Journal of Academic Language & Learning
Vol. 10, No. 1, 2016, A155-A168. ISSN 1835-5196

AALL
Association for Academic Language and Learning

The critical nexus: Linked practices in reading, thinking and writing to develop discourse competency

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(Received 19 October, 2015; Published online 30 January, 2016)

Informed by a conviction that writing is thinking, this paper presents a model for developing student writing within disciplinary curriculum by linking writing practice explicitly to reading non-fiction and critical thinking as co-constructive practices of disciplinary discourse. The challenge of developing students' written communication is here focalised through reading and enacted through formative exercises that emphasise writing as a discursive practice and iterative process. This pedagogy aims to reveal to students the conventions and codes of disciplinary discourse through shared reading and writing exercises that focus on reading comprehension. Rather than an empirical study, I offer a practitioner's perspective informed by several years of reflective practice and training in the approaches associated with Writing Across the Curriculum. The goal of describing this pedagogy is to demonstrate how writing practice and development can be integrated with existing curriculum without displacing subject content. The example here is drawn from a First Year subject in Screen & Media Studies located within a School of Humanities & Creative Arts.

Key Words: writing across the curriculum; writing in the disciplines; writing pedagogy; writing as discursive practice; reading comprehension; disciplinary discourse.

1. Introduction

> … manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'; and that this 'already said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark. It is supposed therefore that everything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in that semi-silence that precedes it, which continues to run obstinately beneath it, but which it covers and silences. (Foucault, 1969 [1972], p. 27)

It is increasingly common to hear Australian academic staff bemoan the low quality of student writing while simultaneously complaining that they should not have to teach students how to write. When it is evident that students are not meeting their expectations, academics often expect that someone else will bring them up to speed. That "someone else" in the university context is most commonly a Student Learning Centre (SLC), Academic Language and Learning (ALL) unit, or a generic writing subject, to which students are directed on referral when they do not meet standards. Yet, there is an established and growing body of scholarship that indicates student writing is best developed within disciplines, where content treatment is inseparable from epistemological and ontological considerations (Arkoudis, 2014; Arkoudis & Doughney, 2014;

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Briguglio, 2014; Britton, 1970; Emig, 1977; Lea, 2004; Parker & Goodkin, 1987; Russell, Lea, Parker, Street, & Donahue, 2009; Skillen, Merten, Trivett, & Percy, 1998). This is to say that, writing is best developed when it is understood as intimately related to the construction of thought rather than merely its expression, and that writing is constitutive to discourse (Bazerman, 1988 [2000]; Menary, 2007). Here discourse is understood in the Foucauldian sense, as a body of knowledge and the practices that shape and sustain it. In North America these principles are manifest in the related programmatic approaches to student writing development known as Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID).

In Australia, a similar position is advocated in the body of work that addresses "embedding" academic literacies and writing development within disciplinary subjects, often by way of collaboration between discipline experts and ALL staff or learning developers (Brooman-Jones et al., 2011; Chanock, Horton, Reedman, & Stephenson, 2012; Gunn, Hearne, & Sibthorpe, 2011; Harris & Ashton, 2011; Reid & Parker, 2002; Hunter & Tse, 2013; Wingate, Andon, & Cogo, 2011). While such approaches are increasingly acknowledged as good practices that provide cost-effective and sustainable responses to an ongoing challenge (Ambery, Manners, & Smith, 2005; Harris & Ashton, 2011), researchers have also observed that, to date, whole of institution implementation has been uncommon in Australia (Brooman-Jones et al., 2011; Chanock et al., 2012; Hunter & Tse, 2013). The same has been said for the UK (Gibson & Myers, 2010; Hill & Tinker, 2013; Wingate et al., 2011) although UK scholarship more readily points out that diversification of the student population (post-1992) has led to more serious consideration of whole of institution approaches to embedding and integrating academic literacy and writing development within disciplinary teaching contexts (Clughen & Connell, 2011; Ganobcsik-Williams, 2004; Hill, Tinker, & Catterall, 2010; Mitchell, 2010). In the North American context, diversity among student populations and whole of institution approaches that require students to undertake various writing development subjects have much longer histories beginning in the latter 1800s and with significant movements arising after WWII and again in the 1970s (Russell, 1991).

While the US, UK, and Australian approaches to writing development are beginning to overlap in important ways, they remain distinct and the contexts in which they operate are not the same. To wit, more than 50% of US tertiary institutions have WAC programs and they are most common at the PhD granting institutions (Thais & Porter, 2010) while UK literature points to current efforts aimed at influencing policy toward a shift that would see whole of institutions approaches, like WAC/WID, adopted (Clughen & Connell, 2011; Deane & Ganobcsik-Williams, 2012; Hill, et al., 2010). More importantly, the way that the concept of "academic literacies" has been taken up in Australia is far-reaching and less well defined than an explicit focus on reading and writing in the university context, as "Academic Literacies researchers have not yet formulated clear principles for the teaching of writing" (Wingate et al. p 70). Moreover, Mitchell (2011) observes that, the "WAC-inspired notion that writing must be situated at the heart of university learning gets conflated with imposed calls to embed study skills…" (p. 342). Indeed, the variety of terminology that circulates through the related concepts of "academic literacies" and "study skills", "embedding" and "integrating" does not help matters.

The writing development pedagogy that I describe below should be viewed within the institutional context and with consideration to my training in writing development. Working in an Australian university for the last sixteen years, I was educated in the US and first taught there. As an undergraduate in the early 1980s, my course requirements included a subject-based First Year writing seminar (I took socio-linguistics), and writing practice was integral to my major study in Communications. After graduation, I was employed as a journalist. More influential to my pedagogy, however, is the experience I gained during my later MA study in Cultural Anthropology. Studying at Temple University in Philadelphia, I trained and worked as a writing tutor at the University's Writing Center. At the time (1989-1991), a great deal of the Writing Center's work was in collaboration with students enrolled in the university requirement, "Intellectual Heritage". Following in the Great Books tradition of teaching western thought, the reading material to which students wrote a variety of response papers included, Homer's *Iliad*, the Declaration of Independence, John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, Karl Marx's *Capi-*

tal, and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, among others. This material was challenging for most students but particularly for those who were first-in-family, recent arrivals from southeast Asia, those who spoke English as an additional language, and those who spoke "non-standard" American dialects at home. Through reading and writing activities we assisted students from less advantaged and often disempowered social groups to gain access to discourses of privilege and power – academic discourses. These were students who would likely be described in Australia as non-traditional but at Temple University they constituted a core demographic. Given this history and training, my approach to student writing is strongly informed by the philosophical groundings of WAC and WID, particularly the intertwined ideas that, writing is thinking, everyone's writing can develop, and writing is everyone's business.

In addition to my belief that writing ought to be integral to university study, a number of factors at the institutional level have shaped the practices described later in this article. Foremost among them is Flinders University's policy toward writing development. While various Faculty and School committees convened to promote the establishment of a writing development subject as early as 2005, it was only in June 2012 that the University adopted a policy on "First Year literacy" for the purposes of "enhancing the academic literacy skills and capacities of first-year undergraduate students likely to be at risk of failure and attrition due to poor literacy skills" (Parkin, 2012). Rather than establishing a subject or sequence of subjects that might aim to enhance the "skills and capacities" of all students over the course of their studies, the policy vision is limited to First Year and its rationale reflects a legacy of "deficit" thinking around writing development. No doubt the result of difficult inter-disciplinary debate, the policy also emerged as an "either/or" proposition through which the development of literacy skills can be achieved "*either* through the explicit integration of course-specific literacy content within the course curriculum *or* via making provision within course rules for students to undertake a generalist, University-endorsed, credit-bearing literacy topic" (Parkin, 2012; see also Miller, 2015). The decision has been left to Course Committees to decide which approach will be deployed, but the recommended choice was that professional degrees would have course-specific integration of literacy development while generalist degrees (eg. BA) would adopt the "generalist, University-endorsed, credit-bearing literacy topic" (Parkin, 2012). While this policy is a first step, it does not, as Reid and Parker (2002) recommended ten years earlier, "involve all staff in incorporating good communication practices into all parts of the teaching/learning transaction" (p.22). My teaching in a Humanities-based discipline primarily serves students in the "generalist" degrees (Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Information Technology, and Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education).[1]

A second contextual matter worth noting is an anomaly of staffing. The University does not appear to employ "Learning Developers" or "Academic Language and Learning" professionals. There are two units that might participate in curriculum and pedagogy reform: the Centre for University Teaching (CUT) and the Student Learning Centre (SLC). These are separate units with CUT being a "staff-facing" unit and the SLC, as its name declares, a student-facing service unit. There are no literacy experts employed in CUT and they have not offered any staff development training in this field. SLC staff do not readily self-identify as ALL professionals.[2] The option for a disciplinary teacher/scholar to collaborate on pedagogy and/or curriculum reform with an ALL professional is not readily available at this institution. Therefore, in the absence of collaborative relationships with ALL experts underpinned by a limited and ambivalent policy on student writing development, the approach and practices described below have emerged in what can be called a WAC/WID diaspora. The practices have been transported and transplanted to Australia and are taking root and adapting to the local environment. This article aims to make a contribution to the area that Hunter & Tse (2013) have identified as "largely under-researched"

[1] Increasingly the BA/BEd can be deemed a generalist degree because so many undertake the course and do not secure teaching positions that it is in effect no longer only training people for professional teaching.

[2] At a recent seminar the guest speaker asked how many participants were teaching staff and how many ALL staff. The SLC staff did not self-identify as ALL staff and their supervisor intervened and explained that ALL meant SLC staff. I point this out to highlight an institutional culture with a long history of writing support as "remediation" rather than "development."

and that is, how subject lecturers take responsibility for and make visible the practices of disciplinary thinking and writing. The case in point is derived from my teaching in *Convergence Cultures*, a first-year, first semester subject in Screen & Media Studies, a discipline situated within the School of Humanities & Creative Arts.

2. The challenge

A majority of student writing tasks in the Humanities and Social Sciences ask for persuasive argumentation engaged with scholarly research and literature and supported by evidence, yet students have little experience writing in this form, and even less experience reading the sorts of texts that we ask them to reflect upon and deploy as the material evidence for their arguments. While the writing assignments we set are 'generic' to some extent (summaries, essays, reports and the like), meeting assessment criteria and getting a good result is dependent upon understanding discursive conventions and codes within the discipline. But, how does a novice to the discipline recognize these conventions and become familiar with the discursive practices associated with a given field? Surely such familiarity is incrementally acquired through reading, discussion, and writing practice with the paradigmatic forms that constitute knowledge in specific disciplines and through which knowledge is authorised – authored – written. As Foucault argued about discourses, their "tranquillity must be disturbed" in order to "show that they do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known…" (1969 [1972], p. 28).

Following this lead, here I discuss the development of student writing as equally a matter of learning how to read non-fiction, in order to reveal the rules and give voice to the silences of academic discourse. This paper presents a model for developing student writing within disciplinary curriculum by linking writing practice explicitly to reading non-fiction and critical thinking (for related reader-oriented approaches to writing see Bharuthram & Clarence, 2015; Chanock et al., 2012; Deane & Ganobcsik-Williams, 2012; Wingate et al., 2011). The challenge of developing students' written communication is here focalised through reading and enacted through formative exercises with an explicit emphasis on writing as an iterative process. Rather than a quantitative study, I offer a practitioner's perspective from a disciplinary scholar, informed by ethnographic observation and several years of reflective practice and training in the approaches associated with Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Inside the Disciplines.

3. The subject

Convergence Cultures has no restrictions or pre-requisites, so students from across the University may enrol, but the student cohort is predominantly composed from three particular Bachelor degrees: Information Technology (BIT) with an emphasis in Digital Media; Arts (BA) for those planning to major in Screen & Media Studies (some of whom are doing the joint BA/Bachelor of Education); and Creative Arts (BCA) with students drawn from strands in TV/Film production, Digital Media and 3D production. The topic[3] learning objectives are to:

1. understand technical, social and cultural contexts for new media developments;
2. acquire a working vocabulary relevant to understanding and expressing ideas about digital media;
3. become familiar with a range of digital media practices;
4. practice and improve critical reading skills and related scholarly writing skills.

The subject is required for the BIT students and is one of two that must be chosen from a selection of three subjects for the BA and BCA students. Contributing to the first year foundation in these degrees and majors, the subject introduces students to media studies as a cultural concern and exposes them to standards and expectations relevant to this paradigm. Many of the issues covered have broad appeal and social relevance, such as the increase in surveillance of public

[3] At Flinders University, individual courses (English 1, Biology 2, etc.) are referred to as "topics" while degrees are called "courses." Here I use the terms topic and subject interchangeably.

space, media regulation and censorship, the future of television, self-representation in social media, and the business of video games. It is, effectively, an introductory survey topic.

Media Studies is fortunate in that students come to class with a wealth of experience as media consumers, and sometimes too as producers. Their analytical skills, however, are not as well developed. Nevertheless, we want to leverage the familiar because passion is such a useful tool in securing and maintaining student interest. An important aim of introductory Media Studies subjects like this one, therefore, is to generate the estrangement necessary to gain distance from the objects of study so that critical analysis is more readily achievable. This work requires delicate balancing between utilising the familiar and framing it in a light that exposes what is often so naturalised that it is overlooked. We want our students to acquire this critical thinking orientation for their future studies.

Convergence Cultures has roughly one hundred students and is delivered in a lecture/tutorial format where weekly lectures are 80 minutes (including screening any audio visual materials) and weekly tutorial sessions are 50 minutes. Two or three academic staff members lecture into the subject delivering units in their areas of expertise. I developed the first iteration of the topic, have taught into it for several years and have been Convenor for three years. In this role I am responsible for selecting the topic content, readings, and assessment, and supervising any casual tutors.[4]

4. Pedagogy for writing development

The pedagogical practice I describe below is derived from the principles associated with Writing Across the Curriculum. In US higher education, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) describes a whole of institution approach that deems writing development to be everyone's responsibility and thus integrates writing practice in every discipline across the entire degree from entry to exit (Anson, 2002; Bazerman & Russell, 1994; McLeod, 2000; Young & Fulwiler, 1986). WAC subscribes to a constructivist theory of knowledge, maintaining that learners actively construct knowledge through language and other symbolic means (Emig, 1977). Writing thus serves as a *tool for learning* usefully deployed in formative learning activities (Parker & Goodkin, 1987). Language, whether written or oral, expresses thought, and writing allows us to see or reflect on our thoughts; to affirm and revise them. Writing is thus understood as more than a means of communicating our thoughts with others; it is equally a method of thought. The oft-repeated slogan of WAC is "writing to learn and learning to write." Most importantly, WAC programs share a view that "inoculation via one writing course is insufficient to prepare students for writing expectation in the academy and beyond" (Condon & Rutz, 2012, p. 357).

Situated in the Humanities, the field of Screen and Media Studies engages students in critical analysis of both audio-visual and written texts. A good share of our curriculum is given over to consideration of big ideas related to the social and cultural dimensions of media, for instance, exploring questions of technology's role in social change, aesthetics and affect, the politics of representation, and the power dynamics involved in looking and being seen, to name just a few. While films, television programs, and video games often serve as primary objects for analysis, we ask students to situate their analyses in historical, cultural, and economic contexts. This requires them to read closely and engage critically with complex and sophisticated secondary sources.

Since these texts are important yet unfamiliar and often difficult at first, a primary goal of this pedagogy is to help students build intimacy and an affective relationship with non-fiction. I want them to recognize and feel a passion for logic and argument, evidence and method. I want them to see the elegance of non-fiction prose and appreciate its form. I want them to become critical readers who can identify and dissect an argument, distinguish a claim from evidence and evaluate that evidence from different perspectives. By guiding student reading in a structured method, we raise their awareness of compositional form and rhetorical strategy. By doing writ-

[4] We do not always have the luxury of employing casual staff as tutors and senior academic staff take on these duties quite regularly.

ing tasks designed to focus their attention on different aspects of argument and its presentation, students gain a keener awareness of linking their writing to their reading as they practice writing with evidence drawn from their reading. Carter, Ferzli, and Wiebe (2007) have shown that "students demonstrated an awareness of something about the act of writing itself – an experience of synthesizing, ordering, reflecting, interpreting – that led to learning" (p. 288). Through a series of linked reading and iterative writing exercises, assessment in *Convergence Cultures* places reading first with the longer-range aim of developing student writing by making both reading and writing *processes* more transparent, more collaborative, and less private – to demystify discourse and make reading more meaningful in itself and more useful in its application as evidence.

5. Reading, thinking & writing practice

Assessment in *Convergence Cultures* is comprised of four short written responses to readings (250-300 words, each worth 15% of the final mark) and a writing workshop associated with each (5% each), as well as a group media production task for 20%. Across a twelve-week semester, students have assigned readings each week, but they only respond in writing to four of them. Given that this is a First Year topic, there is a "make-up option" at the end of the semester and students may submit the fifth response if they have missed a submission or not achieved a Pass mark on one. (There is, however, no associated writing workshop for the make-up option.) Each reading response is based on a different shared text and targets a specific reading comprehension task. The material related to the reading response question is worked on across four weeks and then the cycle begins again for the next reading response. As an example, most recently the first reading response focused on defining the terms and identifying the author's "big idea":

> Jenkins (2006) distinguishes between two senses in which the term "medium" is used: a) the technological; and b) the social and cultural (p.13). Define the two terms and explain how this distinction is important to Jenkins' larger argument.

In the first week, students read the assigned article in their own time. In the second week, the lecture addresses significant concepts in the reading, contextualises them, and exemplifies them. The lecture is informal to the extent that students are invited to ask questions and make contributions throughout. In the same week, tutorials are given over to discussing the reading and the question students are to address. We discuss the reading in terms of the *Critical Reading Guide* (see Appendix A) and we discuss what the reading response question is asking.

In the third week, students bring to tutorial three hard copies of their draft reading response. They break into groups of four and swap papers, commenting on one another's drafts and then discussing the papers and peer comments (see *Instructions for Peer Feedback*, Appendix B). The last ten minutes of the class are given over to sharing feedback with the larger group. Going around the room, students hear that many of the drafts received similar feedback and commentary. They are asked to reflect on what feedback will be helpful and how they will revise their drafts before submission. This oral practice is important for normalising the revision process and making it more public. Marks are given for participation in these workshops: the full 5% is achieved only by bringing a draft or, at least, bullet point notes and commenting on the work of others. The aim is to encourage students to participate in the process rather than penalise them for failing to complete the task. Attending and commenting on peer work without having brought a draft earns 3%. Zero points are assigned if the session is missed.

In the fourth week, students submit their revised paper for marking, by which time, if they have attended the class sessions and participated, they effectively have an answer, if not "the answer." Key to this process is making students comfortable with the content so that they feel free to work on framing, organization and expression, without having to worry about whether they have the "right idea" (for a similar approach see Hunter & Tse, 2013). Knowing what will be said releases the writer to work on how it is said.

A few fundamental assumptions guide the tuition pattern outlined above. First, clear writing requires clear thinking. The time we spend on pre-writing tasks (talking about the reading selection, the author's aim and strategies, the reading response task, and the various response plans students are developing), helps clarify students' thinking in advance of writing. Secondly, this method subscribes to the view that "writing is rewriting." Drafting and open discussion of drafts bring the processes of writing into a public and collaborative forum. Overall, student response to these practices is favourable.

In the end of semester's Student Evaluation of Teaching surveys in 2015, students responded to the question, "What aspects of this topic most helped you learn?" The majority of comments indicated the following benefits from the writing workshops typified in these student remarks:

- Reading Responses; Analysing articles; Reading different ideas; Learning how authors use different methods to convey their opinions
- The variety of readings and associated questions, followed by the writing workshops
- Feedback from other students in tutorials and documents on FLO [Flinders Learning Online] about common errors in text responses were useful for developing my writing skills.
- The workshops that we did to improve our writing.
- The tutorials where we were able to discuss readings and lectures as well as attempt to assist each other in our reading responses.
- The workshopping of our reading responses was very helpful. It made me realise the number of mistakes can be found in your writing if someone else read it and so this made me re-read my work multiple times before submitting.
- The peer writing workshops and the feedback was thorough.

In addition to the positive feedback students in this cohort gave the process, the grade report supports their impression that it did have a positive effect. For 57.5% of students their marks on reading responses improved progressively across the semester, while 23.75% remained consistent with negligible change, and for 18.75% the marks declined across the semester. More importantly, only 1/3 of the students whose marks declined had attended all the writing workshops with a draft. Among those who attended all the writing workshops with a draft, there were only three whose marks declined. Notably, two of them were students who began with marks of 90 and 95/100. It is reasonable to speculate that these two students may have made a rational decision about time management and dedicated their efforts to other classes where they might not have started off as well. While they did not maintain the 90-95 score for the subsequent tasks, their averaged marks remained in the highest band (85-100).

6. Working (not delivering) content

To implement this pattern of tuition, significant changes were made to the topic design. Having eschewed "the essay," tests and quizzes, assessment focuses on small and targeted writing practice that allows students to work on logical structure to make a single point clearly, to compose clear and concise sentences, and to work on paragraph structure and expression. These foundations then serve as building blocks for longer form writing that students will undertake in subsequent topics. At the same time, this learning has been intimately linked with how we read in the Humanities.

Organising the tuition pattern required changes in the delivery of content. Material and activities that might previously have been part of tutorial work now take place in lecture sessions, which often require active student engagement through discussion. Rather than using lectures to deliver content in the typical format of the lecturer speaking as an expert and the students listening, here we work the content together by focusing closely on specific aspects of the week's reading and discussing them in light of the framing provided by the lecturer. As this is a first semester, First Year subject, the first two lectures are given over to considering identity and "reading in the Humanities." The first lecture focuses on good study habits within the context of what it

means to be a member of the scholarly community at university (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The notion of entering a discourse community is presented and provides a context for considering what a student's rights and responsibilities might be in that community. In the most recent delivery of this class, students read two short, non-academic but nevertheless sophisticated, essays. One is about the current state of higher education (Frank, 2013), and the other considers the relationship between print and other forms of text in the digital age (Kingwell, 2013). The subject matter of the essays was meant to generate consideration of university study broadly and self-reflection on their aims and ambitions for study as a way to begin thinking about their role in the scholarly community. This orientation is in alignment with notions of developing learner identity (Friere, 1970) and principles of transition pedagogy (Kift, Nelson, & Clarke, 2010) and it seeks to set students on their way as apprentices in the work of scholarship (Carter, et al., 2007).

In the second lecture, "Reading in the Humanities," we carefully walked through the two essays in accordance with the *Critical Reading Guide* (Appendix 1). Students identified key components of the essays and the method of reading was modelled on these accessible texts. Students were asked about their reactions to the ideas and to the essays as texts – that is, how their process of reading was experienced.

While the lectures are video recorded and the slides are available as a separate file on the learning management system, students receive a hard copy sheet for each lecture with key terms to assist them in taking notes. They are advised to write ideas out in their own words as a way to reinforce the concepts presented and there are periodic pauses so that they can complete their writing. Like reading non-fiction, note taking is a practice that deserves active development.

The Student Evaluation of Teaching survey also asks, "In what ways could your learning have been better supported?" One of the more poignant recent responses was, "If classmates were to put time and effort to read the material and be more prepared for tutorials, it would support my and their own learning process." Other comments echoed this sentiment and getting students to "do the reading" is, of course, a perpetual challenge for teachers. Since only four of twelve readings are treated with reading responses, to further incentivize reading and to bring in another form of writing practice to the mix, the next planned revision in practice is to implement free-writing exercises in the lecture sessions.

Students will be given the last ten minutes of the class to write their reflections on the material, or what it has spurred them to think about, or how it might link to other ideas they have been exploring in other classes or through other projects. I anticipate multiple possible outcomes from such free-writing tasks. First, they offer practice in another form of writing to learn, in addition to note taking, and drafting. Second, they extend opportunities for a different sort of lecture activity or participation. Third, the practice encourages students to take responsibility for making the material relevant in the immediate context of their studies, creative activities, and personal lives by identifying links and cross references between reading and lecture, between this class and other studies. Finally, the practice might further incentivize reading and attendance at lectures.

7. Challenges & outcomes

The pedagogy that I have described here aims to meet the challenge of how we can help students to develop their writing inside their disciplinary studies and without sacrificing precious curricular content in the process. This is particularly important where institutional commitment and policy on writing development are uneven or inadequate to the growing need among students (Miller, 2015).

Working at the reading-writing nexus, both reading and writing are deployed in an integrated and scaffolded learning plan. Conventions of genre and disciplinary discourse are revealed through the linked practices of reading and writing. Focusing on how to read and what to read *for* guides students to become aware of, and helps them to understand, the discursive practices at work in the discipline. The readings become slightly more complex and challenging as the semester progresses and in parallel, the reading response questions require more sophisticated

reflection as they delve more deeply into the texts. The combination of reading, classroom discussion and focused writing exercises are intended to orient students toward critical thinking to better prepare them to construct the types of written work that we want to see in their assignments.

This pedagogy and pattern of tuition have raised a few concerns as each revision implements a small change. At first I was concerned that students might feel I was shirking my teaching responsibility in tutorials where I asked them to workshop their drafts with each other. I also thought they might be disappointed in the feedback their colleagues provided and consider it a waste of time or unhelpful. Neither of these criticisms has been raised by students, in class or in the evaluation surveys. Nevertheless, I think that the student feedback on drafts could be improved and I am currently working to enhance the *Instructions for Peer Feedback* and their introduction in the workshops. Student critique of peer writing is initially reserved, but as the semester progresses, it does become more robust and pointed. Peer feedback may be an unfamiliar process to some students, although it is common in creative writing practice. As the semester progresses, no doubt students build resiliency with time and familiarity so that as they become more reflective of their own work, they become more capable of providing useful feedback to their peers, and become more comfortable receiving constructive criticism. At the same time, when instructor feedback on final submissions aligns with peer feedback on drafts, the esteem of peer feedback is reinforced. Improving peer feedback remains an ongoing matter for investigation and development.

With respect to instructor provision of feedback, I was initially concerned that the marking load would be cumbersome. With a commitment to providing comments in a one-week turn around, I feared that I might become uneven in my feedback. That was not the case. While I certainly give more feedback on the first two assignments, as the semester progresses, student work improves considerably and less annotation seems necessary for most students. In addition to providing a sheet of "Common Concerns" with each assignment return, in this most recent iteration it occurred to me that students might like to see "top job" responses as well. With the authors' permission, with the third reading response I began posting samples on the LMS and students expressed their appreciation at having the exemplars. Not surprisingly, the students whose work was noted were very pleased. I posted two or three responses so that students could see that there was more than one way to compose a strong response. One student commented in the evaluative survey that this should be done from the start of semester and I will take that advice for the next iteration.

I continue to develop and revise learning resources for students based on our shared experience in this topic. Currently students receive the *Critical Reading Guide* and *Instructions for Peer Feedback* at the start of semester and a key words handout each week in the lecture. I am still developing the *Reading for Meaning* handout (Appendix C) and thinking through other changes to the lecture content and student participation in them. In reflecting on the first two lectures, "Student Identity in the Scholarly Community" and "Reading in the Humanities," writing this article has clarified to me that more explicit discussion of discourse theory, research paradigms, and research methods would be useful within the two initial lectures to establish an awareness and vocabulary early in the semester to effectively foreshadow material that comes up at different points later in the semester. Instead of beginning the semester with one concept and sequentially mounting new idea atop new idea, I am now considering how I might open the semester by revealing a big canvass of ideas and then working across the semester to show how the many individual elements (concepts) make up a coherent landscape (field of study). That revision, however, will take considerable planning before implementation.

Student evaluation comments confirm that an important aspect of this pedagogy is the way that the processes of reading and writing, often personal and private practices, are brought into the public domain of the classroom and thereby become more visible and more amenable to collaboration. Students are not expected to understand the readings only after having read them alone outside of class. They are encouraged to read with purpose and to question the text systematically, considering the author's intent and their reactions as a reader and in turn to share those experiences with others. These processes are brought out in lecture and tutorial discussions. The

writing workshops create opportunity for collaboration over writing through dialog with the draft readers. Student writers are put in the position of author with an audience and thus the drafts in themselves offer authentic learning opportunities. The reading and writing practices merge in the student writing tasks that promote a recursive and iterative process of rewriting for and with peer readers in mind. Through these linked practices, my ambition is that students come to hear the "silences of discourse" and learn new ways of thinking about complex issues.

Appendix A. Critical Reading Guide

Reading for university study is meant to be "a close reading" of the text or a "critical reading." Both of these expressions mean that the reader will attend closely to the detail of the text, the argument, and evidence presented by the author. "Critical" in this context brings together several senses of the word. First it is to look for *critical points* in the text. These are claims, assertions, argument statements, critiques of other authors, and evidence. "Critical" also means to bring a *critic's eye* to the piece by paying attention to the detail of the scholarship. Through careful reading, contradictions, mistakes, or bumps in logic may be identified; these should be noted and considered in a summary of the work.

Answering the following questions about an assigned reading will help establish a good set of notes from which a written or oral summary of the text can be developed.

Below is a set of questions that provide a framework for understanding scholarly writing. Keeping a notebook or electronic file of reading summaries will prove useful in essay writing and study. Although it might not be possible to answer all the questions immediately, you might go back later and answer them when time permits.

1. Author's background – What is the author's profession or discipline? Is the author engaged in a theoretical debate within the field? Is this work part of a body of writing on the subject by this author or a group of writers/theorists?
2. What is the main point of the article?
3. What is the author's position or thesis?
4. Does the author make assumptions that are crucial to the argument?
5. Describe how the argument is waged?
6. What type of evidence does the author use to support the argument? (Historical, statistical, ethnographic, mixed, etc.) Is the evidence reliable?
7. Does the evidence suit the argument? Is it appropriate to the type of argument?
8. What is your emotional response to the work? (Don't disregard feelings; they can inform critical and intellectual work.) Clarify unusual or unfamiliar vocabulary and terminology.
9. Are you convinced by the argument? Explain why or why not.
10. Any other responses that you may have to the work should also be noted.

n.b. When reading about a media issue or subject, jot-down media examples (films, websites, clips, etc.) that come to mind and illustrate a point by the author or your opinion on the subject. These examples may prove handy later.

Appendix B. Instructions for Peer Feedback

Peer writing workshops have several purposes. First, everyone's writing can improve but most people struggle to edit their own work. Peer writing workshops are designed to help you become better able to revise and edit your own work. Writing workshops bring the writing process into a public forum where the thinking and writing can benefit from collaboration. In this class, writing workshops provide another opportunity to discuss the class content with your colleagues and gain a more rich understanding of the material we share. Peer writing workshops roughly simulate the peer review and editorial processes that published works undergo.

In this class we will work in peer groups of four. Peer groups should imagine themselves as a team, working collectively toward a shared goal. That goal is to make each piece of writing clear, to the point, and interesting. As a reader, you should help the writer enhance the draft. As a writer, you should remember that we are all working to improve the writing and any questions, comments or suggestions on your writing are offered in this positive spirit.

Writing is thinking. Writing is rewriting. Clear writing reflects clear thinking and respect for the reader.

As you read your colleague's work, these questions might help frame your feedback and commentary.

1. What is the best feature of this piece of writing?
2. Does the piece of writing address/respond to the question directly, succinctly, and thoroughly? Please explain if there is something missing that should be included or if there is something particularly interesting about this response.
3. Does the response make sense? Is the meaning clear, or do you struggle to get the author's point?
4. If the meaning is not clear, identify where the trouble lies. Is it the sentence structure, the choice of words, or the order in which the ideas are presented? Please explain to the author where the work needs attention.
5. Does each paragraph make a single point?
6. Briefly in short phrases, sketch out what the author is saying as a way to provide an outline of the piece.

Appendix C. Reading for Meaning

When you read, annotate. Comment on what you read to clarify the author's ideas, to amplify them with your own reactions and ideas. Circle, underline or highlight key terms and phrases. If you are reading online (rather than printing out hard copies) download an annotation app so that you can mark up your e-Readings as you would a paper with pen and highlighter.

Write short responses to your readings, perhaps starting by stating whether you agree or disagree with the author and explaining why.

Paraphrase the author's ideas by putting them in your own words. Think about what you read and restate the big ideas in your own words. Note the evidence that the author uses to support the claims. Always make sure to cite the author when paraphrasing. You are borrowing someone else's ideas: give credit where it is due.

A summary is a more holistic overview of the reading while a paraphrasing usually focuses on a small bit of the text. A summary demonstrates an understanding of the meaning, tone, and shape of the text. A summary should not recount the entire article in detail; instead, a summary is a selective condensation of the text. The idea is to relay the essence of what the author has said explicitly and to retain a sense of the author's implicit tone.

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