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

Tim Taylor  
*Eastern Illinois University*

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 Goals and Expectations
This practicum will serve as a seminar in the theory-practice (praxis) of consulting in the writing center. Each week, in addition to discussing reading assignments, we will devote substantial class time to discussing issues regarding your work in the Writing Center.

Practicum participants are expected to complete these tasks:

- Attend all practicum meetings
- Complete all reading assignments
- Contribute to class discussion on a consistent basis
- Prepare and offer several collaborative presentations
- Present a thought-provoking and interesting “Search and Share” segment based on self-directed reading or electronic resources
- Post weekly responses to an electronic journal through WebCT
- Complete two theory/practice reflection memos based on two separate tutoring sessions
- Craft a “philosophy of writing center consulting” based on reading materials and actual tutoring session(s)

Texts

Attendance and Participation
You are expected to attend and be on time for every class session. If an emergency arises, however, please contact both Dr. Taylor and Dr. Kory in advance via email or office phone. Because we begin the practicum by talking about experiences that involve and effect all tutors, because much of the work done in class is collaborative in nature, because you are serious scholars who seek to learn and improve yourselves, and because being a graduate assistant is a professional and paid responsibility, you should attend every class meeting. Although the practicum does not involve a letter grade (pass/fail), it is possible not to get credit for 5500.

Reading and Presentations
Readings will introduce issues relevant to your work in the Writing Center and issues that connect to teaching writing. In our discussion we will make connections between the theories,
ideas, and experiences presented and how those concepts and examples connect to, critique, and inform your own work as a Writing Consultant in EIU’s Writing Center.

**Collaborative Work**
For a number of class meetings, you will work with others to lead discussion about issues raised by assigned readings. We encourage creative ways in which to get us engaged with the reading material. In-class exercises, handouts, role-playing exercises, and PowerPoint presentations are recommended. Groups should use time outside of class to brainstorm and plan how they will facilitate class discussion.

**Search and Share**
Each week one member of the class will select a reading or an electronic resource that will be helpful for writing center consultants. You can find reading in one of the many journals at the Writing Center (CCC, College English, Teaching English in the Two-Year College, The Writing Center Journal, The Writing Lab Newsletter) or in some respectable virtual environment. Respectable virtual environments might include the Web sites of professional organizations (NCTE, CCC, IWCA) or online academic journals (Praxis: A Writing Center Journal, The Dangling Modifier, et al.).

For each “Search and Share,” you must prepare a properly documented handout that captures the overall thesis and main points of the article or presents a brief but concrete description of the resource. You should also include our evaluation of the reading/resource. What are the strengths, weaknesses, and important questions raised or not raised? The handout that you provide works as a base for discussion about the theoretical assumptions and practical advice of the article or resource, so it must be usefully detailed.

**Journals**
One of the purposes of keeping a journal is to document experiences and insights that may otherwise get lost to memory. In a graduate seminar like this one, another purpose might be share entries with colleagues so that they can learn from you. The journal you are asked to keep is electronic in nature and housed within WebCT, which will be explained during the first week of class. While some of your journal entries will be guided by specific themes and readings, the majority will be based on insights gleaned from tutoring sessions, interactions with other tutors, and Writing Center-related readings. Approximately 500 words per week is the goal. Drs. Taylor and Kory will occasionally respond to postings.

**Theory/Practice Reflection Memo**
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 about how a specific consulting session connects to one or more of the readings we’ve discussed. 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 an issue or idea. The memo concludes with your own reflection about how the issues involved connect to your goals as a professional (teacher, writer, among others). The conclusion of the memo should connect to how the issues uncovered by the consulting session and the reading relate to your own professional and
scholarly development. The memo must have a three part structure: 1) description of consulting session, 2) connection and relevance to appropriate reading/s, and 3) reflection about the session or concept and how it relates to your professional goals.

**Observation/Reflection Memos**

Near the end of the semester two observation/reflection memos will be due; you will have to observe two different colleagues in sessions at the Writing Center. The purpose of this writing assignment is for you to observe a colleague’s consulting session with a student, describe that session to the person you observed, and then reflect on what you learned from watching this consultant’s work (what you liked, what was effective, what was innovative) coupled with one kind recommendation for improvement. Before you observe your peers, you may also want to ask them if there is anything they would like you to focus on, look for, or comment on. You submit the memos to the writing center consultants observed and Drs. Taylor and Kory (Cc them).

**Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting**

Since consulting in the writing center (and teaching writing) melds what some perceive as a theory/practice divide, it is important to have a pedagogical grounding from which you enact your practice as a consultant, your *praxis*. Composition instructors have philosophies of teaching writing, and you should have philosophies of writing center consulting. So the purpose of the document is for you to explain your philosophy of consulting with writers by synthesizing your own personal beliefs, assumptions, experiences, and ideas with writing center research and scholarship that we have read over the whole semester. This document will serve as a capstone for the course, a piece of writing that will direct your work in the spring semester and also influence your philosophy of teaching writing if you become a graduate assistant who teaches his or her own class in the second year.
Syllabus

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

Week 1: 8-29
"What Tutoring Is: Models and Strategies;” TW (42-69)
"Setting the Agenda for the Next Thirty Minutes,” Macauley; ATG (1-8)
"The Idea of a Writing Center,” North; LG (63-78)
Introduction to WebCT
Sign-ups for Search and Share

Week 2: 9-5
"What Line? I Didn’t See any Line,” Wingate; ATG (9-16)
**Group 1— “Talk to Me: Engaging Reluctant Writers,” Harris; ATG (23-33)
“Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work,”
Brooks; LG (219-24)

Week 3: 9-12
“Tutoring Different People;” TW (89-102)
Search and Share

Week 4: 9-19
**Group 3— “Recent Developments in Assisting ESL Writers,” Ritter; ATG (54-62)
“Crossing Cultures with International ESL Writers: The Tutor as Contact Zone Contact Person,” Severino; ATG (41-53)
Writing Across Borders, Robertson
Search and Share

Week 5: 9-26
**Group 4— “The Return of the Suppressed: Tutoring Stories in a Transitional Space,” Welch; WCR (203-20)
“The Writing and Tutoring Processes;” TW (21-30)
“Tutoring When the Writer Has a Topic but No Draft;” TW (31-41)
Search and Share

Week 6: 10-3
## “Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar,” Hartwell
## “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers,” Sommers
Search and Share

Week 7: 10-10
Fall Break (No Classes)
Theory/Practice Reflection Memo due

Week 8: 10-17
**Group 1— “Organizing Ideas: Focus Is the Key,” Trupe; ATG (98-106)
“Helping Writers to Write Analytically,” Rafoth; ATG (107-14)
Search and Share
Week 9: 10-24

## Plagiarism handouts

**Group 2—“Can You Proofread This?,” Rapp Young; ATG (140-158)
“Using Others’ Words: Quoting, Summarizing, and Documenting Sources,” Dossin; ATG (159-66)

Search and Share

Week 10: 10-31

**Group 3--“Whispers of Coming and Going': Lessons from Fannie,”
DiPardo; LG (350-67)
“Peer Tutoring and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” Bruffee; LG (206-18)
“Freud in the Writing Center: The Psychoanalytics of Tutoring Well,”
Murphy; LG (296-301)

Search and Share

**Observation/Reflection Memo due

Week 11: 11-7

**Group 4—“Straddling the Virtual Fence,” Hobson; LG (475-93)
“Information Literacy and the Writing Center,” Clark; LB (561-70)

Search and Share

Week 12: 11-14

“What Should the Relationship Between the Writing Center and the Writing Program Be?,” Waldo; LG (168-75)
“Redefining Our Existence: An Argument for Short- and Long-Term Goals and Objectives,” Barnett; LG (194-201)

Search and Share

**Observation/Reflection Memo due

Week 13: 11-21

“What Should the Relationship Between the Writing Center and the Writing Program Be?,” Waldo; LG (168-75)
“Redefining Our Existence: An Argument for Short- and Long-Term Goals and Objectives,” Barnett; LG (194-201)

Search and Share

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: 12-5

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

Take 20, Taylor

Week 15: 12-12

Philosophy of Writing Center Consulting due
Due: End-of-the-semester PARTY

Key
TW = Tutoring Writing
WCR = Writing Center Research
** = reading assignment facilitated by a group
ATG = A Tutor’s Guide
LG = The Longman Guide...
## = handout