

# Teaching in a Writing Center IO:375/8N:375, Fall 2005

Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5:20 in 110 EPB Carol Severino,  
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**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 to 11:30 and by appointment. Please check for me in the Writing Center if I'm not in my office and vice versa.

## **COURSE GOALS:**

- 1) To prepare you to work immediately in the UI Writing Center and in other types of writing centers in the future;
- 2) To help you apply what you already know from your own writing and reading processes and your own classroom teaching and conferencing to one-to-one work with writing center students;
- 3) To teach you more about: a) responding to writing, especially in tutorial, conference, and on-line settings; b) writing and reading processes; and c) ESL and basic (inexperienced) writers;
- 4) To introduce you to some of the composition studies literature in order to interest you in pursuing your own research about writing, reading, learning, and tutoring;
- 5) To explore relationships among five course themes: one-to-one dynamics, reading and writing processes, writing center issues, and ESL and basic writer issues.

## **COURSE MATERIALS and RESOURCES:**

- 1) Ryan, Leigh. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Distributed in Class—no cost.
- 2) Rafoth, Ben. *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook. Available at the University Book Store. (ATG)
- 3) Articles on writing center issues distributed in class in a coursepack.
- 4) The International Writing Centers Association Conference October 19-22 in Minneapolis. About a dozen graduate student and faculty tutors and undergraduate Writing Fellows will be attending. To register, go to <http://www.writingcenters.org/2005/index.html>

**GRADES:** Satisfactory if all course responsibilities are fulfilled (see p. 2-3). Unsatisfactory if not.

## **COURSE RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **1) Teaching and Seminar Hours:**

You'll be teaching in the Writing Center (WC) 2 hours a week, or 4 hours a week if you choose to teach 2 more hours in lieu of the final project (see below). Additional time to respond to your students' writing in person or on E-mail and to prepare assignments or folders for subsequent visits may also be needed. Of course, you are expected by your students, your fellow WC teachers, and me to be present in the WC for your scheduled hours. If you are suddenly ill, call the WC (335-0188) and leave a message with the receptionist or desk person about what to work on with your students that day since we would rather not turn them away. If you know in advance that you will be absent, please inform me and try to arrange for another WC tutor to substitute for you. If your students are writing and you find yourself with time, you can eavesdrop on experienced tutors' conversations, familiarize yourself with the assignments in the files to the right of the copy

machine, or peruse the resources on the book shelves and on our web site: [www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/)

If you have questions about how to work with particular students, please ask me. Experienced WC tutors are also excellent resources if you have questions about policies and procedures. I will pair up each one of you with an experienced tutor to help orient you. You can sit in with that experienced tutor and his/her students for a session or two before you start working with your own students, probably in week #3. For a more complete explanation of WC policies and procedures, consult the *Writing Center Teacher's Guide* in your coursepack. Your presence at/participation in all Wednesday seminar sessions is also expected.

## **2) Reading/Teaching Journal:**

Issues that you address in your journals will help determine the direction of our discussion; I may ask you to read part of your entry in class, or I may excerpt from your entries for a handout, unless you indicate in a particular entry that it is not "public." In your journals each week, please respond to the week's reading assignments in terms of your writing and teaching experiences in the WC and elsewhere. For many assignments, I will provide questions or prompts to guide your reading and writing. Sometimes (but not always), you may wish to disregard my prompts to address your own choices of topics from the readings. After you've responded to the questions and addressed any other issues in the readings that you find relevant or compelling, you can also discuss your work with your WC students or add to a previous class discussion. Please send your journal entries to me via E-mail attachment by 6:00 p.m. on Mondays. If you finish your journal entry during the weekend, I would appreciate your sending it early! Each entry should be the equivalent of at least 2 double-spaced, 12-point-type pages. Journal entries will be due most but not all Mondays, for example, not the second week or Thanksgiving week, and not the week of your particular case study or resource report.

## **3) Case Study or Resource Report:**

After midterm when you are getting to know your students and their writing and becoming more familiar with issues in tutoring writing, we will schedule informal, oral case study reports in which you present:

- a) a pedagogical issue you may be encountering through your work with a WC student: e.g. a learning disability; reading or writing in an unfamiliar discipline; difficulties with reading comprehension, interpretation of a teacher's written comments, conventions of American classrooms; culture shock, contrastive rhetoric.
- b) the student's educational and social background, writing history, and motivation for enrolling in the writing center;
- c) the student's strengths and weaknesses in writing, pointing out illustrative features in one or two of the student's writings that, with the student's permission, you duplicate for the class to read;
- d) your strategies for working with this student to address the particular problems in a). Then elicit feedback from the class-comments and suggestions about the student's writing and your strategies for working with him/her.

For your case study, you can choose a student whom you are either puzzled or confident about working with, or one with whom you've come to work with in unique or creative ways. Choosing a student who is a challenge often leads to greater class participation in the discussion and more helpful suggestions for you. Please see or e-mail me to discuss your choice of student and issue. Before midterm we will schedule two of these reports per week. Each case study report and discussion should be no longer than 30 minutes-only **10**

**minutes of presentation** and about 15- 20 minutes of class discussion. No written version needs to be handed in.

If, because of your students' absences or other reasons, you feel you haven't gotten to know them well enough to do a case study, or if there is a book, article, or web site that grabs your attention and is especially relevant to your WC work and helpful to other tutors, you can do a resource report instead. Ideally we would have a good balance of case study and resource reports. Choose an article from *Writing Center Journal*, an unassigned chapter from *A Tutor's Guide* or one of the Composition or WC pedagogy books on the shelves, or an electronic writing or writing center resource; summarize it and explain how it sheds light on some aspect of our WC work. Possible topics include writing center technology, writing center politics and administration, writing about literature or other fields, tutoring in literary non-fiction and the personal essay, and cultural differences in communication. See me for suggestions of recently published books about tutoring and WC's, some of which I'll recommend in class. If you choose a resource yourself, please OK it with me by e-mail or in person. Resource reports are also no more than 30 minutes long: **only 10 minutes to summarize and evaluate the resource in terms of its helpfulness to tutors** and 15-20 minutes for the class to discuss the issues it raises and applications to writing center work.

#### **4) Final Project and Project Report:**

You may use this opportunity to investigate an area of interest you've discovered through journal-writing or through putting together your case study or resource report. You might also conduct a pilot study or a survey of students or teachers on a writing or tutoring issue or create or revise materials for our web site. In week 11, you will report informally on your tentative project ideas and get feedback on design and resources from the class. Also, please discuss your project ideas with me in person and/or on E-mail. For the last day of class, prepare a 5-minute progress report on your research. The written version (approximately 8-10 pages (more are OK), double spaced 12-point type) will be due in my mailbox, Wednesday, December 14. Sample final papers from previous courses are in the black IOWA folder marked "Examples of Seminar Papers" on the rear resource shelf. Oral versions of these final projects often make good presentations at writing center and composition conferences.

If we have a long waiting list and you prefer more tutoring experience, you will have the option of taking on two additional tutoring hours (two more students) starting approximately the fifth week of the semester instead of doing a final project.

**Accommodations:** Please see me if you need accommodations for any kind of disability.

**Complaints:** If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the course, please come discuss it with me. If we can't resolve the problem, you can talk to Dennis Moore, Associate Chair of the Rhetoric Department, 335-0181, 175 EPB, [Dennis-Moore@uiowa.edu](mailto:Dennis-Moore@uiowa.edu)

## **TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1, AUG 24**

**Focus:** Introduction of the course, the writing center, and class members

**Activities:**

- 1) Fill out schedule sheets for preferred hours
- 2) Respond to "Self-as-Writer" invitation, make a copy for me, and pair up to do responses for homework

3) Assignment of WC hours at the end of writing period

**Homework for next week's class (August 31):**

- 1) Respond to your colleague's "Self-as-Writer" according to the suggestions in the handout "Responding to Invitations and Other Informal Writing"
- 2) *Bedford Guide*, Chapters 1 and 2, "Being Professional" and "The Writing Process"
- 3) Read syllabus and peruse web site, especially the invitations: [www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/)

No journal entry due the next week, but please write two questions and bring to class: one about an issue in one of the 2 *Bedford Guide* chapters and another about how the Writing Center works. Next week (Week #2), you will come to the WC during your assigned hours, get paired up with a more experienced tutor, and if it is ok with that tutor's students, sit in on the tutoring sessions. You may very well have your own students to work with by Week #3 or #4.

**WEEK 2, AUGUST 31**

**Focus:** Being Professional, The Writing Process, Role-Play Tutoring

**Activities:** Questions about the readings and WC policies; paired conferences on "Self-as-Writer" and reports to the class about conferences; how and when to use the invitations.

**Homework for next week:**

- 1) *Bedford Guide*, Chapter 3, "Inside the Tutoring Session"
- 2) "Serving ESL Students" chapter from the *Writing Center Resource Manual* (coursepack)
- 3) "Telling Tutor Tales: Breaking Down Barriers with Stories" (coursepack)

Suggested Questions for Journal: What stories might you tell/have you told in tutoring? How might tutoring non-native speakers of English differ from tutoring native speakers?

What connections do you see between what you've observed in the WC and the *Bedford Guide* and ESL chapters?

**WEEK 3, SEPTEMBER 7**

**Focus:** Tutoring Strategies, Stories; ESL Students

**Activities:** Observations of WC conferences; assigned WC students; look at sample Rhetoric assignments

**Homework for next week:**

- 1) *Bedford Guide*, Chapter 4, "Helping Writers throughout the Writing Process"
- 2) The *UI Writing Center Teachers Guide* (Coursepack)
- 3) Rafoth, "Helping Writers to Write Analytically" (ATG)

**WEEK 4, SEPTEMBER 14**

**Focus:** Tutoring in Different Stages of the Writing Process; clarification of WC Policies and Procedures

**Activity:** Continued round-robin discussion about WC students

**Homework for next week:**

- 1) *Bedford Guide*, Chapter 5, "The Writers You Tutor"
- 2) Severino, "Writing Centers as Linguistic Contract Zones and Borderlands" (Coursepack)
- 3) Ritter, "Recent Developments in Assisting ESL Writers" (ATG)

How does this material shed light on the tutoring and teaching in which you've been engaged?

**WEEK 5, SEPTEMBER 21**

**Focus:** Diverse Writers, Negotiation, Contrastive Rhetoric

**Activity:** Look at samples of ESL Writing

**Homework for next week:**

1) Jennifer Brice, "Northern Realities, Northern Literacies: The Writing Center in the "Contact Zone" (Coursepack)

2) Severino, "The 'Doodles' in Context" (Coursepack)

For your journal, what do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of the powerful concept of contrastive rhetoric as illustrated in these two articles? Has the issue of contrastive rhetoric come up so far in your tutoring of non-native speakers? If so, how?

3) Severino, "Crossing Cultures with International ESL Writers" (ATG) How does Lin remind you of students you have worked with?

**WEEK 6, SEPTEMBER 28**

**Focus:** Contrastive Rhetoric

**Activities:** Look at samples of ESL writing

**Homework for next week:**

1) Bean, "Helping Students Read Difficult Texts" (Coursepack)

2) Dossin, "Using Others' Words: quoting, Summarizing, and Documenting Sources" (ATG)

**WEEK 7, OCTOBER 5**

**Focus:** Helping students read and use sources

**Activities:** Look at pieces of student writing from reading

**Homework for next week:**

1) "Becoming a Resource" (Coursepack)

2) Locate a copy of *Writing Lab Newsletter* that piques your interest. You may remove these without filling out a card to complete your assignment, but please return them to the shelves when you are done. In your journal, do a brief rhetorical analysis for a 5-minute class presentation. What topics is the *WLN* you chose concerned with? Which article did you find the most interesting and why? How would you characterize the writing center community, *WLN's* audience?

**WEEK 8, OCTOBER 12**

**Focus:** How we can become better resources

**Activity:** Reports on *WLN* issues; Plan Case Study/Resource Report Schedule;

**Homework for next week:**

1) Lou(ise) Kelly, "One-on-One Iowa City Style" (Coursepack)

2) Andrea Lundsford, "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center" (Coursepack)

What does Kelly have to teach us about tutoring? How has the Writing Center changed since 1980? Which of Lundsford's models does this WC fit? Other WC's with which you're familiar?

**WEEK 9, OCTOBER 19**

**Focus:** Histories and Pedagogies

**Activity:** First Case Study/Resource Reports; possible IWCA panel rehearsal

**Homework for next week:**

1) *Bedford Guide*, Chapter 6, "Computers and Tutoring"

2) Cooper, Bui, and Riker, "Protocols and Process in Online Tutoring" (ATG)

3) Attend the International Writing Centers Association Conference in Minneapolis if you can.

For journal: what are the advantages and disadvantages of on-line tutoring compared to face-to-face tutoring? If you could attend the conference, describe and apply to your tutoring or teaching what you learned at one of the IWCA sessions.

### **WEEK 10, OCTOBER 26**

**Focus:** On-Line Tutoring, the IWCA Conference

**Activities:** Guest speaker, Matt Gilchrist, UI's on-line tutor;  
Second Case study/Resource Reports

#### **Homework for next week:**

- 1) *Bedford Guide*, Chapter 7, Helping Writers Across the Curriculum (WAC)
- 2) Zemliansky, Pavel, "A Balancing Act of Efficiency and Exploration: Tutoring Writers in Advanced Classes" (ATG)
- 3) Briam, Carol. "Shifting Gears: Business and Technical Writing" (ATG)

### **WEEK 11, NOVEMBER 2**

**Focus:** Writers across the Curriculum;

**Activity:** Guest speakers: Writing Fellows; Third Case Study/Resource Reports;  
Brainstorm Ideas for Final Projects

#### **Homework for next week:**

- 1) Brooks, "Minimalist Tutoring" (Coursepack)
- 2) Shamoon and Burns, "A Critique of Pure Tutoring" (Coursepack)
- 3) Wingate, Molly, "What Line? I Didn't See Any Line" (ATG)

Are you a minimalist like Brooks or do you side more with Shamoon and Burns? Why? Where do you stand on the question of whether lines are crossed in tutoring sessions?

### **WEEK 12, NOVEMBER 9**

**Focus:** Tutoring Dynamics

**Activity:** Fourth Case Studies/Resource Reports;

#### **Homework for next week:**

- 1) *Bedford Guide*, Chapter 8, "Coping With Difficult Tutoring Situations"
- 2) Agostinelli, Poch, and Santoro, "Tutoring in Emotionally Charged Sessions" (ATG)
- 3) Munday, "(Non)Meeting of the Minds: A Study in Frustration" (ATG)

Using Munday as a model, analyze the dynamics of one of your own recent tutoring sessions, taperecorded if possible.

### **WEEK 13, NOVEMBER 16**

**Focus:** Potentially Awkward Tutoring Situations

**Activity:** Fifth Case Studies/Resource Reports

#### **Homework for next class after Thanksgiving (November 30):**

- 1) Research for final projects
- 2) Choose your favorite WC's website through the International Writing Center's Homepage

[www.writingcenters.org](http://www.writingcenters.org) ; summarize the WC's services and recommend one of their practices that we might adopt

### **WEEK 15, NOVEMBER 30**

**Focus:** Website Reports

**Activities:** Sixth Case Studies/Resource Reports

#### **Homework for next week:**

- 1) Prepare progress reports on final projects;
- 2) Write summaries of tutoring on the backs of students' enrollment cards;
- 3) Give your WC students evaluation invitations

### **WEEK 16, DECEMBER 7**

**Focus:** Wrap up of course and semester WC work;

#### **Activities:**

- 1) Seventh Case Study/Resource Reports if necessary
- 2) Progress Reports on Final Projects
- 3) Course Evaluations

**Final Projects Due Friday, Dec 17 by 4:30 in Rhetoric mailbox or by attachment**