



Good News for This Semester!

The Writing Center continues to grow. This semester we have 23 faculty, 48 Writing Fellows, and 12 Peer Tutors. We're also getting national attention with our online presence.

Online Videos Still Unique in the Field

The University of Texas online journal *Praxis*, dedicated to the training of peer tutors, published two articles that review our site "Training for Tough Tutorials." See the Spring 2004 issue at <http://uwc3.fac.utexas.edu/%7Epraxis/index.html>, for the articles "Training on the Cutting Edge" and "Get Online with Training."

We're surprised to see that Richmond remains the only program offering video-training such as ours. While Dartmouth has an online video, it is a linear account of a single scenario, rather than the multiple-scene, good-and-bad heuristics approach we pioneered for "Training for Tough Tutorials." For all of you who helped with the videos over the years, or who are developing three new videos in Eng. 383, we extend our thanks.

Speaking of Videos...

The Eng. 383 students in Joe Essid's section will complete, as their final projects, three new training scenarios:

The "Bloody" Paper: a Writing-Center tutor grapples with a paper that has been "red-penned" to death with poorly considered professorial commentary. The scenario will prepare tutors for several difficult ethical issues revolving around tutorial ethics.

WAC Newsletter 1

Richmond Writing Across the Curriculum Newsletter

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Techniques for Questions: We might want to subtitle this one "But I Still Don't Get It!" since the scenario looks at ways tutors can ask follow-up questions when a writer does not understand our explanations and advice.

Writing Fellow, not Tutor: We have never included a scenario featuring written commentary by a peer. In this scenario, we'll explore best practices when a tutor works with a class as a Writing Fellow and must write commentary without becoming "A little professor."

A Writing Exercise

by David Thomas, Dept. of Rhetoric & Communication Studies

I teach a Core section in one of the new classrooms in Weinstein Hall. Each of the ten classrooms in the building has a suite of multimedia tools, including a "Document Camera," that functions much like the old opaque projectors, only much better.

In class one day, I hit upon an interesting writing exercise that might have paid off dividends for facilitating the writing process. The lesson for the day was related to Charles Darwin's books on evolution. I distributed some shark's teeth (fossils) to each student and asked them to write a paragraph reflecting on their experiences and thoughts as they contemplated the objects they were holding in their hands.

As I collected their paragraphs, I asked if anyone objected to having the class read what they had written (no one did), and then projected each paragraph on the screen. My objective was to generate a method of discussion in which every voice in class would be heard. In that, I succeeded. But I also observed what seemed to me a palpable excitement in the class as each student was able to see what he or she had just written being read by everyone else.

Of course, the writing was impromptu, in longhand. I disregarded any spelling or grammar issues, or neatness. I consciously avoided making any comments to criticize or derogate anyone's writing ability, and kept the focus strictly on what the students had written. In that, the exercise was very successful, since the paragraphs on display included a wide range of reflections and observations, from clinical description to metaphysical musings. The exercise did generate discussion into some directions I doubt would have emerged in the usual manner of class discussions.

Yet in hindsight, I imagine that even for those whose writing efforts showed less skill or precision, there was a valuable learning experience in comparing what they had produced side-by-side with twenty of their classmates, some possessing more writing finesse and more extensive vocabularies, but some not.

I plan to do this exercise again with this class. Perhaps someone else has other ideas for fostering writing skills in an ordinary classroom day.

Dealing With No-Shows and Latecomers

by Josh Parrett, Writing Fellow



No one can be on time all the time. But this can be aggravating for a Writing Fellow, especially when a student blows off an appointment. Or if a student arrives at 2:50 for a 2:30 appointment and you have another conference at 3. I'd like to share the message I send my students, so that they know how to handle such situations.

"Hello, this is Josh, and I'll be working as your Writing Fellow for this semester. I'd like to take the time to explain my

policies for writing appointments:

“Hopefully, we’ll make an appointment and you’ll be there. That’s the goal! However, if you need to cancel or reschedule, I’d like to request that you do the following:

“1A. Email me as soon as you realize you need to cancel, and/or no later than one hour before your scheduled appointment time. Wait and see if you get a response from me- if you don’t get an answer AND there are only 15 minutes left before your appointment, THEN...

“1B. ...come to our arranged meeting place! Meet me there, and tell me that you need to reschedule, and we’ll do just that.

“2. If you realize that you’re going to be late for an appointment, late is still better than never! Come to our meeting place and we’ll reschedule the conference.

“PLEASE NOTE, if you cancel or miss an appointment, and don’t inform me in advance or according to the guidelines above, I’d kindly ask that you not schedule appointments in the future. Please don’t let me find an emailed explanation from you two hours after our meeting. Of course, emergencies will be met with understanding.”

PETE Lunch - Looking for ways to inspire learning? Join Lee Carlton and Cheryl Pallant on March 17 for “Motivated Learning: Combating Apathy” in Commons 331.

Program Announcements:

Jason M Przybylski studied at University of Edinburgh in Scotland last semester.

Emily Sever will be studying in Florence, Italy for Fall 04 and in Bristol, England for Spring 05.