

English 502:
Writing Lab Practicum for Graduate Students
Fall 2018

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Office hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays 1:00 – 2:00 p.m., or by appointment during my usual office days, Tuesday to Thursdays.

Description

This practicum works to foster intellectual community and model the academic exploration of issues that likely will arise during your time as a tutor in the writing lab. To spur that labor, we will take up common questions, reflect on their presence in our everyday work, and bridge that inquiry to scholarship from the field. Between our talk, our reflective writing, and our reading, each of us will grow stronger, both as teachers of writing and academics who use scholarship to guide our thinking and practice, particularly in the context of one-to-one and small group learning.

Learning Outcomes

- Share a common approach to conferences with students and have it rooted in “best practices” pedagogy.
- Understand the intellectual and pedagogical roots of writing center practice and the teaching of writing one-to-one.
- Complicate mentoring through understand writing process and tutoring process, and come to have a “voice” toward one’s own praxis.
- Challenge received wisdom about the teaching and learning of writing, particularly around issues of identity and multilingualism.

Readings and Assignments

Mindful that this course is a practicum runs alongside your other intensive coursework, teaching loads, and research, the readings are not meant to tax or overwhelm you, but to provide a common language and understanding, especially since everyone in this practicum doesn’t share the same historical experience with one-to-one mentoring. After reading your applications from last spring and consulting with former participants in this practicum, I’ve opted for less how-to and more active conversations with your peers and other guests from the writing lab and larger department. When the schedule allows, we’ll be reading critical pieces about the history and politics of writing center/lab work as well as engaging raw “data” that writing center administrators and scholars use to guide programming, assessment and inquiry-based research. All that said, I’m committed to jettisoning the schedule and re-negotiating readings if any individual has or group have issues or questions they’d like to process on any given Wednesday morning.

Policies

- *Attendance*

Participation in the practicum, like all others in the department isn't optional, regardless of your concentration or specialty. I strongly believe in building community, especially one that is cross-disciplinary, within writing centers. These spaces are dynamic teaching and learning arenas where we can all grow and benefit from one another, myself included. Besides, honing one's ability to have pedagogical conversations with a wide range of peers, even those with diverse interests in English studies or beyond, makes students much more marketable in a highly competitive job market. Suffice it to say, we can't foster a community if people withdraw, so in addition to being present, let's foster a culture where we each feel safe contributing and challenging one another. Everyday life is going to interfere with any one or all of us; if you have a conference to attend, you get sick, email me before class so that I'm not worried. On a more serious note, disappearing from the practicum can affect your course grade and reappointment in the writing lab. If you don't consistently and equitably participate, you will not pass.

Disabilities, or other issues that impact on learning and participation

- You're under no obligation to tell me if you have a learning issue or any disability that impacts on your learning, but sharing that insight will help me better work with you. For example, I come from a family with a deaf sister, so I've always been trained to make dedicated eye contact with people I'm interacting with (which can be unnerving, even creepy). I can also have the attention span of a dodo, all the worse when I haven't eaten or am too caffeinated. Like many of your own classes, I have mixed feeling about cell phones; they're a lifeline, but they're distracting, especially in an intimate seminar/discussion space like our own. Just be self-aware. Otherwise, I respect that many of you have long days on campus. If you need to bring food, please do. Ideally, we'll become sufficiently comfortable that we'll share or meet up for a meal beyond class time.

Assignments

- *Weekly reflections/responses*

On Blackboard, I've set up, hopefully, a private space for you to post your reaction to the week that was in the writing lab, or for you to respond to the week's reading, or both. I find these virtual check-in's valuable to get a sense of what the room is going to be like, so please post by 6:00 a.m., the day of our usual Wednesday class meeting, even on weeks when we will not be physically meeting. For each class, we'll have a debriefing time during class, but I don't want you to feel obligated to share what you've posted to the journal. Truly, discussion on that site might be private venting or celebration – unless you give me permission or you do it yourself, that journal won't be public in the classroom.

- A Special Note for First-Year Fellows: Until you go “live” on the schedule, you’ll be doing lots of shadowing and group tutorials. I want you to use the journal to capture a day’s experiences, to talk about what you’re noticing, what you might do differently, what you think is working. Look for a range of sessions/people to observe (newer undergrads, undergrad tutors, your own peers, STEM writing, WAC writing, multilingual students at all levels, etc.). Once you’re comfortable with what you’re seeing, move on to doing some group tutoring (pair up with someone and co-tutor) – look for the same range of people and experiences. Lead with someone observing, observe with someone else observing. Once you’re ready, find Tammy, Vicki, or me and talk about going on the schedule.
- *Written observations of sessions*
 During the course of the semester, you’ll need to do three observations. Basically, one each month. A few ground rules:
 - You’ll need to seek permission from both the tutor and student before joining them. I find the tutor before the front desk hands them a to-do sheet for the session, and I say, would you mind if. . . “Remember, they too had to observe sessions just like you.
 - Look for sessions that a can check a number of boxes:
 - Venue type
 - Face to face
 - Online chats
 - Asynchronous/uploaded papers
 - Document types
 - Job or graduate school docs (personal statements, resumes, application letters, statements of. . .)
 - STEM writing, lab reports
 - Dissertation/thesis chapters
 - ICaP
 - Professional Writing
 - WAC, wildcard
 - Client types
 - First-Years (Usually in for ICaP)
 - Undergrads
 - Graduate students
 - Multilingual under/graduate students
 - Tutor types
 - Undergraduate
 - Graduate
 - Foci
 - Grammar
 - Citation
 - Getting start

- Responding to (professor, advisor, company)
 - Don't do the same combination each time.
 - For the self-observation, you need to record yourself, using a digital recorder, a flip-cam, your phone, or whatever – you must get permission from the student. This recording **will not be used for research** (you'd/we'd need to get IRB approval), but I will be forever in your debt if you let us have it for our archive (that we want to use to train people like you). Use the recording to mirror yourself so that you don't have to rely on your memory from the moment. Yes, I also hate my voice, my pale skin, and my odd lack of hair in recordings; my fantasy vision of self is some 20-something Abercrombie & Fitch/JCrew ginger-dude model version of myself. Ain't happening.
 - For the write-ups, keep it simple—three paragraphs. Give me a summary paragraph that provides insight on the context, focus, and direction of the session (what happened, what process and techniques seems to drive the session), a positive assessment paragraph on what seems to be working well during the session, and a critical reflection paragraph on what questions/concerns the session made you consider about your knowledge or practice or about, more generally, how the writing lab approaches some issue or dynamic that happened during the session. The goal of this exercise is to internalize in you being meta in the teaching and learning that happens in the lab and to foster self-awareness of what's happening in sessions.
- *Reflection on being tutored yourself*
 - Similar to the sessions focusing on doing tutoring, the goal of this version involves reflection on being the “object” of our usual dynamic in the lab. Follow the same format of the other observation, except you're writing from the flipped perspective.
 - Another goal of this assignment is to remind you to continue to experience sharing and collaborating with writing, especially with peers, and to learn how to negotiate productive and respectful feedback.
- *Schedule/Due-Dates for assignments* (by 9 a.m., through assignments, on Blackboard).
 - At any point during the semester, reflection on **being** tutored
 - September 27, Observation 1
 - October 25, Observation 2
 - November 29, Self-observation (with recording)

Schedule

Date	Subject	Reading, Assignments Due
August 22	Introductions, Toward a shared approach to sessions	
August 29	A tutoring process, A writing process, Examining expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gillespie & Lerner
September 5	Multimodal/digital tutoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapters from Hewett Samples from WCO
September 12	Error analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shaughnessy, Sentence-level error
September 19	Introduction to identities and the WL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutoring identities, from Oxford guide
September 26	STEM writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gopen & Swan, "The Science of Scientific Writing." Observation #1 due, on Blackboard, by 9 a.m.
October 3	Multilingualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 4 (Matsuda & Cox) in Bruce & Rafoth.
October 10	Error analysis, w/ Dr. Vicki Kennell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBA
October 17	Scaffolding in sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thompson, "Scaffolding in the Writing Center"
October 24	Moving between disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heather Hill, "Tutoring for Transfer" Jessie Moore, "Mapping the questions: The State of Writing-Related Transfer Research" Observation #2 due, on Blackboard, by 9 a.m.
October 31	Assembling Identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grimm, Postmodern Identity Kits
November 7	Racial Linguistic Politics of Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vershawn Asante Young, "Should Writers Use They Own Language"
November 14	The Politics of Gender & Conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lauren Johnson-Black, Gender in Conferencing, from <i>Between Talk and Teaching</i>
November 22	No class – Thanksgiving Break	
November 28	Everyday Racism and Oppression in Writing Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neisha-Anne Green, "The Re-Education of Neisha-Anne S Green: A Close Look at the Damaging Effects of "A Standard Approach," the benefits of code-meshing, and the role allies play in this work" Observation #3 of own session, by 9 a.m.
December 5	Debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection on being tutored due, on Blackboard, by 9 a.m.
Finals Week	No class	