

English 471: The Theory and Practice of Teaching Writing

Winter 2021

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Course Materials on Canvas

Course Materials:

Susan Miller, *The Norton Book of Composition Studies* (W.W Norton 2009)

Additional readings, available in Canvas

Please have access to the relevant readings and materials in class every day

Laptop or Tablet (if you do not own a device, I encourage you to check one out from [Student Technology Loan Program](#))

The Course:

Although the teaching of writing *as a practice* has existed in various manifestations for hundreds of years, it has primarily existed *as a subject of study* since the 1960s and the emergence of the “process movement.” Prior to the 1960s, writing instruction consisted mainly of teaching and evaluating product-oriented skills such as organization, paragraphing, sentence construction, grammar, spelling, and so forth. These “technical” skills were meant to help students prepare and present their texts—their written products—to teachers who then corrected them (often with the infamous red pens). By the 1960s, however, writing teachers, influenced by work in creativity research and cognitive psychology as well as by political exigencies, became interested not just in the finished product of writing but in the processes of its production, hence a shift in focus from a product- to a process-driven writing instruction that we now call the process movement. While today the product approach is far from extinct, the process movement has nonetheless played a large role in making the field of composition studies—and this course, for that matter—possible by giving writing teachers and scholars something to *study* in addition to something to teach, namely the conditions—socio-political, material, linguistic, psychological, and cognitive—that shape writers’ composing processes. As a result, the past sixty years have witnessed a wealth of research studies, theories, and practices that examine and encourage students’ writing development.

This course will introduce you to and help you work with some of these approaches that guide the study and teaching of writing. We will explore the different methods of teaching writing that have emerged in the last fifty years, from text production to assessment. We will examine the research and theories that underscore these methods, starting with the emergence of the process movement itself and then inquiring into its various manifestations in the years since, including the impact of new media and an increasingly globalized and

multilingual reality. Along the way, we will think critically about the values and assumptions that guide these approaches and whose interests they serve, so that we all can become more self-reflective readers, writers, and teachers. Most of all, I would like this course to give us a chance to think about what it means to teach writing, to develop and share our own goals for teaching writing, and to generate and articulate practices that will help us achieve these goals in the contexts of the schools, communities, and state-mandated requirements in which we teach.

As such, the course goals are as follows:

- To familiarize you with the various theories and approaches that inform writing instruction.
- To help you develop the critical ability to examine the values and assumptions behind the various approaches (whose interests they serve, what they enable and what they prevent).
- To provide an opportunity for you to conduct writing-related research.
- To introduce you to a theoretical vocabulary that will allow you to articulate your goals as a writing teacher.
- To give you a chance to develop a range of teaching materials that will help you achieve your goals in the context of grade-level and state and national standards.

Religious Accommodation:

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](#).

Land Acknowledgment:

The University of Washington campuses and all of its sites of learning occupy traditional lands of Coast Salish peoples, including the Duwamish tribe. Understanding the history of these people and their spaces honors their ancient heritage and helps (in a small way) to counter the erasure of their histories. As educators working to deeply see others, an essential component of our work is the ongoing acknowledgment of settler colonialist spaces and the people who still live and work here. I recommend [this video about land acknowledgment](#) for further consideration.

Course Requirements:

Along with class participation, the five main course projects are designed to help achieve the above course goals. They involve keeping a studio journal, facilitating a discussion, conducting a brief teaching ethnography, preparing a bibliography and curriculum design presentation, and compiling a final teaching portfolio. This course will be graded using the Labor-based Contract Grading. This paradigm creates a contract between instructor and student that establishes a grading scale based on the amount of labor the student does. I like this approach because it removes my subjective assessment of student work from the

grades. I will provide my subjective assessments on your assignments, but your grade will be based on the amount of labor you complete. Please see Asao B. Inoue's discussion in his chapter: [Description of a Typical Labor-based Contract](#) for more details. We will be completing and discussing our Labor-Based Contract during Week 1. The labor that will be included on the contract is as follows:

Studio Journal:

Most weeks, we will discuss various approaches and theories that inform the teaching of writing, and we will also have five studio sessions that give you an opportunity to apply these approaches and theories in practice. In these sessions, you will be expected to bring in a draft of a teaching artifact that employs the approach we are studying that week (for example: a lesson plan, a writing assignment or prompt, or sequence of assignments that build on each other, reading responses, peer observations, a worksheet for students, a class syllabus, a class activity, etc.) and share it with your classmates in small groups.

As part of your ongoing documentation and examination of your practice, you'll be asked to provide and receive feedback on your artifacts and write a 2-3 page journal entry after each studio session that includes the following:

- What you shared with your colleagues.
- How you engaged course concepts and readings.
- How your colleagues responded to what you shared.
- How you engaged with what your colleagues shared.
- How you might revise the artifact moving forward.

Each studio journal entry is due in Canvas by the start of class following each Studio Activity (five entries total, 10 possible points each). At the end of the quarter, select three of the five artifacts and journal entries and refine/revise your thinking and writing about them for the final portfolio - see below. The more you can be thinking about how the various readings can be applied (in the form of activities, assignments, lesson plans, etc.) to classes you might teach one day, the better prepared you will be to complete the final teaching portfolio.

Facilitating Discussion:

Students will take turns facilitating discussions on the readings, which will take up part of a class session. In small groups, your role as discussion facilitators will be to draw out and highlight the points of the readings that are most relevant, provocative, confusing, or interesting. It is also your responsibility to moderate discussion and maintain a space where everyone is able to contribute. You can experiment with different moderation styles as you wish.

When facilitating (or co-facilitating) discussion, it is expected that you prepare by thoroughly reading the course readings, highlighting key issues or themes that you deem to be significant, and posing questions in ways that engage others in discussion in order to deepen our understanding of the readings. When leading the discussion, you may wish to prepare a handout, focus on key passages or page numbers, prepare a summary or presentation, structure pair- or small group work while making sure to allow ample time for student

participation and interaction. *What is especially important in the readings? What might be missing or obscured?* Balance critique with recognition of value.

Discussion questions have been suggested for all students to consider, but you may wish to take the conversation in a different direction. (See "Guided Reading Questions" in the Course Info Module on Canvas.) If you decide to go someplace new, try to let everyone know ahead of class so that folks can prepare with that in mind. In any case, come to class prepared with several themes/points to explore, in case discussion lulls.

Discussion facilitators will be scored in Canvas on a credit/no credit basis, and will receive full credit if they demonstrate active engagement in the planning and execution of the discussion.

Teaching Ethnography:

This project, which will result in a 5-7 page paper, involves fieldwork rather than library research. You will first propose a writing-related research question that interests you, and then you will work to answer that question by investigating it within an actual site of writing instruction. As part of your methodology, you might observe and take field notes about a class session or two devoted to writing instruction (perhaps observing a collaborative writing session, a peer review session, etc.); interview the teacher (or teachers if you choose a comparative study); interview the students, if needed; and collect relevant artifacts (such as sample assignments, student papers, evaluation sheets, etc.). How you focus your observations is up to you, and will depend on your research question. For example, you might wish to study how students behave in peer groups or how teachers teach grammar or how students react to teacher comments or how students and teacher interact in writing conferences. You can research an entire class or one student writing, and you can choose any level of classroom (primary, secondary, or post-secondary) or program (ESL/MLL, writing center, etc.), depending on your teaching interests and/or access to these sites. In the resulting paper, which we will discuss in more detail later, you will write up your findings in the form of a teaching ethnography.

Presentation and Bibliography:

In groups of about four, you will select and research a particular writing-related teaching practice (for example, you can examine best practices in assignment design, the six traits, the use of portfolios, assessment, group work, the use of new media, grammar, revision, diversity, working with English Language Learners, etc.). The resulting project asks you to compile a brief bibliography and to present what you have learned about your subject to the class in as creative, multimodal, and engaging a way as possible. Your job will be to teach the class. Each group will receive one group grade.

Teaching Portfolio:

For the final project, you will create an electronic teaching portfolio of teaching materials that apply the approaches we have discussed in class and that support the relevant state or national standards for the context in which you might one day teach. To complete the portfolio, you will have to do the following:

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Syllabus last updated: Nov. 30

1) compose a statement of teaching philosophy, 2) select a state or national standard appropriate to the context in which you plan to teach (for example: Common Core State Standards, Frameworks for Success in Post-secondary Writing, or the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-year college composition), 2) adapt three of the teaching artifacts from the Studio Activities/Journal entries you created throughout the quarter *or* create new ones to support the standards for the grade level you are interested in teaching as well as applying the range of approaches we have read and discussed. And 3) write a reflection for each artifact that describes the standard and explains how each of your artifacts reflects the different approaches, how it carries out your teaching philosophy, *and* how it supports the standards you selected.

Participation:

This element is crucial and a bit tricky in the asynchronous context. Your participation will be assessed based on additional peer reviews, discussion posts, and hours spent logged into Canvas.

Course Calendar

All readings are to be completed BY the day they are listed.

All written assignments can be submitted in Canvas.

Week 1: Introduction and Overview of Process

Readings: Faigley, "Competing Theories of Process" (652)
Berlin, "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class" (667)
Discussion Facilitator: Dylan Medina

Week 2: Expressive Approaches 1

Readings: Rohman and Wlecke, "Pre-Writing" (216)
Britton, "Shaping" (461)
Macrorie, "Telling Writing" (297)
Murray, "The Essential Delay" (715)
Harris, "Voice" (Canvas, under Additional Readings)
Elbow, YouTube video (Canvas, Additional Readings)

Homework: Studio Journal - Expressivism

Week 3: Cognitive Approaches

Readings: Emig, "The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders" (228)
Flower and Hayes, "The Cognition of Discovery" (467)

Homework: 1. Ethnography Proposal
2. Bring Studio Artifact for next class. Find, observe, or design a teaching artifact (lesson, activity, assignment, etc.) that takes up a cognitivist approach, and come prepared to discuss how you might implement it.

Week 4: Cognitive Approaches 2

Readings: Sommers, "Revision Strategies of Student Writers" (323)
Brand, "The Why of Cognition" (706)
Bizzell, "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty" (479)
Bartholomae, "Inventing the University" (605)
Homework: 1. Studio Journal - Cognitivism
2. Submit ethnography proposal

Week 5: Social Approaches

Readings for Today: Bruffee, “Collaborative Learning” (545)
Harris, “The Idea of Community” (748)
Sample student ethnographies #1 and #6. ALSO have read *one* of the sample professional ethnography excerpts (Alvarez or Trainor). All samples are posted in the “Teaching Ethnography Prompt and Info” page in Canvas

Homework:

1. Come prepared to discuss sample ethnographies #1 and #6, as well as *one* of the sample professional ethnography excerpts (Alvarez or Trainor) (posted in Teaching Ethnography Prompt & Info page)
2. Watch video introduction to ethnography (Teaching Ethnography Prompt & Info page)
3. Bring Studio Artifact to next class. Find, observe, or design a teaching artifact (lesson, activity, assignment, etc.) that takes up a social constructivist approach, and come prepared to discuss how you might implement it
4. Studio Journal - Social Constructivism

Week 6: Critical Approaches

Reading: Rose, “The Language of Exclusion” (586)
Lu, “Redefining the Legacy of Mina Shaughnessy” (772)

Homework: **Updated:** Ethnography Rough Draft **due by Monday 2/17 at 5:00pm**
Updated: For Wednesday’s class: Brainstorm and bring to class possible presentation topics
Updated & optional: Watch Asao Inoue’s address, “How Do We Language So People Stop Killing Each Other, or What Do We Do About White Language Supremacy?” (46 min.). [YouTube video here](#) and [slideshow here](#).

Week 7: Critical Approaches 2

Readings: Delpit, “The Politics of Teaching Literate Discourse” (1311)
Brodkey, “On the Subject of Class and Gender” (631)

Homework: Teaching Ethnography final draft **due Friday, 11:59pm**

Week 8: Translingual and Multimodal Approaches

Readings: Canagarajah, “The Place of World Englishes” (1617)

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Syllabus last updated: Nov. 30

Guerra, “Putting Literacy in its Place” (1643)

George, “From Analysis to Design” (1429)

Shipka, “A Multimodal Task-Based Framework” (Canvas, Additional Readings)

Week 9: Multimodal Approaches 2

Readings: Rivers, “Geocomposition in Public Rhetoric and Writing Pedagogy” (Canvas, Additional Readings)
Horner, Selfe, & Lockridge, “Translinguality, Transmodality, & Difference” excerpt (Canvas, Additional Readings; p. 6-19)