ENG 5500-001: Writing Center Practicum

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ENGLISH 5500: Practicum in Writing Center Theory & Practice
Friday 1-3 pm in the Writing Center (Coleman Hall 3110)

This practicum is a seminar in the theory and practice (praxis) of writing center consulting. Each week, we will discuss readings and issues related to your work in the writing center.

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Attendance and Participation
Because we talk about important issues for our community of practice, because much of the work done in practicum is collaborative, because you are serious scholars & professionals, and because you receive one credit for this course, it is reasonable to expect you will attend—on time—every class session. If an emergency arises, contact Dr. Kory and Dr. Smith as soon as possible via email or phone.

Of course, you are expected to come to class with all books and other materials, prepared to contribute to a lively informed discussion of assigned readings.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Grades
You will receive written and oral feedback on your performance in this class, the written work you submit, and your work as a consultant in the writing center. You will not receive a letter grade for this course, but it is certainly possible to earn a grade of “no credit” for English 5500.

Overview of Assignments
Here is a summary of the assignments and activities you will complete by the end of the fall term:
- Monitoring + Active Participation in Discussion Group on Facebook
- Responses to Practicum Readings
- Observation Memos
- Genre Show & Tell presentation
- EIU Writes Blog Post
- Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting
Description of Assignments

Posts on the EIU Writing Center Facebook page
The EIU Writing Center Discussion Group on Facebook is one of many places theory and practice will co-mingle. We will post announcements, schedule changes, etc., so check in regularly.

We will also use this space to reflect on experiences and articulate questions or insights. Starting week 2, the deadline for the first post of the week is noon Wednesday. A second post in which you reply to or interact with the content of another post should appear by 10:00 a.m. Friday.

Formal Responses
Most weeks you will compose a formal written response in which you analyze and reflect on concepts, strategies, and issues presented in one of the assigned readings (not the one assigned to a group) as part of the development of your praxis and your philosophy of Writing Center consulting.

This 300-500 word response—which may have an assigned focus, audience, genre, or citation format—should focus on specifics: a key point; a significant feature of the author(s)’s research methods or approach, an assumption implicit in their argument, a tactic or strategy they advocate, or another aspect of the essay or article that seems worthy of careful analysis and detailed response.

Your response will be productive if you go beyond summary and analysis to consider how these ideas “fit” what you have learned about peer tutoring, and to what extent they are reinforced—or complicated—by situations you have encountered as a writing consultant. Note: If Dr. Smith and I have read the article, you do not need to provide a detailed summary. Do quote or paraphrase (and cite) key passages and demonstrate your understanding of their contribution to the essay as a whole.

Observation Memos
At least twice this semester you will write a memo following your formal observation of a session facilitated by one of your Writing Center colleagues. Submit these memos electronically to the consultant observed and provide copies to Drs. Smith and Kory (as a “cc”).

These memos should have a four-part structure:

1) Describe the arc of the session and key moments within it to the consultant you observed
2) Identify tactics, strategies, or moves that struck you as effective or appropriate, and anything else you learned from watching his or her work with this particular student writer
3) Focus on specific moments of kairos in which the consultant responded effectively to the demands of the moment—and describe a teachable moment s/he may have missed
4) Offer one specific suggestion or observation that your colleague might build upon.

Before you observe… do ask your colleague if there is anything they would like you to focus on—agenda setting, listening skills, body language, clarity of examples/explanations, wait time, etc.

EIU Writes Blog Post
On a pre-arranged schedule, you will compose and revise one post for the EIU Writing Across the Curriculum program’s public blog, EIU Writes. This can be an interview; mini-lesson; writing-related reflection; or discussion of an issue, practice, or truism about writing or the teaching of writing.
Genre Show & Tell
Since the writing center serves writers taking courses across the college curriculum, it behooves us to be familiar with the genres and documents that are characteristic of particular fields, disciplines, and professions. Therefore, each member of the class will make a presentation focused on a specific type or genre of document that is used in specific rhetorical situation or discourse community. Note: For this assignment, do NOT focus on literary genre (e.g. drama, poetry) or “school” genre (e.g. research paper), or “modes” that reflect a specified rhetorical aim (“informative,” “persuasive,” “narrative”).

Here are examples of genres and documents that respond to the demands of a particular rhetorical situation or reflect the methods and outcomes of specific disciplines or discourse communities:
- Marketing report
- Graduate school application essay
- Lab report
- Bad-news (sensitive) memo
- Lesson plan
- Business proposal
- Social-science essay (IMRD format)
- Job application letter
- Annotated bibliography
- Case study

Here are questions you can use to examine the genre or document and its discourse community:
- **Type:** What is the significance of the name of this genre? What type of document is this?
- **Scene:** Where and when (in what situations) does this genre typically appear?
- **Subject:** What sorts of topics, issues, problems and questions does the genre address?
- **Rhetors and Audience:** What are the roles of typical writers and readers of this document?
- **Purposes:** To what end do people write in this genre? What makes this type of document useful, interesting, or effective for its readers?
- **Patterns:** What specific features of style, format or approach are particular to this genre? What makes it different or similar to other written documents?
- **Discourse Conventions:** What is the level of formality for this genre? What’s important to note about syntax, sentence structure, and organization?

For your presentation, prepare a properly documented handout in which information is organized by the questions above. You also should offer a sample or model document we might be able to use during consulting sessions. The written material provided should be richly detailed enough to fuel discussion of practical strategies for working with students who must produce writing in this genre.

Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting
It is important to articulate the principles that support your practice as a consultant. Your personal philosophy will emerge as a synthesis of the ideas and experience you bring to the Writing Center, ideas and approaches you develop through experience, and the research and scholarship we discuss.

This document will serve as a capstone for this seminar, and provide a starting point for your evolution as a consultant during the spring semester. This document might also influence the philosophy of teaching writing you will develop next semester at the end of English 5502 (Mentored Composition Teaching), which will be part of your application packet if you apply to teach independently in the second year of your GAship. (Detailed Assignment Sheet to come.)

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1 These questions are adapted from *Scenes of Writing* by Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi (93-94).
Schedule

Key to Reading Assignments

ATG = A Tutor’s Guide (2nd)
ESL = ESL Writers (2nd)
MLA = MLA Handbook (8th)

# = handout, link, or .pdf

BG = Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors (6th)
LG = Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory & Practice

opt. = optional

Orientation

# “Talking in the Middle,” Harris
# “The First Five Minutes,” Newkirk (also LG 302-315)
# “The Writing Center as a Workplace,” Ryan & Zimmerelli (also BG 1-10)

Writing Center Handbook

Practicum Reading & Writing Assignments

Week 1: 8-26
Meet with at least one WC consultant for a scheduled session
“Breaking Ice and Setting Goals,” Bruce (ESL 33-41)
“Inside the Tutoring Session” (BG 11-27) + “Tutoring Writers through the
Writing Process” (BG 28-46)
# “Tutoring Writing is Performing Social Work is Coloring Hair: Writing
Center Work as an Activity System,” Carter [Praxis 3.2 (Spring 2006)]

EIU Writes blog post on best/worst writing experience due

Week 2: 9-2

STAFF MEETING

# “All Writers have More to Learn,” Rose + another section of “Concept 4”
“Principles of MLA Style” (MLA 3 - 58)
“Reading an ESL Writer’s Text,” Kei Matsuda and Cox (ESL 42-50)
OR “Looking at the Whole Text,” Staben & Nordhaus (ESL 78-90)

In-class Showing of Writing Across Borders
Response to ESL readings due (use MLA citations)

Week 3: 9-9

Take CLAST test (test + answer key at front desk), singly or collaboratively.
“Can You Proofread This?” + Appendices A-D (ATG 140-158)
One more essay (your choice) in ESL Writers
# “Says Who? Teaching and Questioning the Rules of Grammar,” Curzan
OR # “The ‘Standard English’ Fairy Tale,” Greenfield

Response due (use MLA citations)

Blog Post due date sign-ups
Week 4: 9-16

“Helping Writers across the Curriculum” (BG 72-87)
“Shifting Gears: Business and Technical Writing,” Briam (ATG 63-73)
# “Addressing Genre in the Writing Center,” Clark
APA Manual (pp. 65-78)
Response due (APA citations) + brief proposal for Genre Topic

Week 5: 9-23

“The Writers You Tutor” (BG 52-71)
# “Learning Differences,” Dunn
“Talk to Me: Engaging Reluctant Writers,” Harris (ATG 23-33)
# “Kairotic Moments in the Writing Center,” Taylor, Kory et al.
Genre Show & Tell

Week 6: 9-30

“Organizing Ideas: Focus Is the Key,” Trupe (ATG 98-106)
“Helping Writers to Write Analytically,” Rafoth ATG 107-14)
Genre Show & Tell
Observation Memo due

Week 7: 10-7

“Raising Questions about Plagiarism,” Bouman (ESL 161-175)
# “Rethinking Plagiarism in the Digital Age,” Evering & Moorman
“Plagiarism,” “Self-Plagiarism,” “Quoting and Paraphrasing” (APA 170-173)
“Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty” (MLA 6-10)
Genre Show & Tell
Response due

Week 8: 10-14

Fall Break: no practicum meeting
Observation Memo due

Week 9: 10-21

“A Balancing of Efficiency and Exploration: Tutoring Writers in Advanced Classes,” Zemliansky (ATG 85-97)
“Freud in the Writing Center: The Psychoanalytics of Tutoring Well,” Murphy (LG 296-301)
# “In this article, I argue…” (TETYC)
Genre Show & Tell
Response due
Week 10: 10-28

**STAFF MEETING**

# "You Can't Get Anywhere Without Relationships': Marginality & Mattering in the Writing Center," Shelly

Self-Selected Reading from *Naming What We Know* (duplicate + annotate)

"The Idea of a Writing Center," North (LG 63-78)

Response due

Week 11: 11-4

# "Listening in/to the Writing Center: Backchannel and Gaze," Santa

# “Queering the Writing Center,” Denny

Genre Show & Tell

Response due

Week 12: 11-11

# “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers,” Sommers

# “Composing Practices of One- and Multi-Draft Writers,” Harris

Observation Memo

Week 13: 11-18

Re-read at least one influential essay or book chapter from the syllabus

"Redefining Our Existence: An Argument for Short- and Long-Term Goals and Objectives," Barnett (LG 194-201)

Philosophy Pre-Writing due (see prompt)

*Thanksgiving Break*

Week 14: 12-2

**Peer Review** of Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting

# “Tutoring Writing as Career Development," Kiedaisch

Bring two copies of draft Writing Center Philosophy

Week 15: 12-9

**Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting due**

Spring Semester Scheduling