Subject: [wp501] Reprise of recent classes

We've covered quite a bit of ground in the past couple of weeks -- here are some highlights:

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Course Management

Building a Syllabus/Course Schedule around Assignments:

Eric did a nice job of modeling this approach. To create his humanities unit, he decided first what kind of student paper he wanted to read at the end. In this unit, he wanted an argumentative essay supported with evidence provided by close-readings of primary sources and supported with quotations provided by secondary sources. The assignment fits the Writing 2 curricular guidelines.

After deciding on his main assignment, Eric worked backwards to develop the unit as a whole. He added lots of small assignments to allow students to practice critical, close-reading. He chose readings that would take different, often opposing stands, on topics to allow students to try out different theoretical frames / perspectives / viewpoints and to begin to cite and to respond to critical voices. Also, the class discussions, freewrites, and other small assignments would give students opportunities to build up materials toward their final unit assignment.

He introduced the unit with an in-class exercise that would contain a familiar activity for students -- analyzing a (controversial) image that allows for different sets of interpretations, depending on the perspectives applied. The newspaper photo is also literally framed by a misleading caption, a move which points out the relationships between different information modes (visual and textual). The trick with close-reading is to get students to realize the many different layers that are open to interpretation -- they often stop short, as in the exercise that asked them to "read" a mall. They didn't know that it is possible to analyze the layout, the colors used, the music in the background (which often changes by store), the way people negotiate their way through the displays, the enticements for spending money, the plants, the height of the ceilings, the transitions between store fronts, etc., etc., etc. Writing 2 is a place for pointing out that many, many layers are possible.

And keep in mind that student papers are also appropriate texts for close reading.

Keeping Part of the Course Schedule in Reserve

On the first day of class, you must hand out a course schedule in which the major due dates are identified. But you do not have to hand out the entire list of
readings and day-to-day activities. Rather, you can give students materials one unit at a time. This method gives you time to understand your students' needs before you create assignments, and it allows you to fine-tune the class if certain methods aren't working for you.

**Playing To Your Strengths in a Writing Course:**

For a writing course, you should turn as much of the work over to your students as possible. Although you may need to do mini-lectures on various topics, even those will usually be based on examples taken from your students' writing. A writing course should be hands-on.

That said, there are many ways to run a writing course successfully, depending on your own strengths as a teacher. For example, I know that I particularly enjoy working with students one-on-one in conferences. So, I build one-on-one time into my course schedule. I might end class early one day in order to accommodate the extra demand on my time (and to work in appointments when students have tight schedules). Other teachers are particularly good at setting up in-class debates that require lots of small writing exercises. Or they might be particularly gifted at nurturing online forums. Feel free to start with what you do well.

**Trying Out New Stuff:**

When you read research by composition/writing scholars, you'll often find the theme that because we are such an interdisciplinary group, it's hard to find the common threads that characterize our discipline. However, one characteristic of good writing teachers is that they are always trying out new techniques, adding to their repertoire. A writer needs many different tools and types of knowledge for different tasks: invention tools for getting beyond writer's block; analytical methods for understanding texts and audiences; editing strategies for finalizing papers; and so on.

Likewise, a writing teacher constantly builds up a repertoire of ways of talking about and illustrating various writing processes and issues that writers might face. So, for example, experienced writing teachers will have a half-dozen ways of talking about paragraphs, in the hope that one of the ways will click with the writer they are working with.

That's a lot to take on at once, though. Instead, start with what you know and build. And steal. Another characteristic of good writing teachers is that they are also constantly exchanging materials with each other.

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Discussion Techniques

Logical Fallacies.

Chris H did a nice job of pointing these out and explaining how he uses them in class. You can find many websites devoted to logical fallacies. They work particularly well for texts that are predominately oral or oral-like in nature – political campaigns, for example, or speeches or blogs. One fun exercise can be to ask students to bring in materials that demonstrate various fallacies. They should look especially for texts that are not heavily edited (although you will find fallacies aplenty in edited texts, too): i.e., letters to the newspaper, opinion pieces, listserv flame wars, IMs, etc.

Debates.

Chris H. mentioned debates in passing, but I want to highlight that many teachers in our program enjoy setting up student debates, especially in the social sciences unit. The debates are useful for asking students to take other peoples' viewpoints into account when they are writing about significant topics. If you'd like more information about the ins-and-outs of running a debate-based unit, we could provide that for Orientation. Just let me know.

Jigsaw.

Eric mentioned this common technique. No, not an actual puzzle. Rather, in a jigsaw discussion, the instructor divides the class into groups. Each group is responsible for learning about/discussing one aspect (assigned by the instructor) of the general topic for the day, and then the class comes together as a whole to put these pieces together into an overall picture. So, if the class is analyzing a movie, then one group might be responsible for camera angles; another, for music and sound; another, for a particular symbol; (and so on). After allowing the small groups to discuss their topics for some time, the instructor has two choices. In one choice, the instructor immediately initiates a large-group discussion, with each of the small groups contributing. In the second choice, the instructor creates another jigsaw. Representatives from each group are recombined into small groups, and they report back to classmates on their topics. So, each of the new small groups comprises a camera-angle expert, a music & sound expert, a particular symbol expert, etc. After the new small groups have had a chance to exchange information, then the instructor initiates the large-group discussion. The jigsaw technique can be very effective for handling complex information.

Invention Techniques

Chained Freewriting.
Sarah demonstrated well how this works. Freewriting can be a useful technique for getting students to think about many angles of a topic, and so it can encourage them to not decide upon a thesis or "the answer" too quickly. However, freewriting generates a lot of stuff, much of which is unfocused. Chained freewriting is a way to focus the freewriting process a little bit. To begin the chain, freewrite on a topic for 10 mins. Then, read back through what you've written to find whatever is interesting in some way. Take up that topic and freewrite for another 10 mins. And so on, for however long you have.

Paragraph Techniques

Lindemann chapter & Schaffer method. The chapter in your reader does cover most of the major techniques for teaching paragraphing; I won't repeat it here. One variation, based on the Christensen paragraph, you should know about is the Jane Schaffer method. The Schaffer paragraph is very much a formula, which specifies what each sentence in a paragraph should do and how the writer can think them up. It is used widely in California secondary schools, and as a heuristic, it does what it is supposed to do: provide a tight-knit scaffold that high school students can use to generate complex, interpretive paragraphs. The problem comes when the tool becomes an end in itself. Some students believe that they will be punished if they don't produce Schaffer paragraphs, and they lose sight of the overall objectives of their paper. The Writing Program receives calls from parents each year demanding to know whether the Schaffer method is required by the UC system.

Scissors. At one time, "cut & paste" truly meant just that. And it continues to be a good exercise for teaching paragraphing -- type up a paragraph, leaving spaces & blank lines so that you'll be able to cut the individual sentences apart. Cut up the paragraph, so that each sentence is on its own slip of paper. Ask students to reassemble the sentences. In some cases, the students may create two or more paragraphs out of the slips of paper. (i.e., This is an especially useful exercise if the paragraphs contain too many different topics.) Ask students to explain why they have grouped certain sentences together, and why they have put them into the sequence they have chosen. Ask them to identify a topic sentence -- or, more likely, to construct a new one.

Color. Keep in mind that word processors can represent text in different colors. This, too, can be a useful way for explaining how a paragraph is organized. If you are in a computer lab, you can design exercises similar to the "cut & paste" one that use the computer screen & colored fonts instead.
Thesis Statement Techniques

See Eric's handout. The critical idea is to define what you mean by a thesis statement. Remember, in some kinds of writing, it is "OK" to simply announce the topic that you will cover. For example, consider what the thesis of an instruction manual might be. (In fact, most humanities scholars wouldn't consider the main point of an instruction manual to even "be" a thesis statement.) So, although it is true that in much academic writing, the thesis statement sets up an argument, don't assume that the term is universal.

**Inductive Analysis.** Here is an exercise for an already drafted introduction. Before the class, photocopy for everyone an introduction (or introductions) that appears to have many candidates for the thesis statement. Ask students to read through the introduction and to select the sentence that states the thesis. Then initiate a group discussion by asking students which sentence they underlined and why. Typically, in a class of 25 students, you'll get 4 kinds of answers. 1) Some students will select a sentence near the opening of the introduction -- because the sentence announces the topic of the paper (and, although they won't say this, because the opening can be one of two default positions for a thesis statement). 2) Some students will select a middle sentence that contains very specific themes; it often restates the opening gambit in more specific terms. 3) Some students will select a middle sentence that appears to be addressing a question or an issue, even if that sentence hasn't addressed the issue well. (Sometimes, in fact, there is a rhetorical question just before it. Other times, the sentence acknowledges a debate.) Since, for argumentative essays, you may have driven home already that an argumentative thesis must be contestable and must address other points of view, students will pull the sentence that appears to be starting to take a stand. 4) Some students will select a sentence toward the end of the introduction, particularly a sentence that begins to outline the rest of the paper. (Also, this is the other default location for a thesis statement.) In any case, you'll get at least 4 criteria on the table that these readers expect for a thesis statement. Wouldn't it be nice if they could be found wrapped up in one or two easy-to-spot sentences in the intro?

**Thesis Template.** Here is a heuristic for thinking about different elements that can make up a thesis statement (and note the slight change in criteria here). Although X, Y, because Z. "Although there is this other point of view, I am arguing for this viewpoint, because of the following reasons." Although some writing instructors may consider templates to be stifling formulas, in fact, templates can be useful starting points, because, like sonnets, they specify guidelines that direct a writer's creativity and offer the budding writer a model without the temptation of plagiarizing someone else's ideas. (Ok, that's an ugly sentence, but the point of the heuristic is to get a writer to think through the different moves a thesis statement could make.)
The *They Say / I Say* book offers many such templates.

**Close Reading Techniques**

*Images.* Many of our students are visually oriented. They know how to analyze images (even though most could also take their analysis further). Starting with a close-reading of an image can be a great way to start.

*Line-by-Line Analysis.* (The technical term for this at one time was Explication of Text.) Copy a short piece onto a transparency. The piece can be a short poem or a very short story. You're going for something of 10 lines or so. Ideally, you want something with a surprise somewhere in the middle, or, better yet, toward the end. Put the transparency on the overhead and cover (with a sheet of paper) everything except the title. Ask students to close-read the title -- what does the title suggest to you? What images come to mind? What echoes of other texts come to mind? Is it a quotation? If so, what is the context of the original text? What do you expect the following text to be about? What synonyms could have been used instead in the title? Why do you suppose those choices weren't made -- what difference would they have made?

Next, move the sheet of paper down to reveal just the first sentence. Ask students to close-read that. What words stand out? What synonyms could have been used instead? Why do you suppose those choices weren't made -- what differences would they have made? What images come to mind? What connections (if any) are there to the title? Do you see any patterns among the words? If so, why do you suppose they are there? How does the text make you feel? What does it make you think about? Is there anything unusual about the sentence format or word order? If so, why? What difference does it make?

Continue moving the sheet of paper down the text, line-by-line, analyzing each line as you go. Emphasize any overall patterns, too. What does this text seem to be adding up to? What themes are important? What do you expect at the end? What alternatives weren't taken? Are there any patterns to the alternatives not taken? (For example, are all of the doctors men, whereas all of the nurses are women?) What is the significance of any of these patterns?

Ideally, there will be a plot twist or sudden turn that causes readers to reconsider the material they have read so far in a new light. (So, think of something like a very, very short O'Henry tale, excerpts from Browning's Porphyria's Lover. There are collections called Short, Short Stories – you might take a look in them.) Keep asking the same questions you asked before about key words and patterns and images called to mind. But also ask how this new information causes readers to change their perceptions of the previous text. For example, Eric cleverly created a twist when he introduced the news photo without the caption, and then added the caption back to it.
Subject: [wp501] one way to run a peer review workshop

This comes from the SCWriP summer session, and it may be helpful to you. (South Coast Writing Project, a group associated with the National Writing Project, which aims to encourage K-16 teachers to also be writers. Many of the specific techniques of teaching writing have been worked on under the auspices of the National Writing Project). Karen

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Making Peer Review Work: Advice from Jan Goggans, UC Davis

Before Class Meets
1. Have a set of questions which is very clear and which addresses those things which are crucial to successfully writing the assignment.
2. Sequence the questions from general--what is the essay's main idea and how does it respond to the assignment--to the very specific--which paragraph does the best job of supporting the writer's thesis and why.
3. Make sure the questions are open ended (not yes/no) so that they will facilitate discussion. Often, questions which take the form of a "script" the writer reads are very successful.
4. (OPTIONAL) Set the groups based on strength, interest, personality. Use these same groups throughout the quarter.

In Class, Before the Workshop Begins
1. Read the questions aloud before you break the students into groups. You might even suggest possible responses.
2. As a matter of fact, say everything you want to say before you break the students into groups; otherwise, what you say will get lost.
3. Insist that students use the entire room--that they group themselves as tightly as possible and as far away from other groups as the room allows.
4. Explain the logistics of the workshop:
   ** each writer receives 15 - 20 minutes
   ** they read their drafts aloud and then ask for responses
   ** they should take notes on the discussion of their draft
   ** no editing allowed
5. If you don't set the groups in advance, use some kind of random grouping principle.
6. Ask them to write for 5 - 10 minutes about their essay—what they like about it, what worries them, what they anticipate will happen in the workshop.

During the Workshop
1. Circulate. Spend about 3 minutes--never more--with any given group.
   ** don't circulate in the same pattern
   ** get to every group
2. Use your time to facilitate helpful discussion. Praise a constructive comment. Ask the reviewers to summarize the essay's thesis and main support. (You say, "Joe, what's Connie's thesis?") If you hear a problem, use the reviewers again. (Kelly, is Connie's thesis addressing all of the assignment?)
3. Don't get caught with editing, or with one student's problem. Ask a student with major difficulties to meet with you during office hours.
4. Squat down or pull a chair up to each group. Don't loom over them or bend at the waist so you are looking down at them.
5. Don't wedge into a group or turn your back on the rest of the class. Always position yourself so that you can see the whole class. Talk to a group that thinks you're out of range, if need be, so they know you're aware of everything.
6. Give a two minute warning before each draft-reader's portion of time is up. In two minutes, force them to move on.
7. Keep track (either on the board or on a notepad) of good questions they ask or special problems they seem to be having.

After the Workshop
1. Have them write again, this time to articulate their revision plan.
2. Praise them highly. It is hard to listen to others talk about your work. It is perhaps harder to talk about others' work. What they have done is useful, difficult and professional work.
3. Go to the list you made during the workshop and use it for a 5 – 10 minute "mini lesson"--a quick discussion of what they need to know to successfully revise. Some examples: good words to introduce quotations; passive/active voice; conclusions that work; using present tense to talk about secondary sources; semicolons; the difference between effect and affect.
4. Call on them to talk about what they plan to do when they revise.

Presentation - Evaluating Student Writing
Heidi Marx-Wolf
May 10, 2006

When I initially read the theme for this week's class – evaluating student writing - I assumed we would be discussing grading issues and ways to identify key errors and problems in student writing. The articles we read for today don't really address either issue in great detail. Rather they take a cognitive approach to writing and apply it to the question of where students are at in the process of learning to write well. They all address how particular elements or manifestations of student writing reflect specific cognitive processes going on in the mind of the writer and how these affect the kind of prose that ends up being produced. The articles all highlight the way in which certain kinds of writing errors or problematic forms signal to the read, and hence to the writing instructor, what specific tasks the writer is focused on and those with which she is still struggling. Most of us have done a certain amount of teaching thus far, and hence our usual mode of
evaluating student writing is evaluating the "final product" by assigning a grade to it. Many of us, I'm sure, try to use this context to teach the student something about writing. In the margins of papers I write such things as follow: - "Where is your thesis?"
- "Tenses?"
- "Passive voice"
- "Vague sentence"
- "What do you mean by X?"
- "Awkward construction"

But this is very different from the kind of evaluation we will be doing as we work with students in Writing 2. What our authors have done for us this week is to provide an entirely different approach to dealing with the usual problems that mar student prose. The cognitive approach represented in these three articles allows us to contextualize and categorize types of errors, diagnostically determining where a student is at in their writing in light of where they need to go. Errors and anomalies now become signposts. Is the student having trouble with comprehension, with analysis, with definition? Furthermore, our relationship to particular pieces of student writing changes. Instead of fixing a piece of student writing on a scale from F to A, we are facilitating a dynamic process of transforming what the student already has, both in terms of words on a page and a set of skills mastered. In other words, the evaluation process outlined by Linda Flower consists in determining where on a continuum between writer and reader - based prose a student's piece is and strategizing how to move it along. In this context, student errors are no longer reasons for taking away points from an ideal A paper. Rather they become symptoms of mental processes that can be addressed, engaged with and redirected.

**A Brief Post-Presentation Reflection:**
I made this point in our meeting last week, but thought I might reiterate it here. I was struck by the difference between the way Paul and Karen approached the exercise of editing the neophyte prose piece John-Michael brought in and the way in which I did. My first impulse was to look for ways to make the piece better, to fix the errors, and to think of what I would tell the student s/he needed to do to change it. On the other hand, Karen and Paul both considered the ways in which they would work with the student to engage him or her in the editing process. Karen didn't put pencil to paper. Rather, both Karen and Paul devised a series of questions to ask the student who, in answering them, would have to think differently about the prose and the exercise itself. I found the difference between my initial approach to evaluating the piece and that of Karen and Paul both instructive and illustrative of the main points of last week's readings.

**Subject: [wp501] More sample course schedules**

Hi all,
Just a reminder that you have 2 other sample course schedules at hand:
1) The instructor’s manual for WAW talks through the construction of a couple of course options. The manual was written by 2 former TAs here at UCSB, so it is relevant.

2) The units that Paul, Chris & Eric have given you are designed to be combined into a full course. In their handouts, they assumed the order would be the sciences, social sciences & the humanities, but the units could also be reordered.

Best,
Karen

Subject: [wp501] Sample Writing 2 Syllabus -- Race Gender & Oppression

Hi again, Debra, also an experienced writing teacher, has likewise been using Writing about the World in her W2 classes. She has chosen to run a set of themes through the entire course, which makes for a nicely coherent class. Her themes are Race, Gender & Oppression. In this case, she was comfortable with announcing all of the readings and assignments upfront, for she had taught similar topics before.

----- Forwarded message from debraguckenheimer@umail.ucsb.edu ----- 
From: "Debra E. Guckenheimer" <debraguckenheimer@umail.ucsb.edu>

Dear Karen,

My syllabus is attached. It would be my pleasure to talk about my experiences using WAW. I very much enjoyed using the book, and I know that my students enjoyed having a theme to the class, so that we have talking and writing about the same topics throughout the class.

Let me know if you have any questions about the syllabus and when a good time to come to the 501A class. I will be around in the Fall as well.
Best,
Debra

--
Debra Guckenheimer
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"...perhaps the goal is not to find the answer but to keep the conversation going." Barbara Ryan
"...research should be done with people, rather than on people."
Robin Ely and Debra Meyerson

"Honest differences are often a healthy sign of progress."
Mahatma Gandhi

**Subject: [wp501] Sample Writing 2 syllabus & materials**

Hi everyone,
Nuno Sena <NunoAFLS@msn.com> has been teaching with Writing about the World this quarter for the first time, and he has kindly agreed to share his materials with us. An experienced writing teacher, he has chosen to give out his course schedule unit by unit as the class has progressed. i.e., at the beginning of the course, he notified students when the major assignments would be due, but he gave them the readings for only the first unit (a science unit). That way, he gave himself time to see where students were in their writing & reading before finalizing his own reading and assignment choices. When he finishes the humanities unit, I'll ask him to forward it to us.

Nuno has also chosen to supplement Writing about the World with his own reader. That is also an option open to you.
More soon,
Karen

**Subject: [wp501] Digital copies of Unit 2 documents**

Hi all,

Attached are digital copies of the handouts from my presentation last week. Please feel free to use anything you find helpful, and let me know if you have any questions, comments or suggestions.

--Chris

**Subject: Fwd: Nuno: Writing Materials**

Hi guys, There should be several attachments to this message -- all of Nuno's materials so far for Writing 2. I think that he's using Sue's book this quarter, with additions. In any case, please take a look. Best,
Karen
Hi everyone,

Here is a brand new online resource that I think will be very useful to you:
http://comppile.tamucc.edu/wiki/BasicWriting/BestPractices

Let me back up & explain the context (see below as well). CompPile is an online resource center created by Rich Haswell, with the assistance of Glenn Blalock. We will be reading some of Rich's work later this quarter. CompPile began as a bibliographic database of writing studies research, which you can find via the Home Page at http://comppile.tamucc.edu/ CompPile is now expanding to include other kinds of collected information, such as best practices, statistics on different writing programs, and links to professional organizations. The link to Basic Writing best practices you'll find here compiles a lot of solid research and advice about how to work with students whose writing needs extra attention. Actually, most of the practices they mention here--on providing feedback, designing the course, addressing ESL questions--carry over into more advanced writing courses as well.

Please dive in & explore the sites, both now and over the summer. More information will be added, I'm sure, as other researchers begin to contribute.
Best, Karen

Not to toot my students' collective horns, but please do check out the new CompPile section on "Basic Writing: Best Practices" (http://comppile.tamucc.edu/wiki/BasicWriting/BestPractices). We all hope that these prove to be a really valuable resource for comp. instructors at all levels, and especially for courses-called-basic-writing where instructors are working to incorporate best practice instruction.

These were developed by students in a graduate course (Teaching Basic Writing at the College Level) that we just wrapped up last night. The FAQs are students' major research work for the semester, and to say that students found writing for this real audience in this real space meaningful is a whopping understatement. (One told me that she'd already sent the link to all of her friends; another said that her bro-in-law is on the Ypsilanti School Board and she'd sent it to him. And the whole "real public" thing? Huge. Huge!)

I also do want to toot Glenn Blalock and Rich Haswell's horns – and loudly - for making CompPile FAQ available for this kind of work. We all see the HUGE service that they're providing to the field with CompPile and these FAQs, but only my students and I have seen the incredible care and thought that they put in to
this collaboration -- from commenting on the initial assignment that I developed, to responding to summary memos from students as they developed their pages (with incredibly thorough, thoughtful comments that students took quite seriously, in part because of the space/construct/sources), to formatting the front page and creating links within the pages. A very big, very loud public thanks to both of them to making this kind of model possible... and something to consider for others, perhaps?
-Linda

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Subject: [wp501] reprise for April 19

Reprise for April 19, 2006
Hi everyone, Many thanks again to Paul, Pax, and Ken for their presentations! Let me summarize here some of the scaffolding to take away from the past week --

Course Management 1:

* Mapping the Overall Arc of a Course -- We're sending out full examples of Writing 2 syllabi/schedules soon. You will also find one in your Instructor's Manual. But, now that you've seen what one writing unit might look like, let me note here at least 3 ways to think about holding a full course together.

These 3 ways can also be combined.

1) **Repeat types of writing exercises, activities, and short & long assignments.**

Last week, we mentioned the idea of reverse outlining as an activity that could be usefully repeated throughout a course. This week, Paul introduced the idea of writing summaries.

The summary template you tried out comes from Behrens & Rosen, and as Eric mentioned earlier, it can stimulate initial resistance from students because it is formulaic, but it has also worked well for many people in the program. As Paul mentioned in his email, it might seem strange for those of us
in the humanities to set out to teach summary per se. After all, we spend a lot of time telling writers to NOT just summarize a plot. But there are many times when writers need to summarize -- literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, materials for non-expert audiences, etc. It can be useful to teach summary alongside questions of how to paraphrase and how to quote. If you found that you didn't like following the B & R template, you will find other templates and suggestions in sections of textbooks and websites that talk about paraphrasing and quoting.

One caution re: summary -- I would advise _against_ teaching it as a "basic" skill that students must master before moving on to the more exciting realms of argument. It is true that when readers/learners are attempting to understand something, they will often (inadvertently) summarize the materials in their own words first. I encourage my students to do that. But summary is a text-type in itself that should be put to work (in an annotated bibliography, as a review, etc.). Since many students may already know how to summarize pretty well, get them to focus on the when's and why's for summary. (Eric mentioned earlier that you'll be surprised by students who have trouble with summarizing, and you can give them individual attention.) In our case, the summaries you wrote for the 501A class have now become a resource you can draw on later when you put together your W2 courses. You might consider similar collective assignments for your W2 class -- how could students develop resources & materials for each other?

2) **You can hold a full course together by focusing on repeated *themes* or *issues*.**

One of the upcoming sample Writing 2 schedules, for example, runs issues of gender through all 3 units. The Writing about the World textbook lends itself to this technique. As was noted in our discussion, some of the readings could be used equally well in the sciences and social sciences units. Distinguishing them for the different units depends on what rhetorical elements you choose to emphasize.

3) **You can hold a full course together by sequencing assignments.**

Paul's unit displays how he uses a series of shorter assignments and exercises to allow students to develop materials for the final unit assignment. You can do similar kinds of sequencing across the course as the whole.

* Course Management 2:

* Focus on student writing, as well as the reading skills needed to understand various texts, not on "covering" disciplinary content. The Bedford/St. Martin's handbook chapter in our 501 Reader makes this point, and Paul's sample unit illustrated it. Notice that he left the choice of textbook readings open. One
activity that we didn't get to in class was to ask y'all what readings you would choose for a unit such as his. What do you think?

Instead, Paul's unit is built around a writing assignment and the activities that should lead up to it. The readings exist to elicit some student writing. And then the student writing becomes the focus of the class, as students work on developing their research questions and strategies for addressing those questions. Student writing becomes visible to the entire classroom, as it is read aloud, projected on the overhead, written on the blackboard, posted to listservs and discussion boards, and so on.

Discussion Strategies:

There were several examples this week, many of which are probably second nature to you, but perhaps worth pointing out explicitly as scaffolding techniques.

* **Using the chalkboard.**
  Simple, but teachers (including myself) often forget to use it. Pax and Ken illustrated how the chalkboard can be particularly effective for a writing class -- to make ideas visible to everyone, to quickly summarize, to allow teachers and students to re-group/re-categorize the discussion topics as needed.

  Another time you might use the chalkboard -- at the beginning of class to provide an outline of what that day will cover.

  Note: in HSSB rooms, with a full class of 25, the students who sit in the back of the room will not be able to see the lowest 1/4 of the board or the screen. (I've observed classes from the back, and this is a disappointing aspect of these rooms.)

* **Encouraging pair share.**
  You've seen me do this a couple of times, and Ken & Pax also did this. Students are often generous with their ideas and discussion if they are given some time to think about a specific task and rehearse what they want to say. One technique for rehearsal is to ask them to discuss something in small groups (2-3) before presenting to the class as a whole. I sometimes turn this into a running theme (joke?) by asking people to volunteer -someone else- to present, especially if they have heard something especially interesting.

* **Explicitly scaffolding small-group discussions.** Pax and Ken also nicely demonstrated how effective this can be – they circulated around the room to help push small group discussions forward. By doing so, they had a sense of what the class had been talking about and again, they could point out interesting things.
* Turning difficult questions back to students.*  
You need not have an answer for everything. It can be very effective to turn issues back to the class for a discussion.

* Paying attention to where you’re placed physically.*  
As Paul commented -- it felt somewhat odd to him to stand in the middle of a circle, as though at a theater in the round. I ended up moving to different seats in the circle so that I could see. Ken and Pax first stood near the board so that they could use the table and write on the chalkboard; they then circulated around the room. All of these positions can subtly change the dynamics of a class.

**Assignment Techniques:**
As the readings and our discussion suggested, if you will craft a purposeful assignment with shared, but selective, grading criteria, you will be more likely to elicit good student writing. Please note: you will have opportunities during Orientation and 501B to receive feedback on your assignments before you give them to your classes.

Please note too: the suggested assignments in Writing about the World often contain considerable scaffolding for students. Please feel free to use them or to model your own assignments on them.

Some key points:

- The curricular guidelines will help you design assignments because they indicate the outcomes that the assignments should help students meet.
- An assignment can do only so much at one time. Decide which skills a particular assignment will address at such-and-such moment in the course.

Focus on those skills when you develop your grading criteria. For example, I might spend considerable class-time with students on how to write introductions. My grading criteria for that assignment will therefore privilege the introduction.

- Pax and Ken illustrated a very effective way of helping students build a shared understanding of the criteria for an assignment. They started by asking us to reflect on our own experiences to explain what worked and what didn't, and by the end of class, they were helping us build a consensus regarding what was good, bad, and ugly about assignments. Alternatively, you might provide students with some sample texts (good & bad) and ask them to reflect on what makes them effective or not.

- Ken and Pax also nicely brought up the issue that because students are coming from different backgrounds and disciplines, we cannot assume that everyone will know what you are requesting. (I was reminded of that recently when I gave a
graduate-level assignment in which I asked for the equivalent of a conference paper. "But I've never written a conference paper," came the response.) It is worth spending class-time to talk through what you are requesting students to do.

-On providing models and sample papers... Students may have different approaches to how to use models and sample papers. In some fields, they are expected to replicate rather precisely the models set before them. After all, when it comes to following mathematical formulae, our society actually doesn't want accountants and engineers to be too creative. So, to forestall plagiarism, you may want to provide a sample paper that addresses a topic that students won't be using.

From: Paul Rogers <progers@education.ucsb.edu>
Date: April 19, 2006 7:05:11 PM PDT
To: wp501@mail.lsit.ucsb.edu
Subject: Re: [wp501] Science Writing Unit

Hello everyone:

Attached to this email is the science unit assignment. I'm offering this digitized version as one more piece of scaffolding, perhaps you can modify it as a template. Someone asked so I'll say to all that you are free to use the material in any way you want, if you want to put a note of citation I think that's a good thing for all of us as teachers to do; it's something I try to do, but the truth is I don't always give credit when appropriating the lessons of colleagues.

Here are a couple of things I didn't say.

On Summary:
I'd like to argue that summary writing is a necessary and insufficient skill for academic writers. It is necessary in that we must comprehend correctly what authors are saying in order to use appropriate their ideas and voices in our own writing, and to me there is a standard for correct: reasonable, plausible and supported by evidence. At least there is a range of correct possibilities.

Also, summary is part of a series of skills related to integrating sources into our own writing--summary, paraphrase, and quotation. Which I think are important for us to work on in W2, and are a big part of making academic arguments. I've done a small amount of research on this using student writing; here's how I've categorized the use of sources in academic writing.

• Reporting the voice(s)/texts of others --summary--
• Contrasting different voice(s)/texts
• Reporting what others have said about the voice(s)/texts
• Making a comment about the voice(s)/texts
• Comparing observations to the voice(s)/texts in critique and inquiry
• Speaking back to the voice(s)/texts

Of course this fits back in to my conversation model of academic discourse too.

I wouldn't present this to students, but my point is that summary is a baseline, again, necessary but insufficient. I also like making the distinction between summary and other forms of writing. This is especially important in humanities writing because students often spend too much time summarizing, when they should be analyzing, interpreting, critiquing etc...So if we’ve defined what a summary is we’ve also defined what it isn't, well maybe!

Best,

Paul

Subject: [wp501] reprise of wed's class

Hi everyone,

The Associates suggested, and I agree, that it would be helpful to use the listserv to keep track of the many teaching suggestions shared in 501a. The technical term for the suggestions is "scaffolding" -- information that enables others to do a task without doing it for them. You'll provide your Writing 2 students with all kinds of scaffolding to enable them to write, from carefully crafted assignments to in-class activities to templates to feedback.... I've divided the information here into categories we are likely to return to. Please feel free to let me know if you have any questions or if I've forgotten something.

Last Wed, we mentioned the following:

Course Management--
* **Curricular Guidelines.** Although a writing course may include many techniques and topics and goals (and individual instructors are free to bring them in), the course must meet the curricular guidelines. In the case of Writing 2, that means an emphasis on exploring different discourses and on working with secondary sources. When considering assignments, in-class activities, and readings, it's useful to consider explicitly how they will help you and students meet the curricular guidelines.

* **Segmenting.** The Writing 2 classes are 1 hr 50 mins. Typically, instructors will break the timeframe into 20-30 min chunks (more or less), with different activities in each chunk. That helps to keep students' attention. It also allows you to appeal to different learning styles (some students learn better/differently by
engaging in visual activities, aural activities, kinesthetic activities, etc.) btw, by including an activity that requires students to get up and move at some point, you help keep them awake.

Discussion Techniques--

* First-week or so discussions. Both Eric and Karen mentioned ways of connecting what we want students to know with what they already know. Around the 2nd day, to set up his course's themes, Eric asks students to consider themselves as writers. When he asks them, "Who is a writer?" only a few students typically raise their hands. It's only when they start discussing why they don't want to claim that identity that it comes out that the students are in fact doing a lot of writing...blogs, email, IM, letters, etc. A discussion like this gets at the felt/perceived differences between academic or school writing and their own voices/goals/practical writing/motivated writing, etc. You can point out to students that they can bring their considerable skills into the academic world, and you can begin to talk about why academic writing may seem foreign. What are its characteristics? How can you analyze it?

Also, the discussion gets at questions of audience. Students know that they write differently when they write to their friends and when they write to Aunt Millie. That experience can help them understand that academic discourse is also not monolithic -- that people write to different communities that also have different rules.

Karen added to Eric's comments about audience. She often has an early class exercise in which she puts on the overhead sample email messages from students (with names/some details changed). She aims to get across to students the etiquette that many professors will expect. Some of the samples she includes are those with problematic email monikers and those with way too many details about their illnesses or after-hours activities. She reminds students that state employees (i.e., all of their instructors) are obliged to report unreported crimes.

Analysis Techniques--

* Reverse outline. This is a technique that can be repeated throughout the course. A "reverse" outline is simply an outline that readers generate for an already written text. There are at least two levels or questions that can be addressed in a reverse outline. One, readers can list the topics addressed in each part of the text, perhaps paragraph by paragraph. Two, readers can talk about what work each text segment does. What work does this introduction do? (some possibilities...attract a reader's attention, set up a problem, outline the piece, name a main point, rehearse the common ground of knowledge that readers may already know, and so on.) What work does this next section do? (some possibilities... address the first main bit of evidence for the thesis statement, provide a history of the problem, provide a summary of the text
You can use reverse outlining on many different kinds of texts, including the
students' texts. On a reading from the textbook – a reverse outline can help
students understand how the text sets up an argument (and what in fact is being
argued). On a text that models the kind of writing that you would like students to
produce, say a sample student essay – a reverse outline can help your students
understand the different kinds of work that each section of their piece should do.
On a peer's text or the student's own text -- a reverse outline can help reveal
when the logic or sequence of a piece is falling apart. If students can't figure out
what topic is actually being addressed in a section of the paper, and if they can't
see what work is being done, then they know that those sections of a paper need
work.

You can use reverse outlining in different ways during a course. You might
select a *short* piece, put it on the overhead (or computer screen), and work
through it together with your class. You might assign reverse outlines of
readings for homework -- which also serves to make sure that students do at
least some of the reading. You might ask students to generate reverse outlines
during peer review, especially if they are working on essays, to help them
analyze the writing. You might ask students to bring a reverse outline with them
when they meet with you one-on-one to discuss their work. With all of these
options, keep in mind that it can take some time to generate a reverse outline.

*Template Techniques--*
Writing teachers often employ templates, but with caution. Too often, a template
that was intended to be a starting point becomes a goal in itself. For example,
one that we'll talk about later is the Schaffer method for producing
paragraphs. Each year, we receive calls from parents who are concerned that
the UC system "requires" the Schaffer paragraph. That said, the templates can
be useful as an early model of how to do certain kinds of work.

* I Say, They Say (Graff & Birkenstein).

This book contains many templates for getting students to think through how to
incorporate others' arguments into their own. It's brand new from Norton, and
several people in the program are beginning to experiment with it. It's interesting
to WP folks because of the W2 emphasis on working with secondary sources.