

ENGL 4240 / 5320: Writing Center Studies

The Theory and Practice of Tutoring Writing

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-3pm, Thursdays 1-3pm, and by appointment

Communication Guidelines

Connect with me through email, Canvas, and/or by attending office hours. My office hours are for you – you'll find out pretty quickly that I love to yap, so please swing by for office hours so that I don't drive the tutors crazy. If you send an email during the week and if I don't respond within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated (*note, I'm trying my best to find work/life balance, so I won't be as responsive over the weekends*).

In Class: I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

Course Description and Objectives:

This cross-listed course is a seminar designed to challenge students to engage deeply with theory and practice of tutoring writing and to prepare students to serve as tutors in the UNT Writing Center. It is open to students from all majors who have a passion for clear written communication. In this writing course, we will focus on the theory and practice of peer tutoring through reading and discussion of research as well as through practical experience. Throughout the course of the semester, we will cover issues related to the structure and purpose of Writing Centers in the university community, the practice and methods of tutoring in a university Writing Center, and the continued development of Writing Center theory and pedagogy.

There is an experiential component of this course, which consists of approximately 9 hours of observation and practice tutoring in the UNT Writing Center. Undergraduate tutors-in-training must complete their observations and practice appointments before being placed on the schedule (and receiving paychecks) officially.

As much a tutor-training course as it is a writing course, we will also be honing our own writing, critical thinking, and revision abilities as well as learning the expectations for writing across multiple disciplines. Readings for the course will be drawn primarily from

The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors and *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*. Supplemental readings for tutoring online and tutoring English language learners will also be incorporated in the course of the semester. Undergraduate students who wish to be enrolled must first undergo an interview process that qualifies them as hired Writing Center tutors.

Upon successful completion of this course, undergraduate tutors will receive an hourly wage increase, and graduate students will receive priority consideration for hire as Graduate Student tutors through the Toulouse Graduate School over graduate students who have not previously taken the course.

* Materials from the course should not be shared outside the course without my written permission.

Required Texts:

Bruce, Shanti, and Ben Raforth, eds. *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*. 2nd ed. Boynton/ Cook Publishers, 2009.

- 9780867095944 (ISBN)

Hewett, Beth L. *The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015.

- 1457684322 (ISBN)

Murphy, Christina, and Steve Sherwood, eds. *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*. 4th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

- 1319077935 (ISBN)

Ryan, Leigh, and Lisa Zimmerelli. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. 6th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.

- 145765072X (ISBN)

Graduate Students only:

- You will select **one** of the following texts (note that whatever text you select will be the subject of your team-taught lesson near the end of the semester).

NOTE: your text and partners will be chosen on the first day of class, so please do not preorder nor borrow any of these unnecessarily!

- *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors*. Eds. Caswell, Nicole L., et. al. Utah State University Press, 2016.
 - 1607325365 (ISBN)
- *Writing Center and Learning Commons*. Eds. Young, Maria L. Soriano, et. al. Utah State University Press, 2023.
 - 1646423534 (ISBN)
- Lawrence, Susan, and Terry Myers Zawacki, *RE/Writing the Center*. Utah State University Press, 2019.

- 978-1607327516 (ISBN-13)
- The Post-Pandemic Writing Center: A WLN Digital Edited Collection. Eds. Rice, Sarah, et. al. Press Books, 2024.
 - <https://ship.pressbooks.pub/thepostpandemicwritingcenter/front-matter/table-of-contents/>

Undergraduate Student Grading:

• Class Participation	15%
• Grammar Skill Presentation	15%
• Short Essay 1	5%
• Short Essay 2	5%
• Essay 3 Proposal / Annotated Bibliography	5%
• Long Essay 3	15%
• Reading/Grammar/Formatting Attendance Quizzes	10%
• WC Shadowing/Tutoring	15%
• Practice Appointments (2 in-person and 2 online)	20%
• Final Exam (in-person reflective essay)	10%

Graduate Student Grading:

Class Participation is an expectation for graduate students and thus will not receive a percentage toward your overall grade

• Reading/Grammar/Formatting Attendance Quizzes	10%
• Short Essay 1	5%
• Short Essay 2	5%
• Essay 3 Proposal / Annotated Bibliography	5%
• Long Essay 3	15%
• Team-Teaching	20%
• WC Shadowing/Tutoring	15%
• Practice Appointments (2 in-person and 2 online)	20%
• Final Exam (in-person reflective essay)	5%

Grading Scale:

- (A) 90-100;
- (B) 80-89;
- (C) 70-79;
- (D) 60-69;
- (F) below 60

Participation and Attendance:

You are expected to take an active part in all of our discussions; learning in this class is largely collaborative, and class will be much more enjoyable as a result of active and

respectful dialogue. I will base your participation score on whether or not you pay attention, remain engaged, and contribute meaningfully in our class discussions. You are expected to follow the general rules of classroom etiquette in order to avoid disturbing the class: you should arrive on time, silence and put away your cell phone before class begins, and you should responsibly monitor your laptop and tablet use so that you do not become a distraction to yourself and the students around you.

Attendance: I will not be taking attendance formally. Instead, 10 unannounced quizzes will be given throughout the semester at the beginning of class. These quizzes, worth 10% of your grade are meant to encourage consistent attendance and reading completion. *You will be able to retake a quiz missed for tardiness or absences with a grade penalty amounting to one letter grade.* The quizzes will incorporate material from readings and from our grammar presentations. At least one extra-credit opportunity will be available in the semester to nullify the score of the lowest quiz grade and to account for excused absences that result in a missed quiz. Please reach out to me if you missed a quiz at the start of the semester due to late enrollment.

Accessible Education

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the Office of Disability Access website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

Undergraduate Grammar Skill Presentations:

15% of your semester grade will be determined by a group presentation. The purpose of this group presentation is to prepare you for eventual class visits, where you will be expected to present material regarding our services to a classroom of students. Furthermore, this presentation will gauge your ability to accurately interpret, summarize, and teach some chosen aspect of grammar, usage, or WC best practices. The grading of this presentation will be determined by accuracy in instruction, preparedness, effort, and each group members' contribution to not only the preparation

required for the presentation but also participation in the presentation itself. Following the presentation, each member of the group will submit a group-report on Canvas, detailing the contributions to the presentation for each member. See rubric for further details.

Graduate Team Teaching:

20% of your semester grade will be determined by a team-taught lesson. As potential future instructors who will almost certainly present your research and work to others, it is important for you to get sustained practice condensing material into accessible and manageable content for your students/peers. Therefore, I will be taking a step back from teaching for three weeks (October 27th, November 3rd, and November 10th) and will be allowing you to lead our class. Having chosen one of the additional readings for Graduate Students, you will present the most salient points of the work in summary to the rest of the class (visual presentations are not required but are highly recommended) and lead some kind of class activity or relevant discussion regarding the content of your chosen text. You may choose to team-teach the entirety of the class or allot each team member a different portion of the class time to lead. One to two weeks prior to your scheduled lesson, I will hold a conference with you and your partner and provide feedback on your lesson plan.

- *Be prepared to submit your finalized lesson plans for your team-taught course one the day you teach (they don't have to be exhaustive, but I want to see evidence of creativity, careful planning, and flexibility as you may need to turn to alternatives ideas in case any part of the lesson runs shorter or longer than expected).*

The grading of this presentation will be determined by accuracy in instruction, preparedness, effort, and each group members' contribution to not only the preparation required for the lesson but also participation in the lesson itself. I will be observing the class to see how engaged they are in your lesson as well, so do your best to incorporate stimulating activities, visuals, discussion. So that each group member takes on an equal part in preparing for this lesson, each member of the group will submit a group-report on Canvas following the lesson that details the contributions made by each member. See rubric for further details.

Essays:

Three times in the semester, you will be assigned writing assignments. The first essay will be a reflective essay on your own experience writing and what you look forward to (or perhaps fear) about becoming an effective tutor. The second short essay is a researched expository project on disciplinary writing where you will be required to research the stylistic and formatting conventions for writing in a particular field/major *outside of your own major*. This assignment fulfills the course objective of learning about writing across the curriculum and will prepare future tutors to better address the concerns of future clients. The final essay is a researched argument; you will research a chosen contemporary issue in Writing Center research and practice and argue for the

ways that the UNT Writing Center should implement or adjust its practice to better accommodate cultural/social/technological awareness, advancement, and academic rigor.

The length requirements for these writing projects are strict, and *any deviation from the expressed range without permission will incur percentage penalties.*

- Essay 1 should be 3-4 pages with serif font, 1" margins, double-spaced. I will accept either MLA or APA format – but you must adhere to the requirements accurately!
- Essay 2 should be 4-6 pages with serif font, 1" margins, double-spaced. The formatting system you use will be dependent upon the field you have chosen to research. You will need to address what formatting system you are using in your introduction, and you must adhere to the requirements accurately!
- Essay 3 should be 10-12 pages with serif font, 1" margins, double-spaced. I will accept either MLA or APA format – but you must adhere to the requirements accurately!

*Peer review is encouraged for your essays (after all, this is what we advocate for at the Writing Center). **A late essay will have a letter deducted from its grade for every forty-eight hours of tardiness (or fraction thereof).**

WC Shadowing/Observations:

You will be asked to shadow/observe three different tutors in their appointments (and your shadowing should indicate some variety in modality and length of appointment). When you shadow these tutors is completely up to you with the caveat that all three observations must be completed before you sign up for practice appointments. Each observation is worth 5%, and the grading of these activities will be based partially on completion, and partially on the thoughtfulness and effort you have put into completing your peer observation forms (provided via Canvas).

*Note, students can complete one additional observation for up to 5% extra credit.

Practice Appointments:

Before being placed on the schedule, all student tutors will be asked to complete four different full-length appointments (two will be in-person appointments, and two will be online – one chat-based, and one with a/v capacity). A mock schedule will be created on WOnline, and you will be assigned a different partner for each appointment. You and your partner will need to allocate 90 minutes to meet with me in Sage Hall, and you will each take turns being tutor/tutee for 30-minute appointments. Between each appointment, I will provide 15 minutes of feedback / reflection to let you know if I have any advice for continued improvement. Refer to the Appointment Observation Form in Canva or on our Teams site to review the criteria for which I'll be looking.

Final Exam:

You will have one written final exam in the semester that will require you to reflect on the pedagogical, compositional, and grammatical instruction you have undergone throughout the semester. The prompt for the final exam will be given on the day of the exam but should not require any prior study to prepare.

Make-up Exams: Students who have valid reasons for missing the final exam may request to take a make-up exam either prior to or following the final exam period. Valid reasons for missing an examination include documented serious personal illness, personal injury, and family emergencies, among others. Students should contact me as soon as possible to schedule (or reschedule) the exam.

Academic Dishonesty:

Please note that Academic Dishonesty is not tolerated at the University of North Texas. When you write in my class, please know that I genuinely want to hear from you (not ChatGPT, a proxy writer, or Google). It's important that you learn how to hone your writing and express your own ideas while in my class and at UNT; therefore, the use of generative AI software to compose your written assignments is prohibited. For more information on UNT's policies regarding Academic Integrity, please visit this link:

<https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.003%20Student%20Academic%20Integrity.pdf>

To refresh with major holidays and dates in our Academic Calendar, you can refer to the following link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/sites/default/files/fall-2025-academic-calendar-revised-july-2025.pdf>

Reading and Assignment Calendar:

Note: I reserve the right to modify this syllabus as needed in the semester. Each assignment should be prepared in time for the class period on which it is listed. I have abbreviated texts as follows: **[BG]** = *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, **[ST.M]** = *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, **[ESL]** = *ESL Writers: A Guide for Writing Center Tutors*, and **[OWC]** = *The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors*.

Unit 1: Introduction to Writing Centers

AUGUST

- M 18** Introductions and expectations / Syllabus Review; Sign up for Grammar Skills Presentations.
- M 25** Read "Introduction for Tutors" (ix-xii) and Chapter 1 **[BG]**
- Read "The Tutoring Process: Exploring Paradigms and Process" (1-34) **[ST.M]**
- Read "The Idea of a Writing Center" and "Revisiting 'The Idea of a Writing Center'" (44-70) **[ST.M]**
- *Grammar Skills Presentation #1: Introductory elements (phrases and clauses)*

Unit 2: The Practice of Tutoring Writing and Peer Collaborative Tutoring

SEPTEMBER

- M 1** **NO CLASS – LABOR DAY**
- M 8** *NOTE: you will be responsible for reading roughly two weeks' of content by the 8th to account for a week of missed class.*
- Read "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center" (70-77); "Power and Authority in Peer Tutoring" (112-127) **[ST.M]**;
- Read "Minimalist Tutoring," "A Critique of Pure Tutoring," and "Tutoring Style, Tutoring Ethics" (128-153) **[ST.M]**;
- Read Chapter 3 & 4 **[BG]**

***Grammar Skills Presentation #2:** Correcting comma splices, fused sentences, and fragments

ESSAY 1 DUE ONLINE WEDNESDAY (9/10) BY 11:59 PM

M15 **In preparation for this class, choose three of the “Writers” scenarios described on pages 138-142 in “Appendix C” in [BG] and be ready to play the characters and their situations as described.*

Read Chapter 5 [BG];

Read Chapter 7 [BG]

***Grammar Skills Presentation #3:** Pronoun agreement error and vague pronoun reference

Unit 3: Adjusting Tutoring Style to Embrace Difference

M 22 Read “Reassessing the ‘Proofreading Trap’” (284-302) [ST.M]

Read “Before the Conversation” and “Theoretical Perspectives on Learning a Second Language” (1-32) [ESL]

Read “Breaking Ice and Setting Goals,” “Avoiding Appropriation” (33-65) [ESL]

M 29 **ESL Specialist Visit (Refresher)**

Read “Looking at the Whole Text” (78-90) [ESL];

Read “Editing Line by Line” (116-131) [ESL]

Read “Meeting in the Middle” & “An Article about Articles” (91-115) [ESL]

***Grammar Skills Presentation #4:** Agreement (subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent agreement)

ESSAY 2 DUE ONLINE WEDNESDAY (10/1) BY 11:59 PM

OCTOBER

M 6 Read “Whispers of Coming and Going” (233-249) **[ST.M]**

Read Seifeddine’s [“The Writing Center as a Rebel Space”](#) (Open Access article through *The Peer Review*, Issue 10.1)

Read Gramlich’s [“Talking Through: The Detriment of Avoidant Discourse in WC Allyship”](#) (Open Access article through *The Peer Review*, Special Issue 3.1)

Read Anglesey and McBride’s [“Caring for Students with Disabilities: \(Re\)defining Welcome as a Culture of Listening”](#) (Open Access article through *The Peer Review*, Special Issue 3.1)

Read [“Everyday Language of Oppression: What Can We Do?”](#)

Read Sehna’s [“Looking Back to Get Ahead: Student Need and Social Justice in the Writing Center”](#) (Open Access article through *Praxis*, Issue 22.2)

Read Rinaldi’s [“Disability in the Writing Center: A New Approach \(That’s Not so New\)”](#) (Open Access article through *Praxis*, Issue 13.1)

***Grammar Skills Presentation #5: “Who” or “Whom?”**

Unit 4: Conducting WC Appointments Online

M 13 **Librarian Visit**

Read Chapters 1 - 4 (11 - 91) **[OWC]**

Read “Preserving the Rhetorical Nature of Tutoring When Going Online” (326-334) **[ST.M]**

3 COMPLETED OBSERVATION FORMS DUE IN CLASS

M 20 Read Chapters 5 – 8 (92 – 168) **[OWC]**

Read “Tutoring ESL Students in Online Hybrid . . . Writing Centers” and “Responding Online” (132-160) **[ESL];**

***Grammar Skills Presentation #6: Comma Usage (for lists, dates, appositives, relative, etc.)**

Unit 5: WC Research and Practice Today

- M 27** **Graduate Students Lead Class over Chosen Topic on contemporary discourse and WC development**

NOVEMBER

- M 3** **Graduate Students Lead Class over Chosen Topic on contemporary discourse and WC development**

- M 10** **Graduate Students Lead Class over Chosen Topic on contemporary discourse and WC development**

- M 17** In-class research and workshop on Essay 3 Proposal & Annotated Bibliography

ESSAY 3 PROPOSAL & ANNOTATED BIB DUE ONLINE WEDNESDAY (11/19) BY 11:59 PM

- M 24** **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING WEEK**

DECEMBER

- M 1** In-Class peer review of Essay 3;

Read Chapter 9 and Appendices A, B, and D **[BG]**;

ESSAY 3 DUE ONLINE FRIDAY (12/5) BY 11:59 PM

- M 8** **FINAL EXAM (Reflective Essay) from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m in LANG205.**