

Fall 2023

The Practice and Theory of Teaching Writing

Professor Mya Poe and Amelia Morrison
ENG 3381





About the Class

ENG 3381-The rundown

The Practice & Theory of Teaching Writing exposes students to new rhetorical moves and helps them to refine and understand their own processes as writers, tutors, and teachers. Students will read writing center and writing studies scholarship, produce writing in several genres, propose original research, observe tutors and instructors, facilitate a lesson, offer feedback in a variety of settings, and reflect on their experiences. Throughout the semester, students will form a community of dedicated writers, researchers, and thinkers. To accomplish these goals, we will (a) examine what researchers and theorists have said about writing, (b) examine what theorists and practitioners have said about teaching in conference setting and classroom settings, and (c) observe, examine, and reflect upon our own experience as writers and tutors. ENGL 3381 satisfies the experiential learning and writing-intensive requirement for English majors and is an elective option for Rhetoric minors.

Diverse Students → Great Conversation

Wide range of majors

Students studying everything architecture to neuroscience students to to linguistics.

Neurodiverse


Students were comfortable talking about their own struggles in the classroom.

Mix of personalities



Some students talked more than others, but all of them made room for each other to speak freely. The classroom really became a safe space.

Multicultural

Many of our students are bilingual and brought their multilingual experience to class, allowing for effective conversations about linguistic diversity within the English language.



Having a diverse class makes it easier to focus on asset-based community development because we get to observe the wide range of student assets in class each day.





Service Learning

Our Partners:



“826 Boston is a nonprofit writing, tutoring, and publishing organization where students in grades K-12 and beyond can share their stories, amplify their voices, and develop as leaders in school and in life.”

“Cristo Rey Boston is a Catholic high school exclusively serving families of limited economic resources. By offering a rigorous curriculum, a unique work-study experience, and the support of an inclusive community, we prepare our students to succeed in college and beyond with the core values of dignity, perseverance, growth and generosity.”



Some students sought out their own partnerships:



One student chose to work with a cultural center in Worcester where she helped a high-school-aged girl with college applications.



One student worked consistently with a fifth-grade boy through ASC where she helped him with homework and executive functioning skills.



20 hours

Minimum hours of service-learning
we asked students to complete this semester.

16 students

In ENG 3381

377.25

Total hours for all students in ENG 3381
*as of 11/28



Reflections

We asked students to regularly reflect on their tutoring experiences both in and out of class



Growth

September


“I'm nervous overall about the SL since I've never tutored before”

October

“[My student] and I did a division competition and he actually beat me.”

November

“I'm really happy because I think that my student is improving a lot!”



Teaching Moments

“[My student] made a comment about how she wasn't a good public speaker, and I had to figure out how to validate her anxiety while also trying to empower her. Ultimately I encouraged her to do more speaking, and she decided to read our person of the day out loud to the whole class.”

“One new thing I learned was not to make assumptions based on a student's behavior - ex. Describe specifics instead of saying ‘the student is being disobedient’”

“Instead of writing students off as being disruptive, it is far more important for me to understand and help them through it.”

“[It's] upsetting to hear some of the things these young students are going through. I had a young girl telling me she needed to lose weight last week and it broke my heart. She was so young! I just wish she didn't feel that way about herself at such a young age”



Overcoming Challenges

“I got my student to work better when we did little drawings in between assignments”

“I’ve been learning that guiding questions are helpful to ask without revealing the answers to the student. For example, ‘what do we think about this?’”

“It’s hard to console a crying student who has shut down (bc she couldn’t figure out the math), but the woman who runs 826 was like ‘no you’re doing a great job’ so I guess it was fine– it’s just a tough situation.”





Final Takeaways





Student assets matter


Some organizations had more structure for beginning tutors, others were great places for experienced tutors to connect with students in new ways! We promote students to bring their best selves by recognizing their efforts and making service attainable.





Practice Matters!





Tutoring is a useful tool in a teaching course because it allows students to introduce key practices on a small, and more personal scale.





Putting theory into practice

Every class we have to ask: “How can we connect the readings on linguistic diversity to tutoring sessions? How do we bring what we know to our students in ways that they understand?”





**Thank
You!**