

[ **COMP NEWS** ]

LIKE A RHETORICAL LANDSLIDE, BUT MUCH SAFER.

**TIME TO RETHINK OUR OUTCOMES****In this issue...**

- Required Outcomes Meeting
- Introducing CompTrain
- An (Academic) Labor of Love?
- TA Training Success!

**ACADEMIC LABOR DISCUSSION**

In the current practicum for new TAs (English 5913), we'll be spending a session talking about academic labor issues, specifically for those teaching writing as TAs, lecturers, and instructors.

I'm opening up the second half of the class to everyone in the Composition Program, as labor is an issue for all of us.

It isn't required, but consider joining us:

**Tue, November 13**

**4:00-5:15pm**

**Plaza M202**

If you'd like to attend, please drop me an email so I have a rough count. I can also send along readings if you like, which are primarily from Bousquet et al's [Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers: Writing Instruction in the Managed University](#). ■

With one year under my belt as Director, it's time to rethink the Composition Program's desired outcomes for English 1020 and 2030. I have completed a working draft, and I've focused on revising the outcomes so they are (1) clearer to those outside the Program; (2) more useful to Program instructors; and (3) more in tune with the critical thinking, reading, and writing that is central to the Program.

But it's only a draft, and *input from those teaching in the Program is crucial* to making these revised outcomes useful and relevant. To this end, I'm convening a meeting of all who teach in the Composition Program to discuss the proposed outcomes, and I am looking for fresh ideas and criticisms. In the week before the meeting, I'll send out the working draft over the Comp Program listserv.

This is an in-house meeting, as it is important for us to come to a consensus as a Program before we "go public." At the meeting, we'll make decisions about what should be taught when and why. While I am not interested in standardizing the curriculum—as instructor control and innovation is key to the success of our Program—I do want to think about what belongs in 1020 and what is best

left for 2030. This can allow 2030 to be a more fast-moving, innovative course and ensure that 1020 is not strictly remedial.

*required meeting:*

**Outcomes & Textbooks**

**Fri, October 26**

**2:30pm**

**KC 114**

*Please come! Snacks provided.  
Children welcome.*

For example, we can think about when we'd like library orientations to occur, when rhetorical fallacies are best taught, and what sort of basic argumentative skills we can expect students to have as they leave English 1020. I also plan to introduce a shared final assignment for English 1020 called "The Writer's Inventory." In this final 1020 assignment, students document their success and struggles, and the inventories will be available to English 2030 instructors as they begin their courses.

This meeting also provides a chance to give feedback on the textbooks I earmarked last Spring. For more on this, see the upper column to the right. ■

**TEXTBOOK FEEDBACK**

Thanks to everyone for so willingly trying out the new textbooks I earmarked last Spring.

(Choices are listed in [Comp News volume 2](#).) As book orders are soon pending, it's time to get feedback and decide which books we want to drop and/or add.

Please ask your students what they think about the textbook(s) you're using, and bring this feedback and your ideas to the Outcomes and Textbooks Meeting (see announcement to the left). ■

**ALL ABOARD THE COMPTRAIN!**

In Summer 2007, I launched CompTrain, which is a resource website for those teaching in the Composition Program. (See <http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/clas/english/composition/comptrain/index.html>.) While it is still in its infancy, it has already proved useful in training new TAs and in giving more seasoned instructors a way to check out what their colleagues are teaching. Resources include assignments, in-class activities, online references, and more.

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*"Why is it that in spite of our developing ability to acknowledge the political need and right of 'real' writers to experiment with 'style,' we continue to cling to the belief that such a need and right does not belong to 'student writers'?"*  
 -Min-Zhan Lu, *Representing the "Other"*

### COMPTRAIN (continued)

In the future, the assignments page will be password-protected to avoid plagiarism, and the readings section will become an annotated bibliography with links where appropriate. The amount and diversity of major assignments for 2030 will also change, as the new outcomes will allow more innovation

At this time, the website primarily consists of materials I created. Please send your materials as attachments to [amy.vidali@cudenver.edu](mailto:amy.vidali@cudenver.edu) so the website can become more useful for everyone.



### NEW TA TRAINING: APPARENT SUCCESS AND FUTURE FUNDING



On August 8, 9, 10, 13 and 14, new TAs hired to teach English 1020 in Fall 2007 met for a first-ever, paid, five-day, pre-semester training.

Meeting for nearly eight hours a day, these TAs had an opportunity to get to know each other and prepare for their classes in ways that previous TAs have not.

Day One began with a discussion of how and why to teach writing; what sort of writing experiences students come with; and the goals of the first assignment sequence in English 1020. We rounded out the day by discussing possible student readings and the textbook, and Paige Talbot and Jeffrey Erlacher addressed balancing graduate work and teaching.

On Day Two, we workshopped the first assignment; discussed how to scaffold a course; modeled in-class strategies for teaching writing; and were joined by Catherine Montrose and Andrew Watson for a discussion of how to facilitate class discussion.

By Day Three, students had revised their first assignments and were at work on the "building block" activities that would teach needed skills for the first paper. We workshopped these new materials and began to fill in daily "grids" that outlined day-to-day activities and homework. The new TAs and other members of the Composition Program joined at Amy's house for a BBQ (I still have leftover pickles). Over the weekend, TAs had a chance to catch up on curriculum and the various resource readings included in the newly-created 70+ page training manual.

Day Four began with "video-teaching," where TAs were recorded teaching short lessons, which was both nerve-racking and enlightening as we reviewed the tapes. Miranda Egger and Kate Burgess spoke about responding to student work, and we tried commenting and grading sample 1020 papers.

On our final day, Nicole Piasecki joined us to discuss using blogs in composition classes. We were also visited by representatives from the Auraria Library, the Counseling Center, the Writing Center, and others. After a group lunch, I met with each TA one-on-one for "exit interviews" and to approve final materials.

TAs left with the first few weeks of curriculum drafted, and feedback from the TAs indicates that the training was a success, though of course there were also critiques. This new group has handled the snafus that arise in the first few weeks of teaching with grace, and it seems that having an understanding of why—and not just how—to teach composition has been helpful. These conversations are continuing in English 5913.

Thanks to Dr. Jim Hageman, then Associate VC for Research and Graduate Studies (and now interim CLAS Dean), for providing the bulk of the funding for the training. Thanks also to then Dean Harbor for providing a small amount of the funding. Obtaining funding for this training was a semester-long endeavor for me, and unfortunately, a one-time commitment. I am currently pursuing the \$5,000 needed for next summer's training, as I don't see that this training can be a one-time success. ■

### WEST CLASSROOM HIDEOUT?



In Spring 2007, I moved to West Classroom 161A so I would be in a disability-accessible office. Unfortunately, my move seems to have cut down on how much I see folks.

Please do feel free to drop by or make appointment. I can provide:

- desk copies of program textbooks;
- loans of other textbooks;
- support for plagiarism and other problems;
- curricular ideas; and
- witty repartee.

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