

Time: Tues and Thurs, 4:00 – 5:15 pm

Location: TBA

Phone: 293-9731 (Nathalie’s office) and 293-5788 (Writing Center)

GTAs: James Holsinger (jholsing@mix.wvu.edu)

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English 490: Writing Center Theory and Practice

Course Description

All new tutors participate in a one-semester practicum (English 490) as a way of joining the writing center community and entering the writing center conversation. The practicum introduces you to both the field of writing and writing center theory and practice.

All of you come to the tutoring center as experienced readers and writers; this course encourages you to reflect on your literacy experiences as you learn more about tutoring methods. Along with increasing your understanding of yourself as a writer, you will develop a range of consulting strategies to help you work effectively with diverse students and varied writing situations in the university.

Course Goals

- Introduce tutor-interns to writing center theory and research
- Introduce tutor-interns to the practice of tutoring
- Invite tutor-interns to think and act within a peer-tutoring frame of mind

The Practicum

Weekly Time Commitments:

The one semester internship for peer tutors at the center requires a weekly time commitment of 7-10 hours. These hours should be used by tutors to: attend class, read assigned materials, complete required writing assignments, and tutor in the center. In the first six weeks of classes, we will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays. From the 7th week on, we will meet on Thursdays only. In lieu of Tuesday’s class, you will dedicate 2-3 hours per week to tutoring.

Attendance

Each student is allowed **up to two absences**. A third absence will result in the loss of up to one letter grade for the course (note: students must earn an A- in the course in order to continue as tutors). Each subsequent absence will result in the further loss of up to one letter grade. Thus, students who miss 5 or more classes will fail the course.

All absences (excused or unexcused) will count toward the total number, and this policy obtains from the moment you are registered in the course. You are responsible for making up any work you may miss by failing to attend class, even if the absence is necessitated by illness or personal emergency.

Responsibilities When Absent for Illness, Injury, or Personal Emergency

If you have a contagious illness (such as the flu), severe injury, or a critical personal problem, you must, of course, take care of yourself. You do, however, have an obligation to notify me immediately (within 24 hours) and you must arrange to complete any missed work in a timely fashion. I will give you clear guidelines for the ways you can make up for absences and stay on track. This make-up work may include further short-writing, online work, phone or email collaboration, etc.

If you fail to turn in make-up assignments in a timely manner (usually within a week of your return to class) or if the make-up assignments are of insufficient quality, your grade will be penalized.

Responsibilities When Absent for University Activities or Religious Observance

In the case of university activities and religious observance, you must notify the instructor in writing and *two weeks prior* to the date missed. I will give you clear guidelines for the ways you can make up for absences and stay on track. This make-up work may include further short-writing, online work, phone or email collaboration, etc.

If you fail to turn in make-up assignments in a timely manner (usually within a week of your return to class) or if the make-up assignments are of insufficient quality, your grade will be penalized.

Avoiding Extended Absences

Students anticipating an extended absence of more than three consecutive class meetings or a total of five or more total absences should take the course at a later date. Multiple absences necessarily limit your academic success in this class. It is much better for you as a writer and as a student to take the course during a semester when your schedule allows you to be present to do your best work.

Course Assignments

Analytical Questions Based on Readings

All students will come to class with two (2) analytical questions to be drawn from course readings. These questions are meant to spur discussion and will be handed in but not formally graded. Questions will be collected through week 7.

Tutor Autobiography Bag

This assignment will help introduce you to each other. You will choose 6-10 items that symbolize who you are, where you've been, and where you're going as a writer. Place each item in a bag, bring it to class, and be prepared to discuss the significance of each item.

Reflection 1 (2 single-spaced pages)

For this assignment, you will choose from one of three options:

(1) Go to the center and look around the center during regular hours. Write an essay which discusses the spatial aspects of the center. Consider the placement of offices, the tutor "study" area, the computers and desks, and any other elements of the writing center space that you deem to be important. Think about how the spatial arrangement of the center influences the experience of tutoring and/or being tutored. Draw some conclusions about our space and make suggestions about how this spatial design could be changed/improved.

(2) Observe a tutoring session and write an essay that discusses your observations. You might begin by describing the session in detail, but you should move fairly quickly to an analysis of your observations. For instance, you might discuss why a session went particularly well/poorly, or you could discuss aspects of the session that surprised you. Or, you might focus on the interaction between tutor and client, moving from observation to analysis. Of course, what you write will depend on the session you observe, so choose a focus that stems from your observation.

(3) Interview a current tutor regarding their experience working in the writing center. Write an essay based on this interview that details some key points about the job that you can take away from the interview. Reflect on what surprised you from the interview and what useful information you can take away to help you become a strong tutor.

Reflection 2 (2 single-spaced pages)

Before you begin tutoring, we believe it is important that you experience being tutored. For this assignment, you will make an appointment with a tutor and bring a writing assignment that you are currently working on or a paper you have worked on in the past. You will then write up a reflection of the event. As you reflect, consider the following questions:

- (1) What were your expectations?
- (2) What happened?
- (3) What surprised you?
- (4) What might have confused you or made you feel uncomfortable?
- (5) What did you take away from the experience?

Reflection 3 (1 single-spaced page)

In order to get the feel of what it might be like to tutor, for this assignment, you will meet with one of the grad tutors for a mock tutoring session. You will, to the best of your ability, hold a 30 min tutoring session with either James, Dibs, or Rebecca. They'll provide the assignment, and you'll provide the feedback. After the 30 min are up, James, Dibs, or Rebecca will talk with you about the session and offer advice and answer any questions. After your session, please write a reflection in which you describe the session and what you took away from it.

Reflection 4 – First Session Reflection (2 single-spaced pages)

After your very first tutoring session, take some time to think and write about what happened:

- (1) What went on during the session?
- (2) What kind of assignment were you working with?
- (3) How did you build rapport with the tutee?
- (4) What tutoring strategies did you use? How did you feel about the outcome of the session?
- (5) How closely did your experience match your own experience being tutored or observing the session?
- (6) What are some strategies you might use (instead and/or again) in the future?

The session reflection is due in class after your first tutoring session (whenever that may be).

Writing Center Presentation

In the second half of the semester, each student will be responsible for presenting on one writing center at another institution. These presentations will last about 10 minutes. To prepare, you will contact a tutor or administrator at the writing center of your choosing and set up an informal interview (phone/email interviews are fine). While the topics for discussion are limitless, you might consider the following questions:

- (1) How does their Writing Center differ from ours? (e.g. who uses the center, what they offer in addition to one-on-one tutoring, how the tutors practice tutoring, where the center is located on campus or within the university hierarchy, who tutors: undergrad/grad/professional, how the tutors are trained)
- (2) What do they believe are their core values/goals?
- (3) What surprised you about the day-to-day functions of this center?
- (4) What's the most rewarding and/or challenging part about working at the Writing Center?

Class Project

Assignment sheet forthcoming.

End of the Semester Reflection and Statement of Tutoring Philosophy (two single-spaced pages)

In reflection you will have the opportunity to comment on your experiences in the tutor training class as well as your experiences in the Writing Center. You will also generalize your own philosophy of tutoring. Consider the following:

- (1) Tell us about your experiences in the Writing Center this semester.
- (2) What did you learn?
- (3) What did you like best about tutoring
- (4) What did you like best about the tutor training class?
- (5) How might the center be improved?
- (6) How might the class be improved (assignments, readings, activities)?
- (7) How did you grow or change as a tutor?
- (8) What theory/practice guides your work and identity as a tutor?

Grade Breakdown

Participation (includes reading questions)	10%
Reflections 1-4	40%
Writing Center Presentation	10%
Class Project	20%
End of Semester Reflection and Tutoring Philosophy	20%

Schedule of Work (Subject to change according to progress and weather)

JANUARY	
Tuesday	Thursday
<p>15 Class Activities: Introductions, Photos for webpage, and writing activity</p> <p>Homework: Tutor Auto-bio Bags and Devet’s “Redefining the Writing Center with EcoComposition” http://compositionforum.com/issue/23/redefine-wc-ecocomp.php</p>	<p>17 Class Activities: Tutor Bags, Intro to Reflection 1, and discuss reading.</p> <p>Due Today: Tutor Autbio Bag, Reading Questions</p> <p>Homework: Gee “Literacy Discourse and Linguistics”</p>
<p>22 Class Activities: Discuss Gee</p> <p>Due Today: Reading Questions</p> <p>Homework: Brook’s “Minimalist Tutoring” and Burns “A Critique of Pure Tutoring”</p>	<p>24 Class Activities: Discuss readings, HOCs and LOCs, and respond to scenarios</p> <p>Due Today: Reading Questions, Reflection 1</p> <p>Homework: Weaver’s Grammar, Grammar, and the Teaching of Grammar</p>
<p>29 Class Activities: Discuss Weaver, Share Reflections, Intro Reflection 2</p> <p>Due Today: Reading Questions</p> <p>Homework: Review 101 and 102 Guides and write down a list of questions regarding the course and Troubleshooting Research Papers (PDF from Last Year’s Tutors)</p>	<p>31 Class Activities: Discuss Core Writing Courses at WVU (101/102/103), Student Needs and Concerns</p> <p>Homework: Bruce- “ESL Writers Share their Writing Center Experience” and Leki’s “Characteristics of ESL Students”</p>

FEBRUARY

<p>5 Class Activities: Discuss Readings and watch <i>Writing Across Borders</i></p> <p>Homework: Rafoth “Trying to Explain English” and Severino “Avoiding Appropriation”</p>	<p>7 Class Activities: NNS Scenarios and watch “Concerns of the Interns”</p> <p>Due Today: Reading Questions, Reflection 2</p> <p>Homework: Eodice, et al “Everyday Racism” and “Invisible Backpack”</p>
<p>12 Class Activities: Diversity Readings</p> <p>Due Today: Reading Questions,</p>	<p>14 Class Activities: Sign up for Tutoring Hours, Mock Tutoring</p> <p>Due Today: Reading Questions</p> <p>Homework: Write down a list of questions and concerns you have about starting to tutor.</p>
<p>19 Class Activities: Visit from tutors.</p> <p>Due Today: Reflection 3</p> <p>Homework: Bouelle, “Tutoring Students From all Disciplines in a WAC Writing Center” and Corbett and LaFrance “From Grammatical to Global: The WAC/Writing Center Connection”</p> <p>Readings can be found here: http://projects.uwc.utexas.edu/praxis/?q=no+de/268</p>	<p>21 Class Activities: Discuss Tutoring Across the Curriculum</p> <p>Due Today: Presentation:</p> <p>Homework: Dossen’s “Using Others’ Words”</p>
<p>26</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Begin tutoring.</p>	<p>28 Class Activities: Summarizing, Paraphrasing, Documentation, and Avoiding Plagiarism</p> <p>Due Today: First Session Self Reflection (due after your first tutoring session) Presentation:</p>

	Homework: Read Mckinney's "New Media Matters in the Late Age of Print"
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MARCH	
	<p>5</p> <p>Class Activities: Technology and the Writing Center, Discuss final Class Project assignment</p> <p>Due Today: Presentation:</p> <p>Homework: Geller, "Drawing the Play Spaces of Conferences" and Eodice, et al. "Origami Anyone"</p>
	<p>7</p> <p>Class Activities: Writing Center as Culture of Learning</p> <p>Due Today: Presentation:</p> <p>Homework: Read "Coping With Different tutoring Situations" (Handout)</p>
12	<p>14</p> <p>Nathalie at a Conference. Spend this time brainstorming Class Project ideas.</p>
19	<p>21</p> <p>Spring Break</p>

MARCH/APRIL/MAY	
Monday	Wednesday
Mar 26	<p>28</p> <p>Class Activities: Best Practices for Tough Sessions</p> <p>Due Today: Presentation:</p> <p>Homework: Brainstorm ideas for Class Project: compile your list of ideas and be ready to share them with the class</p>
Apr 2	<p>4</p> <p>In Class: Share your ideas for class project with the class, choose a project as a group, and begin planning.</p> <p>Due Today: Your list of ideas</p> <p>Homework: Class Project</p>
9	<p>11</p> <p>Class Activities: Class Project</p>
16	<p>18</p> <p>Class Activities: Class Project</p> <p>Homework: Class Project Presentation</p>
23	<p>25</p> <p>Class Activities: Class Project Presentation</p> <p>Due Today: Class Project Presentation</p> <p>Homework: Final Reflections/Tutoring Philosophy</p>
30	<p>May 2</p> <p>Class Activities: Course Evaluations, Share final reflections and prepare for next version of 490</p> <p>Due Today: Final Reflections/Tutoring Philosophy</p>