

WRIT 540:01 PRACTICUM and MENTORSHIP

IN TEACHING COLLEGE COMPOSITION

FALL 2017
Tuesdays, 8:30am-12:20pm LA 205

Erin Costello Wecker, Ph.D.
Mailbox: LA 133
Office: LA 220
Office Phone: (406) 243-4410
Cell Phone: (406) 581-0908
Office Hours: Tuesday 12:45pm-3:45pm
Email: erin.wecker@umontana.edu
Website: <https://umteachingassistants.wordpress.com/>

Description

This course has the practical objective of supporting your teaching of first-year writing (WRIT 101). In that vein, it will serve as forum for discussing what is happening in your classes. It will be a workshop where we, as teachers, “try out” different exercises and activities. But the course will also aim to support your development as a college teacher. It will ask you to look carefully at your own teaching practices, encourage your professional development as a college teacher, serve as an introduction to reflective practice, and encourage you to examine the interanimating (Tobin) relationship between contemporary critical theory, practical writing experience, and the teaching of Composition and Rhetoric. Though the emphasis is on the central, nuts-and-bolts tasks in the teaching of writing (e.g., designing assignments, responding to student essays; selecting topics and texts for discussion; etc.), this is not simply a prescriptive “how to” course. Instead students are asked to consider pedagogical issues and choices in Composition studies from a variety of personal and theoretical perspectives.

The practical discussions will be situated among readings that will help us to explore key issues in the field of composition such as:

How is writing, and the act of writing, socially and rhetorically situated?
What does it mean to read and evaluate student writing?
What roles do gender, race, class, and language play in our teaching?
What “really happens” when we confer with students?

What processes are involved in reading complex essays and how might we teach these processes?

What role do race, gender, and language difference play in our classes?

How do we deal with grammar and errors in our classes?

How should we grade and respond to student writing and what do grades really mean?

What factors need to be considered when you design a first-year writing course and syllabus?

Course Learning Objectives:

WRIT 540, Practicum and Mentorship in Teaching College Composition, is a 3-credit, graduate level course designed to support you while teaching First-Year Writing at the University of Montana. WRIT 540 began with your introduction to the WRIT 101 program during COMP Camp, which served as the initial introduction to designing and implementing the University of Montana's First-Year Writing course. Over the semester, WRIT 540 will use a *praxis* framework in which theory informs the practice you develop and you should see the practices you adopt—especially in specific contexts—contributing to the knowledge of the field. The course includes both (1) an academic component, which will cover some key issues in composition-rhetoric (particularly, the development of student writers, theories of teaching writing, and undergraduate writing courses) and (2) a mentoring component which will help you to explore issues and questions you will be encountering as a college teacher in your own classroom.

In WRIT 540, you will learn:

- research and theories on writing processes, literacy development, and the socially situated nature of writing
- praxis and the relationship between theory and practice in our work as teachers
- research and strategies on assessing and responding to students' writing specifically within the context of a portfolio based curriculum
- how to develop lessons/units and how to structure feedback (including peer review)
- to design inclusive and informed writing assignments that help your students to become rhetorically savvy writers
- how local contexts and students impact our teaching strategies and choices
- how to begin to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse student writers
- to develop a reflective, informed, and engaged teaching practice as part of your professional identity as a college instructor (including the drafting of your own teaching philosophy)
- relevant history and movements of composition studies, with a particular focus on the first-year writing course

Specifics:

All Graded Work Should Be:

- 12 Point, Times New Roman Font
- Double Spaced
- 1 inch Margins on all sides
- Stapled

Mentor Meetings and Activities:

Over the course of the fall semester, students in WRIT 540 are invited to meet with Dr. Wecker or Dr. Ratto Parks to discuss their teaching and classroom concerns.

In the spring semester, we will continue our pedagogical and theoretical inquiry during the Spring Teaching Colloquium. The Spring Teaching Colloquium is a **mandatory** component of WRIT 540. We will meet on the following dates: We will meet on the following dates: January 26th, March 2nd, April 27th from 3:00pm-5:00pm. Location: the Poetry Corner, Mansfield Library.

Grades from Fall 2017 will be carried over/held until the end of Spring 2018 semester in connection with your participation in the Spring Teaching Colloquium.

Required Texts:

All readings are available on our Moodle page.

Notable Composition Resources (optional reading):

- *College Composition and Communication (CCC)*
- *College English*
- *Composition Studies*
- *Research in the Teaching of English*
- *Written Communication*
- *JAC – Journal of Advanced Composition*
- *Journal of Second Language Writing*
- *Teaching of Writing at the Two-Year College (TYCA)*
- *Rhetoric Review*
- *Computers and Composition*
- Pittsburgh University Press
- NCTE
- Routledge
- Southern Illinois University Press (SIUP)
- Utah University Press
- Parlor Press
- Hampton Press
- Heinemann (particularly volumes from the 1990s and early 2000s.)

Assignments:

Teaching Journal & Pedagogy Gallery Walk (PGW): 20%

One goal of this course is to build a community for TAs at UM through discussion, interaction, and support. To do this it is important to regularly reflect on our own practice and to also share those reflections with our colleagues. The teaching journal will be a place for you to work through some of your own observations while teaching WRIT 101. Over the course of the fall semester you will write five teaching journal entries. Teaching journals are designed to mirror the reflective writing you are asking your WRIT 101 students to do in their journal entries. Accordingly, I will provide prompts and I ask that you write, without stopping (in the spirit of Peter Elbow's "Freewriting" article) or editing for 20 minutes per entry.

In tandem with the teaching journal is the pedagogy gallery walk (PGW). The PGW offers us the chance to share our teaching ideas and innovations. Collaborating in this way enables educators and practitioners to gain insight into the creative ideas of their peers, while also unifying the curriculum across multiple sections. Each presenter will have the opportunity to ask questions of the class and the class will offer strategies for revision

and commentary on methods that are meeting WRIT 101 learning outcomes. The result is a polished lesson plan that is ready for the WRIT 101 classroom.

Each of you will prepare one (25) minute presentation during the fall semester.

On assigned days, (listed by group # on the syllabus; groups posted to Moodle) 2-3 students will individually present a 25-minute lesson plan they are incorporating into their WRIT 101 course in the following week(s).

- **Please create a handout that:**
 - 1) offers specific details so other WRIT 101 instructors are able to replicate and adapt the lesson for their own teaching purposes.
 - 2) keeps audience in mind for the handout (you are offering pedagogical strategies to your colleagues; i.e. this is not a handout you would share with students).
 - 3) details the learning outcomes AND which key terms your lesson plan addresses.
 - 4) Please bring (21) hardcopies to class and email a copy to me so I can post it to Moodle. The hardcopies are important because within any classroom there are visual and auditory learners.

Fieldwork Assignment: 10%

Throughout the course of the semester we will devote some of our seminar time to pedagogical inquiries outside of our LA 205 classroom space. You will be asked to work independently, or in small groups, and each fieldwork day will culminate in reflective writing that you will share with the cohort during our next assigned meeting. Fieldwork assignments are posted on Moodle. We will have two scheduled fieldwork days.

Observation of other WRIT teacher: 10%

Whether you are a new or experienced instructor, class visits can give you fresh ideas on teaching 101. You will complete one (1) observation of a fellow TA during the fall semester. After the observation, you will complete a 2-3-page, summary and reflection on the observed event.

Note: This is not an evaluation of the teacher's methods. Please be respectful of the teacher's time, and make plans in advance. Last-minute requests can mean you show up for a class not worth attending (i.e., they're watching a movie) or in which your presence disturbs the class dynamic (i.e., there are already other TAs there).

Conference Record and Response [R&R]: 10%

TAs will audio-record one of their own teacher-student conference in the fall semester. Please ask permission from your students; they must grant you permission to record the session. There is a permission form on Moodle. Please print this out and have your student sign it before recording the session. You will then transcribe the 15-20 minute conference and write a 2-3 page reflection about your performance in the conference. Did you talk too much? Too little? Etc. A full assignment is posted on Moodle.

Responses to drafts of three student essays and analysis of your responses: 15%

On Moodle you will find PDFs of three student essays; please use these to complete this assignment. First, write responses to these three drafts as if (1) the writers were your own students and (2) revisions of the drafts were due in two weeks. Second, write a 3-4 page explanatory essay in which you describe and analyze your experience reading and responding to the drafts. You will probably want to discuss issues, challenges, surprises, and/or revelations you had during this process; you might also discuss why you included what you included, why you excluded what you excluded, why you adopted a particular tone, etc. Please draw on your teaching journals and activities related to developing your philosophy of writing that we started during Comp Camp.

Three WRIT 101 Writing Assignments and Statement of Teaching Philosophy: 20%

For your final project in WRIT 540, you will develop **three** alternate writing assignments for a WRIT 101 course and a statement of teaching philosophy.

To do this you will need to:

- Develop a set of key terms that will guide and connect each assignment. Please explicitly incorporate your key terms into each assignment when detailing the learning objectives of each assignment.
- For each assignment you will write a 400-500 word explanation that justifies the pedagogical practices central to the assignment (revision, reflection, culturally responsive teaching, etc.).
- It is critical to reflect on how your assignments will foster and encourage transfer. To achieve this you should include the key terms that would guide your proposed WRIT 101 course.
- A 2-3 page, statement of teaching philosophy for first-year writing (or for college teaching more generally).

Spring Colloquium: 15%

- We will meet on the following dates: January 26th, March 2nd, April 27th from 3:00pm-5:00pm.
Location: the Poetry Corner, Mansfield Library.

Course Policies:

Attendance: WRIT 540 depends on your thoughtful and active contributions to class and attending all mentor group meetings, which will count toward your final grade in WRIT 540; the mentorship component of this course will also continue into the spring semester with the colloquium. Absences from WRIT 540, including the mentor groups, will result in a lowered or failing grade. We only meet once a week and you are expected to be here. Missing more than one class will seriously compromise your grade. The entire nature of this course revolves around all of us operating on a similar time-line. Late work or a lack of daily preparedness in graduate courses inevitably results in class sessions full of speculative BS. More so than in other courses, your level of preparation sends a direct message about how much you respect your peers, your work as a teacher, and your position as a TA. Sorry to be a downer: the stakes are high.

Grading: I will be looking for evidence of each student's progress towards professional level work. More specifically I will be looking for evidence of...

- well supported and "original" work that responds to a specific context
- an understanding of rhetoric, composition, literacy theory, as well as the current discussions of its application
- an ability to generate sound teaching materials and justify their pedagogical use
- addressing your audiences appropriately, including fulfilling generic expectations
- prewriting and planning
- professional quality work, in terms of mechanics, design, and protocol

All deadlines are firm; any deviation from these deadlines must be negotiated in advance.

Grade Scale

Your final grade and assignments will be graded on the following point scale*:

Letter Grade	Point Scale
A	92-100%
A-	90-91.9%

Letter Grade	Point Scale
B+	87-89.9%
B	82-86.9%
B-	80-81.9%
C+	77-79.9%
C	70-71.9%
D	60-69.9%
F	0-59.9%

Academic Conduct:

You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows: “plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Students should review the Student Conduct Code so that they understand their rights in academic disciplinary situations.

The Student Conduct Code can be found here: http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php

Academic Conduct. Believe it or not, this can be an issue here. What follows is the same language you printed in your WRIT 101 syllabi: You must abide by the rules for academic conduct described in the Student Conduct Code. If you have any questions about when and how to avoid academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, please review the Conduct Code and talk with your instructor. The Council of Writing Program Administrators describes plagiarism as follows:

“plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.” Academic honesty is highly valued in the University community and acts of plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Disability Services for Students:

Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please speak with me privately after class or in my office. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator.