

Goals & Commitments for Writing Program, Instructors, and Students

Commitments of the Writing Program to Students and Instructors:

To maintain organizational structures that allow for the free exploration of genres, modes, and media choices for composing.

To provide for teachers a system of mentoring and support that promotes collegiality within the community, confidence in daily practices, and a spirit of inquiry and experimentation.

To continually evaluate the practices, quality of teaching, and learning opportunities that the Writing Program offers.

To offer diverse spaces for student and instructor interaction.

To encourage movement of ideas between sections of our courses and between our community and the larger university, regional, and national communities.

To provide instructors with non-biased resources (both written & electronic) that can transfer to a range of teaching scenarios and writing projects.

To encourage the inclusion of global writing practices into our research and writing projects.

Commitments and Goals Teachers Bring to the Learning Space:

An effort to provide specific, identifiable tools and strategies for analyzing and understanding writing in different situations.

An effort to offer terms and definitions of concepts that can be used to analyze writing in different situations.

An effort to specifically address the transfer of skills from one writing situation to another.

An effort to offer writing situations (i.e., projects and assignments) that are: (1) interesting and that motivate students to apply their problem-solving skills rather than their “do it this way” school writing skills and that (2) move beyond the walls of our classrooms and the interaction of teacher-to-student as the primary relationship for textual production in school situations.

A display of our passion for language and for researching ways to make writing work in different genres, and to encourage students’ passion for the same.

Clear assessment criteria for projects and for the course, so students can understand what is at stake and how they are being evaluated.

Promotion of classroom structures and activities that prevent students from “falling out of attention” through productive types of disruption and juxtaposition.

Respect for the knowledge and understanding that students bring to the writing space.

Encouragement of students to enter into the assessment process through dialogue, feedback, and commenting practices--to enact assessment as a co-constructed activity that includes all members of the writing community.

A willingness to reflect on one’s own history and future as a writer.

The facilitation and innovation that entails exploration of writing activities and learning spaces that accommodate different kinds of learning skills and styles--e.g., visual versus auditory versus kinesthetic learners.

Skills and strategies for effectively reflecting on (and learning from) one’s own writing practices and the practices of other writers.

What Students Bring to this Learning Space

(Note: We refer here to students in writing program courses, but also, in a larger sense, to the fact that all writers are students of the genres they produce)

A willingness to re-think their writing practices and the things they have learned about what “good” writing or “correct” writing is.

The ability to analyze and discuss their own writing--to examine it closely at both the sentence-level and its appropriateness for a specific writing situation, and to identify the genres and writing experiences that have shaped/are shaping their knowledge and writing practices.

The willingness to bridge the gap between writing-for-school and just plain writing.

The ability to identify areas of strength and weakness in one’s own writing and the willingness to devote time to improvement.

The willingness to reflect on one’s own history and future as a writer.

An attempt to refrain from viewing our program and our instructors as simply links in a long-chain of “forced” school writing that is not helpful or interesting.

The willingness to share one’s knowledge about writing--including the areas where one’s knowledge is lacking or sketchy.

An openness to new ways of producing meaning in text , including multiple modes and media.

The willingness to rethink assumptions about how writing is shaped and influenced by cultural practices.

The willingness to think about writing as a complicated activity that takes place in multiple locations (e.g., inside and outside of classrooms).

A willingness to apply concepts and practices learned in ENG 101 to the other kinds of

writing they do (inside and outside of the academy).

What we want to avoid

(Perspectives and/or activities that we think may be harmful to our community or to members of the community)

Reifying ideas about writing that interfere with the transfer of writing skills to new writing situations.

Teaching style, grammar, punctuation, citation, (etc.) as skills or rules with overly consistent “right/wrong” answers that never vary in different situations.

Reifying the idea that writing in school is done primarily for a single teacher, with a grade as the reward.

Limiting course writing to ambiguous “school genres,” that don’t require us to investigate the boundaries, limitations and potentials of specific writing situations.

Promoting or prescribing political/social lenses for “looking at texts” that alienate or exclude students from the ongoing discussion of writing as a social, networked activity.