

English 322W-01. The Teaching of Writing, Beale. TR 11-12:15. Room 228 McIver

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Other times by appt.

Texts: Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (Signet Classic edition)

Reserve and E-Reserve list

Course Description

This course is designed for future teachers of English at the secondary level. We will study the history, theory, goals, and methods of teaching writing. Principal topics of investigation will include the historical backgrounds of education in language and rhetoric; the rise of English literacy training in English and American schools; modern composition theory and practice; and the relationships among reading, writing, and critical thinking.

We will do lots of writing in the course--as a way of exploring course topics more intensely; as a way of illustrating and experiencing directly the kinds and uses of writing in school settings; and as an opportunity for reflecting on the nature and predicaments of the writing process.

Learning Goals

Having completed the course, you should

- have a good working knowledge of historical backgrounds, theories, and current issues in the teaching of writing
- be able to access, interpret, evaluate, and respond to the wealth of scholarly and practical resources currently available on the teaching of writing
- have a reasonably sophisticated understanding of the process of composition, of writing as a medium of communication, and writing as a cultural practice
- understand best practices in teaching writing as a process, with special attention to techniques of invention, organization, revising, and editing
- understand ways to use (and help others use) writing as a tool of learning, reflection, critical thinking, and intellectual and personal growth

Method and Organization of this Course

In order for this course to succeed, we will have to blend and sequence--somewhat improvisationally--the following activities:

- study and discussion of the disciplines of learning that inform the teaching of writing--rhetoric, discourse theory, composition studies, language and literacy studies
- practice, simulation, and discussion of the activities of writing, reading, assignment making, coaching and community building that writing teachers have found successful
- study and discussion of the testimony and advice of successful secondary teachers

- careful reflection on how you were taught writing, on your development as a writer, and on your own practices and predicaments as a writer
- writing, and more writing, in accomplishing all of the above

Internet/Blackboard Component

I will assign you to a group and ask you to post materials regularly to your group. Participation in this aspect of the course is essential.

Test, Papers, Projects

In addition to numerous journal entries, exercises, and ungraded writing assignments, there will be a mid-term and a final exam (which may have a take-home component) and the following formal papers/projects:

- a "writing autobiography," which combines reflection on your development as a writer and the various ways you were taught writing with some consideration of issues, conflicts, and traditions in the teaching of writing
- several "progymnasmata" or set-theme short papers, at least one or two of them keyed to our reading of *Romeo and Juliet*
- a "research paper" project, in which you explore the problematics of the "research paper" by writing one

Grade in the Course

Much of the work in this course will consist in informal writing and class participation--work that is ungraded but which will count. You will establish a letter grade through the midterm and final and some of the projects listed above; class participation can raise or lower this grade by as much as a letter grade; your portfolio of informal writing can also raise or lower this grade by as much as a letter grade. I will provide you an individual progress report about half way through the semester.

Course Calendar

As indicated above, there is no set calendar for the course, and so it will be important to keep up with assignments and activities as they develop. Although there will be some necessary leaping back and forth, we will cover the following topics, in roughly the following order:

- I. The field of rhetoric and composition studies; the place of composition in secondary language arts; approaches to composition; issues, paradoxes, and problems in the field
- II. "Writing" and the disciplines of discourse: language, logic, rhetoric and discourse studies, literature
- III. "Invention": planning discourse; pre-writing traditions and techniques; approaches to subject matter; critical thinking; language arts as training of the mind
- IV. Form and style in discourse: issues of fluency, correctness, and coherence; issues of clarity, readability, appropriateness, elegance, "voice," power; "styles" in discourse; grammar and composition
- V. Assigning, coaching, and responding to student writing

VI. Writing from sources: problematics of the "term paper"

The following dates are important:

Tues, Aug 30: "writing autobiography" due

Thursday, Oct. 6: mid-term examination

Tuesday, Nov. 22: initial submission of "term paper" project due

Tuesday, Dec. 13: final examination + final submission of "term paper" project