

Writing About Teaching and Education
ENC 1145, Section 3322
MWF Period 7 (1:55-2:45)
Matherly Hall, (MAT) 0114

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Course Description

This course asks students to study teaching. We will examine the ways teaching practices—especially those of college—relate to education and how “knowledge” is dispensed and verified (tested) throughout the university, and you will have a chance to explore how teaching manifests in your own fields of study. Because this is a writing course, we’ll devote much of our discussions to the analysis of institutional conventions, ideologies and superstitions of college writing. Most importantly, this class will ask students to critically reflect on the teaching styles they’ve encountered throughout their college experiences and present those experiences (formally and informally) to our class. With help of historical texts on debates on IQ testing and writing education, as well as critical examinations of educational systems and pedagogy, students will take an active role in their own education—and in this course—investigating *how they learn* in terms of *how they’re taught*.

Course Texts

The Mismeasure of Man by Stephen Jay Gould
W. W. Norton and Company; Revised and Expanded Edition (1996). ISBN
0393314251

The Trouble With Black Boys by Pedro A. Noguera
Jossey-Bass; 1st Edition (2009). ISBN: 0470452080

When Students Have Power by Ira Shore
University of Chicago Press (1997). ISBN: 0226753557

Teaching to Transgress by bell hooks
Routledge (1994). ISBN: 0415908086

A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development by Carol Gilligan
Harvard University Press; Reissue edition (1993). ISBN: 0674445449

The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life by Eviatar Zerubavel
Oxford University Press (2007). ISBN: 0195332601

Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace (11th Edition) by Joseph M. Williams and Gregory G. Colomb
Longman (2013). ISBN: 0321898680

The Craft of Research (3rd Edition) by Wayne C. Booth
University of Chicago Press (2008). ISBN: 0226065669

Assignments

All writing assignments must be completed in double-spaced in 12-point font. Submit them to me electronically at andrewwilson@ufl.edu before midnight the day on which they are due.

Each assignment builds on the next in both structural and topical terms. Structurally, each essay is manipulating features of the previous essay, often approaching that information from a new angle. Topically, with each essay you will be more immersed in the subject you're writing about. Each new essay will therefore be "more informed," so to speak, than the previous essays.

Writing to Inform (1,200 Words)

The basic tenet of writing to inform is telling your readers about something, delivering information. Expository writing is, at its core, informative. For this assignment, identify a topic that interests you—this can be a social topic, a political topic, an academic topic or a personal topic (keep in mind that you'll write about any "personal topic" analytically, so don't pick something you're not comfortable analyzing academically). Begin researching this topic. We'll discuss what it means to "research" and what count as "academic sources," but the main point, here, is that *how you inform the reader of your topic depends on how you situate that topic in the context of other writings*. "Informing," in this sense, means setting the parameters of your topic—its implications, relevance and scope. In argumentative writing, this would be the "basis" or "grounds" for your point. While you're not exactly arguing something, here, how you set up your topic is, itself, an argument, as you are always *strategically arranging your information* in a way that suits *how you want to discuss your topic*.

Things to remember:

- The objective here is to be informative, not analytical or evaluative
- Because you are working with original informative sources, be very careful not to simply reproduce the documents you have read. Do not verge into plagiarism. Think about your audience and the form of an essay as particular contexts that should alter how your document is written versus the original documents.

Writing to Define (1,200 words)

After you've researched and documented (written informatively about) your topic, you'll want to identify certain key terms or concepts pervading your subject. There may be several, but your task here is to select *one key term* and contextualize that term among others. You're not expected to find the "biggest" term or assume that

certain terms are always more or less important than others. *The most important term* is really your decision. And because there is no *one way* to define any term, your task, here, is explaining *how other writers and researchers have discussed the term you're defining*. Pay careful attention to discrepancies between definitions. Like the "Writing to Inform" assignment, you're *contextualizing* your term in other texts.

Things to remember:

- Definitions do not "speak for themselves"; they are always synthesized across texts and traditions.
- There is no "correct" definition; there are only "best" or "most accurate" definitions, and "best" or "most accurate" depends on how carefully you analyze your source materials and how clearly you situate the definition in your context (topic). The success of your definition hinges on your capacity to show how the term works and why it's important..

(Pick One): Writing to Classify OR Writing to Compare and Contrast (1,200 words)

Now that you've navigated both the "context" of your topic and the "terms" that pervade it, your task here is to organize your materials and the discussions they're having. You can do this in one of two ways, depending on *how you want to approach your subject*.

Writing to Classify involves identifying and categorizing texts or arguments according to terms and parameters you decide upon. You may find, for example, that your topic tends to be discussed in three different ways. Your task, then, is *defining* those "ways," implicating texts or authors in those categories, justifying your reason for doing so and explaining, in the end, why *understanding your topic in these ways matters*.

Writing to Compare and Contrast relies on many of the same facets of Writing to Classify, except here you're focusing your attention on *what differentiates* the categories you're working with. This iteration of the assignment is best if you can identify *two different conversations* surrounding your topic. You'll still classify your texts or authors according to categories you select and define. But because you're dealing with fewer categories, your attention will focus on how these categories relate to and depart from one another. Here, you'll take more liberties with *prioritizing or evaluating* the strength of one side versus another. Just keep in mind that how your comparison *evaluates* one side versus another depends on *what you think is most important about your topic*.

Things to remember:

- You're verging, here, on argumentative writing, insofar as you now required to justify your classifications and make statements about the relative strengths and weaknesses of those categories. That said, classifying or comparative writing is strongest when it assumes neutrality. In other words, you'll want the tone of your piece to seem distant—not *disengaged*, but disinterested in making a point.

•Sometimes “comparing” is just as argumentative as contrasting. For example, you may find that two seemingly different texts or authors—texts or authors perhaps antithetical to one another—operate in similar ways. The same is true for contrasting: texts and authors that seem to be doing exactly the same thing are often actually involved in very different conversations. Strong classifying or comparative writing is able to effectively reveal counterintuitive differences and similarities.

Writing to Describe (1,200 words)

Descriptive writing resembles informative writing insofar as both privilege objective explanation rather than categorization or comparison. Unlike informative writing, however, descriptive writing can be profoundly argumentative. In descriptive expository writing, you may take liberties in the language you use to portray a text, argument or idea. Descriptive writing can resemble a narrative, wherein you’re telling the story of an idea as it passes through history or between writers. Where informative writing delivers information, descriptive writing draws the reader into that information, engaging the reader with the dynamics of your topic. For this assignment, you are going to structure a context for your topic and present that topic in the setting you choose. While you are not explicitly saying “here is my point” or “this is why my topic matters,” it should be fairly obvious as to what your point is and why you’re writing about it.

Things to remember:

•The verbs and adjectives that accompany your subjects will significantly affect how your reader interprets them. Generally, you should peruse subtle descriptions and only use direct language when it serves you the best. But always avoid tepid or overly technical language in descriptive writing (that language is best for informative writing).

Writing to Analyze (1,200 words)

Analytical writing revolves around a clear thesis or “point.” While you will contextualize your thesis in a much larger conversation, contextualization is a small portion of an analytical essay (here, maybe only the first paragraph). The rest of your essay will draw on traits from the previous essays but will focus on explicating your thesis. The “context” of this paper is only to validate the relevance of your thesis. The rest of the essay will engage specific texts in order to expound on your argument, explore its implications and fashion it into a distinct object for further study. This essay will more-or-less be the culmination of the previous essays.

Participation

I expect every student to come prepared for class. Being prepared means completing the required readings, contributing to class activities being actively involved in the dynamics of the class and completing any non-Gordon rule writing assignments.

Grade Points

Writing to Inform

150

Writing to Define	150
Writing to Classify	150
Writing to Describe	150
Writing to Analyze	150
Participation	250
 Total:	 1000

Grading Scale

A	930-1000	C	730-760
A-	900-920	C-	700-720
B+	870-890	D+	670-690
B	830-860	D	630-660
B-	800-820	D-	600-620
C+	770-790	E	0-590

Grades and Grade Meanings

Self-Grading

Every Gordon Rule assignment is, with some exceptions, self-graded. It is up to every student to determine what they think a fair grade would be for each assignment.

You will submit a one-page, single spaced letter with each assignment making a case for why you should receive your proposed grade. The content of each letter will largely consist on your own reflections about what you struggled with and what you succeeded in accomplishing. Letters will give little attention to the general topic or issue you address in the assignment. Instead, the letter should focus on issues—positive and negative—you had with conveying your topic or issue *in writing*. The letter does not count toward the assignment's word count.

I will read each assignment according to your reflections. My feedback will occasionally point toward problems or flaws in your writing that you may not see, but otherwise my feedback will be my own reflections on your piece. What I believe works and does not work is based on my opinions, and my critiques will generally be advice. My feedback will not, however, be determinate of your grade.

I reserve the right to make exceptions to this overall policy. If I see clear disparities in the quality of work you submit and your proposed grade, I will arrange a time to meet with you to discuss the disagreement. In severe cases, I reserve the right to reject your grade entirely. More likely, however, we'll meet to find a common ground about what we consider to be a fair grade.

You will determine your grade based on how hard you worked toward accomplishing what you set out to accomplish. Ways of indicating the level of work include:

- *Time spent revising*: Revision is not simply proofreading; it encompasses how you structure your paper, your sentences, your arguments and your information. Every assignment will likely be revised several times prior to submission. If you find, for example, that the order in which you present your information isn't helpful to the point you're trying to make, you'll spend time rearranging sections of the essay and rewriting sentences to reflect the direction of the overall work.
- *Developing a cohesive style*: Style generally refers to the rhetorical and grammatical choices you make to influence how your reader receives your work. Rhetorical choices often infuse texts with tonal qualities like urgency, irony, patience, playfulness, rationality, etc.—qualities that you can't necessarily *point to* but nonetheless have an effect on the reader. Tonal qualities are expressed through structural, grammatical choices. There are no "rules" for effecting tone, but you'll encounter numerous examples in the texts you read and in our class's style guides.
- *Presentation of research*: Not every assignment requires a laundry list of citations. But every assignment requires you to make effective use of the research at your disposal. You'll regularly find that your topics make less sense to you as you write about them. When this inevitably happens, it's important that you return to your research, curtail your premise or argument to reflect the content of your research and include different quotations or select different texts accordingly. Your writing will be in a constant conversation with your research, and strong academic writing often conveys a fluid dialog between your text and the texts or topics you're writing about.
- *Voice*: I use "voice" as a catchall for your sense of ownership of your own writing. It refers to your writing habits, both good and bad, and the ways you try to develop what works and fix what doesn't. "Voice" is also a reflection about what matters to you as a writer. How do you want your reader to imagine "you" behind this text? What presence do you hope to solicit? In writing, you can never control how your reader imagines you or reacts to your text, but you can always influence that reaction.

You need not reflect on each of these facets of your work in every letter. Indeed, if you feel that your biggest obstacle in a particular assignment is structuring and presenting your research, feel free to focus on developing that in the assignment. I do ask that, throughout the course, you address each of these facets in detail at least once.

Students with more college writing experience can reflect on previous work to put their current work into context. Less experienced college writers will work toward developing that context. But in the end, no assignment exists in a vacuum; each paper is indicative of your development both in and outside of this class. I can only come to understand this development in the assignments you submit, but your work as a writer is always greater than this class.

Grade Meanings

The following grade meanings reflect your *final grade*. They can certainly pertain to each assignment, but they largely pertain to the overall quality of work you produce in this class. If you only aim for B grade in this class (which I don't advise), you can get a sense, here, of how to achieve that.

A You did what the assignments ask for at a high quality level, and your work shows originality and creativity. You clearly articulate, in class and in conferences, what your work is attempting to achieve. In each assignment, it's clear that you took pains to make your work meaningful.

You attended class regularly (no more than two absences). You consistently participated in class discussions by asking questions, expressing ideas/opinions and by responding to the questions and opinions of your classmates. You kept up with all note taking and non-Gordon rule writing assignments.

An A- grade will reflect all of these qualities, but likely means that you missed too many classes, put inconsistent effort into assignments, were inconsistent with class participation, or were otherwise less-than-regularly abiding by class standards.

B You did what the assignments asked of you, but you did not always take strides to optimize your work. You would heed some of my advice, but applied it inconsistently. You did not always come prepared to conferences with clear ideas or completed drafts. You were inconsistent with attendance, participation and note taking.

C You did what the assignments asked of you but hardly ever took strides to develop your work. You missed several classes and rarely ever participated in class. You completed most of your work but never seemed to take it that seriously.

D You rarely did what the assignments asked of you. You missed several classes and hardly ever participated.

E An E is usually reserved for people who don't do the work or don't come to class. This grade also applies to students who turn in work that fails to meet the basic requirements of multiple assignments.

Conferences

Conferences are an excellent opportunity for you to receive direct feedback on your writing. The drafts you bring to conference should be complete—notes and outlines are not acceptable. My feedback is most helpful when it pertains to work that you see as finished.

Conference attendance is mandatory on class days specifically set aside for that purpose. Each student will sign up for one 15-20 min meeting during conference weeks. I will treat missed appointments as absences.

If you do not have a complete draft ready for conference, I may not grade the final version, and you will therefore receive zero points for that assignment.

Absence and Tardiness Policy

Because this course draws heavily on the dynamics of seminar discussions, consistent

attendance is critical to successfully completing the semester. Each student is allowed **two unexcused absences**. Any unexcused absences beyond that point will reduce the overall participation points that student is capable of earning. An absence due to illness or family crisis may be excused if properly documented to the instructor's satisfaction. However, prolonged absences, even for medical reasons, will not be excused, as discussion of reading & writing assignments is a key part of the course content. In addition, if you participate in a university-sponsored event (athletics, music, theater, field trip), you must provide me with documentation from an appropriate authority, preferably before the missed class. **Students who miss more than six classes may not pass the course.**

Policies

Writing Requirement (WR)

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for Writing. For more information, see: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggordon.html>

Statement on Student Disability Services

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Statement on Harassment

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041>

Statement on Academic Dishonesty

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Final Grade Appeals

If you have concerns about your **final** grade in the course and have met with me to discuss your final grade, you may pursue an appeal process by contacting the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of English. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade. Grade appeals should only be pursued if you and I have an irresolvable dispute regarding your final grade. The English Department will not intervene in disputes over individual assignment grades.

Schedule

NOTE: Days marked "READ" mean that you should come to class having read that particular reading assignment. We'll spend that day discussing the text, generally

voicing our opinions and questions. It's incumbent on everyone to prepare to speak that day. If taking notes or preparing remarks and questions helps you speak in class, I advise you to do so.

Week 1

Aug 25: Introductions

Aug 27: Syllabus in detail

Aug 29: Discuss expectations for research topics and how to begin long-term research.

Week 2

Sept 1 NO CLASS

Sept 3: We'll spend the day writing and rewriting statements about our research inquiries following models from *Craft of Research*

Sept 5: We'll discuss finding and prioritizing sources for your research topic. We'll also discuss the Writing to Inform assignment, which you should be actively drafting while you conduct your research.

Week 3

Sept 8: READ: *Mismeasure of Man* chapters 2, 3 and 4

Sept 10: Continued Seminar on *Mismeasure of Man*

Sept 12: READ: *Style Lessons* 3 and 6

Bring the first 2-3 pages of your Writing to Inform assignment. We'll try to apply the style lessons to your draft.

Week 4

Sept 15 READ: all of *Mismeasure of Man*

DUE: Writing to Inform

Sept 17 Continued seminar on the end of *Mismeasure of Man*

Sept 19 Discuss Writing to Define

Week 5

Sept 22 READ: *The Trouble with Black Boys*, Introduction and Part 1 (chapters 1-4)

Sept 24 Compare the racial questions of Gould's text with those of Noguera. Come prepared with passages to compare.

Sept 26 CONFERENCE

Week 6

Sept 29 CONFERENCE

Oct 1: READ: *Trouble with Black Boys*, Section 3 (chapters 9-12).

Oct 3: Discuss take-away from Noguera and reflect on how the issues he discusses may relate to your individual research topics.

Week 7

Oct 6: Introduce Writing to Classify and/or Compare and Contrast

Oct 8: READ: *When Students Have Power* Chapter 1-4

Oct 10: Observe how your instructors engage or even disengage students. Be prepared to offer descriptions and examples.

Week 8

Oct 13: READ: all of *When Students Have Power*

Oct 15: What does Shore do well or fail to do well in his proposed course?

Oct 17 NO CLASS

Week 9

Oct 20 READ: *A Different Voice* Chapter 1-3

DUE: Writing to Classify or Compare and Contrast

Oct 22: We'll relate the issues Gilligan addressed to prior texts, especially Gould's

Oct 24 Discuss Writing to Describe

Week 10

Oct 27: READ: all of *A Different Voice*

Oct 29: Does Gilligan's work resonate with you? How might her ideas translate into classes you're currently taking?

Oct 31: CONFERENCE

Week 11

Nov 3: CONFERENCE

Nov 5: READ: *Teaching to Transgress*

Nov 7: Come prepared to point out how race and gender intersect in previously discussed texts

Week 12

Nov 10: READ: all of *Teaching to Transgress*

DUE: Writing to Describe

The rest of the week, I'll leave the entirety of seminar up to you. This means that we'll have to prepare questions and possible topics ahead of time, discuss challenges and what "success" will look like.

Nov 12: Student-lead seminar

Nov 14: Student-lead seminar

Week 13

Nov 17: READ: *Elephant in the Room* chapters 1-3

Nov 19: Really think about the ethical and moral dimensions of your research topic. For this class day, come prepared to contextualize your research in the moral landscape outlined in Zerubavel.

Nov 21: READ: All of *Elephant*

Week 14

Thanksgiving Break

Week 15

Dec 1: We'll spend this week creating a hypothetical course syllabus for your research project. On Monday, we'll discuss how we might do this and see if your research projects group well with others.

Dec 3: Continue working on this project.

Dec 5: Discuss our hypothetical courses and prepare for the final week of presentations

Week 16

Dec 8: Presentations

Dec 10: Presentations

DUE: Writing to Analyze