ENG 5500-001: Practicum in Writing Center Theory and Practice

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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 issues related to our evolving community of practice, because much of the work done in practicum is collaborative, because you are serious scholars & professionals, and because you receive 3 hours of compensated time plus one credit for this course, it seems reasonable to expect that you will attend—on time—every class session. If an emergency arises that will affect your attendance, please contact both Dr. Kory and Dr. Smith as soon as possible via email or phone.

Of course, you are also 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 possible to earn a grade of “no credit” for English 5500.

Assignments
Here is a summary of the assignments and activities you will complete by the end of the fall term:

- 30 Posts (at least two each week) to the EIU Writing Center Facebook page
- 9 Analytic Responses (form/genre may vary)
- 3 Observation Memoranda
- 1 Article or Resource Search & Share presentation
- 1 Genre Show & Tell presentation
- Opportunities to collaborate with group members to plan and facilitate class discussion
- 1 Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting
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.

**Observation Memoranda**

Three times this semester you will write an observation memo following your formal observation of a session facilitated by one of your Writing Center colleagues. By the end of the semester, you should have observed and analyzed sessions by at least two different colleagues. Submit these memos to the consultant observed and provide electronic 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 some specific moments of kairos in which the consultant responded appropriately to the demands of the moment, and describe any teachable moments s/he may have missed
4. Offer one specific suggestion or observation that your colleague might build upon.

Before you observe... ask your colleagues if there is anything they would like you to focus on.

**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, we will not focus on literary genre (drama, poetry, etc.) or “school” genre (e.g. “research paper”), including “modes” that focus on 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 community¹:

- **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?

(continued on next page →)

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

Shared readings and interactive presentations will introduce issues and ideas that are fundamental to writing center consulting and relevant to composition pedagogy in general. In discussions, we will consider how the concepts and strategies presented by researchers and scholar-practitioners might inform our work in the Writing Center...and beyond.

**Key**
BG = *Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*
ATG = *A Tutor's Guide*
# = handout
** = reading assignment facilitated by a group

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: 1-4)

Week 1: 8-29

Get Tutored: Meet with a WC consultant for at least one scheduled session
“The Writing Process,” “Inside the Tutoring Session” & “Helping Writers through the Writing Process” (BG ch. 2-4: pp. 6-55)
“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 & Share presentations
Essay on Lessons of Best/Worst Writing Assignment DUE

Week 2: 9-5

**Group 1 (aka G1)—“Can You Proofread This?” + Appendices A-D, Rapp Young (ATG 140-158)
“Looking at the Whole Text,” Staben & Nordhaus (ESL 78-90)
“The Idea of a Writing Center,” North (LG 63-78)
Bring 2 Article Search options
Analytic Response Memo due

Week 3: 9-12

**G2—“Helping Writers across the Curriculum” (BG 7: 87-98)
“Crossing Cultures with International ESL Writers: The Tutor as Contact Zone Contact Person,” Severino (ATG 41-53)
# “Addressing Genre in the Writing Center,” Clark
# “Meta-Genre,” Janet Giltrow
Article Search & Share
Analytic Response Memo due
Week 10: 10-31
**G4—“Setting the Agenda for the Next Thirty Minutes” (ATG 1-8)
# “Queering the Writing Center,” Denny
Article Search & Share
Genre Show & Tell
Analytic Response Memo due

Week 11: 11-7
# “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers,” Sommers
# “Composing Practices of One- and Multi-Draft Writers,” Harris
Article Search & Share
Genre Show & Tell
Analytic Response Memo due

Week 12: 11-14
“‘Our Little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions, Boquet (LG 41-60) OR
“Early Writing Centers: Toward a History,” Carino (LG 10-21)
Article Search & Share
Genre Show & Tell
Analytic Response Memo due

Week 13: 11-21
“Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center,” Lunsford; LG (92-99)
“Redefining Our Existence: An Argument for Short- and Long-Term Goals and Objectives,” Barnett (LG 194-201)
Genre Show & Tell
Observation Memo due

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: 12-5
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: 12-12
Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting due
End-of-the-semester PARTY