WRIT 540:01 PRACTICUM and MENTORSHIP IN TEACHING COLLEGE COMPOSITION

FALL 2015
Tuesdays, 9:10am-12pm 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: Wednesday 1pm-4pm
Email: erin.wecker@umontana.edu
Website: https://umtwrit540.wordpress.com/ AND https://sites.google.com/site/writteachers/

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 course designed to support you throughout your first year of 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.

Required Texts:
Greene & Lidinsky. *From Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Text and a Reader*. Bedford St. Martins, 2015 (distributed as a free desk copy)
Newkirk. *Nuts and Bolts*. Heinemann, 1993 (available for purchase at the UM bookstore)
Murray. *A Writer Teaches Writing*. Heinle-Cengage Learning, 2004 (available for purchase at the UM bookstore)

Assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Discussion &amp; Dialectic Response</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of other WRIT teachers</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Record and Response</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition Research Essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses to drafts of three student essays (handouts) and analysis of your responses</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project (Spring Semester Syllabus &amp; Teaching Portfolio)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

**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:**
“embodying the ideals of academic honesty, integrity, human rights, and responsible citizenship, governs all student conduct at The University of Montana-Missoula. You are expected to adhere to this code.” More information can be found here: [http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php](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:
Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations in this course. To request course modifications, please contact me as soon as possible. I will work with you and Disability Services in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at http://life.umt.edu/dss or call (406) 243-2243.