ENGL 309: Approaches to Teaching Composition

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays* 2-3:30 p.m., and by appointment
              (*except for Wednesday 9/16, Wednesday 10/14, and Wednesday 11/18)

Course description and goals

English 309 is a course for future teachers of secondary English Language Arts which will address both methods for teaching composition as well as various philosophies and approaches to teaching writing. Above all, the course focuses on the discursive relationship between writing and thinking: the ways in which writing helps students not only *express* their ideas, but the ways in which writing is key to *generating* and *developing* those ideas in the first place.

Teaching writing is hard. Teaching people how to teach writing is even harder! My goal in this class is to prepare you for the realities of life as an ELA teacher in this era of Common Core State Standards, high-stakes testing, writing assessments that don't actually assess anything useful, and all the other constraints that teachers face today. How do you teach your students to write effectively and authentically? How do you get them to break out of the 5-paragraph essay box? Is it even possible to get students to enjoy writing, to understand that it can have genuine purposes in their lives? Like me, are you almost hyperventilating thinking about all of these issues?

I think the best way to learn something is to do it. So, in addition to reading about and discussing strategies for teaching writing and the writing process, we're also going to practice those things. The class will combine theory and practice, with a focus on informative and argument writing, two of the three genres of writing required by the West Virginia Next Generation standards. (C&I 624 will adress the third genre, narrative writing.) In the process of carrying out your own research projects, we'll also address such issues as assignment design, collaborative writing, peer responding, digital literacy and publishing, and assessment.

What this course *isn't*:
        A class about teaching grammar.
        A "how-to" workshop about grading student writing.

Those are part of the mix, to be sure, but they are relatively small concerns, and ones that we can only address after we talk about writing, assignment design, scaffolding, and lesson-planning.

Required Texts

Fletcher, *Teaching Arguments: Rhetorical Comprehension, Critique, and Response* (ISBN 9781571109996)
Zemelman and Daniels, *A Community of Writers: Teaching Writing in the Junior and Senior High School*
        (ISBN 9780435084639)
Additional required readings posted on the class' eCampus site

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Social Justice Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.
If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order
to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office
of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see http://diversity.wvu.edu. (And of course, feel free to talk with me about how we can work together most effectively.)

Policies and Procedures

It should go without saying, but _**please turn off cell phones and put them away during class**_. If you're expecting an important call, please set your phone to vibrate and take the call in the hallway.

Attendance—Since most of the learning in this course will happen via class discussion and in-class activites and writing, I expect you to attend every class. I trust that you'll check in if you've missed class to find out what you've missed, and that you will get notes from another class member. Missed in-class work must be made up before the next class meeting—no exceptions.

Late arrivals—We will start class on time, so please plan to be here on time. Late arrivals are really disruptive, and if chronic lateness becomes a problem, it will affect your final grade.

Leaving early—Please let me know before class begins if you need to leave early, and what time you will need to leave. In this situation, I'd also appreciate it if you'd sit close to the door so that you can slip out unobtrusively.

End of class—The end of class is usually devoted to summarizing material or making announcements, so please refrain from packing up books, etc., so that you don't miss anything yourself or distract others. I know that some professors have a bad habit of going way over the scheduled ending time for their classes (I had some of them myself)—but I do keep track of the time and promise to always let you out at the class' scheduled ending time.

Course Requirements and Grading

In-class writing	40%
Components of the group research project*	
Project proposal and assignment (G)	10%
Preliminary research report (I)	10%
Annotated bibliography (I)	10%
Revising and responding strategy (I)	5%
Assessment strategy/form (G)	5%
Final product and presentation (G)	15%
Reflection (I)	5%

*"I" indicates that the item will be created and graded individually, and "G" indicates that it will be created and graded as a group.

Most assignments related to the research project will be graded on a 100-point scale, with 90-100 being an A, 80 to 89 a B, 70 to 79 a C, 60 to 69 a D, and anything below 60 an F. In-class writing will be graded on a 5- or 10-point scale, or (in some cases) just with a check mark to indicate completion.

Late Papers/Assignments and Extensions

As you can see from the day-to-day schedule, below, much of the work we'll be doing throughout the semester will happen in class. Because the writing you do in class will be both the foundation and extension of our class discussions, I expect you to attend class regularly and be willing to write. If you miss a class, please talk to me ASAP afterward to see if it's possible to make up any writing we did in class (depending on the nature of the work, sometimes it might not be). And once we start the research project, you'll also need to check in with your group members to find out what they're up to.

Should y and/or your group need more time to complete an assignment, ***you must talk to me first and submit a written extension request to me before the assignment is due.*** I will ask you to set your own revised due date, subject to my approval, and you will be held to that due date.

Academic Integrity

One of the issues we'll be discussing in the class this semester is plagiarism: what it is, how to write assignments that guard against it, and how to help your own students navigate the complicated issues around citing sources. As such, I hope you will raise any questions you have about citing sources in your own work, either in class itself (these can be good teaching moments for everyone!), or to me privately, if you prefer. Nevertheless, I will expect you to abide by the university's definition and policy regarding plagiarism (see below), and if I feel you have violated this policy, I will follow the university's reporting policy and file paperwork to report the incident, and you will receive an unforgiveable "F" in the course.

The following definitions are from the *West Virginia University Undergraduate Catalog.* Please see the catalog's section on Academic Integrity/Dishonesty for the full definition and discussion of procedures.

> Plagiarism. "Submitting, without appropriate acknowledgment . . . material that has been knowingly obtained or copied in whole or in part, from the work of others, whether such source is published or not, including (but not limited to) another individual's academic composition, compilation, or other product, or commercially prepared paper."
>
> Cheating. "Doing academic work for another student, or providing one's own work for another student to copy and submit as his/her own."

DAY-TO-DAY SCHEDULE

"Z&D" refers to Zemelman and Daniels' *A Community of Writers: Teaching Writing in the Junior and Senior High School*; "Fletcher" refers to Fletcher's *Teaching Arguments: Rhetorical Comprehension, Critique, and Response*; and "eCampus" means, of course, that the reading is available for download from the class' eCampus site. In the schedule below, "READ" means that the material listed is to be read before class meets on that day, as it will be discussed on that day.

WEEK ONE—INTRODUCTION
M Aug 17   Introduction to course
W   19   READ: Z&D, Chapters 1 and 2
            IN CLASS: Discussion of the process-centered approach to teaching writing
F   22   READ: Z&D, Chapters 5 and 6
            IN CLASS: Discussion about planning a writing-centered class; writing activity

WEEK TWO—WRITING AND COGNITION
M   24   READ: Z&D, Chapter 7
            IN CLASS: Discussion about creating a writing workshop in your classroom
W   26   READ: Z&D, Chapter 8
            IN CLASS: Discussion about writing to learn and the writing/cognition connection
F   28   IN CLASS: Writing activity

WEEK THREE—INTRODUCTION TO PLACE-BASED EDUCATION AND THE RESEARCH PROJECT
M   31   READ: eCampus articles TBA
            IN CLASS: introduction to place-based learning
W Sep 2   READ: eCampus articles TBA
            IN CLASS: Continued discussion of PBL
F   4   IN CLASS: Writing activity

WEEK FOUR—DESIGNING EFFECTIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
M   7   NO CLASS—Labor Day Holiday
W   9   READ: Z&D, Chapter 9, and eCampus, Gardener's "The Essentials of an Effective
            Writing Assignment"
            IN CLASS: Discussion of constructing effective writing assignments
F   11   IN CLASS: Continued discussion about assignment design; writing activity

WEEK FIVE—PREWRITING, DRAFTING, AND REVISION
M   14   READ: Z&D, Chapters 10 and 12
            IN CLASS: Discussion of prewriting and drafting
W   16   READ: Z&D, Chapter 13
            IN CLASS: Discussion of the revising process
F   18   IN CLASS: Writing activity

WEEK SIX—INTRODUCTION TO ARGUMENT WRITING AND COLLABORATION

M   21   READ: Fletcher, Introduction and Chapter 1
                 IN CLASS: Discussion of argument writing, the CCSS, and how to make this kind of
                 writing palatable (and maybe even engaging!) for students
W   23   READ: Z&D, Chapter 19
                 IN CLASS: Discussion of collaborative research and writing projects
F   25   READ: eCampus, articles about multigenre projects
                 IN CLASS: Discussion of multigenre approaches to research and argument assignments

WEEK SEVEN—ARGUMENT WRITING AND "PLACE"

M   28   READ: Fletcher, Chapter 3
                 IN CLASS: Discussion of the concept of "rhetorical situation"
W   30   READ: eCampus, Rathje's "When Lunch Was Just Lunch…"
                 IN CLASS: Kairos analysis of Rathje's article
F Oct 2   IN CLASS: Group writing activity…choose your own adventure!
                 DUE: At end of class, turn in a draft of your group's proposed research project

WEEK EIGHT—ARGUMENT WRITING AND AUDIENCE

M   5   READ: Fletcher, Chapter 4
                 IN CLASS: Discussion about the importance of audience to argument writing
W   7   READ: eCampus, chapter from *Rural Voices*
                 IN CLASS: Continued discussion about how audience and purpose determine the shape of
                 place-based projects
F   9   DUE: Project proposal and assignment

WEEK NINE—FALL BREAK, GROUP-WORK WEEK

M   12   NO CLASS—FALL BREAK
W   14   Group work day
F   16   Group work day

WEEK TEN—ETHOS, PATHOS, AND LOGOS

M   19   READ: Fletcher, Chapter 6
                 IN CLASS: Discussion of ethos, pathos, and logos
W   21   IN CLASS: Continued discussion of concepts in Chapter 3
F   23   DUE: Preliminary research report
                 IN CLASS: Discussion of preliminary results and brainstorming about next steps

WEEK ELEVEN—ADDING LIBRARY RESEARCH, ANALYZING SOURCES

M   26   READ: Fletcher, Chapter 2
                 IN CLASS: Discussion of reading sources critically
W   28   IN CLASS: Library session
F   30   IN CLASS: Writing activity

WEEK TWELVE—TEACHING AND USING PEER RESPPONDING EFFECTIVELY

M Nov 2   READ: Z&D, Chapter 14
IN CLASS: Discussion of effective approaches to peer response
W   4   READ: eCampus articles on peer responding TBA
IN CLASS: Continued discussion of effective peer-responding techniques
F   6   IN CLASS: Writing activity
DUE: At end of class, turn in your own strategy for teaching and deploying peer responding

WEEK THIRTEEN—DIGITAL LITERACY AND PUBLISHING (LIT CIRCLE #6)

M   9   READ: Z&D, Chapter 15, and eCampus articles on digital literacy TBA
IN CLASS: Discussion of the importance of giving students real purposes and readers
W   11   IN CLASS: Continued discussion of digital literacy and publishing
F   13   DUE: Annotated bibliography

WEEK FOURTEEN—THE PURPOSES AND METHODS OF ASSESSING STUDENT WRITING

M   16   READ: Z&D, Chapter 7, and eCampus articles about assessing and grading student writing
IN CLASS: Discussion about the purposes and methods of assessment
W   18   IN CLASS: Continued discussion about the purposes and methods of assessment
F   20   DUE: Assessment strategy/form for the assignment you created

NOVEMBER 23-27: THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK FIFTEEN—WORKSHOP ON FINAL PROJECT & PRESENTATIONS

M   30   IN CLASS: Workshop (writing final project and working on presentation; peer responding, at group's own pace)
W Dec 2   IN CLASS: Workshop, continued
F   4   IN CLASS: Workshop, continued

WEEK SIXTEEN— WORKSHOP ON FINAL PROJECT & PRESENTATIONS

M   7   IN CLASS: Workshop, continued (polishing final project and presentation)

FINALS WEEK

F   11   11 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Final Exam period
DUE: Final projects, reflections, and presentations