

Spring 2024

# UWP 390: Theory and Practice of University-Level Composition Instruction

F 12:10-2:00, VH 396

**Instructor**  
Dan Melzer

**Pronouns**  
he/him/his

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**Virtual Office  
Hours**  
T 1:00-3:00  
F 11:00-12:00 by  
appointment at  
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Other days by  
appointment

## Course Description and Learning Outcomes

Welcome to UWP 390, the University Writing Program's seminar in the theory and practice of teaching in university-level first-year composition courses. UWP 390 or its equivalent is required for new first-year composition instructors in the University Writing Program. It also satisfies a course requirement for the PhD Designated Emphasis in Writing, Rhetoric, and Composition Studies.

By the end of UWP390, students will:

- Gain an introductory understanding of major theoretical/pedagogical approaches of the field of writing studies
- Explore and respond to major issues in the teaching of college composition
- Connect theory and practice through curriculum design
- Begin to develop a theory and practice of responding to and assessing student writing

Activities for meeting these learning outcomes include responding to readings, designing lesson plans, and creating a teaching portfolio.

**Please keep me updated if your physical health/mental health/life challenges situation changes.** If you miss class due to life challenges that are beyond your control, please stay in good communication with me and I will excuse your absence and help support you to make sure you're keeping up with the class.

I understand that as graduate students you may have important professional opportunities, such as academic conferences, that may cause you to miss a class. Please let me know if you have a professional opportunity that may cause you to miss a class.

We all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or that form barriers to your inclusion, please let me know as soon as possible.

## Course Texts

- PDF articles, websites, and videos available on the course Canvas site

## Further resources

Background on the history of writing studies as a discipline can be found in James Berlin's book *Rhetoric and Reality*.

A list of scholarly journals in writing studies can be found at [cccdoctoralconsortium.org/journals/](http://cccdoctoralconsortium.org/journals/)

For further inquiries into scholarship in the field of writing studies, I recommend the CompPile database at <https://wac.colostate.edu/comp/compile/>

## Projects and Activities

### *Reading Responses*

Each week you'll read one scholarly article and one text that teachers commonly ask students to read in UWP1. Please annotate the weekly scholarly article reading or take notes, and I will ask you to review your annotations/notes in class before we discuss the articles.

To use writing as a tool for learning and thinking about the class texts, before each class you'll write an exploratory **150-200 word Canvas discussion post**, responding to a prompt based on the readings for that week. The purpose of these responses is to encourage you to explore (not summarize) the course readings. Challenge the texts, ask questions, take risks, and think about both the theoretical and practical implications of what you read. I won't evaluate these responses on surface-level editing or organization: these are exploratory responses, and the content is what matters.

Your reading response is **due before Wednesday each week**, and you'll briefly (a few sentences) **respond to someone else's post before class on Friday each week**. The goal of this "dialogic" responding is to further collaborative learning, the social construction of knowledge, and a sense of the classroom as a discourse community. I'll join the conversations and respond to a few of you each week.

### *Class Observation Reflection*

Nothing will help you better understand what it is to teach writing than being in a classroom. For this reason, I'm asking you to observe one day of a UWP1 course (or another course if you're not teaching UWP1) and write a **500-700 word reflection on the students**. You can use the UWP Spring 2024 schedule at

<https://writing.ucdavis.edu/academics/courses-schedules/schedules/> to find an instructor and contact that person using the UWP graduate student contact information at <http://writing.ucdavis.edu/people/directory>. Be sure to contact the instructor at least a week ahead of time to request permission to visit. You'll write a reflection on the class, focusing on the students and the activities, **not on the instructor—please do NOT identify the instructor whose class you visited**. In other words, this is not to be a celebration of or an attack on a particular instructor. Focus

on the learning process and activities of the students: What did they find easy or difficult? How quickly or slowly did they pick up new concepts? What most engaged them? Also talk about how your observation has influenced the way you might teach a college composition course. Make connections between what you observed in the class and the theories of writing we've discussed in UWP 390. **Upload the class observation reflection to the Canvas assignment tool before class on May 10th.**

### *Teaching Portfolio*

The purpose of the teaching portfolio is for you to synthesize what we've been discussing in class and connect theory to practice. Your portfolio will include:

- A teaching philosophy that references the course you've designed
- A UWP1 course syllabus and calendar (or another course if you're not teaching UWP1)
- Lesson plans for the quarter
- Prompts for the major composing projects for your course
- Written or video response to two pieces of student writing

A prompt discussing the details of the teaching portfolio assignment and an assessment rubric is available on the UWP390 Canvas site. **Submit the teaching portfolio files or the link to your teaching ePortfolio to Canvas before Saturday, June 15th.**

## **Assessment**

In all of my courses I use a form of assessment called contract grading. The goal of contract grading is to place the emphasis of assessment on your labor rather than my subjective judgement regarding the content and quality of your writing. I'm hoping you'll find contracting grading more objective and fair than traditional grading. You can keep track of where you're at on the contract by noting how many completes you have in the Canvas grade book (a "check" is complete, a "x" is incomplete, and a "-" is not completed). I'll give you a midterm contract update on where your grade stands. Below is the grading contract:

	<b>A range</b>	<b>B range</b>	<b>C range</b>	<b>F range</b>
<b>Reading responses</b>	Completes all responses and meets the guidelines	Completes all responses and meets most of the guidelines	One or more responses not completed or many responses fail to meet the guidelines	Most responses not completed or fail to meet the guidelines
<b>Lesson plans</b>	Completes all lesson plans and meets the guidelines	Completes all lesson plans and meets most of the guidelines	One or more lesson plans not completed or many lesson plans fail to meet the guidelines	Most lesson plans not completed or fail to meet the guidelines

<b>Peer response</b>	Posts a portfolio draft and provides feedback that meets the guidelines	Posts a portfolio draft and provides feedback that meets most of the guidelines	Portfolio draft or feedback is missing or most feedback does not meet the guidelines	Does not upload a portfolio draft or provide feedback
<b>One-on-one conferences</b>	Completes two conferences and meets the guidelines	Completes two conferences but does not meet guidelines	Completes one conference	Does not complete any conferences
<b>Class observation reflection</b>	Completes the observation reflection and meets all the guidelines	Completes the observation reflection and meets most of the guidelines	Completes the observation reflection but does not meet the guidelines	Does not complete the observation reflection
<b>Teaching portfolio</b>	Meets the “proficient” portfolio rubric guidelines in all categories	Meets the “proficient” portfolio rubric guidelines in most categories	Meets the “developing” portfolio rubric guidelines in most categories	Does not submit a teaching portfolio
<b>Attendance</b>	Attends every class	Misses one class with an unexcused absence	Misses two classes with unexcused absences	Misses more than two classes with unexcused absences
<p><i>A teaching portfolio in the “Advanced” range of the teaching portfolio rubric will result in a “+” added to the final grade.</i></p> <p><i>Meeting each criterion but one in a contract grade category will result in a “-” grade rather than a lower letter grade.</i></p>				

## Course Outline

All the readings, activities, and homework for each week are posted in each module by class day.

Following is a topical outline of each class day. The topical outline is organized around the UWP1 learning outcomes. I will send you an email every Monday reminding you of the homework and due dates for the week.

Day 1: 4/5

Rhetorical Concepts: Introducing ourselves, course information, introduction to the UWP1 learning outcomes

Day 2: 4/12

Writing Processes: Teaching writing as a recursive and social process

Day 3: 4/19

Reading Processes: Teaching reading processes and reading/writing connections

Day 4: 4/26

Metacognition: Teaching metacognition and transfer and introduction to the Writing About Writing approach and the UWP1 curriculum

Day 5: 5/3

Knowledge of Conventions--Translingualism

Day 6: 5/10

Knowledge of Conventions—Language Diversity: Teaching diverse language, genre, and discourse community conventions

*Class observation reflection due*

Day 7: 5/17

Knowledge of Conventions—Multimodality: Teaching multiple modes of composing

*One-on-one conferences with Dan for teaching philosophy rough draft the week of 5/13*

Day 8: 5/24

Research: Teaching information literacy through primary and secondary research

*Teaching portfolio peer response workshop the week of 5/20*

Day 9: 5/31

Responding and Grading: Responding more effectively and efficiently to student writing and understanding contract grading

*One-on-one conferences with Dan for teaching portfolio revised draft the weeks of 6/3 and 6/10*

**Teaching portfolio due before Saturday, 6/15**