2014

315 515-01 Composition Tutoring

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Course Description: Essentially, this is a course for those who like to write or to help others to write.

Composition Tutoring serves two main purposes: 1) as an upper-level writing course, it gives you opportunities to improve your skills and to gain insight into your writing habits and processes 2) as a course focused on one-on-one tutoring, it offers hands-on training in assisting others to improve their writing. Although the course is clearly beneficial to those who want to tutor or teach writing, it is also useful to students contemplating careers in any field that requires good communication skills (oral and written): editing and publishing, technical writing, counseling, legal work, helping professions and so forth. This is why the course counts toward the Writing Minor. The nature of this course requires that students be fairly strong, confident writers and readers: for example, undergraduates should have earned a B or better in their first-year writing course (Composition or Rhetoric). Students must also be comfortable with collaborative activities.

The course focuses on topics such as writing assessment, the dynamics of tutoring, the writing process, grammar and error, and writing across the curriculum. Quite a few classes will be devoted to learning how to assist different kinds of writers—those whose first language isn’t English, for example. Students put their study of writing into practice by apprenticing as tutors for an English 101 course (first-year Composition) throughout the semester. ENGL 101 tutorials are followed by debriefing sessions where methods, strategies, difficulties, alternative approaches and connections to our reading are discussed.

Undergraduates who complete this course with a satisfactory grade are eligible to apply for tutoring positions in the Writing Center for Fall 2015 or beyond. The number of positions available in the Center is determined by the graduation rate of presently employed tutors; just because you don’t get hired for next semester doesn’t mean that you won’t be invited to apply in subsequent terms. I’ll let you know at the end of the term how to go about applying. Graduate assistantships in the Writing Center, if available, are posted at the web site for the Office of Graduate Services; if interested, contact Professor Rebecca Todd (Writing Center Director) for more information.

Assignments and Evaluation: all assignments must be turned in to pass this course.

Grading: I use a plus/minus scale as follows

**Graded Work Includes**

100 points  Personal narrative (2-3 pages)
200 points  Critique of student essay (2-3 pages of text plus paper notations)
200 points  Analytical paper (4-5 pages)
100 points  Group presentation and handout, any pop quizzes, class participation
200 points  Various mini-reports** and quiz on WOE chapters
200 points  Final Exam

1000 possible points

**Mini-reports include your written reflections following the four tutoring sessions with the English 101 class and the two Writing Center visits. Details on all to follow.**

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**Course Policies:**

I love it when students attend class regularly and arrive awake and prepared to engage with the material or activity at hand. Working with other writers requires good communication skills, so this is a great time to work on them. You don’t want me to remember you only as that student who hid behind his/her book and sat in the back row, do you?

Most of our class time will be spent on discussion and interactive activities—experiences that can’t be replicated outside of class. For this reason, you are allowed only three absences—for any reason. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. For every absence after that, I’ll deduct a half-letter grade per absence, and you must withdraw if you exceed 6 absences. Persistent tardiness will also affect your grade. Reading quizzes given in your absence may not be made up.

**The importance of your presence for all tutoring sessions cannot be stressed enough.** In a course that is as collaborative in nature as this one is, your absence means that a student in our partner ENGL 101 class might be denied the opportunity of writing assistance or that one of your classmates will have to tutor two students to make up for your presence.

**Rough draft workshops** are important to your own development as a writer and to other students in the class. If you choose not to participate on these days (whether due to absence, tardiness, or lack of a rough draft of at least a few pages to share), you force me to reduce your essay grade—and I just hate doing that! It’s always better to come with something than not to show up at all.

**Late papers** will be reduced by ½ of a letter grade for each calendar day late. Also, I’m not very interested in reading late assignments (minor ones such as reports, homework) once we have already reviewed these during a class meeting, so you will get minimal credit, if any, for those that are turned in after the due date. Please come and see me (before the due date) if you are having difficulty with a paper or other assignment.

**Do not email papers to me unless we have made prior arrangements.**

**Paper Format:** All papers should be word-processed, double-spaced, with standard margins, font and print size. Refer to MLA guidelines for documentation format. Save copies of your work in case of mishaps.

**Plagiarism:** It’s not worth it. Failure to acknowledge your use of others’ words or ideas adequately and consistently (whether summarized, paraphrased, or quoted) will result in a zero grade on the assignment and probable failure of the course. See Xavier’s policy on academic honesty or talk to me for clarification, if needed. I am likely to make use of Turn It In, a program that helps to identify undocumented use of sources, and I will give you the submission information later in the course.

**Classroom etiquette:** Let us all agree to put the smart phones, tablets, laptops, Ipods, etc. away during class time—even if you have downloaded required texts to them. Turn them off and stow them away out of sight. It should go without saying that texting or using other media during class is wrong for so many reasons. I know—you think I
don’t notice those surreptitious glances you’re making at your phone (or worse, at your lap), but I do. I’ll give you
one “please put it away” warning. After that, I’ll deduct 50 points from your course grade for each time I have to
say that. No joke. That online dating site you are so fond of will still be there when class is over. You can respond
to your mom’s question about what you want for dinner after class. Your obsession with the online salsa lessons
will have to be kept in check for the 75 minute period. If I can hold out for the class meeting, so can you.

Email: You will earn your professors’ good will if you acknowledge their email—even if it’s just an “okay” or “got
it”—particularly if you initiated the exchange or asked for information. And if I don’t acknowledge your email
within two days, you should assume that I did not receive it. So no dice on the old “I emailed you my paper, didn’t
you get it?” ruse.

Use of Your Essays: I often make copies of student papers to use as models in future courses (never as a bad
example!) or to refer to in my scholarship. Please let me know if you would prefer that I do not make use of your
work in this way and I will respect your wishes.

A final note: Many of the readings and assignments for this course are writing-center oriented. The theory and
practice that serves as the primary content of this course has applications to many kinds of tutoring environments
and writing situations. Feel free to share relevant experiences that might broaden the focus of our discussions.
Graduate students in education or counseling, for example, may want to help the rest of us see how tutoring writing
outside of a writing center works.
**Reading, Assignment and Tutoring Schedule:**

Reading assignments from *A Tutor’s Guide* are indicated by TG; those from *Woe is I* are referred to by WOE. Any reading not preceded by one of these abbreviations is an electronic reserve reading, available through the McDonald library *(password: tutor)*. RD = Rough Draft. FD = Final Draft. I reserve the right to change the schedule as needed but will give you advance notice if that’s the case.

| T   | 1/14 | Introduction to the course and one another. The writing process. Focus on Rhetoric: Purpose, Audience, Genre. |
| R   | 1/16 | What tutoring is and isn’t. What writing centers are and aren’t. Other fun stuff. |

-------------------------------The Nuts and Bolts of Tutoring in Writing-------------------------------

| R   | 1/23 | TG, Ch. 1, “Setting the Agenda for the Next Thirty Minutes,” Ch. 11, “Organizing Ideas” and Appendix A (pp. 148-49). Mock tutorials. Focus on Higher Order Concerns. |
| T   | 1/28 | **RD #1 Due.** Focus on revision strategies. TG Ch. 2, “What Line? I Didn’t See Any Line” and TG Ch. 3, “(Non)Meeting of the Minds” |
| R   | 1/30 | **FD due.** TG 4, “Talk to Me: Engaging Reluctant Writers”
    |     | TUTORING SESSION #1 followed by “debriefing” |
| T   | 2/4  | Read WOE, Ch. 8 “Comma Sutra”
    |     | TG Ch. 16, “Can You Proofread This?” and Appendices B,C, and D.
    |     | Focus on lower-order concerns. Discussion of handbooks (rule books). |
| R   | 2/6  | **Deadline for “tutee” visit to the WC.** E-reserves: Brooks, “Minimalist Tutoring.” |

-------------------------------Assessment Issues-------------------------------

| T   | 2/11 | Assessment packet work. E-reserves Reading: Ed White, “Essay Test 3” |
| R   | 2/13 | Assessment packet work. |
| T   | 2/18 | Assessment packet work. WOE, Ch. 12 “Seeing is Believing” |
| R   | 2/20 | TG Ch. 12, Rafter, “Helping Writers Write Analytically”
    |     | TUTORING SESSION #2 |

-------------------------------Academic Discourse and Learning/Tutoring Challenges-------------------------------

| R   | 2/27 | TG, Ch. 9, Bishop, “Is There a Creative Writer in the House?” |

**T and R, 3/4 and 3/6** **Spring Break—Go Nuts!**

| T   | 3/11 | Focus on “Basic” writing. Mike Rose, “Politics of Remediation” (e-reserves, 30 pages) |

T 3/18 TUTORING SESSION #3. WOE, Ch. 9, “The Compleat Dangler.”


-------------------------Working with Non-Native Speakers---------------------------------------------

T 3/25 RD due. TG, Ch. 6, Severino “Crossing Cultures . . .” E-reserves, Rafoth, “Trying to Explain English.”

R 3/27 FD due. TG Ch. 7, Ritter, “Recent Developments in Assisting ESL Writers”

Movie in class?: Writing Across Borders

------------------------Getting WACky: Writing (and Tutoring) Across the Curriculum-----------------------------

T 4/1 TG, Ch. 13, Greiner, “Tutoring in Unfamiliar Subjects” and Ch. 10. Zemliansky, “A Balancing Act of Efficiency and Exploration: Tutoring Writers in Advanced Classes” Peruse WOE Ch. 5, “Verbal Abuse,” and list your own usage issues (we will discuss).

R 4/3 Guest panel on writing across the curriculum?

TG Ch. 17, Dossin, “Using Others’ Words.” (Useful chapter for next tutoring session)

-------------------------Electronic Media and Beyond----------------------------------------------------------------

T 4/8 Konstant, “Multi-Sensory Training.” (handout) Focus on learning styles. Look over WOE Chapters 6 & 7 if you are interested in spelling and pronunciation issues. Time given in class to work on forthcoming presentations.

R 4/10 TUTORING SESSION #4. Look over WOE, Ch. 10, “Death Sentence”

T 4/15 WOE, Ch. 1 and 2 (presentations and handouts) E-reserves, McKinney “New Media Matters”

R 4/17 Easter Holiday – no class

T 4/22 WOE, Ch. 3 and 4 (presentations and handouts)

R 4/24 WOE, Ch. 11, “The Living Dead” Quiz on WOE lessons. Developing a tutoring philosophy.

T 4/29 TG Ch. 15, Cooper, Bui, and Riker, “Protocols and Process in Online Tutoring”

R 5/1 Conclusions: Your Tutoring Philosophy (1-2 pages) Course evaluations.

Final Exam: T, May 6, 1:00 – 2:50. Note different meeting time. Most likely your analysis of a student essay and your tutoring response to the writer of the essay.