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We used to front-load our writing instruction at West Point, with all cadets taking two semesters of composition during the freshman year. For the three most recent classes of cadets, however, the situation has changed. These students must take their second semester of composition--EN302, the course I direct--as juniors or seniors.

We believe we have gained a number of things from this change. The first of these is more effective placement in the curriculum. With its position in the upper-division, writing now has, if not the last word in our cadets' education, at least a later one than it had before; in EN302 we work with students who are relatively close to graduation and thus to facing "real" writing tasks. We have also gained in terms of what our students bring to the course. They not only possess a good deal more knowledge than they did when they were second-semester freshmen, but they return to us with at least a year and a half's worth of further experience with writing itself. They have written papers and essay examinations in their history, literature, philosophy, political science, and economics courses; and they have made a modest use of prose in lab reports and exams for chemistry and physics courses. This experience has made them more fluent, better able to manage complex subjects, and familiar with various disciplines' conventions for form and substance. Finally, our students are at least one and a half years older. Most have matured. And this in itself improves their writing. We find, for instance, that we seldom have to wrestle with adamant solipsism or with opinion that stubbornly imagines itself proof.

But what, exactly, takes place in EN302? Simply this: we work with our students through the process of writing six papers. The majority of the classes in each of our six cycles are workshops wherein the subject is the students' work in progress. We discuss their ideas, explore their topics, examine their sentences, paragraphs, and drafts of whole essays. We also practice freewriting, heuristics for invention, audience analysis, and peer review. Finally, each cycle culminates with the students' submitting their papers. Hardly a radical teaching methodology these days, workshops are particularly familiar to our cadets since they experienced them in freshman composition, EN101, and we capitalize on that experience. In EN101 they became comfortable with the notion of sharing their work, with helping one another, and they began practicing writing as a recursive process. In EN302 the fundamental pattern of business is the same: vision, revision, and revision once more, with group discussion all along the way. And now that West Point has begun requiring each cadet to buy a personal computer and a word processing program, the demand for multiple revisions is becoming a far easier one to meet.

Our six paper requirement takes into account our students' status as juniors and seniors, with those additional semesters of writing, learning, and growing up as I mentioned earlier. For the most part, we do not ask the students to react to texts that we provide. Instead, we try to make them react to experiences outside the composition classroom, to write on topics related to their own academic or extracurricular interests. And we have worded all of the requirements, with the exception of the first--an expressive essay--so that they invite either "reference discourse" or "persuasion" to use Kinneavy's terms.

Let me illustrate. The second paper requirement asks the students to draw on their store of specialized knowledge, "knowledge that the general reader might not have," and write a paper whose aim is to inform. As the handout for the requirement explains,

Everyone knows about Grant and Lee, Sherman and Longstreet. But few--not even most military men and women--know about John F. Reynolds, who died on the first day at Gettysburg while in command of the Union I Corps. An account of his Civil War career would be most worthwhile. And there are topics like this in all academic disciplines--little known events and lives that make fine subjects for writing. Everyone has heard about the Wright Brothers, but how did the helicopter come to be invented? Whose shoulders did Isaac Newton stand on when he invented the calculus? What would be interesting for the general reader to know about Plotinus? What geological process accounts for the view we have of the Hudson from Trophy Point?

The handout also stresses the necessity that the paper make a point; a mere collection of facts will not do. And it, like all of the other requirements, encourages the cadets to try producing an essay that could "conceivably be published." This is meant not only to spur literary ambition and craftsmanship, but also to force the students to imagine themselves in writing situations other than the classroom. It also urges each cadet to ponder an imagined audience's knowledge of potential topics, and thus influences the cadet's handling of material in drafting and revising.

Since I do not have space for all of the requirements, let me cite just one other, the last of the six. Here the cadet "must take a position and defend it." A position on what? Well, just about anything:

One way to arrive at a topic is to think back to the last time you found yourself disputing a point with someone. You thought our policy with regard to Nicaragua was eminently unsound and said so. But unaccountably to you a fellow cadet--by definition a dunderhead--disagreed. And you went on from there trying to convince the dunderhead of the error of his thinking while he attempted to do the same to you. If

yours was like most such discussions it quickly became heated, incoherent, and it finally accomplished nothing. This paper offers you the chance to advance your argument coolly and rationally.

The possibilities of course do not end with Nicaragua. What should the United States do about terrorists? What do you think of the balance of light and heavy forces in the Army's structure? What role, if any, should the instant replay have in the settling of disputed calls in the NFL? Should measures be taken to accelerate the reduction of PCB's in the Hudson, and if so, what might they be?

Obviously we are inviting an argument, and the rest of the handout offers the cadets suggestions for being persuasive.

Beyond illustrating the kind of requirements we have devised for the cadets, the two I have discussed also define the end points on a line that runs through the course. We aim to move the cadets along that line--with as much indirection as possible--from narration to exposition and, finally, argumentation. But if the line is relatively well defined, all else is far less so. The cadets discover and explore their own topics; they establish their own roles and relationships to their audiences; and within broad limits, they experiment with rhetorical approaches and structures.

Although I would like to claim fantastic success for this series of paper requirements, I cannot in truth do so. Although among my own students some few write really interesting, really "publishable" essays, most do not. But even these weaker students improve markedly over their past performances. Moreover, they find that they are writing--often for the first time in their lives--not simply to put a requirement behind them, but in an attempt to see what they can do with language. The experiment with introductions and conclusions, tinker with sentences and paragraphs, try their skill at figurative language. And my section of students is not unique. All of the members of the instructor group have had roughly the same results.

Speaking of instructors, I should mention that the group, all U.S. Army officers, includes some whose degrees are not in English, but in philosophy. We have no separate department for the latter discipline. Those who teach West Point's courses in philosophy do so as members of the English Department and, willy-nilly, they teach EN302. They do not find the task unfamiliar, though, for they have all taught freshman composition before coming to EN302.

What is novel for all the instructors, however, is our grading procedure. We assign no grades to our own students' papers. Instead, when just a few weeks remain in the term, the cadets assemble portfolios containing four of the papers they have written during the semester. These portfolios are then randomly distributed to other instructors by means of a system that maintains

the anonymity of both the students and their teachers. The second instructor evaluates the portfolios and determines their grades.

Why do we assign grades in this way? First, because this procedure helps insure that the grading standards are uniform for all sections; since our cadets' papers are going elsewhere for evaluation, we have a powerful incentive to keep our notions of quality from becoming idiosyncratic. (And in order to maintain an acceptable level of standardization, we also gather several times during the semester to grade sample papers.) More important, though, this procedure changes our relationships with our students. No longer our students' adversaries as umpires or judges, we are forced to play the more productive role of coach; we and our students are "in it together," allies, not enemies.

The changed relationship manifests itself most clearly in the comments we make on cover sheets and in margins. These no longer justify a grade as they often did when we sat in judgment. Instead, since revision for the portfolio is always in view, the cadets get what Peter Elbow calls "reader-based feedback," along with specific suggestions for improvement. The system itself forces comments that are more compelling and useful. We work a bit harder, but happily, so do the students.

Before I conclude, let me mention a couple of the course's other features. At the conclusion of each paper cycle we give the students a quiz on particular matters of usage, grammar, and punctuation; the quizzes cover, for example, subject-verb agreement, dangling participles, proper use of semicolons and commas. In preparing our students for these quizzes we assign them sections of a handbook, though we do not cover the assignments in class unless a student asks questions about them. Furthermore, each of the quizzes requires the students to correct the spelling of a number of words from a list handed out at the beginning of the term.

Our purpose is, of course, to strengthen the cadets' ability to spot and correct errors when revising their own drafts or reviewing those of others. Although we in this profession might cite as writing's most valuable use the way it helps us explore our thinking and our world, out on the street the value of our graduates' writing--at least in the near term--will have as much to do with correctness of form as with brilliance of content. Thus, our quizzes constitute a finishing school on rules and conventions, and we reinforce the semester's work on these matters with a term-end competency exam.

I have already mentioned one of the texts that support the course, the desk-reference handbook; the other is an anthology of readings that we put together in our Department. The selections range from Herodotus on the Battle of Marathon and Shakespeare on the Battle of Agincourt to John Lehman on the 600-ship Navy and Edward Luttwak on why we don't need one. These selections model the kinds of writing the students are supposed to produce. They are not primary topics for classroom discussion and analysis.

We think we have a strong writing "thread" running through the four-year curriculum at West Point. Our freshman composition

course insures that the students recognize writing as a craft, something at which, with practice, one can become more skilled, something that can provide deep satisfaction. That course stresses voice and values. It fosters inventiveness and expands the students' repertoires. It refuses, however, to be a service course for other departments. They must pick up the thread. They know it, and do it, teaching the cadets that different "discourse communities" have different expectations for substance, style, and form. In EN302 we take our students to the end of the thread. Beginning the course as good writers, the students have the opportunity to become even better. Most of them do just that.

CALL FOR PAPERS

"The Writing Teacher as Researcher: Learning from Our Students"

Miami University
Oxford, OH

The Third Miami University Conference on the Teaching of Writing--THE WRITING TEACHER AS RESEARCHER: LEARNING FROM OUR STUDENTS--invites proposals for papers, demonstrations, and workshops on any topic related to class-based research in writing. It will especially welcome studies in which (1) teacher-researchers become learners within their own classrooms in order to be educated by their students and (2) students themselves play an important and conscious role in the research.

The conference will be held October 21-23, 1988, on the Miami University campus in Oxford, Ohio. Keynote speakers are Lucy McCormick Calkins and Donald M. Murray. Deadline for one-page abstracts is April 15, 1988. Abstracts should indicate whether you prefer 15-25 or 40-50 minutes for a paper or demonstration or 1, 2, or 3 hours for a workshop. Send abstract to Donald Daiker, Chair, Program Committee, Conference on the Teaching of Writing, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056. (513) 529-7110.

The Conference is supported by the Exxon Education Foundation.

Contributions Sought for In Print

In Print, devoted to issues and innovations in the two-year and community college, and supported by the North Shore Community College, will publish its fifth annual number in April 1988.

Lively, informative, and jargon-free contributions of between one and two thousand words are sought. Poetry and fiction are welcome. Samples of the last issue will be sent on request.

Write: Carl Carlsen
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Literature in the Composition Classroom

Many of us, as writing instructors, use literary texts in the classroom. Some of us use them exclusively, others only minimally, some not at all, but in light of current reading and composition theory most of us have come to question such use in the composition class. The topic appears to be of continuing interest; our Spring 1983 issue on the subject sold out, and while those articles provided some answers, they also provoked more questions. We invite your responses.

Some issues to consider are: How should "literature" be defined? Do literary texts facilitate writing instruction? If so, how might they function in the writing classroom? Do they detract from emphasis on such writing problems as finding topics, generating ideas, formulating theses, understanding rhetorical situations, etc.? What are the arguments against using literature in the writing class? Does the consideration of a literary text necessitate a canonical and thus closed view, and if so, does this view work against a more process-oriented concern in the writing classroom? What is the relation between reading literary texts and writing essays? Do current reading theories play a role in the teaching of writing?

Manuscripts should be submitted by 31 October 1987 and addressed to Andrea White or Lynn Wright, Issue Editors, Spring/Summer 1988.

The History of Rhetoric and the Teaching of Writing

The Fall 1988 issue of TWI will be devoted to revisions of the history of rhetoric that can enrich our understanding of composition.

Rhetoric's role in composition has frequently been limited to formulaic and prescriptive guidelines for arranging discourse, balancing sentences, inventing subject matter, and so on. While we recognize the usefulness of such studies, we also feel that rhetorical theory can help us better understand, for instance,

- versions of literacy,
- the role of writing instruction in higher education,
- the shifting relationships among reading, writing, and speech.

Manuscripts should be submitted by 15 May 1988 and be addressed to Dave Blakesley, Fall Issue Editor, 1988.

Journal of Basic Writing

The Journal of Basic Writing is for two- and four-year college faculty, those who teach basic writing, or have students who are basic writers. JBW was founded by Mina Shaughnessy at The City University of New York as a forum for theoretical discussions and practical applications aimed at improving the teaching of basic writing. It addresses tough issues in postsecondary education and delves into relatively unexplored areas of pedagogy not yet adequately investigated by researchers, theorists, or practitioners at any level of education.

The Journal has been revitalized under the thoughtful direction of its new editor, Lynn Troyka. In an effort to improve the quality of articles and features, JBW is now a referred journal published twice yearly by The City University of New York.

The Journal of Basic Writing ranges over a wide variety of subject areas to insure that all disciplines that bear on basic writing have a forum and opportunity for expression. Topics and subjects covered in the pages of JBW include:

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION available from Journal of Basic Writing,
Instructional Resource Center, The City University of New York,
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Fourth Annual Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing

November 7-8, 1987

Purdue University
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"THE WRITING/TUTORING PROCESS"

Featured Speaker: Barry Kroll

This conference invites peer tutors, professional tutors, and faculty to join in discussions, workshops, and presentations to share common concerns about tutoring writing. Proposals are invited on all aspects of tutoring writing, emphasizing topics which explore the conference theme, how the writing and tutoring processes intersect and interact. Peer tutors are particularly encouraged to attend and to participate.

For information about the program, contact Phyllis Lassner; for general information about the conference, contact Muriel Harris. To register for the conference, write to: Conference Division Registration, Stewart Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907. Registration fees (includes four meals and snacks): \$25 per student; \$50 per faculty member.

Conference Co-Chairs:

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