

# Teaching Philosophy

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The learning outcomes for the UC Davis First-Year Composition program that I created in collaboration with teachers in the program reflect my philosophy of the teaching of composition as well as the influence on my pedagogy of current scholarship in the field of Writing Studies. The outcomes are based in part on the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition, with an additional emphasis on antiracist writing practices. The outcomes focus on reading and composing knowledge, practices, and attitudes in five areas:

## Rhetorical Knowledge

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of key rhetorical concepts such as audience, purpose, context, mode, genre, discourse community, revision, and editing.
- Students will articulate how their understanding of these key concepts has grown and changed as a result of reading and composing in UWPI.

My teaching philosophy has been shaped by the Writing about Writing movement (Downs and Wardle) and the notion of first-year composition as a course where students are introduced to key Writing Studies “threshold concepts” (Adler-Kassner) and apply those concepts in class projects. In my courses students read theory, research, and narratives focused on diverse perspectives on literacy by authors such as Nancy Sommers, Victor Villanueva, Amy Tan, and Mike Rose and leave the course with a more nuanced understanding of threshold concepts such as “genre” and “revision” and “discourse community,” including the sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts of these concepts. I define the subject of literacy broadly in my courses, and I am influenced by the multiliteracies work of the New London Group and scholarship in multimodal composing (Gee, Selber, Selfe) that emphasizes the need for students to gain the rhetorical agility to compose in multiple modes and genres. To accomplish this multiliteracies goal, I encourage students to rhetorically analyze the aural, digital, and visual genres they read and compose outside of school (social networking sites, music, text messages, etc.) and I ask them to experiment with the modes and genres of class projects.

## Processes

- Students will practice reading, researching, and composing as social processes and revise and edit multiple drafts based on feedback from peers and the instructor.
- Students will develop critical and creative reading and writing practices to empower them to read and write in a variety of genres.

My emphasis on writing processes began with my early reading of the process movement literature (Britton, Elbow, Perl). I currently align myself with social process theorists (Bakhtin, Bizzell, Bruffee) who emphasize that reading and writing are social and situated processes. To enact this social constructivist approach, in my classes I assign dialogic online reading journals; I require frequent in-class group work, including peer response; and I use portfolio assessment, which emphasizes global revision and the importance of both process and product. Labor-based contract grading further emphasizes the importance I place on process, labor, and growth.

## **Knowledge of Conventions**

- Students will practice conventions across a variety of modes, genres, and discourse communities.
- Students will explore the connections and variations among their home discourse communities and other discourse communities they wish to join (academic, civic, professional, etc.).

My teaching has been heavily influenced by genre and discourse studies (Prior, Miller, Devitt). Helping students understand genre as a social action and the ways textual conventions constitute discourse communities and shape meaning is a critical part of my composition courses. Teaching in colleges with socioeconomically and ethnically diverse student populations has furthered my interest in the work of Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy and antiracist Writing Studies scholars such as Asao Inoue, Geneva Smitherman, and Vershawn Ashanti Young. I'm interested in creating a "contact zone" (Pratt) in my courses, where students both understand and interrogate academic discourses. I ask students to consider the ways their personal histories have influenced their encounters with academic literacies and to ask problem-posing questions about academic discourse conventions as well as their personal discourse communities. I encourage students to write for a variety of discourse communities, in a variety of genres, drawing on a variety of language styles.

## **Research**

- Students will use research to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize prior knowledge on a subject related to reading or writing that interests them and create new knowledge through primary research.
- Students will collect, analyze, evaluate, integrate, and ethically cite primary and secondary research.

In Writing about Writing courses students conduct primary and secondary research to both practice the ways Writing Studies scholars make meaning in the discipline and to explore in depth a literacy topic that is relevant to their lives as readers and composers. My students have composed research projects investigating the genres of their discipline, conducting ethnographic studies of the discourse communities of future workplaces they wish to join, reviewing the literature on an aspect of reading or writing they want to know more about and improve on, and various other literacy topics.

## **Metacognition**

- Students will reflect on their reading and composing processes and the rhetorical choices they made in their compositions (choices about organization, evidence, language, document design, etc.).
- Students will identify their strengths as writers and develop improved writing habits and processes in order to increase their confidence and preparation for future writing in college and beyond.

Cognitivist scholarship (Emig, Flower, Rose) as well as the research on student self-efficacy and self-assessment (Boud, Huot, Yancey) and transfer (Perkins and Salomon, Wardle) has shown a strong correlation between metacognitive awareness and reading and writing growth. I value students' ability to understand their composing processes as much as I value the evidence of those processes and the final products. To help students understand and monitor their own reading and composing processes, I ask them to complete literacy self-surveys, compose literacy histories, discuss and share reading and writing strategies, respond to texts about reading and composing processes, and include reflective cover letters with each draft I respond to as well as an extensive reflection essay in their final portfolio. The culminating reflection essay represents what I most want my students to gain from my courses: rhetorical knowledge; the agility to compose in multiple modes and genres and in multiple discourse communities; critical self-awareness as composers; and the understanding that literacy is central to their lives, in college and beyond.