

## English 490: Writing Center Theory and Practice

**Time:** Tues and Thurs, 4:00 – 5:15 pm

**Location:** WDB 106

**Phone:** 304.293.9731 (Nathalie's office) and 304.293.5788 (Writing Studio)

**Writing Center Coordinator:** Dr. Nathalie Singh-Corcoran (nsinghco@mail.wvu.edu)

### GTAs

Natalie Carpini (ncarpini@mix.wvu.edu)

Rachel Hoag ([rhoag@mix.wvu.edu](mailto:rhoag@mix.wvu.edu))

### Class Materials

Ryan, Leigh and Lisa Zimmerelli. *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*. Boston: Bedford St. Martin, 2010.

All other course readings are on ecampus.

### Course Description

Note: English 490 is a Service Learning (S) course. This means the coursework is coupled with experiential education and reflection. The “S” designation also means that upon completion of the class, you will receive service-learning credit on your transcripts.

All new consultants participate in a one-semester practicum (English 490) as a way of joining the writing center community, entering the writing center conversation, and serving fellow students at West Virginia University. The practicum introduces you to writing center theory and practice and also asks that you engage in meaningful campus community service in the form of writing consulting for your fellow peers.

All of you come to the Writing Center as experienced readers and writers; this course encourages you to reflect on your literacy experiences as you learn more about tutoring methods. Along with increasing your understanding of yourself as a writer, you will develop a range of consulting strategies to help you work effectively with diverse students and varied writing situations in the university.

### Course Goals

- Introduce writing consultant-interns to writing center theory and research
- Introduce interns to the practice of tutoring
- Invite interns to think and act within a peer-tutoring frame of mind

- Familiarize students with the concept of World Englishes and how that concept impacts reading and writing at the University level.
- Demonstrate the value of listening and the attendant qualities of patience, empathy, and respect for our diverse campus community.

## **The Practicum**

### *Weekly Time Commitments:*

The one-semester internship for peer consultants at the Studio requires a weekly time commitment of 7-10 hours. These hours will be used by consultants to: attend class, read assigned materials, complete required observation hours and writing assignments, and consult in the center. In the first eight weeks of classes, we will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays. From the 8<sup>th</sup> week on, we will meet on Tuesdays only. In lieu of Thursday's class, you will dedicate 2 hours per week to consulting.

### *Attendance*

Each student is allowed **up to two absences**. A third absence will result in the loss of up to one letter grade for the course (note: students must earn at least an A- in the course in order to continue as paid consultants). Each subsequent absence will result in the further loss of up to one letter grade. Thus, students who miss 5 or more classes will fail the course.

All absences (excused or unexcused) will count toward the total number, and this policy obtains from the moment you are registered in the course. You are responsible for making up any work you may miss by failing to attend class, even if the absence is necessitated by illness or personal emergency.

### *Responsibilities When Absent for Illness, Injury, or Personal Emergency*

If you have a contagious illness (such as the flu), severe injury, or a critical personal problem, you must, of course, take care of yourself. You do, however, have an obligation to notify me immediately (within 24 hours) and you must arrange to complete any missed work in a timely fashion. I will give you clear guidelines for the ways you can make up for absences and stay on track. This make-up work may include further short-writing, online work, phone or email collaboration, etc.

If you fail to turn in make-up assignments in a timely manner (usually within a week of your return to class) or if the make-up assignments are of insufficient quality, your grade will be penalized.

### *Responsibilities When Absent for University Activities or Religious Observance*

In the case of university activities and religious observance, you must notify the instructor in writing and *two weeks prior* to the date missed. I will give you clear guidelines for the ways you can make up for absences and stay on track. This make-up work may include further short-writing, online work, phone or email collaboration, etc.

If you fail to turn in make-up assignments in a timely manner (usually within a week of your return to class) or if the make-up assignments are of insufficient quality, your grade will be penalized.

### *Avoiding Extended Absences*

Students anticipating an extended absence of more than three consecutive class meetings or a total of five or more total absences should take the course at a later date. Multiple absences necessarily limit your academic success in this class. It is much better for you as a writer and as a student to take the course during a semester when your schedule allows you to be present to do your best work.

## **Course Assignments**

### *Invitation to Write*

Class periods will often begin with an invitation to write, a writing prompt based on the day's topic of conversation and readings. We will use our responses to kick-off discussion.

### *Tutor Autobiography Bag*

This assignment will help introduce you to each other. You will choose 6-10 items that symbolize who you are, where you've been, and where you're going as a writer. Place each item in a bag, bring it to class, and be prepared to discuss the significance of each item.

### *Weekly Observations and Journal*

Prior to Week 8 of class, you will spend a minimum of one hour per week observing in the Writing Studio. By January 15, please confirm a regular, weekly observation time with Nathalie. As you observe in the Studio, please use a version of the Tutor Observation Sheet on p. 34 of your *Bedford Guide*. Bring your journal to class each week.

### *Reflection 1 (minimum 2 pages, single spaced)*

This is a two-part assignment.

Part 1. For this assignment, you will make an hour-long appointment with a tutor and bring a writing assignment that you are currently working on or a paper you have worked on in the past. For the first 30 minutes of your appointment, you will be tutored. The writing consultant will give you her or his feedback on your writing. During the last 30 minutes of the session, you will have the opportunity to interview the tutor about your session, the strategies he/she used, and what it's like to work at the Writing Studio

Part 2. You will then write up a reflection of the event. As you reflect, consider the following questions:

Before you worked with a consultant:

- (1) What were your expectations?

During your session:

- (2) What happened when you were being tutored?
- (3) What surprised you?
- (4) What might have confused you or made you feel uncomfortable?
- (5) What did you take away from the experience of working with a consultant?

During your interview:

- (6) What did you discover about the job/role of the consultant?
- (7) What useful information did you take away from your conversation with the consultant?
- (8) What tips will stay with you as you begin working with students?

*Reflection 2 (1 page, single-spaced)*

In order to get the feel of what it might be like to tutor, for this assignment, you will meet with one of the grad tutors or with the Writing Center coordinator for a mock tutoring session. You will, to the best of your ability, hold a 30 min tutoring session with either Nathalie Singh-Corcoran, Natalie Carpini, or Rachel Hoag. We'll provide the assignment, and you'll provide the feedback. After the 30 min are up, Rachel, Natalie, or Nathalie will talk with you about the session and offer advice and answer any questions. After your session, please write a reflection in which you describe the session and what you took away from it.

*Reflection 3 – First Session Reflection (2 single-spaced pages)*

After your very first tutoring session, take some time to think and write about what happened:

- (1) What went on during the session?
- (2) What kind of assignment were you working with?
- (3) How did you build rapport with the tutee?
- (4) What tutoring strategies did you use? How did you feel about the outcome of the session?
- (5) How closely did your experience match your own experience being tutored or observing the session?
- (6) What are some strategies you might use (instead and/or again) in the future?

The session reflection is due in class after your first tutoring session (whenever that may be)

### *Class Project*

You and your classmates will come up with a project that will demonstrate your knowledge of writing center theory and practice and will be of benefit to your fellow tutors and the students who use the center. For example, students from the 2010 cohort created the Writing Center Handout Series that we use quite liberally today, and the 2012 cohort interviewed multilingual students are created resources for our international student population. I will share other examples in class, but all of them do the same thing: they enhance or expand the good work we do at the Writing Center. While many of the assignments you've completed this semester will help you better serve your fellow students, the Class Project will be the largest portion of your service grade.

### *End of the Semester Reflection and Statement of Tutoring Philosophy (two single-spaced pages)*

In reflection you will have the opportunity to comment on your experiences in the tutor training class as well as your experiences in the Writing Center. You will also generalize your own philosophy of tutoring. Consider the following:

- (1) Tell us about your experiences in the Writing Center this semester.
- (2) What did you learn?
- (3) What did you like best about tutoring
- (4) What did you like best about the tutor training class?
- (5) How might the center be improved?
- (6) How might the class be improved (assignments, readings, activities)?
- (7) How did you grow or change as a tutor?
- (8) What theory/practice guides your work and identity as a tutor

### Grade Breakdown

Participation (includes tutoring hours)	10%
Reflections 1-4	35%
Class Project	45%
End of Semester Reflection and Tutoring Philosophy	10%

**Schedule of Work (Subject to change according to progress and weather)**

JANUARY	
Tuesday	Thursday
<p>13</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Introductions and writing activity</p> <p>Homework: Tutor Auto-bio Bags and <i>Bedford Guide</i>, chapters 2 &amp; 3 (exclude exercises).</p>	<p>15</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Tutor Bags, Intro to Reflection 1, and discuss reading.</p> <p><b>Due Today: Tutor Autobiography Bag</b></p> <p>Homework: Gee “Literacy Discourse and Linguistics”</p>
<p>20</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Discuss Gee</p> <p>Homework: Brook’s “Minimalist Tutoring” and Burns “A Critique of Pure Tutoring”</p>	<p>22</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Discuss readings, Observations, HOCs and LOCs</p> <p>Homework: <i>Bedford Guide</i>, chapters 4 &amp; 5 (exclude exercise)</p>
<p>27</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Scenarios, Observations, Share Reflections, Intro Reflection 2</p> <p><b>Due Today: Reflection 1</b></p> <p>Homework: Review 101,102, and 103 Guides and write down a list of questions regarding the courses</p>	<p>29</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Discuss Core Writing Courses at WVU (101/102/103), Student Needs and Concerns</p> <p>Homework: Bruce- “ESL Writers Share their Writing Center Experience” and Leki’s “Characteristics of ESL Students”</p>

FEBRUARY

Tuesday	Thursday
<p>3</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Discuss Readings and watch <i>Writing Across Borders</i></p> <p>Homework: Rafoth “Trying to Explain English” and Severino “Avoiding Appropriation”</p>	<p>5</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Share reflections, NNS Scenarios and watch “Concerns of the Interns”</p> <p><b>Due Today: Reflection 2</b></p> <p>Homework: <i>Bedford Guide</i>, chapter 8 (exclude exercises)</p>
<p>10</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Sign up for Tutoring Hours, Mock Tutoring Practice</p> <p>Homework: Write down a list of questions and concerns you have about starting to tutor.</p>	<p>12</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Visit from tutors.</p> <p>Homework: Eodice, et al “Everyday Racism” and “Invisible Backpack</p>
<p>17</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Diversity Readings, Introduce Reflection 3</p> <p>Homework: <u>Gopen and Swan’s “The Science of Scientific Writing”</u></p>	<p>19</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Discuss Tutoring Across the Curriculum (STEM Emphasis)</p> <p>Homework: Dossen’s “Using Others’ Words”</p>
<p>24</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Summarizing, Paraphrasing, Documentation, and Avoiding Plagiarism, Intro to Final Project</p> <p>Homework: Read all of the SpeakWrite pages including the Writing Studio’s</p>	<p>26</p> <p><b>Begin tutoring.</b></p>

MARCH	
Tuesday	Thursday
<p>3</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>SpeakWrite and PACT</p> <p><b>Due Today: Reflection 3 (if you have had your first tutoring session)</b></p> <p>Homework: Grabil et. al, “Revisualizing Composition: Mapping the Writing Lives of FY College Students.” Start thinking about class project ideas.</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>10</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>The Writing Lives of College Students</p> <p>Homework: brainstorm a list of class project ideas.</p>	<p>12</p>
<p>18</p> <p>Discuss and determine class project ideas.</p>	<p>20</p>
<p>25</p> <p><u>Class Activities</u></p> <p>Spring Break</p>	<p>27</p>

MARCH/APRIL/MAY	
Tuesday	Thursday
Mar 31 <u>Class Activities</u>  Work on Class Project	Apr 2
7  <u>Class Activities</u>  Work on Class Project	9
14  <u>Class Activities</u>  Present Class Project  <b>Due today: Class Project</b>	16
21  <u>Class Activities</u>  <b>Due Today: Final Reflections/Tutoring            Philosophy</b>	23
28  <u>Class Activities</u>  Course Evaluations, End of Semester Celebration	30