ENGL 505 – Teaching College Composition  
Course Syllabus – Fall 2016

Wilson Hall 2-288, Thurs 1:00-2:50
Dr. Doug Downs / doug.downs@montana.edu
Office: Wilson 2-272 / 994-5193
Office Hours: MW noon-12:50 and by appointment

e-presence: d2l

Course Description and Learning Objectives
Required for English GTAs concurrent with their first semester of teaching, ENGL 505 provides scholarship- and research-based background in writing pedagogy, a 50-year-old subfield of Composition Studies. Subjects of study in the course will include scholarship on the history of college composition instruction and on such teaching challenges as assignment design and sequencing, writing assessment, teaching threshold concepts in composition, and the role of reflection in writing instruction. You’ll read a range of existing scholarship on such issues as well as conduct your own research on selected questions within them. The work you’ll produce will include critiques of existing scholarship on a variety of teaching challenges, observations of peers’ teaching, a statement of teaching philosophy, and a reflective journal of the first semester of teaching and its relations to the ideas and research we encounter in this course’s readings.

The purpose of ENGL 505 is to develop writing instructors’ theoretical and research-based knowledge of college-level writing instruction in synthesis with experiential learning in their ongoing teaching, in order to strengthen their knowledge base for designing curricula, managing writing classrooms, evaluating writing, and coaching students in developing their own writing. Our learning outcomes, then, include the following:

- Develop an understanding of the history and tradition of college composition instruction in the United States, including rationales and goals for “freshman English” over the past twelve decades.
- Develop and experiment with a variety of approaches to crux issues in writing instruction such as assignment sequencing and evaluating writing.
- Learn a range of approaches to facilitating particular classroom approaches to writing instruction including reading student writing, workshopping, and responding to writing.
- Build broad familiarity with range of germinal thinkers in composition pedagogy, the concerns they advocated, and the place of their thinking in current approaches to college writing instruction.

Course Texts
- PDFs on d2l.

Coursework and Credit
- Weekly readings, reflection journal, and discussions 30%
- Critical review / Annotated bibliography and presentation on a teaching element or issue 30%
- Teaching observation reflective review 15%
- Statement of teaching philosophy 15%
- Starter teaching portfolio 10%
# Provisional Reading Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subjects of the Day</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Writing</th>
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| Sept. 1 | Overview of Course  
Responding to daily writings  
Teaching readings               |                                         | RJ entry 1 (due by end of Sat. Sept. 3) |
| Sept. 8 | Rhetoric  
Teaching the rhetorical summary          | Uptaught 2-52  
Lindemann, ch 4  
Ede and Lunsford, WTS 320  
Cooper, d2l  
Downs, d2l (writer’s rhetoric)  
Corder, d2l | RJ entry 2 |
| Sept. 15 | Responding                                                                 | Lindemann, ch 14  
Elbow, d2l (doubting game)  
Uptaught 53-110  
Tobin, WTS 72  
Elbow, WTS 54 | RJ entry 3 |
| Sept. 22 | Comp histories and ideologies  
NO CLASS MEETING – WLA  
*(negotiated online discussion)* | Fulkerson, d2l  
Berlin, WTS 9  
Connors, d2l  
Bartholomae, d2l  
Graban et al., d2l  
Uptaught 111-188 | RJ entry 4 |
| Sept. 29 | Process  
NO CLASS MEETING (prof travel)  
*(negotiated online discussion)* | Lindemann, ch 12  
Reither, WTS 286  
Elbow, WTS 335 | RJ entry 5 |
| Oct. 6  | Learning Transfer  
Teaching the discourse ethnography | Wardle, d2l (url)  
Russell, d2l  
Driscoll & Wells, d2l (url)  
Robertson et al, d2l (url) | RJ entry 6  
Clear crit-review subject with me by Oct. 1 |
| Oct. 13 | Threshold Concepts                                                                 | NWWK AK & Wardle (1-11)  
NWWK ch 7 (105-21)  
NWWK Introduction | RJ entry 7 |
| Oct. 20 | NO CLASS MEETING (prof travel)                                                   |                                           | RJ entry 8  
Observation Reflection |
| Oct. 27 | Presentations (3)                                                               |                                           | Critical Review / AB |
| Nov. 3  | Error, Grammar, and Style  
NO CLASS MEETING (prof travel)  
*(negotiated online discussion)* | Shaughnessy, WTS 94  
Hartwell, d2l  
Lindemann, ch 5  
Dawkins, d2l | RJ entry 9 |
| Nov. 10 | Presentations (3)                                                               | NWWK Part I | RJ entry 10 |
Nov. 17  Teaching the List of 10 Composition pedagogies  Bleich, WTS 294  STP draft
           Downs, d2l (reading)  RJ entry 11

Nov. 24  THANKSGIVING

Dec. 1   Teaching Portfolios  STP final

Dec. 8   Managing Final Grading  Lindemann, ch 9  Portfolio

Assignment Guides

Reflective Teaching Journal
Across the semester, write reflectively on your teaching, integrating discussion of your personal experience, conversation with other teachers on their teaching, and readings of the week in 505. Each week, beginning with your first week of teaching, write a total of about 1500 words (equivalent to about 5 double-spaced pages in TNR 12). You are welcome to write more; less welcome to write less; but if you are the type to lose yourself in your writing, just be aware of time. As reflective writing, this writing is welcome to be quite raw and informal. Understand that it will be read at least by your professor, so you’ll have to think about filtering—but understand that as one reader I will be fine with unfiltered if that’s your preference. Course participants will collectively determine any wider audiences (e.g., will you share journals with each other). While I will recommend/prefer you keep your journal as a running google doc (each new entry simply begun at the top of the document), we can negotiate other modalities as a class.

You may initially feel like this journaling assignment pulls you in two directions, with its directive to journal on both your teaching experiences and on your reading responses. I really will look for substantive discussion of both each week. One way that I’ll recommend you synthesize these foci is by, simply, linking what you’re reading to your concrete teaching experiences to date and your thoughts as a teacher of ongoing classes. Everything connects—this is a writer’s article of faith. Look for the connections, invent them, discuss them. Beyond that constraint—the expectation of this twin focus—please make the writing all-the-way your own. The primary purpose of the journal is to foster your own recording of and reflection on what’s going on with your teaching and learning-about-teaching during this first semester. Secondarily, I hope this project will foster a habit that all us teachers ought to be doing, of regular and written reflection; and in addition, I will value a window into your evolving thinking on teaching.

Finally, note that you might well choose, at the end of the semester, to redact portions of your journal into one document in your teaching portfolio (see below). Which presents interesting possibilities….

Critical Review / Annotated Bibliography
Your main scholarly work in this class will be a mid-size research project in which you investigate a particular pedagogical element or issue of interest to you, developing a 6-7 page critical review of state-of-the-art thinking on it plus a supporting annotated bibliography (approximately 15 works). You’ll review your research and critique with the class in a 25-minute presentation.
There are of course multiple purposes for and values of this project. First, obviously, you’ll gain much greater depth on your particular subject of inquiry than the course as a whole can afford—which means that, secondly, you will become our class expert on your subject and thus able to build the rest of our depth on that subject. (We will in fact expect to save critical reviews in our GTA Dropbox so that TAs in future semesters can review them.) Third, you’ll gain some fluency in research resources and strategies in composition studies, which will stand you in good stead as a future teacher needing to research pedagogical problems.

Guidelines and suggestions:

- We’ll discuss viable subjects of inquiry, and you’ll clear yours with me individually (by Oct. 1 via an email). You can think broadly (like “responding to writing” or “collaborative writing projects”) or narrowly (like “contract grading” or “helping quiet students enter classroom conversation.”) You can think concretely inside classrooms or think more broadly ideologically, like “valuing difference” or “critical pedagogy” or “teaching for justice.”
- For this project, critical simply means that you walk beyond a summary or report of the state-of-the-art on your subject in order to add a critique or evaluation of that state of the art. How good is what you’re finding? What else do we need to be doing in this area—what do we not know yet that we need to, or what ought we to be doing that we’re not?
- We won’t stress over bib format—when we get there I’ll offer some possible designs and you can settle on something that makes sense to you. I’ll suggest annotations in the 100-150 word range, which would render the bib something along the lines of 1,500-2,000 words. (As a separate count from the critique itself.)
- Similarly, we won’t stress over presentation format. I’ll suggest that presentations failing to use a visual channel (slides, drawings, interpretive dance, etc) in addition to talk itself don’t make the fullest use of time, and I’ll ask for sufficient planning to yield usable and fluent organization, and I’ll ask that it be sufficiently practiced so that we don’t get the impression you’re looking at the material for the first time. Beyond that, it’s yo’ thang.

**Observation Reflection**

One requirement of the class is that you observe another GTA teaching sometime by mid-October. As part of the observation, you’ll write a reflective report (~1,000 words) that describes what you encountered, what you think of it, and particularly, how it makes you understand your own teaching differently. I will strongly recommend that you include this document in your teaching portfolio (see below)—meaning that it should focus much more strongly on what the observation teaches you about your teaching than it does about your observee’s teaching. We’ll negotiate as a class how this document, or versions of it, can benefit both the observer and observee.

**Statement of Teaching Philosophy and Teaching Portfolio**

You can find two sample STP’s in the GTA handbook, which will put you in mind of what such documents are. By the end of the semester, you should take a stab at one. We’ll run a drafting loop on this, exchanging early drafts for idea-stealing and admiring whistles, then including revised drafts in your teaching portfolio. As we get later in the course, we’ll talk more about what philosophies of teaching might be emerging for you—how you characterize your ethos and sense of purpose as a teacher, and what methodological preferences and strategies emerge from that for you.

The now-much-referenced Teaching Portfolio is simply a collection of documents that demonstrate, exemplify, and reflect on your teaching practices. As such, it will need to include a selection of materials that show your teaching in action—documents you use in your class (syllabi, assignments), documents you receive in the class and respond to (student writing), observations you receive from class visitors, and teaching journals you maintain while teaching the course. (It will need demonstration of and reflection on your tutoring work as well.) Secondly, it will need to include a selection of materials that show your reflection
on your teaching, and (sorry) your reflection on your reflection. These would be your statement of teaching philosophy, including excerpts from a teaching journal, and might include course planning documents or other work that demonstrates you thinking about what’s happening with your teaching and shifting your teaching, or what you teach, as a result. Obviously, the reflective element will probably take more time to build than the demonstrative element.

We’re building simply a starter portfolio by the end of this first semester—things to get you off the ground. It should have a plan for things you want to include over time, your STP, some other reflective element (be it a journal excerpt, your observation reflection, or another mode of reflection), and at minimum two demonstrative elements—a syllabus, and an assignment. We’ll talk more about how these elements can come together as we get there.