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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 1-3 pm

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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 several presentations
- Facilitate a thought-provoking and interesting “Search and Share” presentation based on self-selected reading from a professional resource
- Post weekly responses to the EIU Writing Center Blog before Noon on Fridays
- Compose analytic response memoranda
- Complete one theory/practice reflection memorandum
- Complete two observation reflection memoranda
- Craft a “philosophy of writing center consulting” that reflects your knowledge of writing center pedagogy and your experience as a writing consultant

Texts

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 presentation should be interactive. Groups are expected to arrange time outside of class to brainstorm and plan a pedagogically effective approach to the material.

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.

Posts on the EIU Writing Center Blog
One of the purposes of posting on the writing center blog is to document experiences and insights that may otherwise get lost to memory. In a graduate seminar like this one, another purpose is to share ideas or experiences with colleagues. While some of your posts may be guided by prompts focused on specific themes, the majority will be self-generated posts based on insights gleaned from consulting sessions, interactions with your fellow consultants, and writing center-related readings. The deadline for weekly posts is Noon on Friday. However, we encourage you post earlier in the week, and we hope you will find ways to use the blog to interact with your colleagues productively.

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 from passages you are analyzing. Your memorandum should demonstrate productively 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.

**Theory/Practice Reflection Memorandum**

Approximately halfway through the semester a formal theory/practice reflection memo will be due. The purpose of this writing assignment is for you to reflect on how you can use one or more of the readings we have discussed to analyze a specific consulting session. In the memo, which should be addressed both Dr. Taylor and Dr. Kory, you will describe specific parts of the consulting session and then connect that experience to at least one reading assignment in a cohesive way—whether the experience affirms or critiques or complicates the issues or ideas presented in that reading. You should conclude with your own reflection about how the issues highlighted by the consulting session and the reading relate to your professional and scholarly development. The memo should have a three-part structure:

1) Describe a consulting session
2) Demonstrate the usefulness of exploring that session in light of a particular reading
3) Reflect on the session and/or the concept/s presented in the reading as they relate to writing center *praxis* and your professional goals

**Observation Reflection Memoranda**

You will write two observation reflection memos this semester that follow 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 theory/practice reflection memo, 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 any potentially teachable moment 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).
**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 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 to the EIU Writing Center Blog (at least one post per week)
- 10 Analytic Response Memoranda
- 1 Theory/Practice Reflection Memorandum
- 2 Observation Reflection Memoranda
- 1 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: 8-28**

- "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 due**

**Week 2: 9-4**

- **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)
- "Overcoming the Silence: An Exploration of the Middle Ground of Directivity," Kopec
- Search and Share
  
  **Analytic Response Memo due**

**Week 3: 9-11**

“Tutoring Different People;” TW (89-102)
“Before the Conversation…,” Leki; ESL (1-17)
“Can You Proofread This?,” Rapp Young; ATG (140-158) w/ CLAST test
Search and Share

**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)
Search and Share

**Group 4—“The Writing and Tutoring Processes;” TW (21-30)
“Tutoring When the Writer Has a Topic but No Draft;” TW (31-41)
### “Kairos and the Writing Center,” Glover
Search and Share

**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)
Search and Share

Fall Break (No Classes)
Theory/Practice Reflection Memo due

“Lessons from the Masters” TW (103-19)
### “Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar,” Hartwell
### “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers,” Sommers
Search and Share

**Group 2—“Using Others’ Words: Quoting, Summarizing, and Documenting Sources,” Dossin; ATG (159-66)
“Looking at the Whole Text,” Staben and Nordhaus; ESL (78-90)
“Peer Tutoring and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” Bruffee; LG (206-18)
Observation Reflection Memo due

**Group 3—“Freud in the Writing Center: The Psychoanalytics of Tutoring Well,” Murphy; LG (296-301)
“Whispers of Coming and Going’: Lessons from Fannie,” DiPardo; LG (350-67)
Search and Share

**Analytic Response Memo due**

Week 11: 11-6

**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)
“Information Literacy and the Writing Center,” Clark; LB (561-70)

Search and Share

**Analytic Response Memo due**

Week 12: 11-13

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

**Observation Reflection Memo due**

Week 13: 11-20

“Revisiting ‘The Idea of a Writing Center,’” North; LG (79-91)

### “Reconsiderations: After ‘The Idea of a Writing Center,’” Boquet and Lerner

**Analytic Response Memo due**

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: 12-4

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

“Rethinking the WAC/Writing Center Connection,” Pemberton; LG (442-57)

Take 20, Taylor

Week 15: 12-11

**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