

English 771 01W - Theory/Practice of Teaching Writing

Spring 2015

Donna Dunbar-Odom - Professor of English

Hall of Languages 224

Office phone - 903-886-5264; fax - 903- 886-5980

Office hours (face-to-face and virtual) -10-12 Mondays, Wednesdays; 1:30-4, Thursdays; or by appointment

Donna.Dunbar-Odom@tamuc.edu

Welcome

I'm delighted that you've decided to take this course. I've never taught it before, and while at first, I was a little perplexed about how to approach it, I can now say I'm really excited about what I've put together here. I can't wait to get started!

This course focuses on one central question: What makes writing (and writing programs) relevant? We will be considering the obstacles many students in our writing classes face, and we'll be looking at the possibilities and obstacles facing teachers and writing program administrators who try to put together writing courses and programs that meet the needs of both students and colleges. My goals for this class are as follows:

Student Learning Outcomes—Students who complete this course will be able to:

- discuss best practices in the teaching of composition.
- make informed decisions about how to shape a writing program.
- have a position on what makes writing relevant in a contemporary writing course/program.

Texts: I still feel that I'm learning how to teach online—even after 10 years, so, please, any time you have a question or feel confused or see a way I could improve the course, email me! I check my email with great frequency, so I should be able to get back to you fairly quickly.

Required: *Lives on the Boundary*—Mike Rose

Required: *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts*—Bartholomae and Petrosky

Required: *Toward a Composition Made Whole*—Jody Shipka

Required: *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres*—Bowen & Whithouse

Required: *The Activist WPA*—Linda Adler-Kassner

Required: *Interests and Opportunities*—Steve Lamos

Required: *Tactics of Hope*- Paula Mathieu

Required: *Distant Publics*—Jenny Rice

Grading Criteria

Your grade will be determined by your weekly contributions to the discussion, position papers **which you will post by Wednesday of each week**, a literacy narrative, and a final seminar paper.

Please note that I will *not* be using the Gradebook function on eCollege. I don't think graduate seminars lend themselves to a point system of grading. At any time of the term, if you want to know where you stand grade-wise, just email me. I'll be happy to give you a ballpark grade.

25% - Position papers (6 total - 1-2 pages each; note that you will have 11 opportunities)

25% - Midterm assignment (no more than 10 pages)

25% - Final project (to be determined)

25% - Weekly participation via online discussion

Classroom activities:

Much of the work we do depends on your "coming" each week, prepared to work. Being prepared means not beginning your discussion until after you've read the assignment. I'm giving you the first week to get going on your reading so that you will then be able to begin discussion on Monday of each week starting with Week 2.

I will do everything I can to make the atmosphere of our discussion a comfortable one; I do not tolerate disrespect, so you can rest assured that at no time will your comments be ridiculed or made fun of by me or anyone else in the class. I want this to be a place where intellectual inquiry is the norm. And if at any time you feel that someone has exhibited disrespect, let me know immediately. We should be able to challenge each other's reading and ideas in professional ways that stimulate discussion, not shut it down.

Each week, I'll get us started in the Discussion arena with some questions; then I'll expect you all to carry the conversational ball. Your first response of the week should respond to my discussion starter and will be due by midnight Wednesday. **Then I'd like you to read each other's position papers (see below) and respond to them.** I don't expect you to respond to everyone's papers, but I do expect you to take some responsibility in seeing that everyone gets a response and that the responses are substantive. If there are no position papers for that week or there is only one or two, then you should reread the first half of the week's discussion thread and identify what you think are the key points in the discussion and what makes them key points.

Remember that I expect the "conversation" to be equivalent to a 3-hour graduate seminar-- with the exception being that no one can let others do the talking. You will not only be graded on the amount you contribute but also on the quality of what you contribute; I expect you each to be active participants. The reading we'll be doing is "meaty" and there should be a lot to respond to. I'll contribute to the discussion in the first half of the week; in the second

half, I just read the discussion and make my comments on your position papers which I share only with you.

I'm keeping the class as simple as possible because, quite frankly, I'm easily confused.

ASSIGNMENTS

Position Papers: You will write a total of 6 one-page position papers in which you focus on one issue that arose in your reading of that week's book (or section of the book). Your position paper should clearly indicate the section of the text that is the subject of your concern or interest. Use page numbers so we can go to that place in the text if we need to or if we want to use it in our own research. You may use this as an opportunity to try out an argument you have with the book or as a way to explore a way this book touches on a particular teaching or learning experience you've had, making it part of a larger argument. You will use eCollege's Document Sharing function to upload your papers so that everyone can read them. **Your position papers must be turned in by midnight on Wednesdays so that others have time to read and respond in the discussion section of eCollege.**

Note that I'm requiring 6 position papers, but there will be 11 opportunities to write position papers. So you can choose which ones to skip. If I were you, I'd save it up for the end of the semester when you know you're going to be busy, but if life gets complicated one week, you can skip then. I will not keep track of this for you (although I will have copies for final grades); you will need to do that.

Midterm assignment: Using what we've read so far, please develop and describe a final project that enables you to demonstrate our learning outcomes (see Syllabus). Your midterm will be structured as follows:

- A 1-3 page introduction identifying how you are defining "composition" and what you think the goals of a writing program should be.
- A 1-2 page assignment. The Final Project should provide opportunity for you and your colleagues to engage with the reading assignments and to explore possible directions for composition studies and composition programs to take. Pages 88-89 in Shipka may prove useful to you. You might, for example, ask for an assignment sequence for the comp course you'd design. (Bartholomae and Petrosky are most useful here.) Or you might ask for something nontraditional, something multimodal, something ethnographic—e.g. interviews with WPAs or current writing teachers. If you think teachers don't have a strong enough sense of the history of the teaching of writing, you might construct a final project that would make that the focus. You could ask students to write a tradition 15-20 page seminar paper if that's what you think would best serve your purposes. My suggestion is that you think about what you would find most useful and try to build a final assignment around that.
- A 4-6 page discussion of the reasoning behind your assignment. This section of your midterm **must** draw from the reading we did in the first half of the term. You may bring in other research as well, but I want your voice and position to be the strongest.

This paper should not be longer than 12 pages. This assignment will serve as a kind of midterm. Please use MLA format. It will be due by Sunday of Week 8 (immediately before Spring Break starts).

Final paper: We'll figure this out together after midterm.

POLICIES, ETC.

Attendance: "Attendance" is mandatory. Don't skip a week. I will not let you make up the work unless you experience something dire--and I don't wish that on anyone. The thing with an online class is that there's really no such thing as an absence. Please keep up. IF something dire happens, inform me immediately.

Late assignments: You must keep up with the reading. Since you have a week to complete each assignment and you have options for skipping some of the position papers, I will not accept late assignments. If you experience truly exceptional circumstances (e.g. car wrecks, fires, and the like--God forbid), please contact me immediately.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of someone else's work. I try to come up with distinctive assignments that make it difficult to find appropriate "matches" on the internet or on file here at the university, but I also know that's not always possible. If a find a student has intentionally made use of another's work without giving that person credit, that student will fail the course.

It will be tempting to cut and paste from the internet for some of your responses. Do not. To do so without correct citation will result in an F for the entire course.

If at any time you find yourself overwhelmed by the work required or you find yourself confused, please contact me. Don't feel miserable all by yourself. Share the misery with me!

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library

Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Student Conduct: Apparently student behavior in some classes has deteriorated to the point that we have been asked to include statements about appropriate behavior in our course descriptions. Therefore, it is expected that you will be a civil and productive member of this

class. Disruption of the class or the interference with other students' learning will not be tolerated. If you are unsure what is expected of you, please email me immediately. As I said above, disrespect of one's colleagues or of me will not be tolerated.

Tentative syllabus:

Week 1 - Introductions; generally, your first response to the discussion (in the discussion venue) and your position papers (in Document Sharing) will be due by midnight Wednesday. Your final response(s) to each other's' discussion and to each other's' position papers will be due by the end of Week 1. But this week, we're getting acquainted and the discussion will be more general. No position paper due until Wednesday of Week 2. Weeks are Monday through Sunday. Also this week, you are reading the first text so you will be ready to begin Week 2's discussion early in the week.

Week 2 - Mike Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*

Week 3 - Bartholomae & Petrosky, *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts* - Parts I and II

Week 4 - FAC - Part III

Week 5 - Jody Shipka, *Toward a Composition Made Whole*

Week 6 - Bowen & Whithaus, *Multimodal Literacies & Emerging Genres* - pp. 1-140 [See discussion for specific directions]

Week 7 - Bowen & Whithaus, *Multimodal Literacies & Emerging Genres* - pp.143-335 [See discussion for specific directions]

Week 8 - Linda Adler-Kassner, *The Activist WPA* AND Midterm Assignment due by Sunday night in Doc Sharing and to me.

Week 9 - Spring Break

Week 10 - Read all of the midterm assignments in Doc Sharing. In the discussion, discuss the best choices and make your arguments for which of the projects should be your final project. Have reasons; draw from our reading.

Week 11 - Steve Lamos, *Interests and Opportunities*

Week 12 - Paula Mathieu, *Tactics of Hope*

Week 13 - Jenny Rice, *Distant Publics*, pp. 1-128

Week 14 - Jenny Rice, *Distant Publics*, pp. 129-end

Week 15 - This week is for reflection. I'd like you to use the discussion venue to share with others how you're approaching your final project. In addition, discuss which texts you've found most useful, what you think writing programs should include and look like, etc.

Week 16 - Final paper due

Week 17 - Exam week - There will be no final exam. Your final project will serve a more useful purpose.