English 5894: Teaching Literature & Composition

California State University, Stanislaus
Fall 2003---Monday 6-9---Classroom Bldg. Rm. 115

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TEXTS:

- What to Expect When You’re Expected to Teach: The Anxious Craft of Teaching Composition, Edited by Anne Bramblett and Alison Knoblauch (2002).
- Sharing and Responding, Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff (2000).
- 5894 Course Packet (available in the English Dept. in the Library Bldg.).

OVERVIEW:

English 5894 is designed to offer practical application of composition theory and research. It is intended for those who wish to teach at the college level. It is also a pre-requisite or a co-requisite for a teaching assistantship.

Learning to write is a matter for theoretical consideration, not just recipe swapping.


COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This seminar will be a reading and writing intensive introduction to the nuts & bolts aspects of teaching first year writing at the college level. It is aimed to address issues with which beginning teachers often struggle:

- How can I sequence a writing course?
- How can in-class writing exercises develop writing skills?
- What is the place of reading in a writing course?
- What is my role in writing conferences?
- How can I help students self-evaluate?
- How do I teach editing?
- How should I grade?
I have divided the course into some of the major components that make a writing process classroom a successful experience for developing writers: pre-writing and drafting, fostering the practice of asking open-ended questions, offering ways to employ critical thinking, and close-reading of a variety of texts, as well as offering ways to develop drafts through a series of peer feedback techniques and one-to-one writing conferences.

You will occupy several roles in this class: one minute you will be writers creating a piece of writing of your own, the next minute you will be thoughtful close-readers of our course texts, and peer respondents offering developmental feedback on the photo essays or reading responses. I will also ask you to imagine yourself as the teacher required to walk into the classroom on Monday morning with lessons planned out from the beginning to the end (for some this will be a fictional exercise, for others, it will be a point of fact). You will design engaging ways to present a few of our class readings. Consider these mini-presentations early forays into the craft of teaching.

I will ask you to shape a pedagogical teaching statement and to draw from our course readings to cite key teachers and theorists who have influenced your thinking about the complexity of the craft of teaching composition.

We will study “failure stories”---or those moments in the classroom or in one-to-one student exchanges where a connection is broken and the learning gets curtailed due to any number of factors (see Bramblett and Knoblauch).

In addition to the required texts I have requested desk copies of a current composition reader, Seeing & Writing 2 (2003) to use as a shared text as we begin to discuss ways of shaping different kinds of writing assignments in order to invite different kinds of thinking. I will ask you to create an annotated curriculum unit for a first-year composition course, using Seeing & Writing 2.

It is the quality of our own lives as we engage with the world that is one of the major sources of energy for our students. It is the questions you ask aloud about the world, your curiosity, the books you read, and your personal use of writing that teach far more than any methodological course you’ve ever taken.

---Don Graves, The Energy to Teach

**Ongoing Assignments:**

1. A photo-essay assignment.
2. A teaching philosophy statement
3. An annotated curriculum unit for a First-Year Composition class using a chapter you have selected from Seeing & Writing 2.
d) *In-class presentations* on course readings. I would like this to be a collaborative effort. When you have a plan put together please e-mail me a few days before our seminar so that we can have a brief online conference to discuss your goals and/or your planned activity.

e) *Reading responses*: Once a week you will be assigned a single-spaced response to a selected reading. Please keep all responses in a manila file folder used only for this class. Be sure to include: name/date/course title, an epigraph (or “key” quotation that sparks thought)/ a reference early on to the author and title of the piece you’re responding to/a creative title of your own to signal the focus of your response/ and MLA style parenthetical citations.

(√+) *Reading Response*: Has an original title that signals that you have a clear focus. You begin with an epigraph (a key quotations from the reading); you offer both a personal & critical reading of the significance of the quotation you’ve selected. Your writing has been “crafted,” that is, carefully constructed with clear, grammatically correct prose, and no distracting typos.

(√) *Reading Response*: May have many of the markers of the √+ response but the explanation for why you selected certain quotations is less developed. There may be a few typos/grammatical errors.

(√-) *Reading Response*: Lacks focus, no title, a number of writing errors (spelling, typos, & grammatical errors), no direct reference to our reading, not enough reflection/questioning/evidence to be considered a substantive response.

**Assessment:** Your grade for the course will be based on equally heavy emphasis of the quality of your attendance & participation & final portfolio.

- Attendance & participation 50%
- Final portfolio: 50% (each constituent part will count for 10%).

If you are not a writer, you will not understand the difficulties of writing. If you are not a writer, you will not know the fears and hopes of the writers you teach. If you are not a writer, you will not be aware of the needs of writers: needs such as a real purpose for writing; a real response to writing; a real knowledge about grammar, spelling, and punctuation to make writing correct...
**The Portfolio:** We will design a rubric for assessing the portfolio together. It should be divided into five sections & include the following:

- A cover letter of reflection.
- A teaching writing philosophy statement: a two-to-three page introduction to your portfolio, synthesizing your thoughts on how to teach writing effectively.
- One “finished” piece of writing (your photo-essay) including drafts and revisions, self-and peer responses to drafts, and my responses as well.
- Your (fictional) instructional unit, with annotations that explain your goals and objectives for each element of the unit as well as some commentary about the theory that supports your lessons.
- All of your reading responses with instructor comments.

If you are not a reader of a wide variety of material from the present and the past, how will you know what to write about or how to write effectively? If you are not a reader, how will you know the books that children might love? If you are not a reader, how will you keep up with the theoretical developments in your field…If you are not a reader, how will you understand the world you live in---the ethnic tensions, the political debates, or the moral values and expectations of society?

---Mem Fox, *Radical Reflections, Passionate Opinions on Teaching, Learning, and Living.*

**Attendance Policy:** As graduate students you are asked to arrive on time and fully prepared. If you are repetitively late (arriving late or turning in work late) these actions will bring down your final grade considerably. If you miss more than two classes, your grade will drop a full letter with each consecutive absence. If you do not come to class, you will not pass.

**Disabilities:** If you have a disability that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your abilities, please contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations to allow for your full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunity.

**Tentative Schedule**

* Please bring your packet to each class. *All intertexts are suggested---not required reading.*
Week 1: The Anxious Craft of Teaching Composition
Sept. 8

- Introductions to the course and to each other.
- Introductions to the First Year Competencies (a working document).

Week 2: Pedagogical Inquiry
Sept. 15

- Due: R.R. #1. “Developing Pedagogies: Learning the Teaching of English” (Stenberg and Lee); “Getting Ready to Teach Before Classes Begin; Teaching That First Class”; “Charting a Course in First Year Composition” (Sullivan) (All in the course packet).

Intertext: The First Day of School (Freire) (CP).


Week 3: On Voice(s) and Audience Awareness
Sept. 22

- Due RR #2: “The Poison Fish” (Macrorie); “Style: The Hidden Agenda in Composition Classes, or One Reader’s Confession” (Ronald); “Hearing Voices: Yours, Mine, Others” (Szczepanski); “Trilingualism” (Baker).

• Presenters _______________________________ and _______________________________ “This is Duct Tape” Holding It Together During Your First Semester: “Forty-Eight Eyeballs,” Carrie Heimer pp.9-14 (B&K).

Week 4: Composing a Curriculum or How to Plan a Unit of Instruction
Sept. 29

- Due RR #3: “Designing Writing Assignments”; “Composing a Curriculum” (Burke); two examples of writing assignments: “The 9 Ways of Looking Assignment” (Paterson); “The Photo-Essay Assignment” (Paterson).


Week 5: Teacher Response & Peer Feedback
Oct. 6

- Due: RR #4: Sharing & Responding (Elbow and Belanoff); “A Tool Kit: Twenty Strategies for Reading Life Narratives” (Smith and Watson) (CP).

**Intertext:** On the Relationship Between the Educator and Learner (Freire) (CP).

**WEEK 6: READING THE WORLD/READING THE WORLD**
Oct. 13

➤ **Due: RR #5:** “The Literature Workshop” (Blau) (CP).


**Intertext:** Reading the Word/Reading the World (Freire) (CP).

**WEEK 7: SMALL GROUP WORK**
Oct. 20

➤ **Due: R.R. #6:** “Group Work for Change” (Roskelly) (CP).

• Presenter: ________________ “Becoming a Witness,” Andrew Lopenzina, pp.55-62; Presenter: ________________ “Gap or Rap”: Class Presence in my First-Year Writing Class, Emily M. Hinnow, 63-67 (B&K).

**WEEK 8: WRITING CONFERENCES**
Oct. 27

➤ **Due: R.R. #7:** Ch. 9 “Lessons from the Masters” (CP); “The Role of the Conference in the Teaching of Writing” (Harris).


**WEEK 9: CROSS-CULTURAL CLASSROOMS**
Nov. 3

➤ **Due: R.R. #8:** Ch. 6 “Preparation for College Writing: Teachers Talk About Writing Instruction for Southeast Asian American Students in Secondary School” (Hartman & Tarrone); “Classroom Instruction and Language Minority Students: On Teaching to ‘Smarter’ Readers and Writers” (Blanton); Ch.8 “One Size Does Not Fit All” (Ferris); Ch..9: “Opening Our Doors: Applying Socioliterate Approaches” (Johns).

**Intertext:** Cultural Identity and Education (Freire).
**WEEK 10: RESPONDING AND ASSESSING WRITING**  
Nov. 10

- Due R.R. #9: “Contracting English” (Smith); “Writing Assessment: A Position Statement” (NCTE); Returning to the First Year Composition Competencies (CSU, Stanislaus); “Responding to Student Writing” (Tobin); “Some People Just Don’t Write Well” (Harrington).

- Presenter: __________________________________ “Serving Byron: Case Study of an Obnoxious Student,” Kuhio Walters, pp.85-93, (B&K).

**WEEK 11: A SYLLABUS WORKSHOP**  
Nov. 17

- Due: bring your copy of Seeing & Writing 2 (Composition Reader) + draft of your curriculum unit.

  **Intertext:** Don’t Let the Fear of What is Difficult Paralyze You (Freire).

- Presenter: ____________________________ “I’m Just Basic’: Reading Resistant Writers Within a Discourse of Resistance,” Megan Fulwiler, pp.94-99 (B&K).

**WEEK 12: WRITING WORKSHOP**  
Nov. 24

- Due: Come with radical revision of your essay. Come prepared to swap essays and to put Belanoff & Elbow’s Sharing & Responding strategies into practice; Collage activity.

**WEEK 13: PARADOX IN TEACHING AND LEARNING**  
Dec. 8

- Due: Parker Palmer (packet); Curriculum fair; publishing philosophies; Portfolios due.