

Course Proposal

1. Details:

- a) Course Title: Assessment of Writing *6601.556*
- b) Sponsor: Dr. Diane Penrod, College Writing Department,
College of Communication
- c) Credit Hours: 3 credit hours
- d) Course Level: 500-level graduate
- e) Curricular Effect: Required course for composition track in proposed
Masters of Arts in Writing.
Open to students throughout the University.
- f) Prerequisites: None.
- g) Suggested Time/
Scale of Implementation: Summer 1999
One section
- h) Resources: Teaching faculty is on staff consistent with the
College of Communication budget. New library acquisitions
will be required over time.

2. Rationale:

The proposed course is part of the Master of Arts currently under development by the College Writing and Professional Writing Departments in the College of Communication. The course can also be offered as an elective for students enrolled in graduate programs across campus.

Those who are presently teaching writing in post-secondary and alternative settings or who are considering doing so must be familiar with the nature of assessing written work. In addition, many businesses now require new employees to take writing assessment essay exams that are evaluated by staff members. *Assessment of Writing* examines the dominant ideas, methods, and concerns that are critical to the evaluation of written work. This class would be beneficial for anyone who is involved with the appraisal of written material.

The topics covered in this course span a range of issues related to current and historical perspectives on writing assessment. Through learning the techniques related to writing assessment, Rowan students can develop a stronger basis for determining and implementing appropriate and effective evaluations of their students' or colleagues' written tasks. Our students then have an advantage over their peers in their careers, as Rowan graduates will be able to demonstrate to employers their knowledge of how to present various writing assessment methods and applications to meet the growing national, state, and industry demands for writing competency.

While it is designed primarily for future Writing graduate students, the course may also be beneficial for other Rowan in the Colleges of Communication, Business, Education, and Liberal Arts who may be teaching or evaluating others' writing in a professional setting.

3. Essence of the Course:

a) Objectives:

This proposed course presents a number of objectives:

- (i) To expose students to the current and historical discussions of writing assessment.
- (ii) To provide students with an expanded framework of writing assessment as an integral part of composition that employs certain theoretical and practical models to disseminate information to an audience.
- (iii) To assist students in developing practical assessment strategies for the theoretical models discussed in class.
- (iv) To introduce students to various methods for assessing writing.
- (v) To explore with students the various roles of the writing teacher as an evaluator of written work.
- (vi) To introduce students to various political and legal issues in writing assessment.
- (vii) To discuss with students how new developments in writing (such as computer aided composition) influence changes in writing assessment.
- (viii) To introduce to students the relationship between commentary and writer development.

b) Topical Outline:

The topical outline and content of the course will include:

Project

Students can choose from the following:*

Development of an assessment model to use in their classroom or workplace experience

Multimedia assessment presentation for dissemination as an in-service workshop

In-depth research of teacher comments or industrial assessment program as a case study or ethnography

Full-length paper of publishable quality for journal submission

* The option for students to choose their own semester length project is to tailor learning to meet individual students' needs. To monitor and guide students' progress, instructors will individually contract the semester-long project. The contracts stipulate the length, type of project, and criteria needed to achieve a particular letter grade.

Sample Week-by-Week Overview of the Course**

Week 1: Historical and Contemporary Models of Writing Assessment in the Writing Process Era

Includes a brief introduction to the history of writing assessment, holistic models, Diedrich scaling, ecological models of writing assessment

Weeks 2-4: Issues in Portfolio Assessment

Week 2: Introduction to portfolio assessment

Week 3: Virtues and vices of portfolio use

Week 4: Portfolios and a writer's attitudes toward writing

Weeks 5-6: Evaluating Writing in the Post-Process Classroom

Week 5: Assessing collaborative work

Week 6: Making quality comments on papers

Week 7: Determining Validity and Reliability/Does the Assessment Measure what it sets out to?

Week 8: The Nature of Assessing Errors in Writing

Week 9: Writing Assessment in the Workplace

Week 10 The Effect of Race, Class, Gender on Writing Assessment

Weeks 11-12: Assessing the "Special Needs" Writer

Second Language writers

Basic Skills development

Physical challenges to writing (visual impairment, physical disability, hearing impairment, etc.)

Week 11: Political and Legal Issues in Writing Assessment

(agenda setting, legal issues connected to writing assessment, why we assess writing)

Week 12: The Effect of Electronic Communication on Writing Assessment

Week 13: Strategies for Selecting Appropriate Assessment Models

Week 14: Handling the Paper Load

c) Evaluation and Grading Procedures:

Final course grade will be determined based on the quality of the students' assignments throughout the duration of the class. The assignments can include projects, response papers, examinations, seminar presentations and/or tests and quizzes.

** All students will be required to turn in either weekly response papers, short formal papers, or other regular written assignments (i.e., essay exams, case studies, or ethnography). The options of response papers, essay exams, short formal papers or other written assignments are at the discretion of the instructor teaching the course. The goal of every writing assignment is for students to demonstrate understanding of the content being presented in the classroom.

d) Course Evaluation:

The proposed course will be evaluated using the College of Communication student evaluation forms and critical review by the College Writing Department faculty. Student evaluation forms will assess effectiveness of content and content delivery, assignments, and texts. The critical review by the College Writing Department faculty will determine whether or not the course meets the goal(s) outlined or whether additional courses are needed. Critical review by the department faculty can be met in several ways: classroom observation, syllabus review, and faculty meetings at regular intervals to assess progress.

4. Results of Consultations: See attached.

a) Consulted Departments: Professor Janice Rowan, College Writing; Professor David Lloyd, Professional Writing; Dr. Timothy Viator, English; Dr. Carl Calliari, Elementary Education; Dr. Marion Rilling, Dean of the Graduate School. (Forthcoming)

b) Outside Consultants and Consultant Statements: Ms. Marie Adair, Language Arts Supervisor, Vineland School District, Vineland, New Jersey. (Forthcoming)

c) Written Consultations: See attached.

5. Additional Supporting Information:

Possible Texts

- Allison, Libby, Lizbeth Bryant, and Maureen Hourigan. 1998. Grading in the Post-Process Classroom. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann/Boynton-Cook.
- Belanoff, Patricia and M. Dickson. 1991. Portfolios: Process and Product. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton-Cook.
- Black, Laurel, Donald Daiker, Jeff Sommers, and Gail Stygall. 1994. New Directions in Portfolio Assessment: Reflective Practice, Critical Theory, and Large-Scale Scoring. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann/Boynton-Cook.
- Bloom, Lynn Z., Donald Daiker, and Edward M. White. 1997. Composition in the Twenty-First Century: Crisis and Change. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Bullock, Richard and John Trimbur, eds. 1991. The Politics of Writing Instruction. Boynton-Cook.
- Ruth, Leo and Sandra Murphy. 1986. Designing Writing Tasks for the Assessment of Writing. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishers.
- Strickland, Kathleen and James Strickland. 1998. Reflections on Assessment. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann/Boynton-Cook.
- White, Edward M. 1985. Teaching and Assessing Writing. Second edition. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- White, Edward M., William D. Lutz, and Sandra Kamusikiri. 1996. Assessment of Writing: Politics, Policies, Practices. New York: Modern Language Association.
- Williamson, Michael and Brian Huot. 1993. Validating Holistic Scoring for Writing Assessment: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations. Cresskill: Hampton Press.
- Wolcott, Willa. 1998. An Overview of Writing Assessment: Theory, Research, and Practice. Urbana: NCTE Press.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake. 1992. Portfolios in the Writing Classroom. Urbana: NCTE.

Journals

College Composition and Communication
Journal of Advanced Composition
Assessing Writing
Journal of Basic Writing

Research in the Teaching of English
Phi Delta Kappan

6.) Course Description

Assessment of Writing (0601.)

Assessment of Writing examines the dominant methods, issues, and concerns that are central to the discussion and evaluation of students' written work. Topics include current and historical perspectives on writing assessment, the use of various models of writing assessment, the political and legal issues connected to writing assessment, and the validity and reliability of assessment models. The course will introduce students to the types of assessment models used in the field of composition, will explore the effectiveness of comments on papers, and will examine how to assess errors in writing. This class will also provide students with knowledge necessary to apply a range of assessment models in the application of writing across multiple workplace situations, and will assist students in applying and refining those models to new developments in computer-assisted writing.