

Teaching Writing in Grades 6-12

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For Important Information, including class cancellation notice, see English Department website: www.english.montclair.edu

Required Texts/Purchases:

- Newkirk, Thomas, ed. *To Compose: Teaching Writing in High School and College*, 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990.
- Fu, Danling. *"My Trouble Is My English": Asian Students and the American Dream*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995.
- Soven, Margot Iris. *Teaching Writing in Middle and Secondary Schools: Theory, Research and Practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999.
- Finders, Margaret. *Just Girls: Hidden Literacies and Life in Junior High*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.
- A college edition of a standard desk dictionary and a college stylebook.

Purpose of Course:

This is a writing-intensive course for students who recognize the centrality of writing in their own education and who intend to become educators. A central tenet of this course is that in order to be a writing teacher you must also be a writer. Many who intend to become English educators are fairly comfortable with the idea of teaching literature, but are quite nervous about teaching writing. I suspect that those teacher educators who feel anxious about teaching writing also feel anxious about writing themselves. I imagine that many of the English educators in the schools that neglect the teaching of writing do so for similar reasons. This is all quite understandable: writing is hard; we are made vulnerable by writing; and the criticism we receive on our writing often hurts more than the criticism we may receive on our multiple choice test scores. (Of course, for those of us who have had the right opportunities and experiences, writing can also be wonderful.). In short, writing is personal, even when it appears not to be. So my goal in this course is two-fold: I want to introduce you to some theories and techniques for teaching writing while also providing you with an opportunity to grow as writers yourselves.

Today you may not see yourself as a writer and that's okay; in fact, you are especially welcome in my class. My goal is to work with you to discover your "writer" self, just as you, as a future English educator, will help your students discover their "writer" selves.

What you'll be doing (i.e., "Requirements"): Reading, Coaching high school writers, and Writing

Reading:

The texts for this course address the teaching of writing. You will be given opportunity to respond to the readings and demonstrate your engagement in the readings through a variety of means: class discussion, Response Journal entries, and Tuesday Essays (see below for explanation).

Coaching High School Students in Writing:

As you know, a critical component of this course is your participation in the Montclair Writer's Room, a coaching program that is run inside of the Montclair public schools. It is this aspect of the course that makes this a service-learning course. We are very fortunate to have a very advanced and well-organized program for you to participate in. Notably, the two people that founded and serve as co-executive directors of the program, Sheila Crowell and Ellen Kolba, have been heavily influenced by the very theories that you will be reading. You will not be asked to simply go in and coach writing the best you can; rather, we will train you on how to read and respond to student papers productively. After the training is complete and you are actually coaching Montclair high school students you will still be working with staff of the Writer's Rooms in the high school and middle schools of Montclair. It is important to Sheila and Ellen, as well as to me, that your experience as a coach be a professional, well-supported and therefore valuable one, for both you and the students. As the semester progresses and you continue to participate as a coach you will be able to bring your questions, reflections, and challenges from the Writer's Room to the class through discussion and writing. My hope is that the theories that you are reading about in class, the writing you will do for this course, and your work as a tutor will all be complementary and mutually supporting. That is not to say that I don't anticipate any contradictions, but rather that each component of the course will speak to and enhance the value of the other components of the course.

Writing

Our subject is writing. You will write a lot: about writing, education, tutoring, and theories of writing. You will concentrate your efforts on making connections between your experiences as a student, your experiences as a coach, and what you are learning from me, the staff of the Writer's Room, and the authors of the class texts.

Response Journal. You will need to keep a Response Journal that you'll write in twice a week. In this journal you will respond to readings, class experiences, and experiences at the Montclair High School. Make sure you respond in your journal to each reading you are assigned. Your response journal may be written in an informal style. I will collect response journals occasionally.

Thursday Writings. Every Wednesday you'll bring in some writing. Frequently your Thursday Writing will come out of your Response Journal, an in-class writing exercise, or it may be a revision of an earlier Thursday Writing. Sometimes this writing will be shared with peers, sometimes you'll use it individually in class, and sometimes you'll turn it in. I'll let you know what the assignments and forum for each Thursday Writing will be on the preceding Monday, or on-line.

As part of, not in addition to, your Thursday Writings, you will work on a long writing assignment of your own choosing. This long project will be due in installments three times during the semester. While the topic of this major piece is your choice, I will collect and approve an informal proposal and rationale early in the semester.

Portfolio. At the end of the semester you will collect and review selected writings that you have completed over the semester. In addition, you will write a final reflective paper. You'll hear more about this when we near the end of the semester. For now, all you need to know is, **SAVE EVERY WORD YOU WRITE.** Ideally you will write everything on a word processor to facilitate revision.

Some Basics:

Attendance is required, all the time. If you miss class twice that's fine; more than that is not fine.

All Assignments are required. Although you will see percentage points accumulated below, I reserve the right to additionally penalize a student who fails to complete an assignment.

Participation in the Writer's Room is required. I think you won't find this requirement very difficult to meet, but I want to make it quite clear that participation in the Writer's Room program is required. I personally have made a commitment to the staff of the Writer's Room that each of you will show up when you say you will, and that you will participate fully. The work that the Writer's Room does in the Montclair public schools is crucial to the academic programs at these schools and so it's essential that you are professional.

Complete the assigned readings and writings.

Grading:

Performance as a Writing Coach:	20%
Thursday Writings	30%
Major Project	10%
Response Journals	10%
Participation in Class	10%
Portfolio	20%

I am interested in negotiating with you a system of feedback. I want to talk with you about the relationship between feedback and grades, as it's an important issue for any future teacher to think about. There are different approaches that I have used in the past and with which I feel comfortable. Early in the semester I'll go through these approaches and you can let me know what productive grading systems you've worked with before, and together we will develop a grading procedure and policy.

Schedule

Note: We will discuss the reading on the day that it is listed. Make sure you look ahead in the syllabus so that you can keep up with the reading as we will move at different rates at different times.

Thursday, September 4

Introduction to Course

Monday, September 8

Soven, Introduction, pp. 1-7

Newkirk, Introduction, xiii-xxiv

THURSDAY, September 11

Kolba, Ellen D. and Sheila C. Crowell. "The Writers' Room: The Story of a Writing Center." (hand-out)

Elbow, Peter. Excerpt from *Writing without Teachers*. (hand-out)

Thursday Writing: What do you know about writing? How do you know what you know?

In-Class: Training for the Writer's Room

Monday, September 15

Arthur Daigon, "Toward Writing Right" (Newkirk, p. 3)

Stafford, William, "A Way of Writing." (Newkirk, p. 17)

Donald Murray, "Write Before Writing" (Newkirk, p. 33)

In-Class: Training for the Writer's Room

Thursday, September 18

Perl, Sondra, "Understanding Composing" (Newkirk, p. 43)

In-Class: Training for the Writer's Room

Monday, September 22

In-Class: Training for the Writer's Room

Thursday, September 25

In-Class Training for the Writer's Room

Thursday Writing: Revision of paper that is at least six months old. Give me a copy of the original (old) and your new revision. I want to see substantial revision!)

Monday, September 29

In-Class: Training for the Writer's Room

Soven, chapter Three, pp. 25-32.

Thursday, October 1

In-Class Training for the Writer's Room

Elbow, excerpt from, "The Benefits and Feasibility of Liking" (packet)

Rabin, Sydel. "Reading Papers: A Teaching Response." (packet)

Soven, chapter three, pp. 32-41

Monday, October 6

In-Class Training for the Writer's Room

Soven, chapter three, p. 41-52.

Wednesday Writing: Proposal for and beginning of Long Project

Thursday, October 8

Moher, Terry. "Listening Beyond the Text" (Newkirk)

Fallon, Mary. "What About Arthur?" (Newkirk)

Monday, October 13

Tobin, Lad, "Productive Tension in the Writing Conference" (Newkirk)

Murray, Donald. "Teaching the Other Self" (Newkirk)

Thursday, October 16

Soven, Chapter 5, 109-113.

Monday, October 20

Soven, 113-133.

Thursday, October 23

Flower, Linda, "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," (Newkirk)

Monday, October 27

Fu, Danling. *"My Trouble Is My English": Asian Students and the American Dream.*

1st Installment of Long Project due

Thursday, October 30

"My Trouble Is My English"

Monday, November 3

"My Trouble is My English"

Thursday, November 6

"My Trouble is My English"

Monday, November 10

"My Trouble is My English"

Thursday, November 13

"My Trouble is My English"

Monday, November 17

Soven, chapter 2, 11-24.

"My Trouble is My English" Wednesday writing due

Thursday, November 20

Soven, chapter 8, pp. 197-228

Monday, November 24

Continue from previous day

Thursday, November 27

THANKSGIVING

Monday, November 31

Round My Way

Thursday, December 4

Round My Way

2nd installment of Long Project due

Monday, December 8

Round My Way

Thursday, December 11

Round My Way