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ENG 5500-001: Practicum In Writing Center Theory And Practice

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ENGLISH 5500

Practicum in Writing Center Theory and Practice

3110 Coleman Hall (The Writing Center)

Fridays 1-3pm

3-5

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Goals and Expectations

This practicum is a seminar in the theory-practice (*praxis*) of writing center consulting. Each week, in addition to discussing assigned readings, we will devote substantial class time to discussing issues regarding your work in the writing center.

Practicum participants are expected to fulfill these responsibilities:

- Attend all practicum meetings
- Complete all reading assignments
- Contribute to class discussion consistently
- Collaborate with peers on presentations and group projects
- Facilitate an interesting and engaging Article Search and Share presentation based on self-selected reading from a professional resource
- Provide a thought-provoking and helpful Genre Search and Share presentation based on research, analysis, and reflection
- Post weekly responses to the EIU Writing Center Blog
- Compose weekly analytic response memoranda
- Compose two observation memoranda
- Craft a philosophy of writing center consulting that reflects your knowledge of writing center pedagogy and your experience as a writing consultant

Texts

The Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice. Barnett and Blumner (2008)

Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences. McAndrew and Reigstad (2001)

A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One, 2nd ed. Rafoth (2005)

ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors, 2nd ed. Bruce and Rafoth (2009)

Attendance and Participation

Because we talk about issues that involve and affect all tutors, because much of the work done in class is collaborative in nature, because you are serious scholars, and because being a graduate assistant is a professional and paid responsibility, you are expected to attend—and be on time for—every class session. If an emergency arises that will affect your attendance, please contact both Dr. Taylor and Dr. Kory as soon as possible via email or office phone.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Grades

You will receive written and oral feedback on your performance in this class and about your work in the writing center. Although you will not receive a letter grade for this course, it is possible to earn a grade of “no credit” for English 5500.

Reading and Presentations

Assigned readings and presentations will introduce issues relevant to your work in the writing center and to the teaching of writing in general. In our discussions we will consider how the concepts, strategies, and examples presented in our textbooks and in professional journals can connect with, critique, or inform your own work as a Writing Consultant in EIU’s Writing Center.

Collaborative Work

You will regularly collaborate with peers to facilitate discussion of issues raised by assigned readings. We encourage you to find creative ways (e.g. oral or written exercises, role-playing, small group exercises, etc.) to get us to engage productively with the reading material.

Lectures are antithetical to the *ethos* of writing centers, so your presentations must be *interactive*. Groups are expected to arrange time outside of class to brainstorm and plan a pedagogically effective approach to the material.

Analytic Response Memoranda

In anticipation of our weekly class discussions, you will be asked to write an analytic response memo to both Dr. Taylor and Dr. Kory in which you analyze and reflect on concepts, precepts, ideas, strategies, and issues presented by the authors of our assigned readings. The memo may focus on an author’s main point in one section of the text, an assumption that is implicit within his or her argument, tactics/strategies that the author advocates, or other specific details in the text that you want to *closely analyze* and respond to in depth and in detail.

In each memo you need to offer a concise introductory paragraph that provides context for your response and a strong “bottom-line”: to whom/what are you responding exactly and what is the thesis/focus of your response?

The bulk of each memo should be analysis—not summary. You can assume that your readers have read the article, so you do not need to provide a lot of summary although you will want to quote or paraphrase passages you are analyzing. Your memorandum should demonstrate focused attention to details, which should create a sound basis for exploring, reflecting, questioning, agreeing, even arguing with an author’s points or argument.

Each document should be at least one single-spaced page in a memo format, and it should demonstrate stylistic maturity and mastery of editorial conventions. When citing sources in these memoranda, you have to use APA style on odd weeks and MLA style on even weeks.

Posts on the EIU Writing Center Blog

One of the purposes of posting on the private EIU Writing Center Blog is to document experiences and insights that may otherwise get lost to memory. Other purposes are to share ideas or experiences with colleagues and to interact with your colleagues productively.

The majority of your posts will be self-generated. That means you need to write about insights gleaned from consulting sessions, what you're learning from your fellow consultants, concerns you might have, experiences that connect to writing center-related readings, or issues/questions that emerge during that week.

The deadline for the first post of the week is Noon on Wednesday. Then you need to do a second post to reply/interact with at least one other person's post by Noon on Friday of each week. Our aim is to make the in-house blog a site you can debate issues, ponder strategies and approaches, think about your practice, learn from one another, and have fun.

Observation Memoranda

You will write two observation memos this semester following your formal observation of a session facilitated by one of your writing center colleagues. The purpose of this writing assignment is for you to observe sessions facilitated by two different colleagues. Unlike the analytic response memos, these memos should have a four-part structure:

- 1) Describe that session to the consultant you observed
- 2) Inform that consultant about specific tactics, strategies, or moves you learned from watching him or her work with the student writer (what seemed particularly effective or innovative)
- 3) Share your perceptions of specific *kairotic* moments (see Glover's "Kairos and the Writing Center") that the consultant successfully capitalized on and describe any potentially teachable moments s/he may have missed
- 4) Offer one recommendation to the writing consultant—be specific and helpful

Before you observe your peers, you may also want to ask them if there is anything they would like you to focus on as you observe and comment on in the memo. You should submit the memos to the writing center consultant observed and also to Drs. Taylor and Kory (Cc them).

Article Search and Share

Each week one member of the class will locate a reading from a professional journal or a resource (print or electronic) that seems relevant to the work you do as writing center consultants. You can find appropriate selections in many of the books available in the Writing Center collection or in one of the journals on our shelves (*College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, *The Writing Center Journal*, *The Writing Lab Newsletter*)—or you can find something in a respectable virtual environment, such as the web sites of a relevant professional organization (NCTE, CCCC, IWCA) or an online academic journal (*Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, *The Dangling Modifier*, *et al.*). Or you can discuss a reading from one of our textbooks that is not on the syllabus.

For your presentation, prepare a properly documented handout that lays out the thesis/focus of the reading or resource, its main points, and your evaluation of its applicability in the Writing Center. The written material provided should be detailed enough to be the basis for our discussion of theoretical assumptions and practical strategies presented in the original.

Genre Search & Share

Since the writing center serves writers taking courses across the curriculum, each member of the class will locate a specific genre or document that is characteristic of a particular discipline, field, or profession. Look for a document that reflects the audiences and goals connected to a specific

rhetorical situation, discipline, and discourse community, not an academic essay with a different rhetorical aim (e.g. not an “informative” paper, a “persuasive” essay, or a “narrative”).

For example, here are some genres and documents that connect to specific rhetorical purposes and disciplines/discourse communities:

- Marketing report,
- Literacy narrative,
- Graduate school application essay,
- Lab report,
- Bad-news (sensitive) memo,
- Lesson plan assignment in an Education class,
- Business proposal,
- Social-science research paper using the IMRD format,
- Job application letter,
- Annotated bibliography,
- Research paper in _____ class, and
- Case study.

Here are questions you need to use when examining the genre or document and its discourse community¹:

- Type: What is the name of this genre? Why is it called that? What does the name signify?
- Scene: Where and when does this genre typically appear?
- Subject: What topics, ideas, issues, and questions does the genre address?
- Rhetors and Audience: Who are the typical writers and readers of this document? What roles do they perform?
- Purposes: Why do people write this genre and why is the document important to readers?
- Patterns: What patterns and specific features 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, you need to prepare a properly documented handout that 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 detailed enough to be the basis for our discussion of the practical strategies necessary when working with students who are writing this genre.

Approximately a week before you present about your genre or document, you need to have it approved by either Dr. Taylor or Dr. Kory.

Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting

It is important to be able to articulate the principles that support your practice as a consultant, your *praxis*. The purpose of this document is for you to explain your philosophy of consulting with student-writers by synthesizing your own personal beliefs, assumptions, experiences, and ideas with writing center research and scholarship that we have read and discussed over the semester. This

¹ These questions are adapted from *Scenes of Writing* by Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi (93-4).

document will serve as a capstone for this seminar, and it is a piece of writing that will direct your work in the spring semester. This document might also influence the philosophy of teaching writing you develop next semester in English 5502, which will be part of your application packet if you apply to teach independently in the second year of your GAship.

Assignments for the Fall Semester

The bulleted list below is a tentative list of the assignments and activities for the fall term:

- Active participation in discussion every week
- 15 posts and 15 reply posts to the EIU Writing Center Blog (at least two posts per week)
- 10 Analytic Response Memoranda
- 2 Observation Memoranda
- 1 Article Search and Share presentation
- 1 Genre Search and Share presentation
- 2 instances of leading discussion as a group member
- 1 Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting

Syllabus

All assignments and due date are tentative, and changes to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

- Week 1: 8-26 “What Tutoring Is: Models and Strategies;” TW (42-69)
“Setting the Agenda for the Next Thirty Minutes,” Macauley; ATG (1-8)
“Breaking Ice and Setting Goals,” Bruce; ESL (33-41)
“Tutoring Writing is Performing Social Work is Coloring Hair: Writing Center Work as an Activity System,” Carter
Sign-ups for Search and Share presentations
Analytic Response Memo (APA) due
- Week 2: 9-1 **Group 1— “The Idea of a Writing Center,” North; LG (63-78)
“Talk to Me: Engaging Reluctant Writers,” Harris; ATG (23-33)
“Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work,” Brooks; LG (219-24)
“Looking at the Whole Text,” Staben and Nordhaus; ESL (78-90)
“Can You Proofread This?,” Rapp Young; ATG (140-47)
Article Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (MLA) due
- Week 3: 9-9 **Group 2—“Tutoring in Emotionally Charged Sessions,” Agostinelli, *et al.*; ATG (34-40)
“Before the Conversation: A Sketch...,” Leki; ESL (1-17)
“*Kairos* and the Writing Center,” Glover
“Power and Authority in Peer Tutoring,” Carino
Article Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (APA) due
- Week 4: 9-16 **Group 3—“Avoiding Appropriation,” Severino; ESL (51-65)
“Crossing Cultures with International ESL Writers: The Tutor as Contact Zone Contact Person,” Severino; ATG (41-53)
“Reading an ESL Writer’s Text,” Kei Matsuda and Cox; ESL (42-50)
Showing of *Writing Across Borders*
Article Search and Share
Genre Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (MLA) due
- Week 5: 9-23 **Group 4—“The Writing and Tutoring Processes;” TW (21-30)
“Tutoring When the Writer Has a Topic but No Draft;” TW (31-41)
“Whispers of Coming and Going’: Lessons from Fannie,” DiPardo; LG (350-67)
“Lessons from the Masters” TW (103-19)
Article Search and Share
Genre Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (APA) due

- Week 6: 9-30 **Group 1—“Organizing Ideas: Focus Is the Key,” Trupe; ATG (98-106)
 “Helping Writers to Write Analytically,” Rafoth; ATG (107-14)
 “What Line? I Didn’t See any Line,” Wingate; ATG (9-16)
 “Freud in the Writing Center: The Psychoanalytics of Tutoring Well,”
 Murphy; LG (296-301)
 Article Search and Share
 Genre Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (MLA) due
- Week 7: 10-7 **Group 2—“Look Back and Say ‘So What?’: The Limitations of the
 Generalist Tutor,” Kiedaisch and Dinitz; LG (260-71)
 “A Balancing of Efficiency and Exploration: Tutoring Writers in Advanced
 Classes,” Zemliansky; ATG (85-97) *e*
 “Shifting Gears: Business and Technical Writing,” Briam; ATG (63-73)
 Article Search and Share
 Genre Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (APA) due
- Week 8: 10-14 Fall Break (No Classes)
- Week 9: 10-21 No Class (both Directors at the MWCA Conference)
Observation Memos due in mailboxes by Noon
- Week 10: 10-28 “Information Literacy and the Writing Center,” Clark; LG (561-70)
 “Using Others’ Words: Quoting, Summarizing, and Documenting Sources,”
 Dossin; ATG (159-66)
 Article Search and Share
 Genre Search and Share
 Genre Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (MLA) due
- Week 11: 11-4 **Group 3—“Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center,”
 Lunsford; LG (92-99)
 # “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers,”
 Sommers
 # “Composing Practices of One- and Multi-Draft Writers,” Harris
 Article Search and Share
 Genre Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (APA) due
- Week 12: 11-11 **Group 4—“‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-
 Open Admissions, Boquet; LG (41-60)
 “Early Writing Centers: Toward a History,” Carino; LG (10-21)
 “A Critique of Peer Tutoring,” Shamoon and Burns; LG (225-41)
 Article Search and Share
 Genre Search and Share
Observation Memo due

Week 13: 11-18 “The Writing Center and Social Constructionist Theory,” Murphy; LG (110-23)
“Redefining Our Existence: An Argument for Short- and Long-Term Goals and Objectives,” Barnett; LG (194-201)
Article Search and Share
Genre Search and Share
Genre Search and Share
Analytic Response Memo (APA) due

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: 12-2 **Peer Review** of Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting
Tutoring Writing as Career Development,”
“Transferring Pedagogy from the Writing Lab to the Composition Classroom,” Van Dyke
Showing of *Take 20*

Week 15: 12-9 **Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting due**
End-of-the-semester PARTY

Key

TW = *Tutoring Writing*

ESL = *ESL Writers*

** = reading assignment facilitated by a group

ATG = *A Tutor's Guide*

LG = *The Longman Guide...*

= handout