Madness and Neglect: Learning from Teaching Graduate Academic Writing

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Challenges

For Teachers

• Mixed levels
• Mixed majors
• Marking
  • Student numbers
  • Turn-around time
  • Consistency & fairness
• Academic honesty

For Students

Lack of familiarity with:

• American academic English
• American academic practices
• American academic expectations
  • Academic honesty
• Broader American culture
Core Teaching Beliefs

• One learns by **doing**.
• One learns what one **notices**.
• It’s important to know “the why”.
• “Interests” are interesting.
• Enthusiasm is contagious.
• Critical thinking is… critical.
• What’s learned should echo “beyond the course”.
Textbook:

Academic Writing for Graduate Students (Swales & Feak, 2012)
Grade Breakdown (Spring 2018)

Typed written assignments  
54%

Literature review  
13%

Homework / in-class assignments / quizzes  
13%

Journal entries  
10%

Presentation of literature review findings  
10%

Debate  
Extra credit
Written Tasks (54%)

1. Plagiarism exercise 1 paragraph
2. Comparison-contrast essay 2 pages; 3 sources
3. Research proposal 1 page
4. Summary 2 pages; 2 sources
5. Annotated bibliography 3 ½ pages; 5 sources

Writing clinics begin

6. Extended definition 1 ½ pages; 3 sources
7. Argumentative essay 3 ½ pages; 5 sources
8. Critique 2 pages; 2 sources
9. Data commentary 1 ½ pages; 2 sources
Submission Procedure for Typed Writings

1. Students submit a 1st draft.
2. Errors are highlighted and partially corrected.
3. Students work to correct errors for a homework grade.
4. Students submit their final corrected draft (with the 1st).
5. The final paper is marked as a written assignment grade using a rubric.
Grade Breakdown (Spring 2018)

Typed written assignments: 54%
Literature review: 13%
Homework / in-class assignments / quizzes: 13%
Journal entries: 10%
Presentation of literature review findings: 10%
Debate: Extra credit
Literature Review (13%)

- Research proposal
- Annotated bibliography
- Literature review
Grade Breakdown (Spring 2018)

Typed written assignments 54%
Literature review 13%
Homework / in-class assignments / quizzes 13%
Journal entries 10%
Presentation of literature review findings 10%
Debate Extra credit
Spoken Tasks

1. Plagiarism exercise
2. Comparison-contrast essay
3. Research proposal
4. Summary
5. Annotated bibliography
6. Extended definition
7. Argumentative essay
* Debate (15 pts to winners, 8 to others)
8. Critique
9. Data commentary
* Literature review presentations (10% of grade)
Modifications to Course Design

Based on student feedback & notes to self

- Reduced number of written assignments
- Modified assignment sequencing and genres
- Shortened assignment length
- Updated, refined rubrics
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
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**Writing clinics begin**
Feedback from students

“…incredibly interesting with enormous fun, and I have learnt a lot from academic, cultural knowledge to life lessons. You might never know how it meant to me....From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your hardworking, guidance, your wonderful lectures, and even for your discipline.”
Feedback from students

“Your assignments have helped me a lot especially this semester in Marketing class. There are several writing assignments and I am using your writing concepts.”
Feedback from students

“…It's been tough but knowing you care helps a lot with getting by. I want to thank you for making me feel like not just another student, that I am unique and that my work matters. *The words I say matter and the words I write matter*.... Thank you for your long nights grading quizzes and writing comments on my essays, it means a lot when I know you took the time to help me be a better student going forward…”
“I seek not to know all the answers but to understand the questions.”

-Kwai Chang Caine, “Kung Fu” (ABC-TV, 1973)