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# ENG 5502-001: Mentored Composition Teaching

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# English 5502: Mentored Composition Teaching

spring 2016  
syllabus

Dr. Chris Wixson

“Great writing is created in revision—rethinking, rewriting, adding, subtracting, repositioning, editing. In effect, fine writing is born in change.” –Ralph Wahlstrom, *The Tao of Writing*

“Understood conservatively, teaching is the transmission of information. Understood antifoundationally, teaching is the formation of culture.” – Downing, Harkin, and Sosnoski, *Changing Classroom Practices*

## course description

This course provides a foundation for the effective teaching of first-year composition and other writing courses. Building from theory and pedagogy covered in English 5007 and English 5500, we will immerse ourselves in the *praxis* of teaching writing at the college level. Students should be prepared to engage vigorously in discussion, analysis, reflection, and performance.

This seminar will address these topics and activities:

- \*Exploring various research strands related to the teaching of writing
- \*Designing writing assignments
- \*Crafting lesson plans
- \*Facilitating peer review and workshops
- \*Implementing strategies for effective conferences
- \*Responding to and evaluating writing
- \*Performing effective classroom activities
- \*Facilitating productive discussions and small group work
- \*Using in-class assessment practices
- \*Reflecting on teaching experiences
- \*Establishing *ethos* as an instructor
- \*Building a course policy and syllabus
- \*Constructing a persuasive and visually appealing curriculum vitae
- \*Assembling a teaching portfolio  
(curriculum vitae, teaching philosophy, sample course policy, ENG 1001 course syllabus, sample assignments, and sample handouts.)

## course texts

*Assigning, Responding, Evaluating: A Writing Teacher's Guide*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. White

*First Day to Final Grade: A Graduate Student's Guide to Teaching*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Curzon & Damour

*A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Lindemann

*The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Glen & Goldthwaite

\*\*Articles will at times be distributed through handout or email; at other times, they can be accessed through EBSCO, ERIC, and JSTOR, and other means.

## class participation

Mandatory.

Because this is an inquiry-based seminar, active and constructive class participation is key. You should read. You should think. You should analyze. You should question. You should listen. You should reflect. You should mull. You should argue (with civility). You should ponder. And do so again and again and again...

Think of our meetings as potluck conversations; everyone simply must contribute. We will reflect. We will talk. We will write. We will discuss pedagogy. Participation in a seminar means careful preparation of the reading, **frequent** contributions to discussions, and engaged critical thought. You should come to each session armed with observations, opinions, queries, and insights, ready to take an active part in the ongoing dialogue about the course materials and your mentored experiences.

Remaining in your comfort zone and not talking in class and justifying the silence by saying you are 'just the type of person who likes to sit back and listen to what everyone else has to say.' Certainly, listening is a premium in this class and is a crucial human skill. But real listening only happens in an exchange. Letting everyone else do the talking means that you're not really listening because you are busy keeping yourself safe. Of course, this 'safety' is an illusion.

Remaining in your comfort zone and not talking in class and justifying the silence because you assume that you don't know enough to participate in class and other people (especially those who talk) do. To approach the class and the work in a way that suggests that one can speak only about what is already known is not only dangerous, but it's also intellectually lazy.

In essence, for our endeavor to succeed, there are two preconditions that must be met: everyone must have done the reading critically and carefully, and everyone must be willing to engage respectfully yet vigorously.

Although I'm likely to talk a bit (that's my character), I won't give lectures, and the content and direction of the class is largely in your hands. In other words, I will serve as a resource and facilitator and occasionally cranky curmudgeon, but it's your class to shape and energize. Individually and collectively, this course carries with it a responsibility **to drive** the inquiry and conversation, not rely on others to do so.

The course demands you find creative ways to make topics and assignments personally interesting (especially if your first impulse is to label them "boring" or "too hard"), believe that you have something worthwhile to say, and express your insights and responses after you've pondered/listened/read the material.

## class preparation

In addition to your written assignments, what else you bring to share need not be written out (although you may be asked to do so) but should refer to **specific passages** in the reading as the basis for formulating broader discussion questions. Come to class with an agenda. That means coming with lucrative queries that you think **the articles** are asking with their form and content, not simply questions you have *about* the articles. Besides preparation, class participation also means responding constructively, respectfully, and energetically to what other seminarians share, that you work actively to stretch yourself intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. (This might mean, for example, moving from merely your position during class discussion to striving to promote dialogue between yourself and your colleagues). In short, you are expected to work actively to contribute to the class's overall movement and to strive to promote dialogue between yourself and other seminarians. **I TAKE THIS GRADE VERY SERIOUSLY.**

## contact information

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Coleman Hall 3771

Office Hours: W 9-11 AM / R 11-2 and by appointment

If you encounter challenges with the material covered in this course or simply want reassurance that you are on the right track, don't hesitate to touch base with me. Many times, doing so can save you time in the long run and improve your chances of success in the course.

## attendance

Mandatory.

If you become suddenly ill (think Bubonic plague) or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me or a member of the seminar as soon as possible and stay in touch. Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation. Any unexcused absence will seriously undermine your (and our collective) success in this course. Attendance will be taken at each class session – for a course at this level, you are allowed one unexcused absence before your participation grade is negatively affected (25 points per unexcused absence beyond the first). Four unexcused absences will result in a grade of no credit for the course. Habitual lateness (beyond once) will also affect your grade negatively since it is disruptive and disrespectful.

## late papers

These are no fun for me to keep track of and only put you further behind. For each day beyond the scheduled due date, late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade. **After a week, I will no longer accept the paper, and it becomes a "0."** Again, if you become ill or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me as soon as possible and stay in touch. However, lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.

## cell phone and computer use

You may bring your computer to class with you, assuming that you use it in a scholarly and responsible fashion – that you will only have applications and windows related to the current discussion open. **You may not check** social media (including Facebook and Instagram), surf the web, send texts or Tweets, play games, or otherwise distract yourself and those around you from the class conversation with your computer. You are likewise expected to use cell phones in a responsible manner: **turn them off when you come in to class.** If you have an emergency for which you must be available, you must discuss it with me beforehand and keep your phone on vibrate. **Under no conditions are you allowed to** text message, take pictures or video (illegal in class), play games, or use the phone in any other manner during class. The nature of our scholarly endeavor together necessitates mutual respect and dedicated attention during the too short time we have together. Violating any of these policies will result in your participation grade being lowered by 25 points for each violation.

## academic integrity

Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others' materials (words and ideas). Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

## special needs and situations

If you have a *documented* disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

## teaching demonstrations

During the semester, you will do three mock teaching sessions, and your colleagues will act as first-year students. I will not grade these. However, after each performance, students will provide feedback about your teaching demonstration. Also, after each teaching session, you will do a self-assessment that you'll send me, and, in response, you will receive feedback from me as well. These demonstrations serve as formative assessment — feedback to help you identify your strengths, smart, ideas, and areas for improvement.

Here are the topics/themes of the teaching demonstrations:

1. Leading discussion about or a small group activity connected to an article/essay for a composition class (furnished well beforehand to the 5502 community).
2. Directing a class to an invention or small group activity tied to a writing assignment you've crafted.
3. Open Option (requires instructor approval)—Some possible topics: rhetorical principles, revision, paragraphs, argumentation, transitions, editing techniques, new media, style, research methods, work with sources, evaluation of sources, *et al.*

## reaction memoranda

Over the course of the semester, you are required to write ten reaction memos (addressed to me). These memoranda are designed for you to react to and analyze concepts, precepts, ideas, and issues that authors present in their works. Depending upon to what text you are responding, the memo may focus on an author's main point in one section of the text, an assumption within his or her argument, or specific details or ideas in the text that you want to closely analyze. Assume your reader has a good understanding of the material under discussion so no summary is needed; demonstrate your mastery of the material with articulate analysis of and reaction to it.

You can write a reaction memo to any specific section of a textbook or an article. You're only permitted to provide one per week though so keep in mind you need to write **ten** for the semester.

These memos are graded pass/fail:

\*If the memo mainly provides a summary of an article or a point, it will fail: 0/10.

\*If you provide a thoughtful, analytical, and interesting reaction to an author's ideas, it will pass: 10/10.

These documents must also demonstrate stylistic maturity and editorial professionalism (including grammatical correctness). Each should be **at least one single-spaced page** in a memo format, using one-inch margins all around.

## teaching journal/blog

For each week you're working in the classroom, you need to write two entries in a teaching journal or private blog. The aim of this assignment is for you to reflect on your observations and experiences in the classroom — to play with ideas, to critically think about what's working and what's not, and to ponder other ways to engage, challenge, and support students in the classroom you're working in.

I would like to have entries submitted (or be able to read them) weekly. Grades will be assigned at quarters (25 points @ February 5<sup>th</sup>, March 4<sup>th</sup>, April 8<sup>th</sup>, and April 29<sup>th</sup>).

### discussion leader (DL) responsibilities

While active class discussion stemming from close and reflective reading is expected of all members of this seminar, you will be assigned to be a discussion leader for an article three times during the semester. In this position, you will lead discussion through thoughtful questions and activities that are text-specific for you and your colleagues to facilitate engagement and to make connections to other authors and ideas.

Keep in mind that a discussion leader does not lecture. Instead, you are facilitating discussion. Your role is to get your colleagues talking about the article in a fruitful and responsible way. You're not filling people's heads (the banking concept of education) via lecture, so you need to direct an engaging discussion that is thoughtfully planned and carefully plotted. You should plan to use 15-20 minutes for directing discussion and/or activities related to the article you're assigned.

### course grade breakdown

#### Participation

Discussion, in-class writing, small-group work, peer review	150
Discussion Leader Performance	150
Teaching Demonstrations (ungraded but assessed)	

#### Shorter Writing Assignments

Reaction Memoranda (10 @10 points each)	100
Teaching Journal/Blog (evaluated at quarters)	100
Lesson Plans (3@ 50 points each)	150
Assignment Sheets (3 @ 50 points each)	150
Feedback Memorandum	50

#### Capstone Assignment

Teaching Portfolio	150
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<b>Total Points</b>	<b>1000</b>
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\*\*Because this is an advanced course (thus a thinking-intensive and collaborative venture), you must be committed to becoming more resourceful and reflective as an interpreter, researcher, discussant, performer, and writer. The degree to which you demonstrate this development in class and in your written work will certainly be a factor in my determination of your term grade. All course assignments must be completed.

# Eng 5502: Mentored Composition

Dr. Chris

Wixson

## course calendar

\*\*Because this schedule can and probably will change, it is imperative that you bring it to each class meeting so as to make the appropriate revisions.

ARE = *Assigning, Responding, Evaluating*

FD = *First Day to Final Grade*

Rhet = *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*

StM = *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*

# = article/handout

January 11 Getting Started.  
FD: Chapter 1: Becoming a Teacher, Chapter 3: Weekly Class Preparation,  
Chapter 4: Running a Discussion. (Chapter 5 is recommended, not required)  
Rhet: Chapter 3: What Does The Process Involve  
(Chapters 1 and 2 are recommended but not required.)  
StM: Chapter 3: Classroom Activities (pp. 56-65)

**\*\*NO CLASS JANUARY 18<sup>TH</sup> DUE TO MLK HOLIDAY**

25 ARE: Chapter 1: Writing Assignments and Essay Topics  
Rhet: Chapter 13: Developing Writing Assignments  
StM: Chapter 4: Successful Writing Assignments  
#Smittle, "Principles for Effective Teaching" DL: Cravens  
#Neal, "Look Who's Talking" DL: Dean  
#Bunn, "Motivation and Connection" DL: Dial  
Lesson Plan Due

- February 1 **Teaching Demonstration #1**
- Conferences about draft of Assignment Sheet
- 8 ARE: Chapter 3: Responding to Student Writing and Chapter 4: Issues in Grading Writing and Using Scoring Guides
- Rhet: Chapter 14: Responding to Student Writing
- StM: Chapter 5: Evaluating Student Essays
- #Elbow, "Embracing Contraries" **DL: Lamb**
- Assignment Sheet #1 Due**
- 15 Discussion of Evaluating Sample Papers
- #Auten, "A Rhetoric of Teacher Commentary" (hard copy handout) **DL: Miller**
- #Mellon and Sommers, "Audiotaped Responses" **DL: Neri**
- #Edgington, "Encouraging Collaboration" **DL: Picken**
- #Smith, "The Genre of the End Comment"
- St.M: Sommers, "Responding to Student Writing"
- 22 #Wolff, "Knowledge of Conventions" **DL: Cravens**
- #Lunsford & Lunsford, "Mistakes are a Fact of Life" **DL: Dean**
- #Devet, "Welcoming Grammar" **DL: Dial**
- #Blaauw-Hara, "Why Our Students Need Instruction in Grammar" **DL: Lamb**
- Lesson Plan Due**
- 29 Rhet: Chapters 7-9
- StM: Chapters 5 and 7 (Teaching Invention and Teaching Arrangement and Form)
- Assignment Sheet #2 Due**
- March 7 Rhet: Chapter 15: Designing Writing Courses
- #Sullivan, "A Lifelong Aversion" **DL: Miller**
- Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (via link in class email)
- WPA Writing Outcomes Statement* (via link in class email)
- #Little Liu, "More Than the Latest PC Buzzword for Modes" **DL: Neri**
- Peer Review of the Teaching Philosophy**

**\*\*HAPPY SPRING BREAK!!!**



- 21 FD: Chapter 8 (One on One: Interaction with Students)  
 ARE: Chapter 8 (Using Portfolios)  
 #Boynnton, "See Me" **DL: Picken**  
**Teaching Philosophy Due**
- 28 Rhet: Chapter 12 (Teaching Rewriting)  
 Stm: Chapters 8-10  
 #Costello, "The New Art of Revision" **DL: Cravens**  
**Teaching Demonstration #2**
- April 4 FD: Chapter 9 (Feedback from Students)  
 #Feuer, "Midterm Assessment Techniques" **DL: Dean**  
 #Angelo and Cross, "Classroom Assessment Techniques" (catalog/reference)  
**Lesson Plan Due**
- 11 Conferences about assignment sheet / final teaching demonstration  
 FD: Chapter 10 (Preparing for the Job Market)  
 Sample CVs (Webb, Richardson, Sanders)  
**Peer Review of Curriculum Vitae**  
**Teaching Demonstration #3**
- 18 #Woods, "Moving Beyond" (hard copy handout)  
 #Strasma, "Spotlighting" **DL: Dial**  
 #Eades, "A Working Model" **DL: Lamb**  
 #Oakes, "The Readaround Community" **DL: Miller**  
 #Johnson, "Critical Reading and Response" (hard copy handout) **DL: Neri**  
 Bloom, "Why I (Used to) Hate to Give Grades"; StM **DL: Picken**  
**Assignment Sheet #3 due**
- 25 David Mamet's *Oleanna*  
 Conferences about the Teaching Portfolio (during the week)

**Teaching Portfolio and Feedback Memo due Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> by 5:00.**