**English 796: The Pedagogically Possible: Imagining College Writing Instruction Otherwise**

Fall 2020 | Mondays, 5:50pm-8:35pm | Gambrell 103A

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Office hours: Mondays 4-5pm, Tuesdays 245pm-4pm, **and/or by appt.**

* I am generally prompt with email
* Appointments can be arranged in person/office or via video call (zoom, Bb Collaborate, Microsoft Teams)

**Graduate Bulletin Description**

ENGL 796 Special Topics in the Teaching of English **–** Exploration of issues relevant to the teaching of literature, composition, rhetoric, or speech communication. May be repeated for credit as topics vary.

**Course description – *The Pedagogically Possible***

*What can writing (instruction) do?* First-year or required university writing courses can get a bad rap—they gatekeep; they are slow or tough to change; their missions are sometimes overambitious or untenable. In this course, we'll work to complicate this image, multiplying our sense of what writing and its instruction *could be* capable of by looking to visionary work from writing pedagogues and theorists both historical and contemporary. We’ll think about composition courses, but also how writing is taught and used to support learning, thinking, and expression across the university and beyond. **The purpose of this seminar is to get you thinking about *possibilities* in the teaching of and with writing.** In 15 weeks, we’ll only be able to *start* that work, bringing focus in particular to teacher-research orientations and practices, theories of composing (and writing classrooms), active writing strategies/activities, response/feedback/grading. As this this course builds a foundation in the literature on composition pedagogies and praxis and takes a teacher-research approach through which students will be invited to observe and experiment in their own teaching, it will be of interest to those who are invested in teaching and the teaching of writing.

**Course Objectives |** Through this course, students will be able to:

* Conceptualize contemporary writing pedagogies (methods, assumptions, challenges) in historical, theoretical, institutional, and ideological contexts
* Explore the theory, practices, and potential of contemporary college writing instruction and praxis
* Discover pragmatic and cutting-edge practices/methods for the teaching of writing, in a variety of contexts
* Practice informal, qualitative teacher-research methods (observation, reflection, text analysis) in available teaching contexts
* Analyze, summarize, synthesize and critique scholarship in rhetoric and composition
* Synthesize and intervene in course content with individual (teacher-)research conducted in an area of the student’s interest
* Develop scholarly literacies including critical reading; intellectual engagement/conversation; summary and response; close reading and discussion; conference-style paper presentation and/or course design; critical argumentation

**Required Texts**

* **Required:**
	1. *ENGAGING IDEAS*, John Bean and Daniel Melzer, THIRD EDITION (do make sure it's the third ed.) 9781119705406
	2. *After Pedagogy: The Experience of Teaching*, Paul Lynch 9780814100875
* ***Optional* to purchase *(I’ll provide the selections)*:**
	+ *Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, Tate et al, SECOND EDITION, 9780199922161
	+ *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks, 9780415908085
	+ *Writing without Teachers*, Elbow, SECOND Edition, 9780195120165
* **Other course readings (PDFs) and resources** available in this Google Drive folder: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/142L1uqTS7alAINCod5Y0PR6QfMkQjE-F?usp=sharing

**Course Requirements** (\**see below for all assignment details*)

* Prep and Participation 20%
* Teacher-Research, *total* 40%
* **Final Project**: Conference-Length Paper or Syllabus Design & Rationale 40%

**Final Grades**

This course is **contract-graded**, meaning, in this case, that you’ll earn baseline credit (basically the equivalent of A-) for completing each course component outlined in this syllabus (below). You’ll get formative feedback from me on all course work, which will include “ranking” evaluative language to help you improve your scholarly writing and thinking (here, I may or may not use letter grades to communicate my qualitative assessments). However, in this contract system I will not “calculate” discrete grades toward a final grade. Rather, your final course letter grade will be a wholistic assessment of your efforts. ***Consistent effort, on-time delivery, growth, involvement in your learning is a good guide for succeeding in this seminar.***

**Final Grade Scale**

* A: 90+ (completed all course requirements in a timely and effortful manner; had some excellence moments)
* B+: 85-89.99 (completed all course requirements in a timely and effortful manner; had some good work)
* B: 80-84.99 (most or uneven on course requirements; enduring struggles with time, effort, engagement, attendance; worrying performance)
* C+: 77-79.99 (consistent trouble meeting course requirements...worrying performance, attendance, etc.)
* (C: 70-76.99 D+: 67-69.99 D: 60-66.99 F: 59 and below)

***Why I am ‘contract grading’:*** we’ll explore this kind of assessment during the term. For now, why I am contracting for graduate learning, in short: grades interfere – putting letter grades on your discrete writing projects undermine the impact and meaning of the qualitative feedback; they don’t reflect any of the ways that your scholarly writing will/is actually judged (peer review processes reign, no letter grades in sight!); determining letter grades on writing takes my time, which is much more advantageously spent on qualitative feedback; largely, graduate seminars in our department (and most) are final graded on an unspoken or implicit contract: do the work, put forth sustained effort, be present with persistent participation, do the reading, write what we’re asking, etc. to earn an A. This scheme attempts to demystify that implicit contract/assumption. *At any time, if you have questions or concerns about our assessment scheme or your progress in this seminar, please see me!*

**Course and University Policies**

**Academic Integrity**

The first tenet of the Carolinian Creed is, “I will practice personal and academic integrity.” You are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in a minimum penalty of failing the assignment and may include additional disciplinary measures. Violations of academic integrity especially relevant to this course includes improper citation of sources, using another’s work, **certain reuses of work from other courses**, and other forms of academic misrepresentation.

Here are ways to learn more about relevant University policies:

* [Carolinian Creed](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/our_initiatives/involvement_and_leadership/carolinian_creed/index.php) (http://www.sa.sc.edu/creed)
* [Academic Responsibility](https://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf625.pdf) (http://www.sc.edu/policies/staf625.pdf)
* [Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](https://www.sa.sc.edu/academicintegrity/) (https://www.sa.sc.edu/academicintegrity/)
* [Information Security Policy and Standards](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/division_of_information_technology/security/policy/universitypolicy/) (https://sc.edu/about/offices\_and\_divisions/division\_of\_information\_technology/security/policy/universitypolicy/)

**Accessibility/Disability Services**

**The** [**Student Disability Resource Center**](http://www.sa.sc.edu/sds/) **(SDRC)** (http://www.sa.sc.edu/sds/) empowers students to manage challenges, limitations, and differences experienced as part of disability. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me in the first week of classes to discuss the logistics of any accommodations needed to fulfill course requirements. To receive reasonable, timely accommodations appropriate to the work and expectations of this course, you should be registered with the Student Disability Resource Center (1705 College Street, Close-Hipp Suite 102, Columbia, SC 29208, 803-777-6142). For all, I will do my best to make materials and course delivery widely accessible; should anything about that delivery indicate otherwise, please let me know so I can modify.

**Attendance Policy**

Since this is a graduate-level course based on seminar/class discussion, attendance and participation are required. It’s reasonable to miss one class meeting without penalty, although you are responsible for that week’s reading and assignments. If you miss 2 or more of the class meetings, your grade can be dropped up to one/half letter grade. Missing more than 4 of our class meetings can result in failing the course. For further information, please consult [the University Attendance Policy](http://bulletin.sc.edu/content.php?catoid=66&navoid=1813#Attendance_Policy). Since we’re still in COVID times, if you are feeling ill or quarantining or have any other complications, we can work together toward flexible strategies that allow us rich and rigorous course experiences in these challenging times.

**Instructional Delivery Methods**

*90% seminar/discussion, 10% lecture*–Class meetings will consist mostly of student- and professor-led discussion as well as short lectures by the professor. Engaged participation from every student is expected. Several days will consist of roundtable-style sharing. Optimal participation (in any graduate course) is expected. To practice it, you should: 1) thoroughly read, think through, and annotate all assigned readings, 2) in discussion, actively listen and respond to your classmates, 3) contribute regularly while at the same time be mindful that you’re not dominating the conversation, 4) contribute text-/evidence-based insights to advance insights of our conversation.

**Additional Resources**

[USC Counseling Center](https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_health_services/medical-services/counseling-and-psychiatry/index.php)

[Graduate School – Professional Resources](https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/opportunities_support/professional_development/index.php)

[English Department – Graduate](https://sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/english_language_and_literature/study/graduate/)

[Center for Teaching Excellence](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/)

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

**A) Preparation and Participation 20%**

* *Preparation* means that: you should a) carefully *prepare* all the readings prior to each class meeting, b) maintain a *note system* of some sort that works for you (that might include short summaries, pertinent quotes, questions, etc. for each text in a notebook or file), c) come prepared with *things to talk about*.
* *Participation* means active engagement; it means listening and finding moments to advance the conversation. If you tend to be talkative, make sure others can get in; if you tend to be quiet, choose your moments to get in the conversation.
* Habits of preparation and participation are important to build and practice for all scholarly work, including teaching. They are baseline expectations for all so that we all can get the most out of our seminar time together.
* *There isn’t be anything to turn in* (notes are for you/have intrinsic value) for evaluation; I may ask you to write a little bit at the middle and/or end of the term, describing and evaluating what you’ve been doing. At any time, I’m available to discuss strategies for how to manage reading processes for this and your other graduate courses.

**B) Teacher-Research Activities (3) *total*, 40%**

1. ***Teaching/Teacher Journal*** – the practice of keeping a teaching journal is a prominent one among teacher-researchers (both those who publish about their classrooms and those who take an inquiry approach to everyday instructional practice). For this assignment, I’m inviting you (and me) to commit to keeping a teaching journal for the span of (at least) two weeks.
	* + To get this going, first consider how you want to keep your journal (material or digital) – *choose something you can keep with you*
		+ The idea here is to keep the journal close to you so it’s available to you to *record basically anything related to teaching* (yours and others’). Record observations, quotes, moments, thoughts, worries, plans, reflections, agenda items, questions, websites, notes from a book, memories—whatever—that you see in your day-to-day that is related to teaching in some way.
			- Be as expansive as you like in thinking about “teaching.” Of course, it might be your own current teaching, but it can be elsewhere, too—the teaching you see others do in classrooms, in other UofSC learning spaces (e.g. writing center, grad office, labs, TC Library, Russel House), in your child’s school room or the like, etc.
		+ One strategy is to devote your journal practice to a specific site (“*my journal is focused on my two sections of 101*”). Then, if you catch yourself seeing teaching depicted on TV or in passing by a campus classroom where you can overhear what a prof is up to, you \*could\* note that, too.
		+ I am not going to ask to see your entire journals. Instead, you will write up a 1-page single space (more or less can be fine) describing the experience of doing it – what was cool, what was a challenge (and why?), what value did it bring, 2 or more specific highlight(s) of the journal, how you do it differently, if you’d or will keep doing it, etc. We’ll share one evening as a group about our experiences, and you’ll submit that write-up paper
2. **Activity Share - *Praxis Table***
	* Inspired by Bean and Melzer, find *two* adaptable, active writing/learning activity suitable (and/or modifiable) for a college classroom. One activity idea should come from/be inspired by Bean and Melzer; another from informal research and/or prior experience
	* *Write-Up*: As with these other TR exercises, you’ll write up a short (1-ish pg., single- spaced) recap, in which you describe your activities and discusses your process of selecting them, along with your rationale (i.e. why you believe in or like the activity). On the day you submit, we’ll share informally as a seminar.
	* *Share*: In addition to your submitted Write-Up, on a shared Google Doc, you’ll contribute a link or a citation, etc. (e.g. for ones in B&M, just a page # will do) and write a little promotional blurb for each activity you found. Think of this as a shortened version of the Write-Up above. *Such sharing in a community is a hallmark or teacher-research ethos.*
3. **Feedback Analysis**
	* Assemble a set of your own feedback to students on a writing assignment. (I will provide a set if you don’t presently have a corpus to work with). Your set can be marked up drafts, endnotes only, both – whatever you wish to learn from
	* Analyze that set, noticing patterns, outliers, relationships among marks, habits this responder has.
	* Then, in a short paper (1 or pg., single spaced), discuss the yields from this close looking exercise. What did you learn about yourself as a responder (or “the responder,” if it’s not you)? What do you/they tend to focus on? What’s missing from your/their ways of responding? What do you want to do more and/or less of? What surprised you?

**C) Final Project: Conference-Length Paper** OR **Syllabus/Unit/Course Design and Rationale 40%**

**OPTION 1: Conference-Length Researched Paper**

* a. A scholarly, researched argument that follows from an intervention or problem space you construct, one related to the main questions and topics of the course (as such, it would likely include citation and work with at least *one* text we read together.
	+ Papers should be (in some way) informed by your close attention to course material and proceed from *need* or *exigence* and/or *analytic insight*. The goal here is to practice the gist of scholarly method—see or construct a conversation and figure out how to move it. Said another way, papers should define and make progress on a troubling imperfection, confounding question, productive conflict, seeming contradiction, etc. Find something focused that needs addressing, adjusting, extending, celebrated, connected or doubted and address, adjust, extend, etc. it.
	+ Scholarly arguments about pedagogy proceed with a range of materials and methods: for example, your argument may be theoretical, engaging with other scholarly voices only; it may draw on teaching anecdotes and other teaching-focused “data”; it may focus on a method, activity, or assignment along with contextualization/rationale; it may include a preliminary qualitative study you design at its center. Lots of options.
* b. You can also instead think of this as an extended “report back” research investigation. A “Report Back” paper can be thought of as a more informal research endeavor. One practice of teacher-researchers is to learn more about approaches to pedagogy, pedagogical schools or ideas (e.g. antiracist teaching, writing-to-learn, SEL, etc.), activities, kinds of assignments, or reigning “best-practices” (in things like grading (writing), response, peer-review, portfolios, “error,” etc.). Your paper would say what you were interested in and why, what you learned, and what you or others could *do* with it – how what you learned could impact your own or others’ teaching.
* For either an argument *or* report back: Around 8-10 double-spaced pages, MLA format, with complete and correct Works Cited. Your argument/report back should meaningfully engage with additional scholarship/research you’ve found and read – there is no set number but I’d say ***at least* *five*** *additional* sources is a good target.

**OPTION B: Syllabus/Unit/Course Design & RATIONALE**

* **The Main Thing**: Based on what you’ve read and thought about this semester, and your collective teaching and teaching writing experience(s) and aspirations, **design a syllabus for *a writing-involved cou*rse of your choosing.** (You may also instead conceive of a *unit design* in an existing course or an entire course-design invention. Choose the scope that works.) The syllabus/unit plan/dream course sketch/etc. should include a title, the kind of writing course it is (first-year reading-focused course, first year research course, etc.), course description, outcomes, assignments-in-brief. From there, choose your own level of additional detail, if any!
* **Supplementary Material**: Realize one “thing” that would support this course/unit/syllabus design. For example, draft one assignment description; first unit course calendar with in-class tasks, HW, and/or readings, etc.; Course Schedule, but only in cursory detail. Whatever. Again, do what makes sense to you
	+ *Producing these materials is meant to be a creative exercise but you can make them as “real” as possible, as you wish*
* **Rationale**: The rationale is where you’ll engage literature from the course *and* from your own research, that makes a case, and a name, for the approaches you and your course materials are invested in. Said another way, your rationale (5-ish+ pages, double-spaced) should make an argument that supports your course/syll/unit design. What problems or challenges does your course address in the contemporary scene of teaching and learning writing? What are the influences that lead you to this design? Your rationale should engage with and quote sources (in and beyond what we’ve read together) to make your argument for your pedagogical vision. It should along the way also argue for the value of what your course materials ask students to do.

***FINAL PROJECT is due Monday of Exam week***