Writing in the Disciplines

Saturday, March 3, 2018
Xavier University of Louisiana
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Writing in the Disciplines

9:45-10:10

- Using the Post-It notes, identify the aspects of writing that are important within your discipline.
  - Only 1 idea per note!
  - Please use the following color coding:
    - Yellow = Skills
    - Green = Knowledge
- Place the notes under your discipline in no particular order.

At any point today, feel free to update your notes.
• In 3 minutes or less, introduce yourself:
  – Your name
  – Your department/discipline
  – The writing project you proposed for this workshop.
Reflective Writing

10:20-10:30

• Write for 5-10 minutes in response to the following prompt:
• Describe the best writing assignment you had to do as an undergraduate.
• Be sure to consider...
  – Why was it the best assignment?
  – What was your professor trying to accomplish through it?
Students will be able to communicate effectively through writing...

- Students will be able to craft writing appropriate to specific context, audience, and purpose.
- Students will be able to develop content illustrating mastery of their subject.
- Students will be able to adhere to generic and disciplinary conventions.
- Students will be able to incorporate sources and evidence responsibly and effectively.
- Students will be able to demonstrate control of grammar, syntax, and mechanics.
Writing Across the Disciplines

10:50-11:10

• Part 1
  – Put a star on your Post-It notes that meet one of these criteria.

• Part 2
  – Go to a completely different discipline's area.
  – Given what you know about that discipline, place the notes in order of priority (top to bottom).
Alphabet Soup

• WAC: Writing Across the Curriculum
  – Blanket term for institution-level pedagogy to “integrate writing across departmental boundaries.”

• WTL: Writing to Learn
  – The use of short, informal writing tasks to help students learn and reinforce concepts and ideas.

• WID: Writing in the Disciplines
  – Writing instruction and assignments that stress the discipline-specific conventions and practices.

• WI/WIC: Writing Intensive Courses
  – Writing at all levels of instruction & across the curriculum. Students produce & revise various forms for different audiences in different disciplines.
WID Better Practices

Students Should...
1. Engage directly with the content, genres, and writing processes scholars in your field use.
2. Write throughout the course, with repeated practice and sustained support.
3. Talk frequently about writing in class.
4. Share their writing early and often: with the instructor and peers in class.
5. Complete a self-evaluation of their writing before submitting it for a grade.

Faculty Should...
1. Integrate writing with other important content.
2. Provide a detailed description for any major writing assignment: Purpose; Expectations; Process; Requirements.
3. Begin explicit instruction for writing early, with practice and reinforcement throughout.
4. Offer examples of writing which engage the content, use the writing processes, or serve as models.
5. Require multiple drafts of major writing assignments.

Adapted from "What is Writing Instruction in the Disciplines (WID)?" Western Illinois University, Spring 2014 & "10 Best Practices for Teaching Writing in the Major Courses." Stanford University, 22 Aug 2016.
What Matters Most?

11:30-11:50

• Considering the course/assignment you are working on...
  – Identify 3-5 things you want your students to demonstrate through the formal writing assignment.
    • Skills?
    • Knowledge?
Break!
Please return for lunch by 12:00.
(Net) Working Lunch

12:00-12:30

- With your assigned partner, discuss the expectations/outcomes you've developed for your assignment.
- Assignments:
  - Dunson & Frazier
  - Polite & Schafer
  - Homan & Roberts
  - Hite & Stachow/Todd
Rubrics

• List categories of performance to be assessed.
• Describe levels of performance in each category.
• Help instructor by simplifying & regulating grading & assessment.
• Help the student by laying out a map of your specific expectations.
• Select one of the expectations/outcomes you've developed.
• Describe what an ideal paper that meets this expectation looks like.
• Describe what an acceptable paper that meets this expectation looks like.
• Describe what a paper that fails to meet this expectation looks like.
Low-Stakes Writing

- Short, informal writing tasks, usually focused on one concept or skill.
- If graded, graded for effort or participation.
- Some examples:
  - Abstract/Annotation writing
  - The Parking Lot Test
  - Explain a concept
  - Online discussion groups
  - Learning journal
  - Email the author

- Select one of the expectations/outcomes you've developed.
- Describe a low-stakes writing task you could assign to see how well your students understand the concept or skill.
Drafting & Scaffolding

**DRAFTING**
- Forces students to see writing as a process.
- Provides on-going support & feedback.
- Allows instructor to catch & address unexpected problems.

**SCAFFOLDING**
- Increasingly less support as students improve their skills or knowledge.
- Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development:
  - "The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers."
Feedback

MARGINAL FEEDBACK

- Don't edit WTL assignments.
- Use drafting & scaffolding to hold students accountable for their writing.
- Think of yourself as a peer-review reader.

SUMMARY FEEDBACK

- Let your rubric do some of the work for you.
- Feedback doesn't have to be written:
  - Require a meeting
  - Record a video
  - Record audio
Assignment Development

1:30-2:00

- Transparency in Learning & Teaching
  - Purpose
  - Task
  - Criteria for Success

- Using the TILT template provided, begin to (re)develop your formal writing assignment.
Coming Soon!

2-day intensive teaching writing workshop.
Week of May 14 (after finals).
$2,500 participation stipend.