

English 509, Teaching College English Practicum: Fall 2018

Contact Information:

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Office Hours:

Griffin 349
10:00-2:00 MTWR
10:00-12:00 F

also by appointment

Course Description:

This course is intended to help you out with the day-to-day issues involved in teaching first-year writing at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Class meetings will be problem-solving sessions and group mentoring opportunities.

The class is also a professionalization opportunity, as you will be observed in the classroom and will create a teaching portfolio, which you can use to enter the department's teaching award competitions and to apply for academic jobs and teaching awards.

Required Texts:

PDFs of articles and chapters available on the course Moodle site

Assignments and Grading:

All these are required in order to receive a grade of S for the course.

- Two Classroom Observations
- Class Participation
- Assignment Design Project
- Responding to Student Writing Project
- Teaching Portfolio

Attendance:

This course is graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. If you are unable to attend class on Thursdays from 2:00-3:00, you may come to my office Wednesdays 1:00-2:00 instead, or have a short meeting with me at a different time that week. If you have to miss class for illness or conference travel, email me to let me know. If I have to deal with excessive absences, I will do so on a case-by-case basis.

Academic Integrity:

In this practicum, we'll be talking about helping students avoid plagiarism in their writing, so I certainly expect you to avoid it in yours. You will not get credit for this course if you don't do the (very little) required writing yourself. That being said, you are free to use UL First-Year Writing Program materials such as assignment handouts and peer review prompts.

Meeting Your Learning Needs: Accessibility and Inclusion

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may call 337-482-5252 or visit the ODS office in the Conference Center, room 126. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements.

Please feel free to talk to me anytime about your learning needs, and let me know what I can do to make the learning environment a place where you can participate fully. I'm happy to discuss arrangements with you to help you hopefully not just meet, but exceed the course requirements.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free service located on the first floor of Griffin Hall, in room 107. The Writing Center consultants are experienced writers and students who pride themselves on creating a comfortable environment for every phase of your writing project. From thesis statements, to research planning, document design, to just getting started, the Writing Center staff works to help you become more focused, organized, and confident with your work. In addition to providing the latest style manuals and handbooks, the Writing Center also operates a computer lab, located next door in Griffin Hall, room 108. Both of these services are free, student-operated, and devoted to helping you be a more successful and productive student. Walk-ins are accepted, but scheduling an appointment in advance (482-5224) is recommended. Appointments that are more than ten minutes late will have to be rescheduled.

Safety Information:

- University Police are the first responders for all emergencies on campus. Dial 911 or 482-6447 to report any emergency.
- The Emergency Information Floor Plan is posted in the hallways for every building. This document includes evacuation routes and other important information. Please familiarize yourself with this document.
- In the event that the building fire alarm is sounded, please exit the building immediately and notify University Police. Do not use the building elevator - look for the illuminated Exit Signs to direct you to safety.
- During times of emergency, information may be available on the University's

Emergency Hotline - 482-2222. This number is printed on the back of your ID card.

- The University utilizes a text message service to notify its students and employees of campus wide emergencies. To subscribe to this service, log on to www.ul.mobilecampus.com.
- If you have a special medical condition that might render you incapacitated during class, please make this known to your instructor as soon as possible, including any emergency contact information for your next of kin or similar.

Classroom Observations:

Two classroom observations are required for this course. You are responsible for scheduling the observations; during the first two weeks of classes, email me a selection of dates that would work for you. The first observation should be done in the month of September, and the second should be done between October 22 and November 9. At least one day before each of your observations, you are required to send me a written plan of what you intend to do during that class meeting (what activities, in what order, and how long you expect each one to take). I will have a brief meeting with you after the observation. I have a Canon Vixia and tripod, and I would be happy to bring those and record the class on dates I observe, then send you a link to the video for embedding in an electronic portfolio. It's up to you on whether or not to do that, but I think it's a sign of confidence and transparency to have a video in your portfolio, even if it's just a short part of class.

Project #1: Assignment Handout/Peer Review Prompt/Assignment-Specific Rubric

For this project, you will create an assignment handout for your students, which you're supposed to do anyway. We will work on this during the first two weeks of class. This project will include **four documents total**: the assignment handout, a peer review prompt based on the assignment you have devised, a grading rubric specifically keyed to this assignment, and a one-page reflection about the process of designing the assignment and how students responded to it. **DUE September 27.**

Project #2: Responding to Student Writing

This is a pretty simple project: all you have to do is grade your students' papers (this should be the assignment you designed for project #1), which is already required under the terms of your assistantship, write a brief, one-page reflection about your comments and your grade distribution, and turn in the reflection and stack of papers to me. I will select three of your students' papers at random, review your comments on their papers, and give you feedback about how you're responding to your students' writing. Note: the one-page reflection should demonstrate that you have thought about what we've discussed in class about responding to student writing. **DUE October 25.**

Project #3: Teaching Portfolio

The following remarks constitute my personal opinion about what a teaching portfolio, a.k.a. “evidence of excellence in teaching,” should look like and contain. Not everyone may agree with me, but I have seen a lot of teaching portfolios, not only in my training of new teachers, but also as the chair of a hiring committee. **DUE during finals week.**

Questions to Answer

A reader should have the answers to these three basic questions after reading your teaching portfolio. Ideally, they'll be addressed toward the beginning:

- How long has this person been teaching?
- How many (and which) courses has this person taught?
- How many (and what kinds of) student populations has this person taught?

You can provide an “Overview” page that answers these questions. Your curriculum vita should have a “Teaching Experience” section, and you can use that if you like. You can expand that section slightly to give a short blurb about each course. I first put a page like that in my teaching portfolio after one of my professors suggested it to me when I griped to her that the curriculum in our department was so rigid that my teaching materials didn't represent *my* ideas about designing writing assignments, etc. Those blurbs were a way for me to explain a bit about the departmental curriculum for each course. My “Overview of Teaching Experience” page in my teaching portfolio shows what such a page could look like.

Materials in a Teaching Portfolio

A teaching portfolio may contain some or all of these materials:

Teaching philosophy statement

Sample syllabi

Assignment handouts

Student evaluations

Teaching observation reports

DVD of a class meeting

Student work with teacher comments

Statement about how your research is connected to your teaching

List of courses you have planned and would like to teach in the future (“Courses in Development” page)

Your portfolio certainly DOES NOT have to have all of these. In fact, the only item on this list

that is *de rigueur* is the teaching philosophy statement.

The Teaching Philosophy Statement

When I read a teaching philosophy statement, I want to get answers to these two questions:

1. What specific skill, more than any other, do you want students to get out of your class? For writing classes, what kind of writing do you think it's most important for students to know how to do? For literature courses, what kind of reading or literary analysis do you want them to be able to do by semester's end? *Of course* we want students to enjoy writing and write well. For a teaching philosophy statement, though, saying that is a little too easy and obvious. I'm interested in seeing something more thoughtful and specific.
2. How do you teach the skill or content you most want students to learn? This part needs to be a detailed description of an assignment you give students or a classroom activity you do with students. If it works best to use an anecdote about a particular student to illustrate your philosophy in practice, give the anecdote with the student's identifiers changed.

I know I said two questions, but if your primary research area is rhetoric and composition, I expect to see an answer to one more question: with what rhetorical or pedagogical theorists do you align your teaching practice? In other words, situate your teaching in the field of rhetoric and composition studies.

Alignment and Consistency

I want to see a certain coherence throughout the portfolio. Let's say you have a portfolio containing the following:

- Assignment handout for an annotated bibliography
- Assignment handout for a rhetorical analysis paper
- Two sample student papers, both personal narratives that got grades of A

It would be more coherent to provide an assignment handout followed immediately by a student's response *to that same assignment*. Then, if you include two papers, include two papers that got different grades, to be sure the reader sees that you recognize a range of achievement, and to see how you comment on stronger and weaker papers. It doesn't have to be a pair of opposites (A paper, F paper); A paper/B paper or B paper/C paper pairings are fine.

Also related to alignment and consistency: be mindful of contradictions between what you say in your teaching philosophy statement and/or assignment handouts and what you say to

students in your comments on their work (or in class, if you provide a video of a class meeting). Let's say that in your teaching philosophy statement, you say that what you most want students to learn is the importance of writing for an audience: being aware of the audience's diversity in both their backgrounds and their opinions about the subject of the paper. If you don't say anything about audience in your assignment handouts, and if your comments on student work are along the lines of "no first person," "no contractions," "incorrect MLA format," you lack that alignment and consistency. If audience is your priority, I'd expect to see some remarks about audience in your assignment handouts and comments on papers such as: "you may alienate your audience due to the use of the term ____ here" or "you need to address opposing views X, Y, and Z because not everyone in your audience agrees with your position on this issue," and so on.

A side note regarding comments on papers: again, this is just my opinion, like everything else here, but when I look at sample student work with teacher comments, what I do first is look ONLY at the comments without reading the student's writing. If I can't tell from the teacher's comments what the subject matter of the paper is, I find the comments to be insufficient. I do this in my own teaching too before I return a set of papers. If I see that I haven't made comments on, asked questions about, or otherwise engaged the subject of the paper in some way, I write more comments.

Other Advice

Keep the portfolio brief. Don't load it up with years' worth of teaching evaluations, multiple student papers, syllabi and assignment sheets for every class you've ever taught. Be very selective when it comes to deciding what to include. The portfolio should represent the best of your teaching. That said, if you include a set of comments from your student evaluations, don't cherry-pick them. Include comments from all the students in the class who wrote them, even if some of the comments are critical.

Earlier I mentioned a "Courses in Development" page, which you can put in your portfolio. I recommend having a page like this especially if you are a graduate student without teaching experience besides first-year writing. That page is an opportunity for you to show hiring committees that you have thought about and planned for teaching a variety of courses and are prepared to do so. You don't need to have complete syllabi for these classes, only course descriptions of about a paragraph each with reading lists and brief descriptions of assignments. It's also good to mention the level of each course you're planning. Is it a sophomore-level course? Graduate-level? A class for juniors and seniors?