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
      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.