Teaching argument-writing in grades 6-12

2013-14

ED500 / CRN 2820 / 1 graduate credit

#### **Date and time:** 8 meetings during the academic year, Medford Higher Education Center

#### **Instructor:** Dr. Margaret Perrow

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*The engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with the world beyond itself.*

*bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (1994)*

*Course description*

In this seminar, we will read about the theory and craft of writing argument, and explore the teaching of argument-writing using a ‘structured process’ approach. One of the basic premises of the seminar is that to teach writing well, teachers themselves must write. We will write arguments using a variety of approaches and writing-process strategies, design and implement lessons that incorporate these strategies and approaches, share ideas with each other, and debrief after implementing lessons in our classrooms. Meetings will be spaced 3-4 weeks apart, to allow all participants time to try out argument-teaching strategies and approaches that we read about or experience in the seminar.

***Course objectives***

* Differentiate between different basic types of argument, and teach these basic types of argument writing to students (including simple arguments of fact, judgment and policy) in support of the Common Core State Standards at your grade level.
* Explain the role of warrants, backing, definitions, qualifications and counter-arguments, and be able to teach more complex arguments of judgment or policy in support of the Common Core State Standards at your grade level.
* Frame a ‘researchable problem’ of interest to your students, in service of teaching arguments of policy.
* Evaluate arguments, and be able to teach students to evaluate others’ arguments effectively.

***InTASC focus standards***

Your active participation in this workshop provides evidence of InTASC focus standard #10: Professional learning and ethical practice. In addition, the following InTASC focus standards are practiced in this workshop:

Standard #4: Content Knowledge. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline, and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

Standard #7: Planning for instruction. The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

Standard #8: Instructional strategies. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration. The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

***Course expectations and evaluation***

All seminar participants are expected to:

* Create a plan for implementing argument-writing into your curriculum.
* Complete assigned reading prior to each session, and engage actively in discussion of readings
* Develop and try out lessons and activities based on our seminar readings and discussions
* Share lessons or activities with colleagues, in a practice-lesson or demonstration-lesson format, and receive feedback.
* Share examples of student work produced in your classes, as part of teaching argument-writing; analyze student samples for evidence of instructional effectiveness, and explain how you will adapt your instruction based on that evidence.
* Write a short paper at the end of the course reflecting on your successes, challenges, and key learning—in light of your plan.
* Attend all seminar sessions, except in case of serious emergency or illness.

Grading: A-F

***Texts:***

Hillocks, G. (2013). *Teaching Argument Writing.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. (You will receive a copy of this book at the first seminar meeting.)

Additional readings will be distributed in class.

***Schedule (subject to change to meet needs of the participants)***

Meetings will take place on Thursday evenings from 4:30-6:30 pm at the Medford Higher Education Center (HEC) or a nearby location. (Note that the last two meetings are scheduled for Wednesday evenings.)

September 26, 2013 February 20, 2014

October 24, 2013 March 20, 2014

December 5, 2013 April 23, 2014

January 23, 2014 May 21, 2014

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***Accommodations***

Please let me know if you have any particular learning needs that are not addressed by the content or structure of this course.