

Prof. Debbie Minter
Andrews 219
Office Hours: 9–10:30 Tues. & Thurs.
And by appointment
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Meet in Andrews 102
Meeting time: 2–5 p.m., Wed.

Composition Theory and Practice (English 957) Fall 2000

This course is designed as an exploration into the scholarly work of teaching writing. Understanding that we come to this work as a group of people who have a range of prior experiences with teaching and a range of goals for our professional future, I have generated some preliminary organizing questions for this course:

- How do post-secondary English teachers mine the value of influential concepts in English studies (and/or concepts adapted from other fields, such as education research) for their pedagogical purposes?
- How do teachers attend to their classrooms for the purposes of their own development as teachers and scholars?
- How might the contexts in which we are teaching matter?
- What difference does it make to our understanding of English studies to see pedagogy as a form of scholarship?

These questions are the “signposts” that will help to focus our discussions of the course readings, and help us to locate our practical and immediate concerns in a context that extends beyond our Eng. 150 classrooms. In this way, I hope that this course will be responsive not only to your immediate needs as a teacher of 150, but responsive as well to future professional (and cultural) work.

Required Texts:

Nancy Grimm’s *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times* (Boynton/Cook, 1999)
Amy Lee’s *Composing Critical Pedagogies: Teaching Writing as Revision* (NCTE, 2000)
Michael Blitz & C. Mark Hurlbert’s *Letters for the Living: Teaching Writing in a Violent Age* (NCTE, 1998)
Cooper and Odell’s *Evaluating Writing: The Role of Teachers’ Knowledge about Text, Learning, and Culture* (NCTE, 1999)

Recommended Text:

Bizzell, Herzberg and Reynolds’ *Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing*, 5th ed. (Bedford/St. Martins, 2000) Available free of charge (though harder to read) online through Bedford’s website: <<http://www.bedfordbooks.com/bb/index.html>>

Required Coursework:

Weekly Reading and Writing offer opportunities for interrogating ideas, practices and experiences in a way that is (likely) somewhat more sustained than the opportunities offered by class discussion. I'm experimenting with CourseInfo/Blackboard this semester. I'm hoping that we'll be able to post our writing to the course-site, once it is (and I am!) up and running. Unless otherwise notified (at the time of the journal assignment), assume that your weekly writing should run at least 3 pages (double-spaced typescript).

Teaching Circles will meet for an hour each week (starting the second week of the course) through Thanksgiving, and once during the last weeks of class. These discussion/reflection groups function as a forum in which to share ideas as well as concerns and/or celebrations as they emerge over the course of the week. Those who have taken 957 in the past regularly identify teaching circles as a really important component of the course experience.

Leading Discussion (more information to follow). I believe that the whole class benefits when we share responsibility for shaping our collective work. For that reason, I am requiring that everyone lead a 50–60 minute discussion of the assigned reading at least once during the semester. You may lead discussion collaboratively or individually. In any case, I will want to meet with discussion leader(s) prior to the class meeting in which you are taking up this role. (And, of course, I'm happy to meet/consult with discussion leader(s) during their planning process.)

Peer Observation of Teaching is a unique opportunity to reflect on your own classroom. The object of observing another's classroom (and having them observe your's) is not to evaluate or judge one another's teaching. Rather, as an observer in another's classroom, you function as a second set of eyes for that classroom teacher (as that teacher will for you). In addition, that classroom functions as a kind of "mirror" of your own (as your's will for your partner-teacher). Thus, together, the two of you can build—reciprocally—through your experiences of each others' classrooms, very useful insights into the teaching of writing. (More information forthcoming).

Classroom Inquiry Project and Presentation (more information to follow). Your final project—a classroom inquiry project—should run approximately 20 pages, and represent the kind of intellectual and scholarly work regularly undertaken in seminar papers (though it need not take that form). The final version should:

- include some discussion of (document) how this project has emerged from your classroom experience;
- place your classroom inquiry within the context of relevant scholarship; and,
- include some discussion of the implications of this project for our work as post-secondary teachers of writing and reading.

In addition to submitting a final version of this project to me at the end of the semester, you will also be presenting this work to your classmates at the end of the semester.

Weekly Syllabus

Signpost 1: Mining the pedagogical value of influential concepts—As Grimm’s book will make clear, the study of writing shares with the study of literature some influential concepts and framing questions (i.e., subjectivity, authority, etc.). In addition, scholarship on the teaching of writing develops from influential concepts in the fields of rhetoric (i.e., the classical “five-stage” model of developing text, etc.) and education research (i.e., teacher and peer-response, collaborative learning, etc.). In these first few weeks, we’ll be exploring a handful of concepts, discussing the pedagogical value of these concepts and how their pedagogical value might be related to (but also different from) their value as concepts for textual scholarship.

Week 1 August 23 (Wed.)

Read: Ryder, et. al. “Audience Considerations for
Evaluating Writing” (in *Evaluating Writing*)
Anson “Reflective Reading: Developing Thoughtful
Ways to Respond to Students’ Writing” (in *Evaluating Writing*)
(In-class Invention Activity: Metaphorical Thinking)

Week 2 August 30

Read Grimm pp. 27–128 (Ch. 2 - end of the book.)

Discussion Leader(s): _____

Journal: Dialogic Notebook activity + Reflection

Week 3 September 6

Read Lee pp. 1–95 (Ch. 1–3)

Discussion Leader(s): _____

(Note for discussion leader(s): I’ll be leaving town
in the early morning of August 31 and return in the evening of Sept. 4.)

Journal: Observation and Reflection on graduate course

Signpost 2: Attending to Classrooms—To study the teaching of writing and to think about our current and future work as teachers, we can benefit from examining how others attend to classrooms. What do reflective teachers attend to and why? What do they do with their observations? (In addition, the work we started in section I of the course is developed in Lee’s work with her focus on the concept of “revision.”)

Week 4 September 13

Read Lee pp. 96–178 (Ch. 4–5)

Discussion Leader(s): _____

Week 4 September 13 (continued)

Journal: “Drive Words” activity + reflection

Week 5 September 20

Read Lee pp. 179–240 (Ch. 6)

Discussion Leader(s): _____

In order to allow time for peer observations of teaching, and for discussions about those observations, no journal due this week.

Week 6 September 27

Read Lee pp. 241–86 (Ch. 7)

Discussion Leader(s): _____

*****PEER OBSERVATIONS DUE**

Week 7 October 4

Read: Brueggemann’s* “Still-Life: Representations and Silences in the Participant-Observer Role” (copies on reserve and—eventually—outside my office).

Brueggemann’s “On (Almost) Passing” (copies on reserve and—eventually—outside my office).

Discussion Leader(s): _____

Journal topic to be announced.

*Brenda Bruggemann is scheduled to be here on Thursday of this week. More information to follow.

Signpost 3: Teaching/Writing and the Academy—How do the institutional contexts of our teaching matter? (Those among us who have studied and/or taught in K–12 Language Arts classrooms, workplace education initiatives, and community literacy settings should draw on those experiences to help us in our collective work of examining the constraints and opportunities of teaching within a university setting.)

Week 8 October 11

Read: Ball “Evaluating the Writing of Culturally and Linguistically diverse Students” (pp. 225–48 in *Evaluating Writing*).

Clagget “Integrating Reading and Writing in Large-Scale Assessment” (pp. 344–65 in *Evaluating Writing*).

Week 8 October 11 (continued)

Discussion Leader(s): _____

Journal topic to be announced.

Week 9 October 18

Read: Mortensen’s “Going Public” + support materials
(copies—eventually—on reserve and outside my office).

*****PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE**

Week 10 October 25

Coursework TBA: Possibility that Sharon McGee will be here.

Journal topic to be announced.

Signpost 4: Pedagogy as Scholarship—When teachers place their work as teachers at the center of their scholarship what contributions does such scholarship make to the study of English? How does this scholarship contribute to our understanding of (or visions for) English studies?

Week 11 November 1

Read Blitz & Hurlbert pp. 1–86 (Parts 1–3)

Discussion Leader(s): _____

Journal topic to be announced.

Week 12 November 8

Read Blitz & Hurlbert pp. 87–170 (Parts 4–5)

Discussion Leader(s): _____

Journal topic to be announced.

Week 13 November 15

Coursework TBA

Week 14 November 22 ***CLASS CANCELLED FOR THANKSGIVING***

Week 15 November 29

Presentations of research/ works-in-progress.

Week 16 December 6

Presentations of research/works-in-progress.

FINAL PROJECTS (Final Drafts) DUE Dec. 13.

Assessment Policy: As with any graduate seminar, final grades will be determined by the quality of the work you produce across the many sites of this course (the required course projects, in-class & teaching circle discussions, etc.) and by your consistent engagement with the work of the course (as evidenced in attendance, etc.). I would be happy to meet with you at any point in the semester to discuss your grades.