading from previous students:

• Be prepared to take notes as you read and re-read. Note especially the key terms. Look for ways an article works, not just what it “says.”
• Slow down your reading. These texts require a different level of attention than that novel you have to read in a week or an article in the newspaper.
• Avoid the freshman last-minute syndrome that you’ll have to address with your students. Give yourself time to read and reflect on reading before you respond.

5. A final word about the course…

This is a course about a course: We will be using our own class as a laboratory where we try out strategies and try to ground abstract ideas in concrete reality. It is a chance to observe “behind the curtain.” I leave it to you to begin to observe closely—and not just in our class!—and to begin to formulate some ideas about how classes work.

Teaching Composition Reading/ Assignment Schedule

Sources: T.R. Johnson, Teaching Composition: Background Readings, 3rd ed. (R); Blackboard (B)

[Note: chapters from Graff and Birkenstein won’t figure in response papers (G&B)]

To Prepare For **Week 2:** Teaching the Academy, read and respond to:
- David Bartholomae, “Inventing the University” (R)
- Gerald Graff, from Clueless in Academe (R)
- Mike Rose, “I Just Wanna Be Average” (B)
- Kathleen B. Yancey, “Writing in the 21st Century” (B)

Response paper due by class time
G&B, Preface, Intro and Chpt. 12 “Reading for the Conversation”

To Prepare For **Week 3:** Teaching Literacy, read and respond to:
- Naomi Baron, “Gresham’s Ghost” (B)
- Plato, “Phaedrus” (excerpt) (B)
- Lisa Delpit, “The Politics of Teaching Literate Discourse” (R)

Response paper due by class time
G&B Part I, Chpt. 1-3

To Prepare For **Week 4:** Looking at Composing, read and respond to:
- Sondra Perl, “Understanding Composing” (R)
- Mike Rose, “Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language: A Cognitivist Analysis of Writer’s Block” (R)
- Anish Dave and David Russell, “Drafting and Revision…” (B)
Response paper due by class time

To Prepare For **Week 5: Teaching the Process: Invention**, read and respond to:
- Ann Berthoff, from *The Making of Meaning* (R)
- Peter Elbow, “Closing My Eyes as I Speak: An Argument for Ignoring Audience” (R)
*G&B Part 2, Chpt 4-7*
Bring full draft of Essay #1 * (3 copies) - no response paper due

To Prepare For **Week 6: Teaching the Process: Revision**, read and respond to:
- Nancy Sommers, “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers” (R)
- Joseph Harris, “Revision as Critical Practice” (B)
*Autobiographical essay due (5-7 pages)*
The development of academic writing—your experience as example
1-2 page revision reflection with paper—no response paper

To Prepare For **Week 7: Teaching the Process: Evaluation**, read and respond to:
- Peter Elbow, “Ranking, Evaluating, Liking: Sorting Out Three Forms of Judgment” (R)
- Nancy Sommers, “Responding to Student Writing” (R) and “Across the Drafts” (B)
- Andrea Muldoon, “A Case for Critical Revision” (B)
*Review 2 videos on commenting and evaluate sample papers (B)*

To Prepare For **Week 8: Debating Pedagogy**, read and respond to:
- James Berlin, “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class” (R)
- David Bartholomae, “…Without Teachers,” and Elbow, “Being a Writer…” (B)
*G&B Chpt 11, “I Take Your Point”*
*Hand in collection of 3 responses (originals + revisions) and 1-2 pp reflection.*

To Prepare For **Week 9: Re-vising Pedagogy**, read and respond to:
- Guy Allen, “Language, Power, and Consciousness: A Writing Experiment at the University of Toronto” (R)
- Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone” (B)
- Jeffrey Maxson, “Govt. of da Peeps … Revisiting the Contact Zone” (B)
*Post response/question on Blackboard*

To Prepare For **Week 10: Students**, read and respond to:
- Johnathan Mauk, “Location, Location, Location” (B)
- Jennie Nelson, “Reading Classrooms as Texts” (B)
- Sommers and Saltz, “Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year” (B)
*Post response/question on Blackboard*

**To Prepare For Week 11: Transformations**, read and respond to:
- Alison Cook-Sather, “Education as Translation” (B)
- Dawn Skorczewski, “From Playing the Role to Being Yourself: Becoming the Teacher in the Writing Classroom” (R)
- Jacqueline Jones Royster, “When the First Voice You Hear …” (B)
*Post response/question on Blackboard*

**To Prepare For Week 12: Language/Voice**, read and respond to:
- Fan Shen, “The Classroom and the Wider Culture” (B)
- Bonnie Devet, “Welcoming Grammar Back…” (B)
- Wayne Booth, “The Rhetorical Stance” (R)
*G&B Part 3, Chpts 8-10*
Schedule a paper conference with me this week; no response due

**To Prepare For Week 13: Courses and Classrooms**, read and respond to:
- Elizabeth Wardle, “Mutt Genres” (B)
*G&B , Chpt. 14, “Analyze This”*
In Class: “Inside the Teachers’ Studio” – College Writing faculty panel
“Hand in” collected response posts (originals + revisions) and 1-2 pp reflection.

**To Prepare For Week 14: Presentations – Joining the Conversation**, bring one-page handout or abstract of a recent article to share

**To Prepare For Week 15: Presentations – Joining the Conversation**
- Critical analysis essay (6-8 pages) “Joining the Conversation about Teaching Writing” due

**Readings Available on Blackboard**


Wardle, Elizabeth. “‘Mutt Genres’ and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?” *CCC* 60.4 (2009): 765-89. Print.