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WRIT 540.01: Teaching College Level Composition

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**WRIT 540:01 PRACTICUM and MENTORSHIP
IN TEACHING COLLEGE COMPOSITION**

FALL 2018

Tuesday, 9:30AM-12:20PM LA 205

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Description

This course has the practical objective of supporting your teaching of first-year writing (WRIT 101). In that vein, it will serve as a forum for discussing what is happening in your classes. It will be a workshop where we, as teachers, “try out” different exercises and activities. But the course will also aim to support your development as a college teacher. It will ask you to look carefully at your own teaching practices, encourage your professional development, serve as an introduction to reflective practice, and encourage you to examine the interanimating (Tobin) relationship between contemporary critical theory, practical writing experience, and the teaching of composition and rhetoric. Though the emphasis is on the central, nuts-and-bolts tasks in the teaching of writing (e.g., designing assignments, responding to student essays; selecting topics and texts for discussion; etc.), this is not simply a prescriptive “how to” course. Instead students are asked to consider pedagogical issues and choices in composition studies from a variety of personal and theoretical perspectives.

The practical discussions will be situated among readings that will help us to explore key issues in the field of composition such as:

How is writing, and the act of writing, socially and rhetorically situated?
What does it mean to read and evaluate student writing?
What roles do gender, race, class, and language play in our teaching?
What “really happens” when we confer with students?
What processes are involved in reading complex essays and how might we teach these processes?
How should we grade and respond to student writing and what do grades really mean?
What factors need to be considered when you design a first-year writing course and syllabus?

Course Learning Objectives:

WRIT 540 is a 3-credit, graduate-level course designed to support your teaching and professional development as instructors of first-year composition. WRIT 540 will use a *praxis* framework in which theory informs the practice you develop and you should see the practices you adopt—especially in specific contexts—contributing to the knowledge of the field. In this course you will become familiar with the University of Montana’s WRIT curriculum and work with your peers and advisors to create relevant lesson plans to promote your students’ writing. WRIT 540 will also help you develop skills as an effective reader and evaluator of student work.

The course includes both (1) an academic component, which will cover some key issues in composition and rhetoric (particularly, the development of student writers, theories of teaching writing, and undergraduate writing courses) and (2)

a mentoring component which will help you to explore issues and questions you will be encountering as an instructor of first-year composition. Think of WRIT 540 as a teaching community where we will work together to develop effective classroom management strategies and provide a support system for navigating individual classroom and student concerns.

Objectives:

Graduate Teaching Assistants will be able to:

- Create lesson plans, activities, and assessment procedures that promote student writing
- Convey information through different learning modes
- Use the assigned textbook and collaborative learning activities effectively
- Design inclusive and culturally responsive assignments
- Support the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse writers
- Develop effective strategies for commenting on student papers, providing feedback, and encouraging revision
- Grade consistently and fairly; justify and explain grades to students
- Articulate and apply WRIT 101 learning objectives
- Demonstrate effective classroom management and resolve student-specific issues independently

Specifics:

All Graded Work Should Be:

- 12 Point, Times New Roman Font
- Double-Spaced
- 1-inch Margins on all sides
- Stapled if multiple pages

Spring Teaching Colloquium:

In the spring semester, we will continue our pedagogical and theoretical inquiry during the Spring Teaching Colloquium (STC). The STC is a **mandatory** component of WRIT 540. We will meet on the following dates: January 11th and April 12th from 3:00pm-5:00pm. Location: the Poetry Corner, Mansfield Library.

Your WRIT 540 grade from the fall semester will be carried over/held until the end of the spring semester in connection with your participation in the STC. Your official transcript will show a grade of “N” (in-progress) until final grades are submitted at the conclusion of the spring semester.

Required Texts:

All readings are available on our Moodle page.

Assignments:

Fieldwork Assignments: 20%

Throughout the course of the semester we will devote some of our seminar time to pedagogical inquiries outside of our LA 205 classroom space. You will be asked to work independently, or in small groups, and each fieldwork day will culminate in reflective writing that you will share with the cohort during our next assigned meeting. Fieldwork assignments are posted on Moodle. We will have two scheduled fieldwork days.

Observation of fellow WRIT 101 teacher: 20%

Whether you are a new or experienced instructor, class visits can give you fresh ideas on teaching 101. You will complete one (1) observation of a fellow TA during the fall semester. After the observation, you will complete a 1-page summary and a 1-page reflection on the observed event. You will submit one copy of your observation to me and one to the person you observed. The summary should give an overview of the entire class period—how did it begin? Did students write? How did class conclude? The reflection should include analysis on specific pedagogical moves you observed, how you would adapt those innovations for use in your own course, any insight that you think might help your peer elevate the lesson you observed, etc.

Note: This is not an **evaluation** of the teacher's methods; rather you are observing and offering feedback in a supportive fashion. Please be respectful of the teacher's time, and make plans in advance. Last-minute requests can mean you show up for a class not worth attending (i.e., they're watching a movie) or in which your presence disturbs the class dynamic (i.e., there are already other TAs there).

Conference Record and Reflect [R&R]: 20%

You will audio-record one of your teacher-student conference in the fall semester. Please ask permission from your students; they must grant you permission to record the session. There is a permission form on Moodle. Please print this out and have your student sign it before recording the session. You will then transcribe the 15-20 minute conference and write a 2-page reflection about your performance in the conference. Did you talk too much? Too little? A full assignment is posted on Moodle.

Three WRIT 101 Writing Assignments and Statement of Teaching Philosophy: 30%

For your final project you will develop **three** writing assignments for a WRIT 101 course and a statement of teaching philosophy.

To do this you will need to:

- For each assignment, write a 400-500 word explanation that justifies the pedagogical practices central to the assignment (revision, reflection, culturally responsive teaching, etc.).
- 1-2 page, statement of teaching philosophy for first-year composition (or for college teaching more generally).

Spring Colloquium: 10%

- We will meet on the following dates: January 11th and April 12th from 3:00pm-5:00pm. Location: the Poetry Corner, Mansfield Library. Please plan on being actively involved in both meetings.

Attendance: As WRIT 540 is a required component of your professional participation at UM, you are expected to attend every session. If you cannot attend a session because of illness or other personal reasons, you will need to contact me beforehand. Missed classes, failure to complete all requirements, and/or failure to complete all assignments may result in not earning credit for the course. WRIT 540 depends on your thoughtful and active contributions to class and mentor group meetings (STC).

- ★ 1st absence: final grade drops one letter grade (example: A drops to B)
- ★ 2nd absence: final grade drops two letter grades (example: A drops to C)
- ★ 3rd absence: final grade is an F

Your level of engagement and preparation sends a direct message about how much you respect your work as a teacher and your position as a TA.

Grading: I will be looking for evidence of each student's progress towards professional level work. More specifically I will be looking for evidence of...

- well-supported and original work
- an understanding of rhetoric, composition, and literacy (RCL) theories and practices
- an ability to generate sound teaching materials and justify their pedagogical use
- professional quality work, in terms of mechanics, design, protocol, and execution

All deadlines are firm; any deviation from these deadlines must be negotiated in advance.

Grade Scale

Your final grade and assignments will be graded on the following point scale:

A = 92-100 %	A - = 90-91.9 %	B+ = 87-89.9 %
B = 82-86.9 %	B- = 80-81.9 %	C+ = 77-79.9 %
C = 72-76.9 %	C- = 70-71.9 %	D = 60-69.9 %
F = 0-59.9 %		

Academic Conduct:

You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows: “plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Students should review the Student Conduct Code so that they understand their rights in academic disciplinary situations.

The [Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/) can be found at www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/.

Academic Conduct. Believe it or not, this can be an issue here. What follows is the same language you printed in your WRIT 101 syllabi: You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows:

“plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Disability Services for Students:

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me privately after class or in my office. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.