

eng 611: the composition GE seminar (crn: 22850)

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class meets w / 5:30 – 8:20 p.m.

“So maybe sometimes I get some inspiration just for, I don’t know, suddenly. You can think more as your writing goes on. ... I really enjoy the whole screen can be filled this way. I may enjoy the writing.” –

composition student writer

course overview

ENG 611: The Composition GE Seminar (CRN: 22850) is the theoretical component of the three-course pedagogy sequence designed to prepare graduate students in English, Creative Writing, Folklore, and Comparative Literature to be instructors of record for WR 121. The course introduces the Composition Program’s pedagogy of ethical argumentation along with its theoretical and institutional context. As a community of writing teachers, we will consider: How do we develop inclusive, engaged, and research-led teaching practices that support diverse students in developing transferable knowledge about writing and its relationship to ethical argumentation?

Successful completion of this course is a necessary prerequisite for appointment as a GE to teach composition courses in English. Policies regarding appointments are summarized in the [Composition Program Policy Manual](#).

course goals in brief

1. To become familiar and critically conversant with theories of writing, teaching writing, and the uses of writing in ethical argumentation.
2. To develop and evaluate theory-informed teaching artifacts.
3. To prepare to practice inclusive pedagogies that address the needs of diverse first-year students.
4. To become part of a community of writing teachers.

Full details about course goals can be found on the [learning goals](#) page on Canvas.

course structure

Our class sessions will follow two parallel tracks: in class each week, you will experience a range of active learning strategies to discuss and analyze assigned readings. You will also be expected to participate in weekly teaching workshops that will primarily occur asynchronously on Canvas. This will allow you to access the technology you need and to work at a pace that works for you. You may wish to make arrangements to work on labs with one or more members of your team.

Note: Your grade for the course will be determined by your adherence to a grading contract. This will give you experience in an alternative assessment method currently being piloted by about a dozen Composition teachers. As a class, we will refine and negotiate the terms of the contract.

required texts

Reading, Reasoning, and Writing: Program pamphlet by Jim Crosswhite required of all WR 121 sections

Naming What We Know, available at the bookstore

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[Policies and Procedures: Teaching Written Reasoning at the University of Oregon, 2018-19](#), online access on the *Composition program Resources for Teachers blog*

additional articles will be available on Canvas

optional

Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning. James M. Lang, 2016, available as an ebook through the UO Libraries

responsibilities + policies

I am here to help you succeed! It is our shared responsibility to communicate respectfully. The syllabus and Canvas are your starting points when you have questions about what is happening in class. It is my responsibility to be as clear as possible about expectations, assignments, and assessment procedures. It is your responsibility to contact me when feeling confused, overwhelmed, or unsure. If you do have questions about an assignment after it has been graded, assessed, or commented on, I ask that you wait 24 hours and that you have specific questions for discussion when you contact me.

attendance

This class uses contract grading. Engagement + reflection (we'll define this together!) during in-person and online meetings is critical to our ability to meet course learning goals. See the grading contract for more details.

course content + intellectual discussion

We are going to be talking about oppression, violence, racism, and privilege frequently in this class—not an easy thing to talk about. We're going to have to build community and trust in order to do that, and therefore we need guidelines for delving into these difficult topics. We will use a "brave space" classroom in order to do that. Please read through the course "Charter for Compassion and Bravery." I'll ask you to make suggestions and to pledge to uphold the ground rules we decide on as a class. Our rules will help us do all that we can knowing we'll fail on occasion, to restore compassion to the center of our lives (at least in this course and during this quarter) and attempt to engage with our colleagues in this course with compassion. This means we will work to think first of others, their benefit, their well-being, and their learning, knowing that others are compassionately working for our benefit. We will strive to see our interdependence and interconnectedness, and labor for one another. If at any time, course content makes attendance or engagement difficult, I ask that you let me know so that we can find a solution together.

additional policies

All members of our classroom community are required to adhere to the relevant [Composition Program policies](#) published on the Composition Program webpage: composition.uoregon.edu/program-policies/

assignment overview

Course assignments give you experience working as part of a community of teachers: reading and discussion scholarship about writing/teaching writing; designing theory-informed lesson plans, assignments, and other teaching artifacts; providing feedback to each other. Each series of assignments is designed to provide you practice in speaking, thinking, and writing critically about writing, ethical argumentation, and teaching.

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Further details about each assignment will be available on Canvas at least one week in advance of being due. All work will be assessed on *completeness*. As a community, we will provide each other compassionate, critical feedback to improve and enrich each other's work.

engagement + reflection/teaching notebooks

due: weekly as assigned

purpose: To build skills and knowledge needed to complete other course assignments, prepare for collaboration, and deepen understanding of course material. To become familiar and critically conversant with common teaching tools and methods and to practice documenting and reflecting on your experience.

what you will do: You will be asked to read, participate in in-class and online discussions and workshops, and create weekly entries in a teaching notebook to engage with course material and reflect on your learning. Additional details you'll need to know about readings, workshops, and notebook entries will be posted on Canvas at least a week ahead of due date. The teaching notebook is a record of your process and reflective work in the class and in the online workshops. I recommend you set aside a time each week to work on it.

teaching circles

due: wk3, wk6, wk8, wk10

purpose: To gain experience in feedback circles, a strategy commonly used in UO writing classes. Teaching or writing circles develop community among colleagues as they practice critical and empathetic reading of each other's work. This series of assignments take place on the Canvas discussion board to give you experience in practicing critical and empathetic feedback in a digital space.

what you'll do: Four times during the term, you will share an insight or an issue from your individual teaching notebook with the members of your teaching circle. You will then read and respond to at least two members of the group. After reading the responses to your initial post, you will write on final reply detailing what you learned from your peers and how your thinking on the issues is changing. Initial posts will be due on Fridays, feedback posts on Sundays, and follow-up reflections on Tuesdays.

threshold concept in action

due: project plan due at midterm, revised concept project due wk11

purpose: To contribute to our community of teachers by creating and sharing an artifact that can be used in your own and other WR 121 classes.

what you'll do: You will use informal writing to explore one subconcept from each of the five concepts in *Naming What We Know*. From these, you will create teaching artifacts for use in your class in the fall that addresses a specific moment in the program's pedagogy. For your Threshold Concept In Action, you will choose one (or two for an "A") artifacts you have created in your teaching notebooks to revise and share with the class. Each shared artifact should be accompanied by a reflective report outlining the decisions you made in creating and revising the artifact, its potential uses in WR 121, and how theory and research informed its creation. You will be required to include brief annotations of 1-2 sources in your report. Artifacts might include:

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- a face-to-face or online teaching demonstration of rhetorical concept
- an original, theory-based assignment
- critical report of available resources for writers at UO
- a model essay using ethical argument for use with writing students
- a grading rubric and rationale

You will also meet with as Assistant Director of Composition to discuss the artifact(s) you plan to share in weeks 6-8.

NOTE: Sharing two artifacts will raise your grade from a B+ to an A. You can opt to share an additional artifact to make up for one incomplete assignment or one non-engagement day.

research + reflection plan

due: wk11

purpose: To apply what you've learned in ENG 611 to your future teaching practice and inquiry.

what you'll do: You will identify a teaching or learning problem -- something you've read about this term, encountered in tutoring or your apprenticeship, or in your own experience learning writing -- and design a small-scale classroom research project to understand the issue and identify potential solutions. This will include a brief annotated bibliography, a guiding question, and a proposed method of inquiry. You should include a reflection that anticipates how you might use material covered in the Composition Program training sequence to address the issue.

tentative reading + workshop schedule

It is my expectation that you will complete each week's reading by Tuesday evening in preparation for the weekly engagement + reflection quiz on Wednesday morning. Your responses to quizzes will help me shape our time in class together. Teaching notebooks are due on Sundays.

Consider this list **tentative**. Things will likely shift as we get going. I will provide up-to-date details each Wednesday for the following week on Canvas. We will see together where we want to go as a class!

wk 1 / 01.09

welcome, writing is an activity + a subject of study

reading: *Naming What We Know [nwwk]* pg ix-xi, 15-34; [UO Composition Program draft course-level learning outcomes](#); [transparent assignment design template](#)

writing: teaching notebook: concept 1 informal narrative

workshop: teaching as inquiry: seeing with and through threshold concepts

wk2 / 01.16

inclusive teaching, discourse communities, style

reading: Downs: "[What is First-Year Writing?](#)"; Watson + Shapiro: "[Clarifying the Multiple Dimensions of Monolingualism: Keeping Our Sights On Language Politics](#)"; Lorde "[Difference and Survival: an Address at Hunter College](#)"

writing: teaching notebook: brainstorm/create artifact(s) related to concept 1, universal design

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workshop: universal design, access, and difficult discussions

wk3 / 01.23

writing speaks to situations

reading: NWWK: pg 35-47; Crosswhite: "How To Read;" del Principe + Ihara: "[A Long Look at Reading in the Community College: A Longitudinal Analysis of Student Reading Experiences](#)"

writing: teaching notebook: concept 1 informal narrative; teaching circle 1 due

workshop: how to read [and how to make reading assignments]

wk4 / 01.30

sympathetic + critical reading to enter the conversation

reading: Emerson: "[The American Scholar](#)"; Baldwin: "[The Creative Process](#)"; three short essay TBA

writing: teaching notebook: brainstorm/create artifact(s) related to concept 2, reading

workshop: usability testing

wk5 / 02.06

writing enacts + creates identities + ideologies

reading: NWWK: 48-58; selections from [Hybrid Pedagogy](#), [Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy](#), [ProfHacker](#)

writing: teaching notebook: concept 3 informal narrative; threshold concept in action draft plan due; sign up for consultation with Alex or Carmel

workshop: technology and the teaching of writing

wk6 / 02.13

ethical reasoning + questions at issue

reading: Emmel: "[Evidence As A Creative Act](#)"; Gage: "[Why Write?](#)"; Crosswhite: How To Reason

writing: teaching notebook: brainstorm/create artifact(s) related to concept 3, technology; teaching circle 2 due

workshop: asking and reasoning through questions / the enthymeme [if you are going to use it, use it!]

wk7 / 02.20

all writers have more to learn

reading: NWWK: 59-70; Crosswhite: How To Write; articles of your choice to support reflection + research assignment

writing: teaching notebook: concept 4 informal narrative

workshop: sympathetic + critical reading of student writing [by *all* members of the classroom community]

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wk8 / 02.27

feedback + revision

reading: Ferris: "[Responding to student writing: Teachers' philosophies and practices](#)"; example student essays

writing: teaching notebook: brainstorm/create artifact(s) related to concept 4, feedback/assessment; teaching circle 3 due

workshop: writing and style

wk9 / 03.06

writing is also always a cognitive activity

reading: NWWK: 71-81; selections from Asao Inoue's work on contract grading

engagement + reflection: teaching notebook: concept 5 informal narrative

workshop: assessment

wk10 / 03.13

research + reflection

reading: review course readings

engagement + reflection: teaching notebook: brainstorm/create artifact(s) related to concept 5, reflection; final teaching circle

workshop: teaching with reflection

wk11 / 03.20

due Monday, end-of-day: research + reflection plan; revised threshold concept in action due; additional artifact due for "A" contract