

## Writing and the Teaching of Writing Spring 2011

**Instructor: John Sheehy**

**T-F 1:30 – 3:20**

**Dalrymple 43**

What do we do when we write, and how do we learn to do it? This is the question that will drive our inquiry into both the theory and the practice of teaching writing, and we will conduct that inquiry with an eye toward learning something not only about the teaching of writing, but also about our own writing processes. The course will be divided roughly into halves: during the first half, we'll be reading and discussing various writing "bibles," beginning (of course) with Strunk and White, and moving to some more radical statements about writing. In the second half of the course we'll focus on teaching and tutoring writing. We'll get plenty of hands-on experience: students in the course will tutor other Marlboro students and will also be expected to teach segments of the course periodically.

Two things you should note: first, this is **not a writing seminar** -- if you haven't yet passed the writing requirement, this shouldn't be the only writing course you take this semester. Second, all participants in this course should be enrolled in at least one other course that requires frequent writing, since we will use your own writing as a basis for many of our in-class exercises. You should also be prepared to have drafts of your writing done when we need them for *this* class, regardless of when they're due in your other classes.

### Reading List

Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*

Thomas, *Clear and Simple as the Truth*

Lanham, *Style: an Anti-Textbook*

Williams, *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*

Elbow, *Writing without Teachers*

Jensen, *Walking on Water*

Meyer, *The Practical Tutor*

Selections from Roger Sale, *On Writing* and Lanham, *Style: an Anti-textbook*  
(handouts)

Selections from Lindemann, *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* (handouts)

### Requirements and Grading

The course will be graded on a mixture of writing and class participation. Throughout the semester, I will ask you to write informal responses to the class reading and to your experiences with tutoring and teaching. You will be asked to respond frequently to each other's writing, and as we start tutoring, I will ask you to

write about that experience both from the point of view of the tutor and from the point of view of the tutee. At the end of the semester I will ask you to write a longer, more considered paper on some issue in writing or teaching that interests you. The grading structure will look something like this:

Weekly short writing assignments and <a href="#">online forum</a> posts	35%
Tutoring / Teaching / In-class presentations	30%
Final paper	15%
Participation and general gung-ho-osity	20%

### **The Bad Stuff**

This is the place in the syllabus where I usually drone on and on about all the bad things that will happen to you if you don't come to class, don't do your work on time, etc. Those bad things will happen: I just don't feel like droning on and on. A few commonsense guidelines:

- The class only meets twice a week, and the other people in class will come to depend on you and your participation. Make it to class; make it a habit. A good excuse for missing class is being dead; my reaction to other excuses will depend on my mood.
- Put everything you've got into your writing, and especially into your teaching and tutoring: think, prepare, take chances, go out on limbs. Don't be a wuss. Don't give the class your Thursday nights -- give it your Friday nights and your Sunday mornings.
- Turn in your work on time and be ready to tutor when the time comes. As a student, what you do with your time is your business: but as a tutor, your preparation has an effect on other students. Take that seriously. Be good to each other, and don't slack off.