

Practicum in Tutoring and Writing

Dr. Janelle Adsit

Course Information
Contact Information

Office Hours: XX:XX – XX:XX
Office Location: XXX

Course Description

This course is primarily designed to train tutors to work in the University's Writing Center, though the course is also useful for writing teachers and those who wish to gain a vocabulary for talking about writing. We will investigate our own and others' writing processes, styles and purposes for writing in various contexts – including courses in different majors – and the dynamics of giving and receiving useful peer feedback on writing. We will also examine the role of a Writing Center on campus and compare it with the writing classroom. This course will give you lots of practice in responding to students' writing, and we'll regularly provide each other feedback on our tutoring approaches as we learn to analyze the risks and possibilities of different pedagogical techniques.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able...

- To tutor effectively in the Writing Center.
- To analyze some of the controversies associated with writing pedagogy.
- To articulate your own philosophy of peer tutoring, which will help orient your possible future work in the Writing Center.
- To assess your own educational experiences and writing strategies.
- To analyze the values and conventions of different academic disciplines.
- To define, use, and teach others key terms for discussing writing and writing processes (e.g., rhetorical situation, convention, ethos, genre, literacy, discourse community, code-switching, heuristic, etc.).
- To identify the rhetorical choices in a piece of writing and to consider their effects.

Required Textbooks

1. Murphy, Christina, and Steve Sherwood. *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*. 3rd ed. New York: Bedford, 2008. Print.
2. Course packet (pdfs will be posted on Blackboard/Canvas/Moodle)

****Be sure to keep all feedback you receive throughout the semester, so you'll have access to the documents you need for your portfolio. The portfolio will also include an introductory statement and a discussion of your peers' presentations.**

Course Policies and Expectations (Attendance, Plagiarism, Community Expectations, etc.)

See separate sheet.

Grading

Your grade will be determined by the cumulative points earned on the following assignments.

| Unit | Major Assignment / Project | % of Total Grade |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | Writing Center Mission Statement & Reflection | 10% |
| 2 | Argumentative Analysis on the Risks and Possibilities of Minimalist Tutoring | 10% |
| 3 | Short Research Paper and Presentation About a Common Idea About Writing | 10% |
| 4 | Writing Center Scenario Analysis, Drawing Upon Course Readings | 10% |
| 5 | Research-Based Presentation on the Conventions and Common Genres of a Discipline | |
| 6 | Print-Out of Example Online Tutorial | 10% |
| 7 | Tutorial Role-Play Presentation | 10% |
| Scheduled at your convenience | Reflection on Your Experience of a Tutorial | 5% |
| Scheduled at your convenience | Observation & Analysis of Two Writing Center Tutorials | 10% |
| Daily | In-Class Writing Assignments and Exercises | 15% |

Course Overview

The following provides an overview of the organization of the course. A day-by-day schedule with assignment due dates will be provided at the beginning of each unit. All assignments will include a detailed checklist of guidelines and criteria that will be used in evaluating your work. **Note that daily in-class writing assignments and exercises will make up 15% of your final grade.** These assignments draw upon your knowledge of the assigned readings.

UNIT 1: THE ROLE OF THE WRITING CENTER & MINIMALIST TUTORING

Class Time: Exercises

- Profile Assignment: Who Are You as a Writer? Who Are You as a Respondent?
- Reflection: What Are Your Goals for This Course?
- Agreements: What Kind of Community Do You Want?
- Collaborative Reflection: How Do People Learn How to Write?
- Identifying Preconceptions About Writing Instruction

Readings

- Bedford Guide: “Introduction for Tutors” (course packet).
- Muriel Harris, “Talking in the Middle: Why Writers Need Writing Tutors” (course packet).
- Bonnie S. Sunstein, “Moveable Feasts, Liminal Spaces: Writing Centers and the State of In-Betweenness” (course packet).

Major Assignments

- **Writing Center Mission Statement & Reflection (10% of the final grade):** For this assignment, you’ll pretend that you are beginning a new writing center in a specific context of your choosing. You’ll submit your mission statement and an explanation of how your mission statement compares to other writing centers’ mission statements.

UNIT 2: MINIMALIST AND DIRECTIVE TUTORING

Class Time: Exercises

- Small-Group Brainstorm: 100 Good Questions to Ask Writers in the Writing Center
- Practicing Writing Together & Modeling as Pedagogical Techniques
- The Risks and Possibilities of Minimalist Tutoring: A Friendly Debate
- Analyzing Dartmouth Online Tutor Training Videos

Readings

- Rebecca Moore Howard, “Collaborative Pedagogy” (course packet).
- Stephen M. North, “The Idea of a Writing Center” (St. Martin’s Sourcebook).
- Stephen M. North, “Revisiting ‘The Idea of a Writing Center’” (course packet).
- Jeff Brooks, “Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Student Do All the Work” (St. Martin’s Sourcebook).
- Muriel Harris, “Modeling: A Process Method of Teaching” (course packet).
- Linda K. Shamoon and Deborah H. Burns, “A Critique of Pure Tutoring” (St. Martin’s Sourcebook).
- Isabelle Thompson, “Scaffolding in the Writing Center: A Microanalysis of an Experienced Tutor’s Verbal and Nonverbal Tutoring Strategies” (course packet).

Major Assignments

- **Argumentative Analysis (10% of the final grade):** For this assignment, take a stance on the debates that we encounter in Unit 2. Write an argument, intended for an audience of fellow writing tutors and instructors, that analyzes the risks and possibilities of minimalist tutoring. Which of the readings do you find most compelling or persuasive, and why? And what is your own belief about the questions that the texts raise. Your argumentative analysis should synthesize the readings and respond to them. Remember that your argument should stand alone and should be clear to readers who are not in our class.

UNIT 3: UNHELPFUL MYTHS ABOUT WRITING

Class Time: Exercises

- Common Conceptions about the Writing Process
- Finding Answers to Questions about Writing
- Global vs. Local Revision
- A Heuristic for Thinking about Revision: Hierarchy of Revision Concerns

Readings

- Robert Yagelski, Chapter 2 “Ten Core Concepts” (course packet).
- Ken Macrorie, “from *Telling Writing*” (course packet).
- Mike Rose, “Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language: A Cognitivist Analysis of Writer’s Block” (course packet).
- Donald M. Murray, “The Essential Delay: When Writer’s Block Isn’t” (course packet).
- Nancy Sommers, “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers” (course packet).
- Joseph M. Williams, “The Phenomenology of Error” (course packet).

Major Assignments

- **Short Research Paper and Presentation (10% of the final grade):** Write a research-based paper that addresses a common conception about writing. This assignment asks you “to recognize that many of our conceptions, or commonsense understandings, of writing are actually misconceptions that don’t hold up under close scrutiny” (Wardle and Downs 167). The readings for Unit 3 provide examples of

how to complete this assignment. After completing the research for your paper, you'll present your findings to the class, as a way of gaining practice in talking to your peers about writing.

UNIT 4: WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING? AFFIRMING DIVERSITY

Class Time: Exercises

- Analyzing the Words We Use to Talk About Writing
- Constructs of Error and Correctness
- Practicing Error Pattern Analysis

Readings

- Lisa Delpit, "The Silenced Dialogue" (course packet)
- Gloria Anzaldúa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (course packet)
- Fan Shen, "The Classroom and the Wider Culture: Identity as a Key to Learning English Composition" (course packet).
- Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski, "Postcolonialism and the Idea of the Writing Center" (St. Martin's Sourcebook).
- Mark Blaauw-Hara "Why Our Students Need Instruction in Grammar, and How We Should Go about It" (course packet).
- Sharon A. Myers, "Reassessing the 'Proofreading Trap': ESL Tutoring and Writing Instruction" (St. Martin's Sourcebook).
- Julie Neff, "Learning Disabilities and the Writing Center" (St. Martin's Sourcebook).
- Margaret E. Weaver, "Transcending 'Conversing': A Deaf Student in the Writing Center" (St. Martin's Sourcebook).

Major Assignments

- **Writing Center Scenario Analysis (10% of final grade):** You'll receive a scenario description of an occurrence that has taken place in a writing center. Write a critical response to your assigned scenario that substantively integrates ideas from our course readings. Your response should detail the steps you would take in a writing center consultation that presented a similar situation. Provide your rationale and a thorough consideration of alternative pedagogical choices.

UNIT 5: DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES

Class Time: Exercises

- Features of a Discourse Community
- What Discourse Communities Are You Part Of?
- Analyzing Disciplinary Differences: One Author, Three Discourse Communities
- Analyzing Disciplinary Differences: Citation Style
- How to Research a Discipline: Drawing from WAC and WID Research

Readings

- Lucille P. McCarthy, "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing across the Curriculum" (course packet).
- Diane Dowdey, "Citation and Documentation across the Curriculum" (course packet).

Major Assignments

- **Research-Based Presentation (10% of the final grade):** Your presentation will inform the class about the conventions and common genres of an academic discipline. In researching your presentation, you'll use at two methodologies: interviews, survey, textual analysis, etc., in addition to drawing

from WAC/WID research in rhetoric and composition. You'll then report your findings to the class, providing the class a well-designed informative handout to keep. After completing this work and hearing your colleagues' presentations, you'll have a broad sense of the different disciplinary conventions of the majors available at this institution, so you'll be prepared to work with students in those majors.

UNIT 6: TUTORING ONLINE

Class Time: Exercises

- Rhetorical Analysis and the Tutorial Session

Readings To Be Completed for Homework

- Rhetorical Analysis Handout
- Online Tutoring Section of St. Martin's Sourcebook

Major Assignments

- **Print-Out of Example Online Tutorial (10% of the final grade):** You'll complete an online tutorial, providing help to a partner on an assignment of your partner's choice. Print all the documentation from your online tutorial and submit that for instructor feedback on your pedagogical practice. Your online tutorial should provide evidence that you are able to implement the best practices that we discuss in class.

UNIT 7: TUTORIAL ROLE-PLAY PRESENTATIONS

Major Assignments

- **Tutorial Role-Play Presentation (10% of the final grade):** In the final weeks of the semester, each student will have the chance to role-play a non-scripted 15-minute tutorial in front of the class. After each presentation, we will collaboratively workshop the tutorial as a group – offering suggestions and examining alternative options for approaching different students and different texts.

Additional Assignments to Complete By the End of the Semester

*While the deadlines for these assignments are flexible, please complete these assignments sooner rather than later as we will share our findings in class discussions. *Students who attempt to complete two or more of the following assignments in the last two weeks of class will lose points on these assignments.*

| | | |
|---|-----|--|
| Reflection on Your Experience of a Tutorial | 5% | You are required to experience a tutorial in the Writing Center this semester. Arrange to visit the Writing Center when you have a genuine interest in working with a tutor on any writing assignment for this or any other class or project. After your visit, write 3-5 pages on your impressions of the experience: How did you feel during the tutorial? In what ways was it helpful? What could have worked differently? What did you notice about the how the tutor led the session? |
| Observation & Analysis of Two Writing Center Tutorials | 10% | Arrange to <i>observe</i> two tutorials in the Writing Center, asking permission of both the student and the tutor who you are observing. Then write a 3-5 page analysis of each session, including analysis of the environment, the writer's and tutor's body language, and of the strategies and responses of both writer and tutor. Draw from (and cite) at least two of our course readings to help you explore and explain the dynamics of the sessions. When writing your second analysis, you should also compare your most recent observation to your previous tutorial observation. |