ENGL 4354: Writing Processes of Children (CRN 10881)

Dr. Brad Jacobson
Office hours: R 12:00-1:00, 3:00-4:00; by appt

Class Schedule: T/R 1:30-2:50 pm
Location: HUD 200
bjacobson@utep.edu

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Accommodations for Disabilities: If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. Please inform me about specific accommodation needs at the start of the course.

Students without documented disabilities who may need specific accommodations should contact me to set up a conference to discuss specific needs.

About the Course
Course Description
This class emphasizes current theory and practice in K-8 writing development, review of applicable rhetorical and linguistic theories, evaluation and assessment of written work, and relationships between reading and composition.

Our work is grounded in core principles of the National Writing Project (www.nwp.org), a research-based and teacher-centered network dedicated to the teaching of writing. These principles include:

• The best teachers of writing are writers themselves
• Teachers provide the best instruction for other teachers
• Anyone, no matter their ability level, can improve their writing in a supportive context with other practicing writing
• Teachers, students, and communities benefit when teachers form networks with other teachers and draw on collective experience

This course therefore immerses emerging teachers in the theory and practice of teaching writing by grounding the course in experience. Be prepared to write extensively and use these experiences as a starting point for questioning, extending, and applying scholarship from leading thinkers on literacy and writing pedagogy.

Course Goals and Objectives
The goal of this course is to give you the theoretical and practical foundation to teach writing with children. To that end, we’ll work with different writing and teaching techniques to explore the possibilities and challenges of different classroom practices.

All of the work we do over the course of the semester is geared toward answering the following questions:

➢ What are your philosophies about the teaching of writing and how are they shaped by various theories and approaches?
➢ Who are you as a writer and a teacher?
At the end of this course, you should:

- Understand writing as a developmental process
- Be familiar with a range of pedagogical techniques to help children develop as writers and meet a variety of communication needs
- Be able to design courses and activities that draw on principles of writing process and writing workshop pedagogies in context-appropriate ways
- Develop your own identity, practices, and passions as a writer, as the best teachers of writing are writers themselves

Course Texts

Required Textbooks

Technology

This course will be conducted face to face, but will include many digital components. You will need the following 3 things:

- a computer or mobile device with access to high-speed internet
- a built in or external camera for your computer/device
- a built in or external microphone for your computer/device

Note: Firefox and Chrome are the browsers of choice for Blackboard. If you hit a glitch, the solution may be to switch to another browser. As with all technology, it’s impossible to predict all of the various set-ups that you (or your future students) may have.

Additional Required Materials

- UTEP email account and computing account
- An active Microsoft OneDrive account (you can access OneDrive for Business from MyUTEP)
- A PDF reader that allows annotation: free tools include Preview (Mac), Adobe Reader, and Mendeley (my favorite).
- I highly encourage you to sign up for Blackboard notifications so you will receive announcements and updates via text message or email
**Recommended Texts for Future Reading:**


**Other helpful resources:**

- National Council of Teachers of English: [http://www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)
- National Writing Project: [http://www.nwp.org](http://www.nwp.org)
- Rethinking Schools: [http://www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)
- Jim Burke’s Homepage: [https://englishcompanion.com/teaching-english/](https://englishcompanion.com/teaching-english/)
- Teachers & Writers Collaborative: [http://www.twc.org](http://www.twc.org)
- International Literacy Association Teaching Tips: [https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/the-engaging-classroom/teaching-tips](https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/the-engaging-classroom/teaching-tips)
- Writers Who Care: Teachers, Parents, & Professors Advocating for Authentic Writing Instruction: [https://writerswhocare.wordpress.com/](https://writerswhocare.wordpress.com/)
- We are Teachers: [https://www.weareteachers.com/](https://www.weareteachers.com/)
- Educators’ Reference Desk: [http://www.eduref.org](http://www.eduref.org)
- TEKS Guide (searchable by grade and topic): [https://www.teksguide.org/](https://www.teksguide.org/)

**Major Components of the Course**

**Dialogue Notebook: Reading about and Discussing Pedagogy**

Course readings cover pressing issues and diverse assignments in literacy pedagogy, and they are designed to have clear applications to the K-8 classroom. You will post weekly responses and questions for discussion in a digital notebook, and each reading group will be responsible for posting discussion questions to the class at least once.

**Writing Group: Exploring the Writing You Want to Teach**

Given that the best teachers of writing are writers themselves, you will have opportunities to experiment with writing in a range of genres and modalities to help you explore which kinds of writing you are most energized to teach. You will meet regularly in writing groups to share and respond to these choice writings. At the end of the semester, we’ll have a read-around celebration to share our pieces.

**Intertextual Teaching Statement (ITS):** Teaching Statements, also called Teaching Philosophies, are a genre of writing that explains the pedagogic beliefs, values, and practices of the writer/teacher. This semester-long assignment will help us to achieve our goal of examining, discussing, and reflecting
on our beliefs about teaching writing. More detailed information can be found in the guidelines posted to Blackboard

**Self-Assessments:** You will complete two self-assessments in this course: first during week 8 and then as part of your final project. These assessments will offer you an opportunity to reflect on your learning and assess your work. The final assessment will include assessment of your Writers’ Notebook as well as an analysis of your own writing. Guidelines will be posted to Blackboard.

**Grading and Assessment**

“If we believe that we are teaching writing instead of assigning writing, then we must focus on the progress students make from draft to draft rather than focus on the final product.”

—Linda Christensen, *Teaching for Joy and Justice*, p. 132

This class will likely be graded differently than many other courses you have experienced. In all of my courses I use a form of assessment called “contract grading.” The goal of contract grading is to place the focus on your labor (your time and effort) and learning rather than on a subjective measure of quality. Like Linda Christensen, I believe I am teaching writing and teachers of writing, not assigning or grading writing. I want to reward your progress and learning instead of whether or not you meet a certain preconceived standard. At the end of the course, you will assess your efforts in the course, using the chart you see below as a guideline. We will have opportunities to negotiate these criteria throughout the semester. **Please note:** All major assignments must be completed and submitted to receive a passing grade for this course.

By taking conventional grades out of the day-to-day activities of the class, I hope you will have the freedom to take risks and work hard, and to try something new even if you’re not sure if it will work. And since I won’t attach a numerical grade to any individual project based on its quality (even though I will give you plenty of feedback), this allows you the chance to rely more authentically on your colleagues and on your own assessment and revision advice. You’ll have the opportunity to listen carefully to different judgments and ideas, assess those judgments for your work and its purposes, express why one idea is more workable and better than others, and most importantly, make informed, careful decisions that you can explain to others. In short, you have opportunity in this class to fail **productively.** Good, deep, important learning often happens because of risking failure, so it’s really not failure at all. Many entrepreneurs claim that failure is necessary for success; even world-class surgeons schedule **meetings to discuss and analyze what goes wrong in their practice.** In our class, failure (in the typical schooling “F” sense) really only happens when you do not do the work, or when you do not engage with the processes of the work in the ways that are expected of you.

Even though you will not receive numerical grades from me, know that I will read everything and shape our classroom activities and discussions around your work. I will offer lots of feedback, but sometimes I may not comment directly on your work, except in class when we use it or discuss it. I want you not only to rely on your colleagues and yourself for assessment and revision advice, but to build strategies of self-assessment that function apart from a teacher’s approval.

**Disclaimer:** If you’re interested in doing the least amount of work to get the highest possible grade, I’m sorry to say this is not going to be the class for you. You’ll probably get frustrated, and you may even think the class is unfair. But if you want to learn and improve yourself as a writer, reader, and teacher, and you are willing to accept the idea that your hard work will be rewarded and not the perceived
quality of your work (although we will discuss the importance of *quality*), then stay and grow and learn with us.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A range</th>
<th>B range</th>
<th>C range</th>
<th>F range</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance</strong></td>
<td>Attends every class but 1</td>
<td>Misses 2-3 classes</td>
<td>Misses 4-6 classes</td>
<td>Misses 7 or more</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Groups</strong></td>
<td>Brings drafts and provides feedback in all workshop sessions (during and out-of-class) that meets all guidelines</td>
<td>Brings drafts and provides feedback in all workshop sessions but 1 or 2, generally meeting guidelines</td>
<td>Inconsistent attendance, drafting or feedback in writing groups, but still contributing; may or may not be meeting feedback guidelines</td>
<td>Not contributing to writing group due to patterns of attendance, drafting, and/or feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue notebook</strong></td>
<td>Completes all assigned dialogue tasks on time and meeting guidelines</td>
<td>Completes all assigned dialogue tasks, but a few may be late or not meet all guidelines</td>
<td>Inconsistent completion of dialogue tasks</td>
<td>Most dialogue tasks are not completed or do not meet the guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choice writing / Writing notebook</strong></td>
<td>Completes more than the assigned writing notebook tasks and demonstrates clear evidence of re-reading and revision – it’s “messy”!</td>
<td>Completes all assigned writing notebook tasks and demonstrates some evidence of re-reading and revision</td>
<td>Inconsistent completion of notebook tasks and minimal evidence of reading and revision</td>
<td>Most notebook tasks are not completed and there is no evidence of re-reading or revision</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intertextual Teaching Statement (ITS)</strong></td>
<td>Completes all drafts of ITS in a timely manner and meets all guidelines</td>
<td>Completes all drafts of ITS and meets most guidelines</td>
<td>Completes all drafts of ITS, but may be late or miss guidelines</td>
<td>Does not complete ITS project</td>
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<td><strong>Self-Assessments</strong></td>
<td>Self-assessments are complete, on time, and supported with evidence of learning</td>
<td>Self-assessment is incomplete, underdeveloped, or late</td>
<td>Does not meet A, B, or C-level guidelines</td>
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*In general, meeting each criterion but three in a category will go to the majority category. For example, if you have 4 in the “B” range and 2 in “A”, your grade should be a B, and vice versa. If your assessment is split across three grade categories (A-B-C, for example), your final grade should likely be in the middle.*
Policies

Basic Needs Policy
Your health, safety, and well-being are more important than anything going on in class. Feel free to reach out to me if you need to talk. Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing or personal safety is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Please also notify me if you are comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources I can.

Dean of Students: https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/

Attendance
Attendance and participation are necessary for this course. As we will discuss, writing is a social act and writers develop by practicing with and for others. To this end, we will be reading, writing, and workshopping during class time, and it is essential that you are there to learn with and support your colleagues. As defined in the grading contract chart above, incurring absences, regardless of the reason, will negatively affect your grade, and more than 6 absences will result in failure of the course. Consistent with university policy, there are no excused absences other than for university-recognized activities or religious holy days.

What does attendance mean in this course? Over the last few years, we have learned to be flexible when it comes to attendance and participation. Due to illness or other circumstances outside of our control, we are likely to have disruptions individually or collectively that impact attendance and participation. There remains a chance we may not be meeting together face to face for every class session. And, given our need to protect ourselves and each other from communicable diseases, it’s understandable if you are not able to make it every time. So how can we make this equitable? Here’s a beginning idea:

Live Meetings: We will plan to meet in HUD 200 every Tuesday and Thursday from 1:30-2:50 pm. Most class will have a digital component that we work on in class.

- If you miss a live meeting, you can still earn credit for the class. This will include you working through the digital component, connecting it to our class reading(s) for that week, and contributing to our class discussion by posting to our Collaborative Class Notes document. In order to “make up” your absence, you should plan to post these notes within one week of your return to class. (click here for more)

Asynchronous Meetings: In the event of asynchronous meetings, you will still have “class” expectations that will include some combination of viewing, reading, writing, and/or discussing. Any preparation tasks (homework) should be complete before our class time on the day of the asynchronous meetings. All activities should be completed by noon of the following day. For example, if we have an asynchronous meeting on Thursday, you should complete the preparation activities by 1:15 pm that day. Your asynchronous tasks will be due by noon on Friday. Completing these tasks on time will count as attendance for that day.

I can promise you fairness, flexibility, and understanding, with the hope you will offer me the same. Communication will be essential. Please make sure you are checking your email and our Blackboard announcements daily. You can contact me via email, Teams, phone, or text – please keep me informed.
Assignment Expectations
All out of class assignments (other than Writing Notebook) must be typed unless otherwise stipulated. Work is considered late if it is posted or submitted after the deadline (usually the beginning of class). You should keep a copy of all assignments, class notes, and handouts in an organized notebook and/or digital file for easy access.

Assigned writing tasks are due *before* the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted. If you are still working on it at 1:30 pm, it’s late! If you miss a class (or an assignment instruction due to tardiness) you are still responsible to submit any assignments and for getting the missing information/handouts from the Blackboard page or another student in class.

Academic Integrity
At this point in your academic careers, you are all likely familiar with the expectations for academic integrity. You can find the university policy here: https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccc/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html

I am aware that teachers often gain ideas from other teachers. Generosity, sharing, and reflective practice are part of the ethos of the profession. At the same time, it is our obligation to give due credit to others when they influence our ideas. I will do so explicitly in our class discussions and in class materials, and I expect you will do the same. When you borrow ideas or materials from others, from the web, or from library databases (as you should!), it is your responsibility to give appropriate credit to the original creator. This is important for you as a scholar and as a teacher; this is one of many ways we can model attribution for our students.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools
As literacy instructors—even with young children—we need to be aware of the ways changes in technology impact our work and the potential literacy experiences of our students and communities. To this end, we will explore generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-E, etc.) and their affordances and limitations. While you may end up using generative AI to brainstorm ideas, fine tune a question, or even check your grammar, you should not use such tools to draft entire assignments, or even to write complete sentences or paragraphs to complete class assignments. You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited in order to stay within university policies on academic integrity. When in doubt, please ask.

Illness Precautions
Please stay home if you have symptoms of a communicable illness. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations.

There is free COVID-19 testing on campus for active students. For more information, click here: https://www.utep.edu/chs/covid-testing/index.html.
Course Schedule

The linked schedule is subject to change at my discretion to meet instructional needs and/or to accommodate time constraints. I will do my best to alert you promptly of any changes. Please check Blackboard regularly for any Announcements or updates related to the course schedule.