

# Working with Student Writers

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# Bad News

Uh oh...

# There is No Writing Pill

- No grammar shot.
- And writers seem to forget much of what they've learned – much of what they might be good at – when faced with new and challenging writing tasks.



# Transfer of Writing Skills

- Writers need cues and reminders to activate previous writing skills and apply them to new contexts.
- And every new context requires some new skills, too.
- So no writer will ever come to your class fully prepared and ready to go. Ever.

# So, What Can We Do?

As teachers of content and the ways of participating in our disciplines.

# Talk About the Ways You Write in Sociology as Unique Genres

- With unique rules and expectations.
- Here is a handy, customizable guide you can use to teach students about your discipline's genres:
  - <http://www.sjsu.edu/wac/pages/seminars-and-workshops/workshops-f16/handouts-and-notes/genreanalysis/index.html>

# Think of Assigning and Teaching Writing as Coaching

- Students learn how to write in new genres *in process* – while they are doing it.
- Just like a coach, we can't just show film and put them in the game and expect them to succeed.
- But we can – just like a coach – break down the process and engage with our student writers in each part.



# Practical Things That Seem to Be Helpful

Which is kinda like good news.



# Samples and Examples

- And methods for thinking about them that help writers see the expectations of the genre.
- Use the Genre Analysis guide, customized to your particular genre (like Literature Review, for example).
- An Idea: Collect and share your students' chapters and dissertations.

# Clear Expectations for Each Assignment

- The usual stuff about length and sources.
- But also genre expectations, using the vocabulary and language in the Genre Analysis guides.
  - Both the substantive and stylistic features.

# The Chance to Write – And Have Their Writing Responded to – As a Recursive, Iterative Process

- Break assignments down into parts (summaries, arguments, introductions, implications, etc.) and phases (invention, organization, drafting, polishing).
- Give writers opportunities to get feedback throughout the process.
- The most productive writers:
  - Regularly share drafts and partial drafts with teachers and peers.
  - Understand that writing is an iterative, recursive process. It is not linear.
  - Receive feedback designed to help them make progress from where they are now. Not feedback designed to inform them how far they are from acceptable.

# So What Should We Do in Our Classrooms?

Four things.

# Give Writers Good Samples and Examples

- From our own students.
- From our discipline and our own writing.

# Articulate the Expectations of the Genres

- Using the language in the Genre Analysis guide.
- Both substantive and stylistic features.

# Coach Our Writers Through the Process

- Engage with our writers early and often. Don't just assign a paper and then collect it ten weeks later.
- Give content and organization feedback first.
- Save correctness feedback for later drafts.
- Set lofty goals that they will have to achieve to pass the class, but work ***with them*** to get there.
  - Give developmental feedback based on where they are at and how they can make progress.



# Encourage Our Writers to Make Use of All Our Writing Support Resources

- Meetings with you for content and organization feedback.
- Meetings with peers for content, organization, and correctness feedback.
- Meetings with Writing Center tutors for content, organization, and correctness feedback.



# Thank You!

Questions, comments, discussion?