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ENEX 540.01: Teaching College Level Composition — ENEX 100, Introduction to Academic Writing

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The University of Montana
Department of English
ENEX 540

Teaching College Level Composition—
ENEX 100, Introduction to Academic Writing

Autumn 2001

Monday 3:10-5:00
LA 306

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Course Description

The purpose of ENEX 540 is to provide ENEX 100 instructors with a general view of the program’s focus, goals, and approach. It is also intended to give instructors an outline of each chapter and related assignments. There are many sections of composition, and the overview and the outline should help construct a sense of continuity in the aims of ENEX 100 without excluding the individual skills and talents of each instructor. In fact, the intent is to create a sound and effective framework in which all instructors may build their own palettes of ideas for independent, creative teaching in the classroom.

Writers, like teeth, are divided into incisors and grinders.
-Walter Bagehot, *Estimates of Some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, 1858

You have made, sir, three faults in orthography.
-Marquis de Favras, remark to the clerk of the court after the reading of his death sentence, 1790

I wrote my name at the top of the page. I wrote down the number of the question “1.” After much reflection I put a bracket round it thus “(1).” But thereafter I could not think of anything connected with it that was either relevant or true. It was from these slender indications of scholarship that Mr. Welldon drew the conclusion that I was worthy to pass into Harrow. It is very much to his credit.

I don’t like to write. I like to have written.
-Gloria Steinem
An ongoing function of 540 is to examine the curriculum in use and pedagogy applied, adding changes and/or new elements whenever appropriate and beneficial to the program. ENEX 100 instructors are invited to participate in the continued refinement of this curriculum, specifically its goals, focus, and assignments. Instructors meet to review the week’s progress and to examine the next week’s schedule. The intrinsic value of 540 is that a group of teachers gather not only to seek information and chapter outlines, but also to ask advice, offer insights, and narrate successful episodes of particular exercises and assignments. We will also do a moderate amount of reading in composition theory and pedagogy, and we will take turns giving “book talks.” We will also take turns giving micro-teaching demonstrations of lesson ideas we would like to try in our classrooms. We will examine ways to provide thoughtful and effective feedback to student writing, direct useful revision workshops and student conferences, help non-native English speakers with their writing, and more. The intent is to build camaraderie, share teaching ideas, and provide much needed support for the often-demanding concerns of being a teacher of writing.

Course Objectives

Graduate students who successfully complete this course will

- Examine curriculum and pedagogy intended to successfully implement the course objectives of ENEX 100 (see sample syllabus ENEX 100).
- Explore resources available on composition theory and pedagogy.
- Practice effective teaching through micro-teaching experiments.
- Conduct peer observations according to the rudiments of horizontal evaluation.
- Examine strategies for giving helpful feedback to student writers.
- Examine strategies for successful student conferences.
- Examine strategies for conducting effective student discussions
- Examine strategies for facilitating effective peer response groups or writing workshops.
- Examine strategies for working with non-native speakers of English.
- Examine strategies for working with “learning disabled” students.

Requirements and Evaluation

Course Policies

1. Regular attendance is mandatory and counts on your final grade, which is calculated either pass/fail. Much of the course depends on collaborative work, so you must be present to contribute your insights as well as to receive feedback. Therefore, regular attendance is mandatory. If you have a class conflict with ENEX 540, or must be absent for any reason, you are responsible for “getting up to speed” on your own. Find a “buddy,” with whom you may share missed information in the event of an absence.
2. Specifically, this means that you are allowed no more than 2 absences for any reason throughout the semester. You will not be able to pass the class if you accrue more than 2 absences. When you need to use 1 of those 2 absences, get in touch with me immediately. The bottom line: Plan to attend class everyday. Save your 2 allowable absences for true emergencies.

3. Attentive and active participation in class discussion and in group work are required as it is essential for accomplishing the course goals. You will be able to do this if you respond thoughtfully in class discussions. Keep current with assignments.

4. If you have not prepared for class, refer to #1 above and come anyway.

5. I will be available to meet with you during office hours and by appointment; please come and talk with me about your teaching ideas, about difficulties you are having with students, about problems you’re having in any of your classes. Feel free to email me. I will respond as soon as possible. I frequently work at home on MWF. I have given you my home phone number in case you have a pressing need to talk with me, and I am not in my office.

6. The standards and criteria that will be used to grade participation and preparation are based on the following:

   - One hundred percent attendance [see above.]
   - Listening carefully, taking notes, participating effectively in group discussions (e.g., avoid socializing and stick to the assigned task at hand), and asking appropriate questions.
   - Consideration of community: Avoidance of undue claims of time or attention from others.
   - Awareness of and appropriate response to the learning dynamics required in class.
   - Being prepared with assignments on the day they are scheduled.

Assignments

Syllabus

Due no later than September 17

There are many sections of ENEX 100, and you have been provided with an overview and outline for a sample syllabus, which intended to construct a sense of continuity in the aims of ENEX 100, without excluding the individual skills and talents of each instructor. The intent is to create a sound and effective framework in which all instructors may build their own palettes of ideas for independent, creative teaching in the classroom. Individual idiosyncrasies are welcome. Nonetheless, the English Department needs to keep a copy of all ENEX 100 syllabi on file. Submit a copy of your syllabus to me and I will, in turn, see that it is filed appropriately.
Book Talks

*Sign up for dates*

We will schedule time for “book talks” throughout the seminar. For this assignment, you are expected to sign up and to read one of the books about basic writing from a bibliography I will provide. When you conduct a “book talk,” you will need to summarize the book for the class and highlight the ideas or pedagogical suggestions you find useful to your teaching. You also should be prepared to discuss and demonstrate a particular activity or process, which you develop based on the ideology and pedagogy represented by the book that others could adopt in their teaching.

Microteaching

*Sign up for dates*

We will schedule time for 10-15 minute microteaches throughout the semester. A microteach provides an opportunity for you to prepare, teach and get peer feedback on a 10—15 minute snippet of a lesson you would like to teach in your ENEX 100 sections. The purpose is twofold: 1) to give you a supportive environment in which to try out new activities, ideas, topics, lessons that will help you to supplement and diversify your current approaches to teaching, and 2) to share ideas and strategies with other instructors.

Microteaches are not meant as performances of already-perfected lessons and strategies. Microteaches are intended as “pre-teaching” experiments, in which you can try out, examine, and receive feedback on ideas and strategies before you attempt them with students in your classroom. Microteaches are a kind of rehearsal prior to the real performance you enact in your classes.

Peer Observation and Horizontal Evaluation

*Scheduled throughout the semester; final reflective paper due December 10th.*

Horizontal evaluation is a systematic style of peer observation and feedback that is intended to provide a supportive and collaborative structure for formative (feedback intended to help the teacher improve) as opposed to summative (judgment intended to grade or rank performance) evaluation of teachers at all levels of experience. In order to complete this requirement, you will need to pick a partner with whom you will exchange long- and short-term goal-setting conferences, pre- and post-observation conferences, and conduct two to three classroom observations each.

It is often best to work with someone with whom you are not a close friend. Once you have selected a partner, schedule times when you can conduct your two to three observations of each other (this is two to three each for a total of four to six observations). Prior to your first scheduled observation, spend time discussing long- and short-term goals and make some notes. Here you should articulate what you are working on in your teaching in the short-term (e.g., “Tomorrow I am conducting a workshop and my goal is to get students to say more than “this is good” to each other”) and in the long-
term (e.g., “I spend way too much time responding to student papers. I want to find ways to become more efficient in the process.”) Prior to each observation, plan for a pre-observation conference in which you share your goals for the lesson in light of your long- and short-term goals. If there is anything in particular you want feedback on, let your observation partner know (e.g., I don’t feel like I have good pacing. I take way too long on some things and not enough time on others. At the end of class, I always feel really rushed. I don’t give students closure for the lesson. Can you watch that to see if you have any suggestions for working on pacing?) Following the observation (as soon as possible after the observation when you can coordinate your schedules), debrief the lesson observed. Here the teacher should talk first and give the observer some idea about how s/he perceived the lesson and attention to goals. Next, the observer should give supportive feedback, suggestions, ask questions, report what s/he noticed in light of the teacher’s professed goals. Keep an observation log in which you date and summarize the content of the observation and conferencing sessions to turn in at the end of the semester.

Toward the end of the semester, each instructor should write a 3-5 page self-reflective paper in which you discuss the merits of horizontal evaluation; your semester teaching strengths and weaknesses; and your future teaching goals—ideas that you plan to work on spring semester.

**Director Observation**

*Scheduled throughout the semester*

I will observe you at least once during the semester. The purpose of my observations will be to give you feedback on your teaching. I will ask you to schedule your observations with me in advance, so you will not be surprised. Following my observation, we will schedule a follow-up conference in which I give you my feedback.

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**Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 3</th>
<th>No Class</th>
<th>Labor Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 10</td>
<td>Course Introduction, Diagnostics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Today we will go over the syllabus and assignments. I will introduce you to ENEX 540 routines, which include temperature check, overview of book and assignments for upcoming week, hot topics discussions. We will also sign-up for book talks, microteaches, and peer observation and horizontal evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>September 17</td>
<td>Demonstration Lesson; Modeling Good Pedagogy—Focus and Control; Introduction to Pop Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Temperature Check</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outline of upcoming weeks’ assignments—pop culture overview</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• Brief discussion of ways to set up workshop groups and successful peer response sessions
• Hot topics: Today we will also look at ways to talk about the two primary skills ENEX 100 students need to learn in order to complete the course successfully: focus (thesis) and control (organization and development). We will engage in a model demonstration lesson that discusses these issues of concern.

September 24 Facilitating Effective Discussions and Small Group Work in Writing Classrooms

• Temperature Check
• Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments
• Hot topics: Today we will look at strategies for breaking the cycle of QARs (question, answer, response) that dominate most teacher-directed lecture-style classrooms. We will examine strategies for asking questions and facilitating effective discussions, which involve more than the usual precocious students.

October 1 Conducting Effective Writing Workshops

• Temperature Check
• Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments
• Hot topics: Today we will discuss strategies for conducting effective writing workshops and problem solve some of the wrinkles we have experienced in our classrooms that inhibit productive work.
  o Introduce steps/procedures for peer response and editing; If you want to use a checklist (e.g., see the one I gave you for the summary), review with students. Explain to students that their least important responsibility is to point out sentence construction problems and/or grammar issues. They should concentrate on content, clarity, focus, and control.
  o My experience is that the more structured the workshop, the better the results: be clear about steps and responsibilities. Likewise, students generally rush through the workshop and finish before class time is up. When things begin to slow, move to some other related issue: the particular rhetorical strategy, or sentence construction issues, grammar points, etc. You can also use the time to allow students to work on their revisions, while you have mini-conferences and/or walk around the room to answer questions, discuss any written comments on paper.
  o I have been very successful with asking students to write a note to their responders prior to the session. Possible prompts include variations of the following: “What I think I have done well with in this draft…” “What I am still confused or concerned about…” “What kind of feedback I want from reviewers…” Student writers should read these before they begin to read their paper (I am a huge proponent of outloud reading of drafts…. Responders should have copies to follow along and make notes while the writer reads). Following response sessions, I ask students to freewrite
again: “What information I received from my group that I will think about as I revise…” “What I wanted that I didn’t get…” “What I will do next…”

- Book talk
- Microteach

October 8 Commenting on Student Work; Introduction to Gender and Family

- Temperature Check
- Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments—gender and family overview
- Hot topics: Today we will examine strategies for managing the paper load and commenting on student work. We will look at advantages for and purposes of the marginal comment and the end comment. We will examine commenting strategies promoted by Nancy Sommers, Director of The Harvard Writing Program.

- Book talk
- Microteach

October 15 Conducting Effective Student Conferences

- Temperature Check
- Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments
- Hot topics: Today we will look at strategies articulated by Donald Graves for conducting effective student conferences, which leave the authority for the writing in the hands/minds of the writer. Such strategies help to promote responsible and independent writers.

- Book talk
- Microteach

October 22 Teaching Grammar and Usage in Context; Introduction to Music

- Temperature Check
- Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments—music overview
- Today we will look at strategies for teaching grammar and usage in context; we will focus on LYSK and discuss its helpfulness (or lack thereof). We will also look at various strategies for exercises that teach grammatical usage in the context of student writing

- Book talk
- Microteach
October 29
Midterm Portfolio Assessment;
Working with Non-native Speakers of English
Meet with 101 Instructors LA 207

I will be attending the National Indian Education Association conference in Billings, MT. You will meet with Tully Thibeau, Professor of Applied Linguistics, and the 101 instructors. Professor Thibeau will discuss strategies for working with non-native speakers of English.

November 5
Working with Learning Disabled Students

• Temperature Check
• Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments
• Hot topics: Today, Bruce Adams, an academic learning/study skills counselor will help us look at strategies for working with learning disabled students.

• Book talk
• Microteach

November 12
Rhetorical Reading and Writing

• Temperature Check
• Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments
• Hot topics: Today we will examine strategies that promote rhetorical reading and writing so valuable to successful college students. We will look at the ways in which conversations about audience, message, and intent determine writing choices.

• Book talk
• Microteach

November 19
Grading Student Writing—the rubric;
Introduction to Film

• Temperature Check
• Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments—film overview
• Hot topics: Today we will examine grading rubrics and the ways in which we can make (more) objective decisions about ways to grade student writing. We will discuss the distinction between work ethic (effort) and product excellence. We will look at the relationship between sentence level accuracy and the larger writing concerns of focus, clarity, coherence, and control.
November 26  Helping Students with Diction and Style

- Temperature Check
- Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments
- Hot topics: Today we will examine ways to help students with diction and style in their writing. Although style is not frequently an issue in the ENEX 100 class, it is an element created by diction, or word choice. ENEX 100 students frequently suffer from attempts to use words they do not have the meanings for, but think they do. We will look at strategies for helping students with diction problems.

- Book talk
- Microteach

December 3  Preparing Students for Research Papers

- Temperature Check
- Outline of Upcoming Week Assignments
- Hot topics: Today we will look at ways to prepare students to do research as required in ENEX 101. We want to send our students off to 101 with some idea about research strategies and writing research papers.

- Book talk
- Microteach

December 10  Course Review; Exit Exams—Scoring Schedule; Looking Ahead; Celebration!

Today we will review aspects of the course, look ahead to the spring schedule, determine procedure for scoring exit exams and plan an end of the semester celebration.

- Horizontal evaluation observation logs and reflective papers due.

Happy Holidays!