

Dr. Jessica Restaino
ENGL 586
Summer 2007
Dickinson 271
TR/6:00-9:10pm
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Teaching Writing and the Basic Writer

This course explores the term, “basic writing,” and challenges us to think constructively about developing writers and their struggles with language. We will consider various approaches to writing pedagogy and the many factors that shape both teachers’ and students’ experiences with writing. We will experiment with how to respond to student work, identifying its strengths and its errors, and we will think about approaches to revision. Our learning will also be shaped by exploration of the larger influences on student writing, such as issues of second-language learning, socioeconomics and schooling, and also students’ sense of themselves as writers. We will consider approaches to assessment, including the role of standardized testing in secondary English classrooms, and we will wrestle with traditional and nontraditional measures of student writing. Ultimately, our goal in this class is to ask critical and, at times, theoretical questions about how to teach writing, while we consistently experiment with the realities of practice.

Requirements

Group Note Share/Maintain Reading Notes (20%)
Learning Needs “finds” (brought to class) (20%)
Learning Needs final project packet (40%)
Writing Assignment Design and Analysis (20%)

Books

Fu, Danling. *My Trouble is My English: Asian Students and the American Dream* (1995)
Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Border: A Moving Account of America’s Educationally Underprepared* (1989)
All additional readings will be available through Blackboard (via the “course documents” link) at <http://montclair.blackboard.com>

Explanation of Requirements

1) Group Note Share/Maintain Reading Notes (20%)

I want you to feel like you can realistically handle the reading load each week. Accordingly, most weeks you will be assigned one article (or an equivalent portion of the workload) for which you must prepare notes to share with peers. While I encourage you to read all assigned readings in their entirety in preparation

for every class, I understand that the depth of these works and the demands of everyday life may at times prevent you from reading every page. I expect you to read the article for which you are responsible as thoroughly as possible—give it your full attention and take brief, well-focused notes (about 2 pgs, no more than 3) that outline the most central moments, quotations, and questions for you. You'll bring two additional copies of your notes to class (that's three total: one for you, two additional for peers); we'll work through the assigned readings in groups, sharing our findings and convening with classmates who've prepared notes on the same piece, and the remaining two. Hopefully, this will provide a well-rounded view of the assigned readings, give you a more manageable workload, and allow you to really engage in what you read. I will expect to see that you've completed your notes and distributed them to your group members for discussion. As long as you are consistent in this practice for the session, you will receive full credit for this course requirement.

2) Learning Needs “finds” (20%)

At the start of class, you will be asked to articulate, in writing, something you feel you need to learn as a (future) teacher of writing. You could do so in the form of a question, a freewrite, a detailed description of a struggling student, and so on. We will work together to sharpen your focus so you can approach our time together with a clear sense of your own need(s) as a teacher. Each week, you will be expected to find something online that speaks to your articulated learning need. It can be a lesson plan, a description of a best practice, a useful article, a teacher's personal testimony, and so on. You'll print it out and bring it to class with some simple, short notes for yourself that help you to explain why this “find” is useful for your stated learning need. In your notes you may also pose any questions you have about what you've found. By the end of the class, you'll have compiled a folder of “finds” for your future use. I will expect you to bring one “find” in for class, as scheduled on our syllabus, and will routinely check on your progress. Consistently fulfilling this expectation will earn you full credit for this course requirement.

3) Learning Needs Final Project Portfolio (40%)

In conjunction with your regular learning needs “finds,” by the end of our class you should have a nice collection of resources that speak to your own needs as a writing teacher. For your final project, you'll compile these in a folder with your original “learning needs” statement that you wrote at the start of class. You'll write a description of your packet, discuss the ways in which what you've found informs your own needs as a teacher, and also compare your findings to some of our readings throughout the semester. I will distribute a longer and more detailed description of this assignment on the first day of class.

4) Writing Assignment Design and Analysis (20%)

While responding to and assessing student writing often receives much necessary attention, the difficulty of designing thoughtful, challenging writing assignments is easily overlooked. You will design a writing assignment based upon selected poems featured on recent AP exams and discussed in class. You will receive feedback on your assignment from a peer, in both writing and conversation, and you will be asked to write a short analysis of your assignment in which you discuss the assignment's strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities for revision.

My Expectations

1) I always expect that you are prepared for my class. Particularly because you are often responsible for only one third of the assigned readings, I expect that you have prepared your notes on this reading and are ready to engage in our discussion.

2) I expect you to show up for every class and be on time. Please know that I am realistic: I understand that things happen and complications arise. I expect that you'll communicate with me if necessary. However, our class meets for only six weeks and takes on a significant amount of material. I trust that you'll make every effort to attend all our class meetings. Should there be any problem with your attendance, I will discuss my concerns with you and determine the extent to which your absences have impacted your performance in class.

3) I strive to create a collaborative, friendly environment in which all feel welcome to participate. I have great respect for others' opinions, experiences, and vantage points, and encourage questioning and critical inquiry. I will not tolerate negative, discriminatory comments against any group of people or individual. I expect you to approach my class with openness and a commitment to mutual respect. If we can trust each other with our ideas and varied perspectives, we will learn endlessly more together.

Syllabus

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| Tues 6/26 | In-class reading and writing; excerpt Bartholomae, "Tidy House: Basic Writing in the American Curriculum"; student learning need statements |
| Thurs 6/28 | Read, Bartholomae, "Tidy House"; Hull and Rose, "This Wooden Shack"; National Writing Project (NWP), "The Neglected 'R'"; group note share (bring three copies of your notes)
Small groups review learning needs statements; initial discussion of resources for research; final project assigned |
| Tues 7/3 | Read Bartholomae, "The Study of Error"; Rabin, "Reading Papers: A Teaching Response"; Patthey-Chavez, "Investigating the Process Approach to Writing Instruction in Urban Middle Schools"; Burke, "Responding to Student Writers"
group note share and discussion |

- group discussion of student texts/“responding” handout (from Montclair Writers’ Room source)
Review of online research sources for learning need statements
- Thurs 7/5 Discussion of student sample texts; questions and response strategies
Find one valuable lesson plan or teaching practice that responds to learning need statement and bring to class for small and large group discussion (ie, **learning needs/practical “finds”**)
- Tues 7/10 **No class meeting**; Read Burke, “Putting Grammar in Its Place”;
Recommended but not required: Neuleib and Brosnahan, “Approaches to Grammar Instruction”
One post minimum to online discussion board
- Thurs 7/12 Read Rose, *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America’s Educationally Underprepared* (1989)
group note share
Learning needs/practical “finds”
- Tues 7/17 Read excerpts from Hillocks, *The Testing Trap: How State Writing Assessments Control Learning* (2002); **group note share**
Recommended but not required: Forelle, “Academic Success, Critics Say, When the Results Can Help”; Sacks, “Inventing Intelligence”; Dougherty, “Those Who Can’t, Test”
Visit NJPEP “Virtual Academy” and review Language Arts links for NJASK grades 5-7, GEPA, and HSPA
Print and review NJ Registered Holistic Scoring Rubric (bring to class)
(All website links are available in week’s folder on BB)
- Thurs 7/19 HSPA picture prompt exercise w/peer review
Discussion of alternate assessment tools (portfolios, etc)
Learning needs/practical “finds” group work
- Tues 7/24 Read Fu, *My Trouble is My English: Asian Students and the American Dream* (1995)
Group note share and discussion
- Thurs 7/26 Strategies for second-language learners/student writing work
Read Ferris and Roberts, “Error Feedback in L2 Writing Classes: How Explicit Does it Need to Be?”
Visit <http://webster.unh.edu/~pmatsuda/biblio/index.html> (a website on second-language writers, compiled by Paul Matsuda)
“Writing Across Borders” documentary
Learning needs/practical “finds” group work

Tues 7/31 Read poetry selections (Auden, Hughes, Oliver, and Larkin—all used on recent AP Exams)
Read White excerpt
Visit <http://www.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources/wm1.htm> for info on students' understanding of writing assignments
Learning needs project draft workshop

Thurs 8/2 Bring in two copies of writing assignment for selected poems
Writing assignment workshop; "Student/Teacher" conferences
Analysis of assignment (What works? How might you revise?)

Learning Need Final Project portfolio due Friday, August 3 by 5pm in Dr. Restaino's office (463 Dickson)