

ENGL 4393/5392: Writing Center Theory and Practice

Fall 2023

Course Information

Time and Place of Class Meetings

In-person, meeting T 6-8:25 pm

CAS 208

Office Hours: Wed 9-11 am

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Miriam Rowntree, UTT

Writing Center Director

Office Number: CAS 238

Email Address:

mrowntree@uttyler.edu

Best Contact: Canvas Inbox

All instruction and testing will be on campus.

We will have some class periods that will be asynchronous in which individual or group work will be completed, and we will hold some class meetings at the end of the semester in the Writing Center.

Description of Course Content

This course will survey the history, theory, and practice of writing centers as they have developed in American universities since 1970. Students will complete extensive reading lists, give regular presentations, and complete a major research assignment. Students will also observe and conduct supervised writing consultations in the UTT writing center.

Our goal is to familiarize you with current theories and practices of modern writing centers as well as provide training in working with writers one-on-one. Students will study major scholarship on writing center theory and practice, as well as observe and discuss writing center sessions to learn best practices. Over the course of the semester, students will gain a clear understanding of what it means to tutor and teach writing by examining the many roles that writing centers play in helping students and faculty negotiate the terrain of college literacy.

Each week we will discuss reading assignments and assigned videos, take part in instructor-led and student-led case discussions of sessions, and engage in problem solving on the tutoring challenges you may encounter. Students will participate in multiple sessions and conduct multiple observations of sessions (your peers will

observe you, too). You will write occasional reflections on your tutoring practices and respond to reflections written by classmates. Students will also write reports about your observations and an extended conversation analysis of one of your recorded consultations. Students will also lead a discussion about one of your sessions.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Students should be able to compose and communicate more effectively in using both written and verbal discourse.
- Students should have a clearer understanding of the intertwined histories of writing center theory, rhetoric, and writing.
- Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of texts and theories related to composition and writing center studies.
- Students should be able to analyze and interpret texts (theoretical, video, audio, transcripts) and employ close reading skills as well as a variety of other theories and methods employed in the tutoring of writing.
- Students should be able to effectively communicate orally with small groups

By the end of the semester, students should be able to discuss and enact writing center theoretical approaches, along with rhetorical principles, practices, and theories, that involve both close-listening and close-reading approaches.

Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials

All the required readings, video, and audio for this course will be found in our Canvas course shell in the forms of PDFs and links to other sources. I *highly* suggest that you either print them out or download them into Adobe in order to annotate and add your own comments to the readings. We will also conduct videos of sessions. These can be done using your phone, but we will also have equipment available.

Technology Requirements

The course tools that we will be using in this course are Canvas, Zoom, and WC Online (all are free). Students can access tutorials on these tools (except for WC Online) by clicking on the “Get Started” Box on their Canvas Homepage. Students are not required to have a webcam to succeed in this class, but we will have assignments and sessions that you’ll be required to participate in through Zoom or WC Online.

Descriptions of major assignments and examinations

Readings: The readings for this course lay the foundation for tutoring practices that you will be participating in throughout the semester. Students *must* complete the entire reading selection by the discussion date. Since some of the readings are fairly long, I

advise you to read ahead when possible. I also suggest that you *annotate and keep terminology/theory notes* to help you stay on track (hence, the required composition notebook). These actions will not only help in you in preparation for future writing/tutoring assignments, but they make you an *active* rather than a *passive* reader. Also, we will have a midterm exam that will cover the theories and terminology that we will be discussing during the first half of the semester (see below). Keeping an annotated list of these theories and terms will not only be helpful with the midterm exam, but the list will be a key source to reference for the final project.

NOTE: The following are brief descriptions of the major writing assignments. More detailed assignment prompts will be provided to you and discussed in class in the coming weeks.

Recapitulation: A recapitulation is a ‘recap’ of something. This word also means “the [repetition](#) of an [evolutionary](#) or other process during development or growth.” We will write a minimum of seven weekly responses which will specifically address the course readings and writing tutoring concepts that we will discuss during our class meetings. Prompts will be given in class for each response. Please note that critical analysis is more than an opinion (I liked/didn’t like a reading or agreed/disagreed with a point). To be “critical” requires identifying the criteria that informs your judgment (explaining *why* you had that response). These papers provide you a space to explore your reactions to the theories and arguments presented in the reading, discuss an element/concept that you find intriguing, or ask a question (and attempt to answer!) about the text and/or its theoretical/historical context. In short, the recap can be used as a repetition of your evolution as a writer and thinker. Using close textual analysis of the readings will assist in illuminating your response and our discussions. These assignments will be graded on the originality of your thought and the depth of analysis used to support your response. The criteria for each Recap can be found in the Canvas FAQ

Midterm Exam: This exam will cover the major theories, terminology, and history concerning the practice of tutoring writing. As stated above in the Readings section, copious notetaking of class discussions and lectures, along with annotating the readings, will help you greatly with this exam.

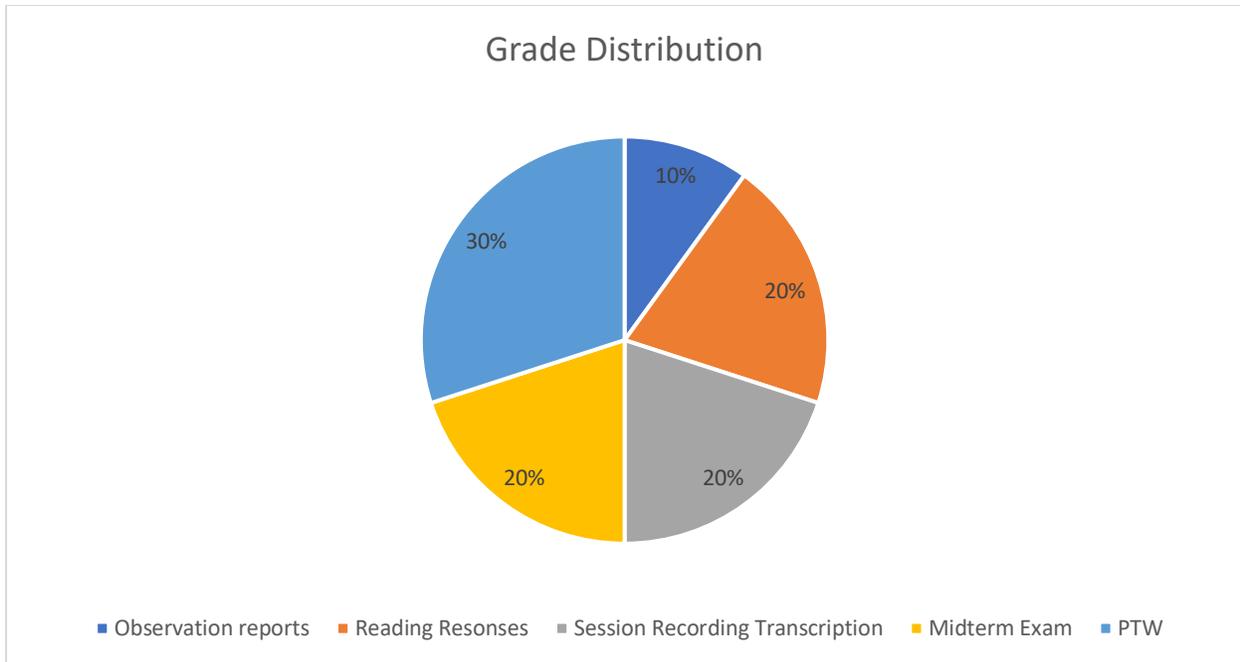
Observation Reports (2): These reports will be generated from observing tutoring sessions. You will either observe tutoring sessions with each other, in session videos, or

possibly in actual sessions in the UTA Writing Center. The observation reports are exercises in close-listening and detailed notetaking during sessions. More information about the reports will be provided later in the semester.

Session Recording/Transcription: For this assignment, you will participate in a video recorded session and transcribe a section of the consultation (maximum of six minutes) in which ***you are the tutor***. You will use either a modified version of Gilewicz and Thonus's "Close Vertical Transcription" or a "dramatic script" model to construct your transcription. You will also construct an analysis of your session based particularly on the "kinds of talk" between you and the writer (more info provided later in semester).

Philosophy of Tutoring Writers (PTW): The capstone assignment for this course will be a philosophy of tutoring writers, a project in which you will draw from your readings, session and class observations, tutor journal, reading responses, reflections, tutoring conversation analysis, and additional research regarding writing center theory and practice, etc.). You will write an extensive tutoring philosophy that illustrates your pedagogical values, your goals for working one-on-one with writing, and the methods and practices that realize those goals. Your philosophy will also bring light to and address a specific social, political, or cultural issue(s) that we have discuss in class that's relative to tutoring writers. PTW presentations at semester's end will also contribute to the final project grade.

PLEASE READ (more than once): As you can see, this is a "Topics in Rhetoric" course which means that it is *writing intensive*. The course is also "front-loaded" with several important readings early in the semester that make up the core of the theory and practice of tutoring writers. Please understand that to succeed in this course or in anything (as a future teacher, tutor, writer, diplomat, banker, whatever) you simply ***cannot*** skim the readings and "get by." The readings will heavily inform your approaches, actions, and attitudes that ***you will put into action in the tutoring sessions that you will be participating in and observing for this course.*** Close reading of the texts will also assist you in the invention/composing processes of your final assignment; thus, ***you must make reading and annotating a priority in this course.*** The PTW assignment due at the end of the semester will draw ***heavily*** on your understanding and synthesizing of the theories and concepts from the readings, and how these concepts are applicable to the bigger picture of writing pedagogy and tutoring writers, as well as to real-life issues involving communication and dialogue. And please note that the PTW assignment is also 30% of your final grade, which means it can make or break an entire semester of work. Also, please understand that if it becomes clear to me in our class discussions and in the responses/reflections that a majority of the class is not critically invested in the readings, I reserve the right to replace some of the more "engaging and hands-on" assignments with weekly quizzes and/or full exams.



Grading Information

Grading

- 10% Observation Reports
- 20% Recap
- 20% Session Recording/Transcription
- 20% Midterm Exam
- 30% Philosophy of Tutoring Writing & Presentation

Attendance

While UT Tyler does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients “begin attendance in a course.” UT Tyler instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report must the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Canvas. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

[Student Success Programs](#)

[Library Information](#)

Emergency Exit Procedures

Should we experience an emergency event that requires evacuation of the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located near the stairwell immediately outside our classroom door. When exiting the building during an emergency, do not take an elevator but use the stairwells instead. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Tentative Course Schedule

CAN = Canvas Readings

OX = The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors (chapters)

RR = Reading Response

All submissions are due at 11:59 pm on the date listed

| Class Emphasis | Readings | Assignments Due |
|--|---|---|
| <i>I. Why Tutor Writers? What's a Writing Center?</i> | | |
| Week 1: 8/22 Introduction to the course, syllabus, each other Intro Discussion: The Writing and Reading Processes | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts" (CAN) • Ox. Chap. 1, p. 4-10 | Due Fri 8/25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canvas Basic Training Module |
| Week 2: 8/29 What the #### is a Writing Center? Intensive Training | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ox. Chap. 3, p. 47-64 and 65-79 • "Talking in the Middle" by Muriel Harris | Due Mon 8/28: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap #1 |
| <i>II. Theories and Histories of Tutoring Writers</i> | | |
| Week 3: 9/5 Theoretical Views of Tutoring Writing | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OX Ch 2 pp. 27-43 (CAN) | Due Mon 9/4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap #2 |
| Week 4: 9/12 Perils of Writing Writing as Personal History | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lu, "From Silence to Words: Writing as Struggle" (CAN) • Brodkey, "Writing on the Bias" (CAN) | Due Mon 9/11: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap #3 |
| <i>III. Tutoring Writers: Strategies</i> | | |
| Week 5: 9/19 | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OX. Ch. 6 pp. 139-157 | |

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| <p>Week 6: 9/26 Listening</p> | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valentine, “The Undercurrents of Listening: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Listening in Writing Center Tutor Guidebooks” • Santa, “Listening in/to the writing center: backchannel and gaze” | <p>Due Mon 9/25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap #4 |
| <p>Week 7: 10/3</p> | <p>Project Meeting via Zoom</p> | <p>Due Mon 10/9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Proposal • Online Mid-term |
| <p>Week 8: 10/10 Minimalism & Time</p> <p>“What do I say? How should I say it? What should I avoid saying?”</p> | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brooks, “Minimalist Tutoring” & Newkirk, “The First Five Minutes” (CAN) • Daiker “Learning to Praise” (CAN) | |
| <p><i>IV: Session Mechanics and Observations</i></p> | | |
| <p>Week 9: 10/17 In-class tutoring session #1 (First 5 + scaffolding)</p> | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caposella “Surface Errors” | |
| <p>Week 10: 10/24 Talking Writing: Writing and Authoring Processes; Session Discussions (from 10/17)</p> | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch 4 OX 85-96 (CAN) | <p>Due Mon 10/23:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap #5 • Observation Report #1 |

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| Week 11: 10/31 Responding and Prioritizing | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kiedaisch & Dinitz, “Look Back and Say So What” | Due Mon 10/30: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recap #6 |
| In-class tutoring session #2 (Responding to Writing) | Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferris “Responding/Teachers” | Due: RR#7 |
| <i>V. In Action: Tutoring Writers in Sessions</i> | | |
| Week 12: 11/7 Session Recordings | | Due Mon 11/6: Observation Report #2; Register for session recordings |
| Week 13: 11/14 | | |
| Week 14: 11/21 | Thanksgiving Break | |
| Week 15: 11/28 | | Presentations Last Face-to-Face Class |
| Final Exams Week 12/4-12/8 | | Due 12/4: PTW complete project |