

The **W**riting **F**ellows **F**aculty **H**andbook



The Undergraduate Writing Fellows Program

Co-sponsored by
The Writing Center &
The College of Letters and Science Pathways to Excellence Project

University of Wisconsin–Madison

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I. Welcome to the Program

We're delighted that you've decided to participate in the Undergraduate Writing Fellows Program, a teaching initiative developed under the joint auspices of the Writing Center and the Pathways to Excellence Project and dedicated to improving the quality of writing instruction across the College of Letters and Science. We appreciate your support, and we look forward to working with you.

This handbook outlines the philosophy of our program and explains how most effectively to incorporate Writing Fellows into your course. On the pages that follow you'll find a discussion of the program's principles and goals, an explanation of how the program works, information about the Fellows and the program's administrative staff, answers to frequently asked questions, and some tips from experienced faculty. The most important logistical details are summarized on the checklist on page 9. Please be sure to consult the checklist as you plan your course and periodically throughout the term, to insure that everything runs smoothly.

If at any point during the semester you have questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact one of the program's administrators. Communicating with faculty is important to us; you are in an ideal position to see what Fellows are doing well and what they can learn to do better.

Thank you for taking part in the Writing Fellows Program.

II. Program Administrators

Emily Hall, Ph.D., the associate director, administers the Writing Fellows Program, oversees everyone involved, coordinates the selection of new Fellows, and teaches English 316, the special three-credit honors seminar for first-time Fellows. Emily received her Ph.D. in English literature at UW–Madison, where she has taught writing since 1993. She welcomes your questions, concerns, and ideas about the Fellows program.

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John Tiedemann, the assistant director, coordinates the ongoing education of experienced Fellows, helps recruit and select applicants to the program, consults with faculty participants, and coaches Fellows on how to help student writers improve. John has taught courses at UW–Madison in American and British literature, literary theory, rhetoric, writing, and pedagogy. He is completing his dissertation on American literary and political theory and practice in the 1960s.

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Brad Hughes, together with Jean Lutes, founded the Writing Fellows Program in the fall of 1997. Brad, director of the Writing Center and also of the L & S Program in Writing Across the Curriculum, continues to help oversee the Writing Fellows Program and would be happy to hear from you if you have questions, concerns, or ideas about the program.

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III. Program Philosophy

The Writing Fellows Program — based on a model initiated at Brown University more than twenty years ago and now in place at campuses across the country, including Michigan, Harvard, Swarthmore, and Penn — trains talented undergraduates to serve as peer tutors, called Writing Fellows, in writing-intensive classes across the College of Letters and Science. Two central principles guide the program. The first is that all writers, no matter how accomplished, can improve their writing by sharing work-in-progress and making revisions based on constructive criticism; the second is that collaboration among student peers is an especially effective mode of learning.

The Fellows put these principles into practice. Like their colleagues in the Writing Center and the Writing Across the Curriculum Program, the Fellows understand writing not simply as the expression of thought but as an integral part of the process of thinking. Therefore Fellows not only seek to help their peers express themselves more clearly; they aim to show them how to develop, deepen, and hone their ideas by gaining control of the writing process through which those ideas take shape.

Collaborative learning plays a crucial role in this process. Although Fellows are not specialists in the disciplines in which they tutor, and therefore do not offer instruction in course content, they are accomplished, self-aware writers and intelligent, attentive readers. They are therefore able to offer sound guidance and concrete advice on any and all writing-related issues. What is more, by serving as sounding boards they can help their peers to work through their ideas for themselves and to discover the most compelling ways to present them. By acting as collaborative colleagues, the Fellows not only help their peers to write better papers but encourage them to take themselves more seriously as writers and thinkers.

This sense of commitment to the idea of a learning community informs all aspects of the Writing Fellows Program. By placing undergraduates in positions of intellectual leadership and creating new opportunities for intellectual exchange between and among students and faculty, the Writing Fellows Program helps fulfill the university's teaching mission. And by supporting Writing Fellows in their development as teachers and scholars, you, the Writing Fellows faculty, help us work toward the program's most ambitious goal: building and maintaining a community of undergraduates dedicated to uniting intellectual inquiry with service to the university.

IV. Who Are the Writing Fellows, and What Can You Expect from Them?

❖ Who the Writing Fellows Are

The Writing Fellows are talented, enthusiastic, and thoughtful undergraduate writers from majors all across the College of Letters and Science, including anthropology, Afro-American studies, art history, biochemistry, comparative literature, engineering, English, history, political science, sociology, and zoology. All Fellows have ample experience writing both in their majors and in other disciplines, and all receive thorough training in writing instruction and peer tutoring. They are among the brightest and most accomplished students on campus, not to mention some among the university's most dynamic and devoted teachers. Together they form a tight-knit group of gifted teacher-scholars dedicated to sharing their excitement and expertise with their peers.

Fellows are chosen in a carefully designed and highly competitive application process. Applicants must submit a personal statement, transcript, two writing samples, and a letter of recommendation from a professor or teaching assistant. After an initial screening, we select roughly fifty candidates to interview; based on the interviews, we then choose between twenty-five and thirty new Fellows each year. All Fellows have demonstrated strong writing ability and interpersonal skills, intellectual curiosity about the writing process itself, and a commitment to helping their peers.

Once they've joined the program, Fellows receive extensive training. In their first semester, Fellows enroll in English/Interdisciplinary Programs 316: Seminar on Tutoring Writing Across the Curriculum. This three-credit honors seminar, taught by Emily Hall, explores how writers write, how they learn to write, and how to help writers revise their work. Fellows read recent work from composition studies, practice commenting on student drafts, conduct original research on writers and writing, and reflect on their own experiences as writers and tutors. The seminar also provides support and a sense of community as new Fellows begin the task of responding critically and constructively to student writing. Fellows who have already completed the seminar participate in ongoing education and professional development sessions and mentor new Fellows; many of them present their research at academic conferences. All Fellows receive continuing guidance and support from the program's administrative staff and other members of the English department throughout their tenure.

❖ What the Writing Fellows Do

Each Fellow helps ten to fifteen students per term to revise two papers. All of the students in your course (not just writers who appear to need extra help) are required to submit drafts to their Fellow. The Fellow reads each draft carefully, making copious marginal comments and writing extensive endnotes before returning the drafts to the students for review. The Fellow then meets in conference with each student individually, taking questions and making suggestions, praising what works as well as pointing out what doesn't work, in order to help the student devise a plan for revision. Because paper drafts are turned in to the Writing Fellows before the final papers are submitted for a grade, faculty can be assured that all papers will have been started early and revised at least once. Ideally, having students go through this process of drafting and revising their papers with a Fellow enables faculty to concentrate on discipline-specific issues of content and method when grading student papers. (For an example of a Fellow's comments, see page 17.)

Because Fellows are peer mentors, not graders, they serve as facilitators rather than judges for the writers in your class. Building on the special trust that peers can share, they are in a unique position to advise, encourage, and challenge students on the often-sensitive issue of their own writing. By discussing writing with their peers, Fellows seek to demystify the conventions of academic writing and to help students make informed decisions as they go about revising their

work. Fellows also serve as role models for their peers, by demonstrating their own commitment to collaboration, critical thinking, and writing.

❖ Some Things that Fellows Don't Do

Not exactly a student and not quite a teaching assistant, the tutor, and especially the writing tutor, can sometimes seem to occupy a somewhat ambiguous role. In the interest of keeping ambiguity to a minimum, it pays to bear in mind some roles that the Writing Fellows do *not* play.

Fellows address writing issues, not issues pertaining to course content. Because Fellows are not specialists in your discipline and will not be enrolled as students in your course, they are not in a position to evaluate the course-specific content of papers. They focus their comments on writing concerns: *e.g.*, *How well does this draft fulfill the requirements of the assignment? How clear is the thesis? How logically is the essay organized?* While Fellows will doubtless engage in spirited discussions about course content during their conferences with students, they will do so as interested laypersons, not as experts in your field. They will keep in mind the goals you have set for the assignment as well as what they have learned in their seminar on tutoring, but you alone are responsible for assessing a paper's content.

Fellows are not copyeditors. The Fellows' goal is to help their peers to become better writers, not to "fix" their prose for them. They therefore do not copyedit their peers' papers, since having his or her sentence-level errors corrected for him or her doesn't teach a student how to avoid or correct those errors him- or herself. While the Fellows will certainly identify patterns of grammatical or mechanical irregularity and explain how to avoid them, and point out sentences whose meaning is unclear and help the writer to clarify them, they are not proofreaders. It is ultimately the writer's responsibility to copyedit his or her own work.

❖ What the Fellows Need from You

The Writing Fellows are bright and active learners, but they are not yet fully developed teachers; and as students they have very busy schedules of their own. They will need your guidance, support, and consideration, which you can provide by taking the following steps.

Be sure that your students understand that the Writing Fellows are an integral part of your course. The more clearly your students understand what the Fellows do, how valuable you hold their contribution to the course to be, and how crucial working with the Fellows is to their success in class, the more seriously they'll treat their interaction with the Fellows. So please stress the importance of the Fellows in your syllabus, on the first day of class, and when talking about your paper assignments. (For more, see "Introducing the Program to Your Students," p. 5.)

Keep the lines of communication open and active. From time to time your Fellows will have questions, concerns, and need of advice; so please check in with them from time to time, respond promptly to your their emails, and be available to meet. And should you need to modify your calendar of assignments or to make other adjustments that will affect your Fellows' schedules, please consult with them as early as possible. (For more, see "Late Papers," p. 7.)

Establish clear policies and stick to them. For the cycle of drafts, conferences, and revisions to proceed efficiently, clear policies with respect to late drafts, extensions, and attendance at conferences need to be in place. Please establish these with your Fellows at the outset of the semester, make sure that your students know what the policies are, and hold to them throughout the term. (For more, see "Meeting with Your Fellows," p. 6.)

V. How the Program Works

❖ Overview

Each Writing Fellow works with ten to fifteen students. You will be assigned enough Fellows for all the students in your course. Each student will turn in drafts of two papers to his or her Fellow.¹ These drafts should be scheduled to come in to the Fellows at least two weeks before the final draft is due. The Fellow will return drafts with comments within a week and hold conferences the following week, leaving ample time for the students to make revisions before turning in the final draft (along with the first draft and the Fellows comments) for a grade.

That's the short version of how the program works. To insure that the process works smoothly, please attend to the details sketched below. (For a summary of the key logistical details, see the checklist on p. 9.)

❖ Assignments of Fellows

Fellows are assigned to courses a week or two before the start of the semester. To insure a good fit between Fellows and the specific courses to which they're assigned, we take into account the preferences that the Fellows express and their individual academic backgrounds and interests, and we try to pair new Fellows with experienced Fellows. (We also take into account faculty preferences when they're expressed; so if there is a particular Fellow with whom you would like to work, please let us know.) We will provide you with the names of your Fellows at the orientation meeting that we schedule during the week before classes begin (see below).

❖ Orientation and Check-in Meetings

In addition to being available for individual consultation throughout the semester, the administrative staff holds two important group meetings for all faculty currently using Writing Fellows in their courses: an orientation meeting before classes begin and a mid-semester check-in meeting around the seventh or eighth week of the term.

Please plan to attend these meetings even if you're not new to the program. They're brief and informal, usually scheduled as brown bag lunches, and they're an important opportunity for faculty to talk together about how to work effectively with Fellows. They provide a chance for faculty new to the program to ask questions and learn from other teachers who have chosen to work with Writing Fellows, and they give experienced faculty a forum to share advice and suggestions. The meetings are also a valuable source of feedback for the administrative staff.

❖ Introducing the Program to Your Students

Faculty who actively support the Writing Fellows find that their students work seriously on their writing. The way that you introduce the program to your students on the first day of class will influence your students' responses to it. This will be the first time that most of your students will work with Writing Fellows; some may see it as extra work rather than as a special opportunity to improve their writing. So explain to your students why you chose to work with Writing Fellows: let them know that you see revision as a crucial part of all writing, that you believe in the value of collaborative learning, and that you support the work that the Fellows are doing. And please explain to your students that Fellows are not TAs: they do not help with course content or grade papers.

¹ You may assign more than two papers to your students if you wish, but your Fellows will comment on only two of them. We do ask, however, that taken together the two assignments with which Fellows work be worth at least 40% of a student's final grade for the course, to encourage students to invest the time and effort necessary to make the kinds of serious revisions that their Fellows will suggest.

Saying these things just once will not be enough. Reinforcing them at regular intervals — when you discuss paper assignments and your goals for those assignments — will set a positive tone and enable the Fellows to work more effectively with your students.

It is also important that you mention the Fellows on your syllabus. Explain who the Fellows are and the role they will play in the class. Here, too, emphasize the importance of revision in your class and to academic writing. (For examples of how faculty have explained Fellows, see pp. 12–13.)

❖ Meeting with Your Fellows

Please plan to meet with your Fellows several times during the semester. We suggest the following schedule of meetings.

- **A meeting in the first week of classes**, to get to know your Fellows, to explain your course and writing assignments, schedule a time for the Fellows to introduce themselves your class, set policies, and (if you have more than one Fellow) to divide up the class. One of your Fellows will get in touch with you during the first week of class to schedule this meeting.
- **A 5- to 10-minute visit to your class by your Fellows during the first two weeks of class**, so that they can introduce themselves to your students, explain their roles, and answer any questions your students may have.
- **A meeting before each paper cycle**, to clarify goals and expectations for the assignment. What do you most want Fellows to concentrate on when they make comments on drafts and meet with students? What sorts of problems do you expect students to have? What are your pet peeves in writing? (Be sure to share these with your students too!)
- **A check-in meeting while the Fellows are commenting**, to consult about their comments, offer guidance, and clear up any misconceptions or confusion before Fellows begin holding conferences with students. This meeting is especially important during the first round of papers, when the Fellows are still learning about your expectations and priorities. The Fellows will ask you to review their comments on a draft or two so you can examine and guide their responses.
- **A meeting after you've graded the papers**, to point out to your Fellows what they did well and to suggest areas for improvement.

❖ Writing Assignments

Please observe the following guidelines with respect to paper assignments.

- **Please do not ask Fellows to comment on ungraded or informal papers**, which usually are not revised and thus are ill-suited for the drafting process that constitutes the core of the Writing Fellows Program. Writing Fellows should read drafts of two formal, graded papers.
- **Write out all assignments.** Let Fellows know your expectations, issues that may arise, your grading procedure, and organizational strategies. Craft assignments with clear goals and well-defined parameters; Fellows (as well as students) often find it difficult to interpret open-ended expectations. (Sample assignments can be found on pp. 14–15.)
- **Include “Fellow Due Date” or “First Draft Due Date” and “Final Due Date” on your syllabus and assignment sheet.**
- **Make clear to your students that submitting drafts, attending a conference with the Writing Fellow, and revising the draft are mandatory.** Remind students that working with Fellows can improve the papers of those who are already strong writers as well as those who are struggling. Emphasize to students that the Writing Fellows should receive complete drafts of papers, not outlines or rough drafts.

- **Have students hand their papers to you rather than to the Fellows.** Before passing drafts along to the Fellows, skim through the first page of each draft to ensure that the students have taken the draft assignment seriously and to identify students who may need extra help. This way, the professor, rather than the Fellow (who has far less authority), can enforce the requirement.
- **Remind students that only you, not their Fellow, can grant an extension on a paper due date.**

❖ Collecting and Returning Papers

To keep the process of collecting and returning papers manageable, please keep to the following schedule.

- **Meet with your Fellows before first drafts are due, to clarify goals and expectations for the assignment.**
- **Students submit first drafts at least TWO weeks before the final deadline.** Fellows need at least a week to write their comments and a week to hold conferences and give students time for revision. Drafts should be handed in to the professor rather than directly to Fellows. Fellows pick up papers from the faculty member — either in your class or at your office.
- **Fellows return the papers ONE week after they receive them.** You and your Fellows can negotiate how this happens. Usually Fellows will return papers to class, but they may instead bring them to you in your office. Please check in with your Fellows while they are commenting on drafts, to give them a chance to ask questions or seek additional guidance.
- **Fellows hold conferences with students the week after they've returned drafts.** You and your Fellows can negotiate how this happens. Typically, students sign up for conferences on the same day that drafts are returned.
- **Students submit their final drafts.** Students should turn in the final draft of the paper, along with the first draft and their Fellow's comments, directly to you, no sooner than two weeks after the first draft was turned in.

❖ Late Papers

Please make your late paper policy clear to the Fellows and the students. Fellows do not have the authority to grant extensions. If, as we recommend, papers are always submitted to the course instructor, students will not be tempted to contact a Fellow to plead for extra time.

Before you decide whether to grant an extension for a late paper, please consult with your Fellow to insure that he or she will have sufficient time to comment on the work. Students handing in late papers must make arrangements to meet with their Fellow for a conference. It is helpful to establish a clear cut-off date for extensions, so that the Fellows will be able to plan their own work schedules.

Please do not excuse students from participating in the program because their papers are late.

❖ Evaluation of the Papers

You will need to receive both versions of each student's paper — the first draft (with the Fellow's comments) and the final copy. You may wish to consult the first version in order to determine how the paper developed. You can see the kinds of comments that the Fellow made and the student's response to them. We suggest that you skim the Fellow's final comments before evaluating the final version of the student's paper.

Consider requiring that students turn in a cover letter along with the revised version of the paper. A cover letter outlines what changes the student has made to the paper and explains how he or she has responded to the Fellow's comments. (For a sample cover sheet, see p. 16.)

In your final comments to students, reinforce (when appropriate) what Fellows have written on drafts and encourage students to continue to attend to their suggestions.

❖ **Evaluation of the Program**

In addition to the informal evaluation you will have with your Fellow, we ask that you have your students complete a short evaluation of the Fellow and the program that we will provide. These evaluations are very important to us and we appreciate your cooperation in distributing and collecting them. Please ask that students complete these evaluations in class. We will also ask you to fill out a short evaluation of your Fellows and of the program and very much appreciate the feedback you give us.

❖ **Thanking Your Fellows**

We hope that you will consider doing something at the end of the semester to show your Fellows your appreciation for their work in your course. In previous semesters, professors have taken their Fellows out to lunch or coffee, or scheduled a brief meeting to praise and thank Fellows for their efforts. They work very hard for you, and even something as simple as a short personal note means a great deal to them.

VI. A Checklist

- ✓ Please attend the orientation meeting we will schedule during the week before classes start.
- ✓ When writing your course syllabus, please include an explanation of the Fellows program and your Fellows names, as well as the “Fellow due dates” and the “final due dates” for each of the two papers on which the Fellows will work. And please make sure that these two papers, taken together, are worth at least 40% of the grade for the class.
- ✓ Introduce the Writing Fellows Program to your students on the first day of class. Explain what the program is, how it works, and why it’s integral to your course.
- ✓ Meet with your Fellows during the first week of class, to settle upon procedures for collecting and returning papers and for students to sign up for conferences, a late paper policy, and a date during the first two weeks of the term for your Fellows to come introduce themselves to your class.
- ✓ When discussing paper assignments with your students, please reinforce the importance of the revision process and remind them that submitting drafts, attending a conference with their Fellow, and revising the draft are mandatory.
- ✓ Please write out all paper assignments, being sure to include the “Fellow due date” and the “final due date” on the assignment sheet.
- ✓ When scheduling draft cycles, please keep to the following schedule:
 - ➔ Meet with your Fellows to discuss the assignment.
 - ➔ Schedule the first draft to come due no sooner than two weeks before the final draft is due.
 - ➔ Allow the Fellows a week to comment upon and return drafts.
 - ➔ Allow the Fellows a second week to hold conferences.
- ✓ Require that students turn in first drafts and along with their final drafts. Consider requiring that students provide a cover letter along with the final draft.
- ✓ After you’ve finished grading papers, please let your Fellows know what they did well and suggest areas for improvement.
- ✓ Please attend the mid-semester check-in meeting with program administrators.
- ✓ Near the end of the term, please distribute to your students the evaluation forms that the program administrators will provide, collect the completed forms, and return them to the assistant director in the envelope provided.
- ✓ Let us know if you plan to work with Fellows next semester, so that we can include your class on the preference form that the Fellows fill out shortly before the term ends.
- ✓ Thank your Fellows at the end of the term.

VII. Frequently Asked Questions

Here are responses to questions that faculty have occasionally expressed.

❖ What should I do if a student submits a late paper?

It is important that you insist that all papers be turned in on time. Nevertheless, some students may miss deadlines. At the first meeting with your Fellow, establish a late paper policy. Your Fellow will make every effort to comment on a late paper, but his/her schedule may not allow it. Students should not be allowed to omit revision by submitting their papers late.

❖ What should I do if a student turns in a final paper without the first version and the Fellow's comments?

For the program to be effective, students must receive a Fellow's comments, attend a conference, and revise the paper. Therefore, we ask that you accept only papers accompanied by the first draft and the Fellow's comments. If for some reason a student neglects to turn in their first draft and comments, remind the student that these are required. If the student has lost them, ask the Fellow for a copy of his or her endnotes (which Fellows typically save); you won't be able to look at the marginal comments, but at least you'll get a sense of the Fellow's main suggestions.

❖ What should I do if a student says he or she does not need a Writing Fellow?

Since the program is mandatory for all students in a participating course, please do not excuse any students. Sometimes writers are initially skeptical about working with a Fellow, but they ultimately find the experience beneficial and enjoyable. You may want to discuss a skeptical student's paper with your Fellow when he or she is in the process of commenting on it.

❖ What do I say to a student who complains that his or her Writing Fellow is not familiar with the course content?

We ask you to remind students that Fellows will respond as educated lay readers. Since Fellows comment on form rather than content, they need not be experts in the field to help the student improve his or her writing. Please help students appreciate the kind of response a lay reader can give by sharing your own experiences of having colleagues outside your immediate field read your work.

Some faculty members choose to help students' work on content issues in the papers by scheduling fifteen-minute conferences with each student to discuss paper content or by scheduling in-class peer workshops (before or during the Writing Fellows paper cycle) to focus exclusively on content-related issues in the papers.

❖ What should I do if a student complains about a Writing Fellow?

Very rarely, a student complains about a Writing Fellow's comments. Please do not allow the student to switch to another Fellow simply because the student was unhappy with the comments. Rather, meet with the Fellow and student, together or separately, to review the paper and discuss solutions for the second paper cycle. (If a student feels that a Fellow's behavior has been inappropriate, please contact Emily Hall immediately.)

VIII. Advice from Experienced Faculty

If several Writing Fellows are working in one course, encourage one of them to be point-person when scheduling meetings with the professor. [One of my Fellows] did this and saved me lots of time. I really appreciated it; he made sure meeting times worked with the others and then he e-mailed me a confirmation or alternative time/date. Very helpful. ~ David Zimmerman, English 609

This time I solicited input from the Fellows on both paper assignments, which made me more aware of the rhetoric of these assignments and how students read them. ~ Susan Bernstein, English 460

I found my own interactions with the Fellows very helpful. Their questions about my goals for the students' papers helped me formulate the assignments better and be clearer about my own priorities (e.g. organization, grammar, etc.). ~ Patricia Rosenmeyer, Comp Lit 554

Timing is always a little tight. It might be useful to remind Fellows that they should try to schedule their appointments so that students have at least 3 days or more after the appointment to do revisions. ~ Heather Dubrow, English 215

I met with [my Fellows] and also corresponded with them by e-mail, providing them all handouts provided to students. The Writing Fellows responded quite well to what I was looking for in terms of the writing. ~ Matthew Turner, Geography 565

Often, suggestions registered by the Writing Fellows reconfirmed my assessments of the respective [student papers]. This enabled me to establish common objectives in consultation with the Writing Fellows. While we were not looking for a model or ideal paper, we had similar reactions to the variety of good papers. This experience allowed me to respond to student texts by often reiterating both the strengths and the weaknesses that the Writing Fellows had pinpointed during their conferences with students and in their written commentaries on student papers. ~ Dena Mandel, English 593

I have worried in the past that students who come in as good writers might get ignored. This semester the Fellows and I actively decided to push those students to take some risks, to be bolder than they might ordinarily be. This made it a little scary for the Fellows, who, not knowing the subject matter, worried they might encourage the students to go into inappropriate territory. It was a little scary for the strong writers, too, since they were used to their writing being a safety net. But it was marvelous for me to read papers that were exciting, if flawed, rather than safe and boring. ~ Linda Hunter, African Language & Literature 306

IX. Appendices

❖ Sample Syllabus Explanation #1

Women's Studies 530

Professor Caitlyn Allen

Fall 1998

We are fortunate to have two peer writing tutors, called Writing Fellows, assigned to our course this semester. They will work with you individually outside the classroom to help you improve the clarity and effectiveness of your writing. I have chosen to work with Writing Fellows in this course because I believe in the philosophy behind this program: All writers, no matter how accomplished, can improve their writing by sharing works in progress and making revisions based on constructive criticism.

Writing Fellows Are:

undergraduate students who will read your writing and make constructive suggestions for revision trained in how to critically evaluate and respond helpfully supervised closely by your professor

Writing Fellows Do Not:

grade your papers
teach you course-specific content

How It Works:

The Writing Fellows will work with you on two different assignments: the evolutionary psychology paper and the popular media paper. In each case, you will submit a polished draft* of your paper to me on the assigned due date. I will pass it on to your Writing Fellow, who will carefully read your paper, make comments on your draft, and then meet with you individually for a conference to discuss your writing and suggestions for revision. You will then revise your paper and submit both the original draft and your revised version on the specified revision date. Please include a cover letter briefly explaining how you responded to each of your Writing Fellow's comments.

***What is a Polished Draft?**

A polished draft represents your best effort at the assignment. It is typewritten (double-spaced) and has a complete bibliography. It is of quality comparable to what you would turn in for grading. It is not an outline, a rough draft, or a first draft. Proofread carefully to remove any grammar or spelling errors (see handouts on common usage errors and editing your own prose). This will ensure that when you meet, your Writing Fellow can focus on larger issues like organization, presentation, and clarity of style.

❖ Sample Syllabus Explanation #2

N.B.: Professor Cronon uses his Fellow's name on the syllabus, a practice we encourage. If you haven't yet been assigned Fellows when you write your syllabus, you can use "your Fellow" in place of names.

History 600 Professor Bill Cronon Spring 2002

Writing Fellow: Nate Metzger, [contact info]. Nate has a mailbox in the Writing Center on the sixth floor of Helen C. White, where you can leave papers for him if you need to do so. For more on Nate's role in the seminar, see the section on Writing below.

Writing: [description of writing assignments] In both cases, you'll produce an initial draft to be read and critiqued by our Writing Fellow, Nate Metzger. For those of you who have not yet had the good fortune of working with a Writing Fellow, I want you to know how lucky we are to have Nate assigned to our seminar. Writing Fellows are skilled undergraduate writers who have been chosen in a campus-wide selection process to assist other students in drafting papers. They're given intensive training for an entire semester on how to offer constructive criticism in the drafting process, and are then assigned to writing-intensive courses to work one-on-one with other students by reading drafts, offering detailed comments, and then meeting individually with each student to make constructive suggestions for how drafts can be improved. I'm quite certain that Writing Fellows offer some of the best and most detailed advice you'll find anywhere on campus about how to become a better writer.

It's important for you to remember that Writing Fellows are not expected to have any special expertise in the subjects of the courses with which they work. Their role is to offer intelligent lay readings of the drafts they critique, helping you see how you haven't been as clear or as graceful as you could be in presenting your arguments. They're not supposed to evaluate the content of your papers; instead, they take the content you've given them and work with you to improve the way you structure and present it.

A word to the wise: please don't react to Nate by assuming that you're already a skilled writer and have nothing to learn from another undergraduate. Please respond as seriously as you can to the advice he'll be offering you. Skilled writers know that all good writing is rewriting. Among the most precious resources any writer can hope to have is an intelligent audience that is willing to give thoughtful feedback about the drafts one has produced. If you think your prose has no need of criticism, please think again. I've been writing all my life, and I'm still grateful whenever I'm lucky enough to receive the kind of critical readings of my work that Nate will be giving yours. You won't get this kind of help often in your life. Make the most of it. (Please note: when you turn in your final papers, you'll also turn in the rough draft with Nate's comments, and I also ask that you include a cover sheet in which you explain the ways in which the paper evolved between the two drafts.)

❖ **Sample Assignment #1**

This assignment is more open-ended, but it still emphasizes the date that drafts are due to the Writing Fellows and when final papers will be turned in for a grade.

Women's Studies 223

Lecturer: Jody Cardinal

Fall 2001

Paper 1: WHAT IS YOUR "MESTIZA CONSCIOUSNESS"?

Full Draft Due: Monday, October 1

Final Version Due: Monday, October 15

(Except in emergencies, no late papers will be accepted on either date.)

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is

- to analyze how well the ideas and theories discussed in class apply to your personal experiences of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and other identity categories
- to think more deeply and in more detail about specific course readings
- to develop skills for writing well-organized and effective academic essays

Format for both versions: 3 typed, double-spaced pages

- **Full Draft:** The full draft submitted on 10/1 must be a high-quality draft, 3 pages minimum. It is not an outline or a very rough draft. It should represent your best effort at the assignment and be comparable to what you would turn in for grading. I will review all drafts and then give them to your Writing Fellow who will make comments and schedule a conference to discuss your paper with you.
- **Final version:** Remember to submit both your first version with your Writing Fellow's comments and your final version on 10/15. An evaluation of your revision process will be included in the grade.

Assignment: Choose one of the following topics:

1. Mestiza consciousness paper: Answer all of the following questions:

- How does Gloria Anzaldúa define "mestiza consciousness"?
- Choose one of the characters or authors from the list on the back of this sheet. Using specific examples from the readings, analyze how and to what extent your chosen character or author has a "mestiza consciousness."
- Using specific examples from your personal experience, analyze how and to what extent you have a "mestiza consciousness."

2. Develop a metaphor for identity: Gloria Anzaldúa and Sonja Curry-Johnson develop metaphors to explain how multiple and conflicting aspects of identity can be joined to form a functional whole. Anzaldúa uses the metaphor of the borderlands, while Curry-Johnson uses the metaphor of a tapestry. For this topic, do all of the following:

- Explain your own original metaphor for the way in which conflicting aspects of the self can be linked together to form a functional identity.
- Choose one of the characters or authors from the list on the back of this sheet. Using specific examples from the readings, analyze how and to what extent your chosen character or author has the type of identity described by your metaphor.
- Using specific examples from your personal experience, analyze how and to what extent you have developed the type of identity described by your metaphor.

❖ Sample Assignment #2

This assignment is more open-ended, but it still emphasizes the date that drafts are due to the Writing Fellows and when final papers will be turned in for a grade.

Sociology 236

Jane Piliavin

Fall 1997

PAPER ONE – COMPARATIVE PAPER

Based on observing two different forms of community participation, you will write a 3–5 page paper comparing and contrasting the behavior and rhetoric of actors, and your own feelings, in the settings. This is due on September 22. Comments will be made on this paper by the Writing Fellow, supervised by the professor, and you will then rewrite it for a grade. The rewritten paper is due October 20.

❖ **Sample Cover Sheet**

If you'd like an electronic copy, contact Emily: ebhall@facstaff.wisc.edu.

Cover Sheet to Accompany Final Draft

Your Name: _____

Paper Title: _____

What is your goal with this paper? What does it attempt to do?

What do you like best about your paper? What's working well?

What changes did you make in your revision of this paper?

How have your Writing Fellow's comments on your draft and/or your conference with the Fellow influenced your revisions? (You're not required to take all of your Writing Fellow's advice, but please explain your choices.)

❖ Sample Comments from Fellow

Here is an example of the kind of commentary you and your students can expect from the Fellows. (The assignment, from an upper division philosophy class, asked that the writer analyze, interpret, and take a stand on Kant's theory of evil.)

Dear _____,

I enjoyed reading your explanation of the complexities that arise when the propensity to evil is seen as “sometimes innate.” You treat the subject in a very accessible yet scholarly tone, which makes it easy for me as a reader to follow the line of your argument without becoming hindered by the language. Also, you have done a nice job incorporating quotations into the material—doing so helps me to understand more precisely how Kant thinks so that I can compare it with what you say.

Here are some things for you to consider as you revise your paper:

- 1) **Scope.** You mention that you are concerned with the amount of material you cover in such a small space. It certainly is all very interesting; however, considering the page limit of the assignment, I think that you are correct to say that it may need to be constrained. How might you condense the material in the first part of the paper (approximately through paragraph 5, perhaps?), while still constructing a complete explanation of propensity to evil and its implications? I think that doing this will focus your argument so that you are not trying to do too many things at once. There were times when in first half of the paper (the analysis of the propensity to evil) when I was not sure how this explanation was relevant, considering that you ultimately show propensity to be flawed.
- 2) **Quotations.** There are certain places where you use quite a few direct quotations from Kant. After each one, instead of letting it speak for itself, make sure that you sufficiently explain your interpretation of this quote and how it furthers or complicates your argument. For example, paragraph 8 contains almost one quote per sentence—a lot for a paper of this length; it might benefit from you incorporating the ideas into your own by paraphrasing them, or from a short elaboration after each one. Since you seem to agree with Kant at certain points and disagree at others, your readers can benefit from you clarifying the intent with which you use each quote.
- 3) **Topic sentences.** Many of your topic sentences are already good, but there are places where they could further guide the reader in the journey of your argument. For example, instead of using a question (paragraph 9) or a re-statement of Kant's explanations, take it one step further and explain where this idea fits in within your thesis statement. By relating each topic sentence back to the thesis, and by making each one a mini-thesis for the paragraph, you will ensure that a) each paragraph plays a distinct role in your argument and b) that your reader will easily follow and (more likely) be convinced by your logic.

I look forward to meeting with you and discussing your paper further at our conference—your paper's already got a lot going for it, so through revision it will only become even stronger still. Look over your paper, and bring any questions or ideas that you may have for us to talk about. See you then!