WE NEVER KNEW WHAT WRITING WAS

A GRAD SEMINAR IN PEDAGOGY + TRANSFER + DESIGN THINKING FOR WRITING TEACHERS PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE
ENGL 6325.01I/02I-Studies in Composition Techniques (SiCT)
We Never Knew What Writing Was–A Grad Seminar in Pedagogy, Transfer, & Design Thinking
Fall 2018. Tuesday 7:20-9:50. ITV–ESWOT 1.403 & BSABH 2.110

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Face to face or Zoom office hours by appointment Monday-Thursday

COURSE DESCRIPTION & PREREQUISITES
Advanced study of composition theory and techniques and methods of teaching composition, with special emphasis on teaching English composition to college freshman. Required of all English teaching assistants. May be repeated for credit when the topic varies.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES FOR THE COURSE

MA-English (RCLS) Student Learning Outcomes

• SLO1: Students will demonstrate a graduate-level understanding of rhetoric and composition theory.
• SLO 2: Students will demonstrate the ability understand the predominant debates and issues related to rhetoric and composition theory and practice as well as writing in society.
• SLO 3: Students will demonstrate the ability to conduct rigorous research that involves the evaluation of scholarly arguments as well as the logical organization of evidence, and which leads to the composition of documented, graduate-level research papers, the presentation of such papers at academic conferences, or the production of significant projects relevant to their programs of study.

Our focus for 6325 is on how we can create and deliver first-year writing courses that foster innovative design thinking and the transfer of rhetorical strategies. To these ends, I have designed our course around a set of questions about writing and the teaching of it at the first-year level (see bulleted list below, all tied to SLOs 1-3). Over the course of the semester, you should begin to formulate answers to these questions, relying both on what you learn from the readings this semester, what you learn from practicing your learning-craft here and possibly in your own classroom, and what you know about writing from your own experiences.

• Why do we write?
• What do we know about writing and how it works? What does the teaching of (first-year) writing become in an economy of innovation?
• What roles can and do first-year writing classes, including “developmental” reading/writing classes, serve (for the individual, the program, the larger institution, and the larger community)?
• What do we value as writing teachers, and how can we create a course that honors those values? For instance, how can we design first-year writing classes to help students see writing as purposeful and meaningful? How can we help them achieve their own purposes in writing while also achieving our own pedagogical goals?
• What are useful and effective strategies for assessing and responding to student writing? Which strategies will work for you given your own context?

These questions, of course, are overlapping and interrelated, but they’re questions every good writing teacher should ask him/herself on a recurring basis. The best teachers are reflective teachers, thinking always about how the smaller things (a daily activity, a writing project) fit into the larger goals of the class and the institution. Through your work this semester, you’ll each be
given an opportunity to construct your own writing theories and pedagogy in relation to your own personal and professional goals, and you’ll be able to do that with others who are thinking about the same things.

In order to address the above questions, you will engage with diverse in and out of class activities, responses, and projects. Many of you in this class plan to become writing teachers; however, I also know that some of you may have taken this class for other reasons and, in those cases, we can adjust the two major course projects to fit your educational and professional goals as they relate to writing. If this applies to you, please set up an appointment with me immediately so we may begin brainstorming potential project ideas.

TEXTBOOKS & RESOURCE MATERIALS

Required Books


6325 Instagram account access [6325sict & 6325f18]

Plus Selections From . . .
- Materials from the WP, the First Year Writing Program at UTRGV
- Course Designs Feature in Composition Studies (University of Cincinnati) [$0 online]
- Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing (Parlor Press) [$0 online]
- Composition Forum special issue on writing and transfer (Weisser, Ballif, Wardle)

GRADING POLICIES

The “A” Build
1. Weekly Teaching Journal with 3 Pieces
   a. Glossary explorations from Naming What We Know (NWWK) and First-Year Composition (FYC) (15 or more in your teaching journal)
   b. Weekly reading responses & discussion questions and 10 observations (5 of you by peers in teaching contexts, 5 by you of your peers in teaching contexts); teaching demos can be guest instruction, peer visits can be off campus if host-school approved, you can record and share teaching, and you can share teaching activity designs with us. In the event that you are not “teaching” or have limited opportunities to “teach” with an observer, just fill in the 10 with observations.
   c. Feedback loop with WP partner, providing formative feedback on student writing samples (at least 2 each week for a minimum of 10 by week 6)
2. Research profile of first year writing issue, including textual sources, contact with UTRGV librarian or composition historian, teacher interview, contact with national or international expert, journal analysis, and textbook recommendation
3. First year writing project sequence (minimum of 3-5 weeks), including intro/teaching philosophy, syllabus, calendar, assignments, and feedback materials
4. Attendance of and participation in all class meetings

NOTE: You must complete all 4 to get an A for 6325. And it’s totally doable:)
The “B” Build
1. Weekly Teaching Journal with 3 Pieces
   a. Glossary explorations from *Naming What We Know* (NWWK) and *First-Year Composition* (FYC) (10-14 or more in your teaching journal)
   b. Weekly reading responses & discussion questions and 6 observations (3 of you by peers in teaching contexts, 3 by you of your peers in teaching contexts); teaching demos can be guest instruction, peer visits can be off campus if host-school approved, you can record and share teaching, and you can share teaching activity designs with us. In the event that you are not “teaching” or have limited opportunities to “teach” with an observer, just fill in the 6 with observations.
   c. Feedback loop with WP partner, providing formative feedback on student writing samples (5-9, or at least 1 each week, by week 6)
2. Research profile of first year writing issue, including textual sources, local contacts, and textbook recommendation
3. First year writing assignment, including intro/teaching philosophy, relevant class plan, and feedback materials
4. Attendance of and participation in all class meetings

NOTE: You must complete all 4 to get an B for 6325.

Looking at the previous builds, you’ll find a choice you need to make early on in our class. The amount and complexity of work you do this semester in 6325 will determine your grade range.

Will you work towards the A build or the B build? My goal is to clearly show you my expectations for what an A or B for the class would involve based on complexity of projects, number of products, etc. Of course, the quality of design, language, and rhetorical effectiveness in your work matters, too, but I’ll handle that with guided feedback throughout your work. We’ll also do a writing studies map during the first meeting to help you figure out how we get this work done:)

This build idea, which is a type of contract grading, is about workload and setting realistic goals for a class on the art of teaching and writing. What matters to me is that you take an honest look at your total responsibilities this semester, you estimate how much time and energy you want to dedicate to this particular class, and you decide on the amount of work that you have the time to compellingly create.

So shoot for an A, get an A. Shoot for an A, have an emergency interfere with your life, and get a B. Same goes for how a B can play out. I designed the work so that you simply extend the B build to get an A. That part is really not complicated. Looking at your schedule and life this semester and figuring out how much work you can get done . . . well, I’ll leave that to you with these guidelines. Feel free to talk to me any week before class about your goals for this semester in 6325. And don’t be shy. Assessment should become a normal part of conversations between teachers and students. If you adjust your goals during the semester, let me know. I’ll adjust, too.

The following turn-in calendar is there to help you map out your semester in terms of when assignments are due for feedback and then for grades. You’ll also need to set up a day and time to have a 30-45 minute exit interview with me between 11/28 and 12/11:)
UTRGV IMPORTANT DATES FOR CLASSES
The UTRGV academic calendar can be found at https://my.utrgv.edu/home at the bottom of the screen, prior to login. Some important dates for fall 2018 include:

- August 27: First day of classes
- August 30: Last day to add a course or register for fall 2018
- September 3: Labor Day – NO classes
- November 14: Last day to drop a course; will count toward the 6-drop rule
- November 22 - 24: Thanksgiving Holiday – NO classes
- December 6: Study Day – NO classes
- December 7 - 13: Final Exams
- December 14 – 15: Commencement Exercises

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged through SAS at any time, but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services.

Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD
Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further
instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available on or about:
Module 1  October 4 – 10
Module 2  November 29 – December 5
Full Fall Semester  November 15 – December 5

ATTENDANCE
Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and may be dropped from the course for excessive absences. UTRGV’s attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact the instructor in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work or examinations.

Perfect attendance can be rough. Life gets in the way, and I actually want (potential) teachers participating in conferences, professional meetings, and learning opportunities. So here’s the solution: if you have to miss for any reason, just create and upload an image of a “whiteboard table” in which you explore the connections between the-thing-that-kept-you-away-from-us and what we’re working on in class.

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY
As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, & VIOLENCE
In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

COURSE DROPS
According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.
STUDENT SERVICES
Students who demonstrate financial need have a variety of options when it comes to paying for college costs, such as scholarships, grants, loans and work-study. Students should visit the Students Services Center (U Central) for additional information. U Central is located in BMAIN 1.100 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 1.145 (Edinburg) or can be reached by email (ucentral@utrgv.edu) or telephone: (888) 882-4026. In addition to financial aid, U Central can assist students with registration and admissions.

Students seeking academic help in their studies can use university resources in addition to an instructor’s office hours. University Resources include the Learning Center, Writing Center, Advising Center and Career Center. The centers provide services such as tutoring, writing help, critical thinking, study skills, degree planning, and student employment. Locations are:

- Learning center: BSTUN 2.10 (Brownsville) or ELCTR 100 (Edinburg)
- Writing center: BLIBR 3.206 (Brownsville) or ESTAC 3.119 (Edinburg)
- Advising center: BMAIN 1.400 (Brownsville) or ESWKH 101 (Edinburg)
- Career center: BCRTZ 129 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 2.101 (Edinburg)
WEEK 1: The First Question(s)
Why study composition and rhetoric (and teaching)? What’d I get myself into? What are we all doing here? What do I need to know about this guy as my teacher? What does he need to know about me? Why do digital devices matter to design thinking? How am I going to get all this stuff done in sixteen weeks?

1. This is your writing/design assignment for the day (collection): Inventory the room, your bag, your pockets, maybe your mind if you’re not too tired: What do we have at our disposal? What sense and use could a writer make out what we have to work with? How could a writing teacher use this space? How could a writing student engage it? Let’s divide up into 4 teams. Each team needs to introduce themselves to each other and then explore the room (and any space close to the room without roaming too far). This can include any devices we have that connect us to other spaces. Take notes and be ready to talk to the whole class about what they found in trying to answer the bolded questions above and what writing/teaching insights they may have discovered. {Feel free to use our shared Instagram account to post anything connected to this activity. 6325 Instagram account access: 6325sict & 6325f18} ~45m

2. This is is your epistemic opportunity for the day (construction): I’m going to ask each group to map out a concept connected to writing. You can choose any concept from NWWK from 1.0-1.7.

   1.0 writing is a social and rhetorical activity
   1.1 writing is a knowledge-making activity
   1.2 writing addresses, invokes, and/or creates audiences
   1.3 writing expresses and shares meaning to be reconstructed by the reader
   1.4 words get their meanings from other words
   1.5 writing mediates activities
   1.6 writing is not natural
   1.7 assessing writing shapes contexts and instruction

   Now, you don’t have the book; just the concept, so you’re going to (1) discuss what the hell you think your concept means (no peeking on your phones or computers), (2) you’re going to try to connect it to something that has happened in class so far, and (3) you’re going to draw a diagram on a whiteboard that shows the concept in action (explains how it works). When, you’re done, snap a pic and upload it so we can all look at it while you walk us through the diagram. ~45m

3. This is your take away for today (reflection): Let’s go over the syllabus, especially the Builds on pages 3-4. As I talk through a lot of words and ideas, I’ll stop every time I get to the and ask you 2 simple questions. What does this part say about a writing teacher? and What does this part say about a writing student? Now choose a build:)

4. This is what we have to do by next Tuesday’s meeting (projection): Get your books, especially NWWK; read through p.34. Observe or be observed in a teaching/learning situation. Do your first week’s teaching journal entry. Lock down a WP partner (which you can ask me about once you’ve tried) and secure some anonymous piece of student writing and the assignment that prompted it.
The structure of discourse, and in particular, the super-structure of English, is this set of relations among these parts. Short, Moffer is advocating that students produce discourse as the goal is to produce teachers, Moffer’s triad of relationships suggests helping students develop the following skills:

- A pedagogy for learning how to be a teacher (and by extension for becoming a teacher) is characterized by discourse richness, situations that are structured to put into play all possible relations. To learn the most, students should explore the whole realm, switching among different roles. However, these structures must be open, allowing the students to conceive of, construct, and articulate the knowledge most important for themselves, relative to the topic under consideration. Open structures ought to stimulate inquiry, lead to the unexpected, and actively inhibit predictable or pro forma responses. Discourse structures should contain no specific intellectual or disciplinary content that is, the content must be student-selected and not dictated. Discourse openness makes certain that students, through acts of writing and speaking, can direct (to some degree) the development of their teaching selves.

- Wider different perspectives or roles. In general, language activities should be designed to maximize variety and change in terms of audience, purpose, form, mode, setting, and along any other dimension the teacher can imagine. For instance, language activities could alternate between forms—narrative or expository, modes—spoken or written, audience—peers or teacher, topics—conceptual or methodological, and so forth. Formal essays, class debates, small group conversations, informal written responses to prompts, and oral feedback are just a few of the options available. Changing the audience and participants to include variations such as student to student, individual to whole class, teacher to student, adds even more options.

- Invariably, students must produce a variety of discourse modes if we want to see
WEEK 2: First Days & Threshold Concepts (Part 1)

How do you set up a class, and how do you imagine the class will “work” for a writer? What is an introduction? What tone and pace should you set? How can different participants learn and engage at your first meeting? What do writing students need to learn day one? Who are you as a writing teacher on day one and why?

The Didyas
☐ Get your books, especially NWWK; read through p.34.
☐ Observe or be observed in a teaching/learning situation. It’s okay if not; we start now:)
☐ Do your first week’s teaching journal entry.
☐ Lock down a WP partner (which you can ask me about once you’ve tried) and secure some anonymous piece of student writing and the assignment that prompted it. It’s okay if not; you need this done by class next week.

Week 2
1. This is your writing/design assignment for the day (collection): Drawing from your reading for this week and your teaching journal (and even what I planned out and tried last week), individually figure out a way to start a first year college writing class. Once you have a draft, share it with your group, and the group can pitch something important we should all consider for that “opening” moment. Questions for thinking are above in italics. I’ll do my best to map out these day-one designs as we talk. [5-10-30m]

2. This is is your epistemic opportunity for the day (construction): Now that you’ve thought about a first day, I’m going to ask you to prepare a teaching demo for a first concept. Each group needs to map out a plan for teaching a concept connected to writing, pp 1-34. You can choose any concept even if it is from last week or if we have repetition today. And we are your writing students. The activity should take no more than 15 minutes and can be truncated to save time. [15m to prep + 15m for each demo]

3. This is your take away for today (reflection): After our first round of demos, I want to briefly go over the project details I wrote up for 6325 and see if you have any questions about them or about your journal, observations, and feedback samples (which are your current foci). [~30m]

4. This is what we have to do by next Tuesday’s meeting (projection): Read section 2 of NWWK. Observe or be observed in teaching/learning situations (you should have 2 done by Tuesday for the A build). Do your second week’s teaching journal entry. Really lock down a WP partner and secure 2 pieces of anonymous student writing and the assignment that prompted it; have feedback done before class based on . . . let’s see what you come up with left to your own devices, but be able to explain how and why you gave the feedback you did:)

ENGL 6325.01I/02I-Studies in Composition Techniques
Notes on the Work You’ll Do for 6325
Here is the breakdown for each part of the class that contributes to your grade for 6325. Remember, this is contract grading, so I’ll be helping you improve the quality of your writing throughout the semester, but I won’t be throwing grades around. The grade is based on the type and amount of work you choose to do. The descriptions below include references to the A build, but they’re just as relevant to the B build, which is slightly less intense.

Weekly Teaching Journal with 3 Pieces
1. Glossary explorations from Naming What We Know (NWWK) and First-Year Composition (FYC) (15 or more in your teaching journal)

6325 is both an introduction to the language of teaching for teachers and the language of writing instruction for students. That means that concepts important to writing and rhetoric are the bones of the class. For ten weeks, we’ll work with NWWK and FYC, exploring a lot of concepts—way more than 15. It’s your job to do what I call a glossary exploration each week. Here’s the drill: (1) Choose a concept from our reading (past or present); (2) explain the concept in the author’s words, do a bit of digging and see what the concept has meant historically (inside and outside of writing studies and rhetoric); come up with a definition of the concept in your own words and based on how you would use it in your own class and teach it to your own students. Extra points if you can link it to other concepts from the semester:

2. Weekly reading responses & discussion questions + 10 observations (5 of you by peers in teaching contexts, 5 by you of your peers in teaching contexts)

You need to be writing about what you read to prepare for class. My goto format is to make myself write a very brief and specific summary of a reading, followed by a paragraph or two of response (my reactions to the reading), and ending with a discussion of how I’d use something in the reading as a writing teacher. In order to make sure I’m thinking beyond the reading, but reflecting on its details, I also generate at least one question for discussion that I could throw out to the class to start a conversation. As long as you have a response to the reading that suits your needs, I’m cool with the shape you develop. But the discussion question is mandatory—even if we don’t use it. You will also arrange to observe and be observed in teaching and learning situations several times this semester. Teaching can involve guest instruction, group leadership, or a whole class. Peer visits can be off campus if host-school approved. You can record and share teaching, and you can share teaching activity designs with us. In the event that you are not “teaching” or have limited opportunities to “teach” with an observer, just fill in the 10 with observations. I’ll give you the peer review sheet that we use in WLS for organizing your notes and feedback. If you have questions about whether an event counts as teaching, just ask:

3. Feedback loop with WP partner, providing formative feedback on student writing samples (at least 2 each week for a minimum of 10 by week 6)

Identify someone who works in the Writing Program this semester. This will be your feedback partner. Your job is to secure 2 anonymous samples of student writing each week (along with the assignment that prompted it) and provide targeted and meaningful formative feedback to that writer, which you’ll bring to class to discuss. You’re practicing what it takes to be a teacher-responder, so your approach to giving feedback will develop over time, and I only require you do this for 5 weeks.

Research profile of first year writing issue, including textual sources, contact with UTRGV librarian or composition historian, teacher interview, contact with national or international expert, journal analysis, and textbook recommendation. Your job with a research profile is to build a textual and personal profile of an issue. Once you propose and get me to approve an issue,
you’ll find print and digital sources directly related to it. You’ll also work with people—talk with a local historical specialist on the issue, interview at least one teacher who knows about the issue, and contact a national/international specialist. Finally, you’ll look into journals that focus on the issue and survey textbooks to find one or a piece of one related to the issue that you think is valuable. I’d suggest building this profile the way you would build an annotated bibliography, but it’s a more sophisticated version because the sources are wider-ranging. The goal: have deep knowledge of an issue near and dear to first year writing pedagogy, one that involves publications and people.

**First year writing teaching portfolio** (minimum of 3-5 weeks), including intro/teaching philosophy, syllabus, calendar, assignments, and feedback materials. This is the most complicated work you’ll do all semester, and it will be our writing focus for weeks 6-15.

You’re going to assemble, workshop, and complete a portfolio of teaching materials that make sense for a writing teacher. Developing this portfolio will give you opportunities to develop, reflect on, revise, and integrate materials that allow you to demonstrate what you’re learning about teaching and writing. I could have you write a researched essay, but that would have little public value compared to the value gained from putting your research to work in the actual materials a writing teacher would use. You’ll begin by creating rough drafts of these materials based on your interests and the theories you bring to the class. You’ll continue to work on the portfolio throughout the semester, revising each piece as you discover new ideas about teaching and get feedback from me, your peers, and other writing teachers. Finally, you’ll spend some time editing your portfolio (and adapting it to an online space if possible).

Not going to ever be a teacher in a writing classroom? Totally fine and doesn’t change a thing:). I’ve done this project with future teachers, engineers, curious students . . . the list goes on. You’ll learn more from working in the genres that people in the field of composition use, and considering the audiences for those genres, than in synthesizing an argument meant for only me to read.

**PHILOSOPHY**

A good teaching philosophy follows a few guidelines. First, though, I suggest you do some one-word inventions to try to nail down what you value and want to get across to your audience (people who would hire you, colleagues who want to know how and why you teach, students who may be interested in an introduction to your philosophy). The following is adapted from a workshop I do regularly on writing a teaching philosophy.

**Begin by generating one-word inventions about different aspects of teaching so you have a simple and clear idea of . . .**

- one word that describes your teaching or you as a teacher;
- one word that describes how you see your students;
- one word that describes how you think about or perceive your area(s) of expertise; and
- one word that describes the classroom environment you want to create.

In order to make sure the reader has all your information, an effective teaching philosophy . . .

- is one page, spaced to read, and walks reader through a sequenced picture of you as a teacher;
- contains a name, professional title, and date; and
- might have a picture of you working with a class or an epigraph that resonates for you or a tagline that summarizes your philosophy.

Your goal is writing about your relationship to different aspects of teaching. What is teaching or being a teacher to you? How do you see/work with students? What is your relationship to the class’ or discipline’s content? How do you occupy and use the classroom as a learning space?
Consider composing one paragraph on each. That is one way to sequence your philosophy: teacher, students, content, space, which moves from the local, personal context (you as teacher) out to the larger social context (the whole classroom and everything in it). It’s not the only sequence, but it’s a useful one for me.

What makes a good, sequenced philosophy, then, is careful attention to transitions. Spend time on functional transitions—what is the reason for moving from one idea to the next or one paragraph to the next? How are you walking someone through your ideas of how teaching works? Sometimes it’s about the traditional transitional words that begin paragraphs. Sometimes it’s about writing really great linking sentences between paragraphs that explain how, for instance, this second paragraph on students emerges from what I said in the first paragraph about me as a teacher.

Somewhere in your philosophy, you should try to integrate pedagogical best practices and . . .

- build in one example that highlights a strength for your reader, often tied to the discussion of one of the above relationships;
- choose an example that generically describes what you do with students during an activity (it doesn’t have to dive into a particular student or moment); and
- create a collection of a few examples to plug in to different contexts,

Use the audience’s criteria and expectations to design your organization.

- Letter of Introduction for Syllabus: Address students at a particular level in a particular sequence and what they will want/need to know about your goals for this class.
- UTRGV Dossier: Address your department’s criteria for excellent teaching, including teaching innovations, examples of student engagement, connections between your teaching and UTRGV’s strategic plan, your research, and your service.
- Award Application: Address the reviewer’s rubric that explains how your application will be judged.
- Job Ad: Address the ad’s stated requirements, responsibilities, student population, and preferred abilities/areas of experience.

A great teaching philosophy is all about (rhetorical) alignment, which means . . .

- connect what you teach (including student learning outcomes for particular class) to how and who you teach; and
- articulate how you reach your teaching goals with your particular students. (HINT: You’ll develop your personal teaching goals throughout this semester, but all courses you review will have explicit or implicit learning goals or student learning outcomes that you can work with as well.)

Take a look at these examples and, as you begin to design your own portfolio with your own goals for readership, try to figure out how well they address their intended audience’s needs.

- Cheryl Ball, West Virginia University (online professional site)
- Alyssa Cavazos, UTRGV (state teaching award application)
- Colin Charlton, UTRGV (multipurpose, state teaching award application)
- Doug Downs, Montana State (online professional site)
- William Ordeman, MA-English Graduate (job application)
- Brittany Ramirez, UTRGV (job application and annual review dossier)

SYLLABUS

It’s your job for this part to find a syllabus model for a writing class you would like to imagine teaching and then work from it as a model. Here are your guidelines for finding a model:

- the model you choose needs to be dated and taught within the last two years
- the model you choose needs to be from a school and department/program that you’re interested in, have experience with, or have a connection to
• the model you choose has to be for a class whose subject is writing or rhetoric & composition or it has to be a writing intensive class (and we can talk about how we can determine intensity when if and when we get to that point based on your interest)
• the model you choose has to be identifiable in terms of the teacher and the teacher’s contact information
• the model you choose has to have official course info, college/university policies, grading system, project/assignment names or descriptions, and a calendar

Searching for syllabi can be as easy as googling a course name, number, and university abbreviation (literally, type in UTRGV ENGL 1301 and see what you get). But I’d urge you to spend some time thinking about what you’d like to teach if you could teach a writing/writing-intensive class. Then, find a school/program you’re interested in and see if they teach it. The goal here is to blend what you want to do with the actual requirements of a school/program so you can see how to synthesize writing goals with institutional necessities. That synthesis is an art and a learning experience in itself worth going through.

You will also need to create a calendar for however many weeks your build requires, and doing this is how you figure out what will fit in a certain amount of time and how you will organize it.

WRITING AND/OR READING ASSIGNMENT
You have to create at least one original writing assignment. Start collecting samples of anything that prompts people to write. Potential sources for research: old or current courses, first year writing textbooks, high school canned curriculum systems, old or current teachers, Composition Studies (which publishes assignments and discussions in one forum), and prompt: a journal of academic writing assignments. When we get to the point in the semester, we’ll read Hall and Dueck’s introduction to prompt, and we’ll use their first issue’s articles to figure out what needs to be in your sample assignment. For the moment, I’ll say that most great writing assignments do the following:
• explain the purpose of the assignment and potential purposes for the writer doing it
• explain a way to generate some ideas for the assignment
• explain intended audiences or a way to determine a meaningful audience
• explain potential forms (or genres) for the assignment
• explain at least one process for generating the assignment
• explain any rigid formatting guidelines that have to be adhered to
• explain a way to reflect on what you accomplished in the assignment

All this stuff isn’t always in a writing assignment, but the teacher generates it and supplies it when necessary. So what your writing assignment looks like and includes will develop as you read about theories, see models, and experience writing instruction from myself and your peers throughout the semester.

NOTE: A lot of ineffective (okay, bad) assignments out there are bad because of one simple reason. They tell students to do something, but they don’t teach the students how to do it. So if the work in class doesn’t teach everything you need in order to complete an assignment—in other words, the assignment seems to be an add-on to what’s going on in class—writers will struggle with the assignment because they literally don’t know how to do it, or at least don’t know how to get started doing it:) The goal isn’t to fix all the problems before they happen; that assignment has no end. It’s just pages of warnings! The goal is to foster writing and learning, and that takes you providing the set-up, the explanation, and the (described) room to experiment so that a writer can work towards a clear research and writing goal.

FEEDBACK MATERIALS
I’m looking for at least one document that supports feedback the way you want to foster it in your writing class. That could be a workshop handout with questions for students. It could be an instruction sheet for a speedback session, or it could be a sheet your students have to get a
reviewer to fill out at an event like *CompoCon*. What you can’t do is simply create a rubric without a context. We’ll talk about this in the weeks to come.

**Attendance of and participation** in all class meetings. Enough said, I think:)
Guidelines for Faculty Peer Observation of Teaching  
Department of Writing & Language Studies  
Approved April 24, 2017

The following departmental guidelines align with the approved institutional guidelines from the Office of the Provost.  
This policy applies to all full-time faculty whose duties consist of teaching organized courses, including hybrid and online courses, and/or clinical instruction. The policy also applies to full-time faculty who hold administrative appointments at 50% or less.

Frequency of Observation
• All tenure-track faculty shall be observed at least once per academic year.  
• All tenured faculty shall be reviewed at least once every three years.  
• Faculty members with the rank of Lecturer I, Lecturer II, Lecturer III, Clinical Instructor, Clinical Assistant Professor, and Clinical Associate Professor shall be observed at least once per academic year.  
• Faculty members with the rank of Senior Lecturer and Clinical Professor shall be observed at least once every three years.

Selection of Observer
Faculty may:
• choose any full-time faculty member at the rank of the faculty being observed or higher with appropriate subject expertise in the course being observed, or  
• ask the chair to select any full-time faculty member at the rank of the faculty being observed or higher with appropriate content expertise in the course being observed.

Timeline
The Faculty Member Report shall be provided to the department chair, unit head or equivalent (or the dean in the event the faculty member being observed is the department chair), no later than the last day of classes for the semester in which the observation takes place. The Faculty Member Report will also be included in the faculty member’s dossier.

Guidelines for Peer Observer Evaluative Report & Faculty Member Report
Guidelines for the Peer Observer Evaluative Report, provided only to the faculty member, and the Faculty Member Report, required to be included in the faculty member’s dossier, are on the following pages. The faculty member may choose to include the Peer Observer Evaluative Report in the dossier.

To be included in Peer Observer Evaluative Report
1. Course number, section, and title of observed class  
2. Date, time, and location of observation(s)  
3. Name, title, and signature of faculty member  
4. Name, title, and signature of peer observer  
5. Faculty member’s goals for class day of observation  
6. Peer observer’s feedback

To be included in Faculty Member Report
1. Course number, section, and title of observed class  
2. Date, time, and location of observation(s)  
3. Name, title, and signature of faculty member  
4. Name, title, and signature of peer observer  
5. A narrative written by the faculty member describing what the faculty member has learned from the peer observation process and any plans for improvement or development.

Faculty Peer Observation of Teaching . Department of Writing & Language Studies
Peer Observer Evaluative Report
[to be written by the observer and given to the faculty member observed for evaluative purposes; faculty member can include in dossier]

Faculty and Course Information
Course Number, Section, and Title:
Date, Time, and Location:
Faculty Name and Title:
Peer Observer Name and Title:
Faculty Signature: ___________________________                  Peer Observer Signature: ___________________________

Faculty Member’s Goals for Class on Day of Observation
Please describe your goals for the class that your peer is observing, connecting them to any relevant core-level, program-level, or course-level goals for the class. Also, please point out any areas or pedagogical questions that you’d like your peer to specifically pay attention to and address in the observation and feedback.

Peer Observer’s Feedback
Considering the following aspects of teaching in the class you observed, discuss your colleague’s pedagogy. Offer feedback on aspects that are praiseworthy and places that may benefit from improvement or development. Responses should be specific about how effective each aspect of teaching is in consideration of the course type (face to face, online, ITV, or hybrid). Questions you could consider for each area conclude this document.

• Faculty Member’s Questions/Concerns
• Faculty Preparation
• Class Content & Delivery
• Faculty-Student Interaction
• Overall Student Engagement
• Feedback on Student Work (WP Required)
• Demonstration of Subject Expertise
• Additional Comments
Course Number, Section, and Title: 
Date, Time, and Location: 
Faculty Name and Title: 
Peer Observer Name and Title: 

Faculty Signature: ___________________________    Peer Observer Signature: ___________________________

Faculty Conclusions & Plans for Development
Please describe what you learned from the peer observation process, specifically referencing any plans for development or improvement based on your peer’s feedback. This piece, at minimum, is required in your dossier for each peer observation.
Guiding Questions for Peer Observers over Each Teaching Aspect. Department of Writing & Language Studies

Peer Observation Report

Faculty Member’s Questions/Concerns
- How do your colleague’s specific questions/concerns comment on his/her ability to reflect on and develop his/her teaching?
- What worked in terms of your colleagues’ concerns? What didn’t quite connect (create an observable learning moment or desired outcome) for you or the students?

Faculty Preparation
- According to your colleague’s goals, what was the purpose of the class meeting?
- Was the purpose clear to you and/or the students?
- How were the class activities related to that purpose and to one another?

Class Content & Delivery
- How well did the content of the class connect to disciplinary expectations and/or one or more of the course’s SLOs?
- How was class time structured?
- Did your colleague include opportunities for active learning?
- Was enough time given to each activity?
- How were the transitions from one activity to the next handled? How did your colleague cope with the unexpected?
- Did the class activities offer evidence of creative planning?

Faculty-Student Interaction
- How does your colleague facilitate student participation?
- How do the students engage in active learning?
- Are there opportunities for the students to ask the teacher questions?
- What kind of dynamic seems to govern the class?
- How does your colleague establish and/or manage the dynamics of the class?

Overall Student Engagement
- How did your colleague use class time?
- What evidence of student engagement or investment with the material and/or activities was there?
- How varied were the activities of the class, and did the variety foster student engagement?
- Were there moments of overall disengagement, and what did your colleague do to address them?

Feedback on Student Work (WP Required)
- What main goal seems to be driving the feedback on the student projects turned in for review? For instance, is there a particular SLO linked to the feedback? Is there a concern that emerged in class that is referenced? Is there an explanation of the type of feedback provided?
- How would you categorize the dominant feedback pattern—directive, suggestive, open, collaborative, or something else? In other words, what does the feedback ask the student to do and HOW is that request delivered?

Demonstration of Subject Expertise
- How does your colleague introduce and go over expert knowledge relevant to the class meeting?
- How does your colleague handle student questions about material relevant to the class meeting?

Additional Comments
- What was something that you saw or learned about teaching in this observation that you would want to integrate in your own practice and why?
- What was something that you saw in this observation that has potential but needs fine-tuning and why? How might your colleague revise or develop the strategy to make it more effective?
Colin Charlton got his PhD in English-Rhetoric & Composition from Purdue University in 2005, after which he took his first full-time gig at The University of Texas-Pan American. He paints, cooks, forces himself to run, plays guitar and writes songs, binge watches apple tv, coedits a journal, teaches at every level from transitional to graduate, and generally spends too much time at a computer working when he should be living it up with his family. But he’s trying.

His areas of expertise include writing pedagogy, high school-college transition, and writing program administration, though he’d really like to get better at writing science fiction. He took on his next adventure in spring 2015 as Chair of the new Department of Writing & Language Studies at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and is still working in that position with a fantastic group of faculty and students.

Things he most enjoys: chilling with family, writing with friends, and helping students create innovative projects.