

## The Evolution of My Teaching in Composition

- I. My first semester
  - a. How the class was structured
    - i. Personal narrative, rhetorical analysis, research, argument
    - ii. Book (*How to Write Anything*): Heavy on detailed instructions, light on reading
  - b. My observations
    - i. Book readings didn't model students' goal writing (too informal – from salon.com, blogs, newspapers)
    - ii. Personal narrative was the easiest
    - iii. Academic, non-personal writing was a struggle
    - iv. Connection between reading habits and writing skills
- II. My second semester
  - a. How the class was structured
    - i. Reading unit first (instead of personal narrative), research, argument, rhetorical analysis
    - ii. Book (*Reading the World*): Heavy on classical readings (Gandhi, MLK, Koran, Bible, Frederick Douglass)
  - b. My observations
    - i. Students' skills at summarizing and reading improved
    - ii. Readings still didn't model students' goal writing (too formal/old)
    - iii. Readings fulfilled goals of liberal education but not necessarily my responsibilities as a composition instructor
    - iv. Reading didn't help students with grammar and sentence structure
    - v. Success of my one-day grammar session: “boring,” but they said it actually helped them improve – and I saw evidence in effect/affect, less/fewer, etc.
- III. Plans for my third semester
  - a. How the class will be structured
    - i. Book (*tbd*): Continued emphasis on readings. Modern but academic/intellectual readings – Malcolm Gladwell, Michael Pollan, Barack Obama
    - ii. Grammar: Pre- and Post-tests. Daily grammar lessons and grammar journal with lots of practice, starting with parts of speech and simple and compound sentences.
    - iii. Service learning: My interest in it (AmeriCorps & Peace Corps). Hearing about it in FTCP and thinking it wasn't relevant. Talking to colleague about using it with argument & research paper. Community Engagement Office (<http://www.mnsu.edu/engagement/>). Decision to pair it with research paper combining personal experience & research – using modern literary essays as models.
    - iv. Reading unit, argument (introduce MLA & research skills), rhetorical analysis or compare/contrast, literary essay (using research & personal experiences).
  - b. The outcomes I'm hoping for
    - i. Continued improvement in critical reading skills.
    - ii. Greater transfer from reading to writing skills due to more modern, relevant readings and genre-based teaching.
    - iii. Improved grammar skills (as evidenced by first drafts and in pre- and post-tests)
    - iv. Service learning will make students more thoughtful community members and show how research can be integrated with personal experience to illuminate our lives and answer real-world questions.