

Rhode Island College
 Feinstein School of Education and Human Development
 Educational Studies Department
Teaching Writing in Secondary Schools
 SED 445 Fall 2009
 Wednesday 4-6:50 p.m.

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This course is designed to help you (re)locate your identity as a writer and to teach you habits of mind and of practice that should guide your instruction as a teacher of writing and of literacy. You will be working independently and collaboratively to explore your talents and fears as a writer as well as the possibilities that writing holds for the English language arts classroom.

I will ask you to wear two hats this semester: The hat of a student writer, and the hat of a teacher of writing. This will require you to experience this course both as a participant writer and as a prospective designer of lessons and curricula.

With all this in mind, the following questions will guide our work together this semester:

- Who are you as a writer? What pathways and roadblocks have you encountered as a writer? What does it mean to you to be a writer?
- What is good writing? Who decides?
- Why must we teach writing and cultivate writers? What does it mean to be a teacher of writing?
- How do the constructs of schooling and of correctness affect our teaching of writing?
- What is your vision of a reading and writing classroom?

Course Texts and Materials:

Required Texts (available in the RIC campus bookstore):

- Breathing In, Breathing Out (Fletcher)
- Because Writing Matters (NWP & Nagin)
- Writing With Power (Elbow)
- Rethinking Rubrics in Writing Assessment (Wilson)

Other readings will be provided in class or be available on the web.

In addition, you will need each week:

- Course notebook and folder
- A writer's notebook (reserved for Writing Group meetings)
- Texts that we will be discussing or using in class
- Writing assignments due for in-class use

Course Requirements

What I expect from you as prospective teachers:

This class is participatory in nature and depends on our ability to work together and to support each other. It is imperative that we show sensitivity and thoughtfulness toward one another while we are working together. Writing is a risky activity, and reading our writing aloud makes us vulnerable.

I expect of you what you will expect of your own students someday. I expect that we will all do our part to build a classroom culture on a foundation of safety, honesty, and integrity. I expect each of you to complete the readings and other required assignments, to contribute through discussion and sharing, to engage with in-class and out-of-class planning and writing, and to work collaboratively with your peers.

Attendance & Participation:

Each of us is an integral part of this course. Therefore, you need to be present and active every class meeting. I assume that everyone in this class is preparing to be a teacher. In this course, as in your future work as a teacher, your presence—both physical and intellectual—and your performance—your energy, your professionalism, and your thoughtfulness—matter the most.

You are allowed one absence this semester without penalty. For every absence (or its equivalent in time) over one, I will lower your final grade by one third (an A- would become a B+). Please also note that leaving early or coming late to class can contribute to the total sum of your absences.

Expectations for your written work:

All formal, written work to be handed in must be typed in standard format: 12 point, Times New Roman font and double-spaced with one-inch margins. In this class, you may be using and adapting materials from many different sources, so it is crucial that you acknowledge any other published work in MLA format.

Your written work should be typed, edited, and submitted to me at the time it is due. Your grade will be lowered if you do not turn in major assignments on time or if you do not fully participate in the collaborative activities. If you have extenuating circumstances

that are keeping you from doing your best work, talk to me about the situation as soon as you can.

Accommodations: If you are seeking reasonable classroom accommodations, you are required to register with Disability Services in the Student Life Office (Craig-Lee 127; 456-8061). To receive accommodations for this course, please obtain the Request for Reasonable Accommodations forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

Major Assignments:

1. Think Pieces:

In addition to discussion and activities, each class (unless you hear otherwise) will include your responses to assigned readings. Each week, you will be asked to prepare a one-page “Think Piece”—a provocative response to the reading for the week.

These one-page Think Pieces should be your best attempt to intellectually grapple—with your teacher’s hat on-- with the theoretical and practical foundations of the readings.

Consider using one or more of the following questions as prompts as you prepare your Think Piece each week:

- Take a walk with a line from this reading—what “golden nugget” from this article or chapter deserves some further discussion or musing?
- What does this writer’s opinions or methods remind you of? What sounds familiar? Unfamiliar?
- If you could have a discussion with this author, what would you want to discuss? What questions would you ask?
- From what you know of secondary schools and classrooms, what might be some benefits of this author’s approach to teaching writing? What might be some barriers?
- What “burning question/s” do you have after reading this?
- Play the “believing game.” What do you like or trust about this reading? Why?
- Play the “doubting game.” What is off-putting to you or problematic about this reading? Why?

2. Writing Groups & Writer’s Notebooks

As teachers of writing, we must first consider ourselves writers. Your Writing Group will provide you with a close cadre of your peers with whom you can safely experiment with writing activities and ideas. Your Writer’s Notebook is the depository for these Writing Group experiences, ruminations, activities, and responses.

Each writing group will be made up of 3-4 students from this class. The primary texts for your group will be Ralph Fletcher’s Breathing in, Breathing Out, a sort of guide for getting a Writer’s Notebook underway.

Your writing group will meet once a week, outside of class, for one (1) hour. Your meetings will be led by the designated “Teacher,” a role that should rotate each week during the semester. During your meetings, your writing group will be responsible for:

- Reading aloud a new chapter from Fletcher’s book (the goal is to work your way through the text)
- Completing one guided writing activity inspired by Fletcher’s chapter and led by the designated teacher for the week (teacher should have this activity planned ahead of time).
- Sharing out your writing from the activity and actively responding to what others share
- Making a plan for the next Writing Group meeting

I will form the Writing Groups following our 2nd class session. Each group is required to meet at least 10 times throughout the semester. You need to purchase and keep a Writer’s Notebook to document your work and your reflections on your work as a member of this group. Each of you is responsible for leading the group activity at least twice during the semester.

3. I-Search Project and Presentation:

You will complete a targeted I-Search project this semester, a research project (with your question at the center) that asks you to tap primary resources to explore adolescents’ experiences with writing and literacy, both in school and out of school.

The I-Search, developed by Ken Macrorie (1988), is an inquiry-based approach to teaching the research process. The I-Search gives you the opportunity to take an active role as a researcher in the inquiry process. This model allows you the freedom to write your own research questions, to design the steps to your search, and to target specific topics and sources. It also encourages you to use primary rather than secondary information sources, often requiring one-on-one interviews with an expert in the field (thereby enacting your active role as researcher).

The culmination of this project is a formal paper (5-7 pp) that will chronicle your I-Search process, findings, and reflections in first-person narrative. An I-Search paper generally contains four components: (1) a baseline—a summary of what you knew about the subject when you began; (2) a section explaining your rationale for choosing the topic along with questions you hope to be answered by the I-Search; (3) a narrative review of your I-Search activities (these will come from your weekly Research Memos); and (4) a concluding reflection about what you discovered as a result of the process (your “findings”) and why it matters to your teacher and writer self.

I will be assigning the I-Search project about mid-way through our semester together, and we will be completing the I-Search process in steps, on our own and as a class. I will assign a new step of the I-Search process each week. I will also ask you, each week, for a 1-page Research Memo about your new directions and findings.

In your Research Memo, you'll respond to the questions: What have I found/learned this week? How does it make sense to my I-Search? So what (or, Why does it matter)? And, if applicable, where do I go next (or what do I need to do)?

We will have at least one peer feedback and revision workshop in class—to which you must bring a completed I-Search paper draft in progress. The final draft is due, in class, on Wednesday, April 29.

Course Evaluation:

Performance Assessments	Percentage of Course Grade	Course Outcomes	RIBTS	Conceptual Framework
Course attendance, participation, preparation & weekly writing activities	50%	1-3, 5, 7-12	1,2,4-7, 9-11	Knowledge, Diversity, Pedagogy, Professionalism
Writer's notebook & Writing group	25%	1-3, 9, 10	1,2, 7, 9-11	Knowledge, Diversity, Pedagogy, Professionalism
I-Search Project & Presentation	25%	1, 4-11	1-6, 8, 9	Knowledge, Diversity, Pedagogy

****SPECIAL NOTE FOR ENGLISH EDUCATION MAJORS:**

In order to enroll in SED 410 English/Language Arts Practicum, you must pass three tests: the Principles of Learning & Teaching or PLT (passing score is 167); the English Content Exam 0041 (160) and Essay Exam 0042 (150). Go to ets.org for more details. Workshops on taking the PLT are offered periodically at RIC and there are study guides you can download from the ETS website or buy in local bookstores or online. If you are a secondary education major or elementary major, check with your advisor about tests you may be required to pass before enrolling in practicum.

Course Schedule
This schedule is subject to change.

Week/Day	Concept/Focus	Assignments Due
Week 1 Sept 2	Introductions & beginnings: Cultivating community	“Writing is...” “My Name” School/Life HW: “Reclaiming the spark” listing exercise; study for Name Quiz
Week 2 Sept 9	Knowing ourselves as writers: What has been our experience? What does it mean? How can we learn from it as teachers?	Share results from “Reclaiming the spark” In class writing from your list to draft your Letter to a Teacher HW: Read <u>Because Writing Matters</u> : Preface, Introduction & Chp. 1 Write a Think Piece to share aloud (1 p.) in response to the reading. Write your Letter to a Teacher to share aloud in class (1-2pp).
Week 3 Sept 16	Refocusing our lenses: When we look at our experiences writing in school and out of school, what do we see? Protocols & formation of Writing Groups	Sharing Letters to Teachers Sharing Think Pieces and discussion of reading from <u>Because Writing Matters</u> . Read “First Thoughts” from Fletcher’s <u>Breathing In, Breathing Out</u> (p.1-5) Read Elbow “Introduction to the Second Edition” (xiii) through “The Dangerous Method...” (p.46). Write a Think Piece on a particular resonant point or points in Elbow’s chapters.
Week 4 Sept 23	Getting started with Writer’s Notebooks and Writing Groups	Share Think Pieces on Elbow’s Writing With Power

		<p>Writer's Notebook entry & Writing Group meeting protocols</p> <p>HW for next week: Read Because Writing Matters, Chp. 2</p> <p>Write Think Piece to share aloud</p> <p>**Writing Groups will meet for the first time during class in Week 4**</p>
<p>Week 5 Sept 30</p>	<p>Research in the Teaching of Writing</p>	<p>Share Think Pieces on assigned reading</p> <p>History/timeline of writing instruction in the U.S.</p> <p>HW for next week: Read Because Writing Matters, Chp. 3 ("Writing to Learn")</p> <p>Other readings on Writing to Learn</p> <p>Write Think Piece in response to the readings on "Writing to Learn"</p>
<p>Week 6 Oct 7</p>	<p>Writing to Learn</p> <p>Introduce I-Search Paper & Presentation</p>	<p>Share Think Pieces on writing-to-learn</p> <p>What IS writing to learn?</p> <p>I-Search exploratory writing-to-learn</p> <p>HW: Read Because Writing Matters, Chp. 5 (Standards & Assessments for Writing)</p> <p>Review GSEs & GLEs on RIDE website—what do you notice?</p>
<p>Week 7 Oct 14</p>	<p>Standards & Assessment for Writing</p>	<p>Share Think Pieces on "Standards and Assessments in Writing"</p> <p>Reflection on how we were assessed as</p>

		<p>writers—what do we know about how our teachers assessed us?</p> <p>Discuss RI State Standards and NCTE standards for teaching English and writing.</p> <p>Honing your I-Search topic & research question; planning your search for primary data</p> <p>HW for 10/21: Read Wilson’s <u>Rethinking Rubrics in Writing Assessment</u></p> <p>**Write a 2-3 p Think Piece that responds to Wilson’s ideas about rubrics and writing assessment.**</p>
<p>Week 8</p> <p>Oct 21</p>	<p>Assessment in Writing, Part II</p> <p>Designing authentic writing assignments</p> <p>What is authentic intellectual work? What does it look like in a classroom?</p>	<p>Share Think Pieces in response to Wilson’s text</p> <p>Crafting a writing assignment and an appropriate assessment</p> <p>HW: I-Search memo (1-2pp) on your inquiry topic, your focused research question/s, your rationale for this topic/question, and your plan to move forward and interview folks.</p> <p>HW: Design an authentic writing assignment and assessment on your own. Design it to suit your goals as an English teacher in a secondary school. Cite any and all resources you borrow from. First draft due for peer feedback in class next week.</p>
<p>Week 9</p> <p>Oct 28</p>	<p>Designing Authentic Writing Assignments, Part II</p>	<p>Share I-Search memos aloud</p> <p>In groups, share writing assignments and assessments; peer feedback protocols: Is this authentic intellectual work?</p> <p>How to conduct a research interview</p>

		<p>HW: I-Search Interview #1</p> <p>Write an I-Search Analysis Memo detailing your findings from your first interview: What did you learn? How has it affected your thinking?</p>
<p>Week 10 Nov 4</p>	<p>I-Search Check Ins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview peaks and pits • What’s surprised you, intrigued you, disturbed you • Next steps <p>Writing Group Check Ins</p>	<p>I-Search Interview #1 due</p> <p>Share I-Search Memo (findings from Interview #1)</p> <p>Bring Writer’s Notebook—meet with Writing Group to make plans for final meetings and wrap up.</p> <p>Writing Group activities</p> <p>HW: I-Search Interview #2 and I-Search memo detailing what you discovered or learned from this second interview.</p>
<p>Week 11 Nov 11</p>	<p>NO CLASS—COLLEGE HOLIDAY</p>	<p>Read in Elbow’s Writing With Power: Section IV “Audience” (177-235) and Section VI “Power in Writing” (279-373).</p> <p>Prepare notes on 7 golden nuggets you gleaned from your reading in Elbow. Prepare to present these to the class on 11/18.</p>
<p>Week 12 Nov 18</p>	<p>Considering audience and tapping into our power as writers</p>	<p>Share I-Search Interview #2 and Memo (findings)</p> <p>Share golden nuggets from Elbow reading</p> <p>I-Search Final Memo: What have I gained from this inquiry? Where have my questions led me? What new questions do I have? Where do I go from here?</p>
<p>Week 13 Nov 25</p>	<p>In-class response groups for I-Search Final Memos & Plan</p>	<p>Share I-Search Final Memos</p>

	for Drafting	Develop Plan for Drafting Final Paper Homework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft your I-Search paper • Prepare your Golden Nugget presentation
Week 14 Dec 2	I-Search “Golden Nugget” presentations (10 mins) Peer revision of I-Search drafts	“Golden Nugget” presentations BRING YOUR I-SEARCH DRAFT TO CLASS. HW: Write final draft of I-Search Paper HW: “Where am I now as a teacher of writing?” final reflection to be read aloud in class
Week 15 Dec 9	Final Class Meeting	I-Search Papers due Read “Where am I now?” paper aloud in class; final teaching evaluations

Appendix A

Course Information

Relationship to Professional Program and to Knowledge Base:

This course builds upon the belief that meaningful instruction is the result of continuous, thoughtful reflection by educators. Students will have the opportunity to implement and reflect on course concepts in a field component for this course. Students will be expected to be reflective and thoughtful as they actively participate and interact in class. This course is rooted in the Reflective Practitioner Conceptual Framework and emphasizes the development of pedagogy and professionalism.

Course Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you should:

1. Develop confidence in yourself as a prospective teacher of writing. (RIBTS 1,2; Knowledge, Pedagogy, Professionalism)

2. See yourself as a writer by consciously developing your writing processes and supporting others as they do the same. (RIBTS 2; Knowledge, Professionalism)
3. Recognize that writing is a nonlinear, recursive process that varies according the rhetorical situation and the writer. (RIBTS 4; Knowledge, Diversity)
4. Value the diverse writing interests, attitudes, and abilities of young adults and develop instructional strategies that utilize your students' interests and literacy practices. (RIBTS 3, 4; Diversity, Pedagogy)
5. Be able to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of various theoretical approaches to writing instruction and the roles writing teachers play. (RIBTS 6; Knowledge, Pedagogy)
6. Create engaging writing units and invitations for real purposes and actual audiences that give students voice and choice while building their skill and confidence as writers. (RIBTS 4, 5; Knowledge, Pedagogy)
7. Understand, articulate, and put into practice writing strategies that are research-based and meet NCTE and GSE standards for writing instruction. (RIBTS 11; Pedagogy, Professionalism)
8. Be familiar with the types of writing stressed in a secondary school curriculum. (RIBTS 5; Professionalism)
9. Understand writing as a social activity and the value of collaboration, peer support and response, teacher conferencing, and ways to nurture those in the classroom. (RIBTS 6, 7; Knowledge, Pedagogy)
10. Be familiar with strategies for responding to, assessing and evaluating writing in the classroom. (RIBTS 9; Knowledge, Pedagogy)
11. Be able to identify ways writing instruction can be successfully integrated into the curriculum to support the teaching of all aspects of English/Language Arts, including analyzing literature & media, and speaking & reading skills. (RIBTS 8; Knowledge, Pedagogy)
12. Be familiar with resources available to English teachers through the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and other local, state, and national professional organizations. (Rhode Island Writing Project, for example). (RIBTS 10; Professionalism)