

# Workshop: Teaching Analytical Writing

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**Date:** September 26, 2011

**Time:** 1:30 pm

**Room:** Allen 117

## **I. Opening Remarks:**

- New analytical focus of 1001
  - Side effect of curricular innovation: perfect text is even more elusive.
  - Addressing that gap: workshops, website, and possibly a text.
    - Michele Turner is editor. Need your thoughts on the need for that, what content and form would be most useful, etc.
    - Email or chat with Laura or Michele
- Review today's agenda: best practices for teaching analysis

## **II. Synthesizing sources: Jerrod Hollyfield**

- Background: graded AP exams this summer for the synthesis question. Out of 1100 essays, only two evaluated sources for quality and authority.
- Designed 1001 accordingly, around common body of knowledge (course is themed around 9/11/2001) structured to build from general sources (i.e. blog posts) to academic sources
  - Series of scaffolded mini-assignments
    - In-class mini-essay (practice): synthesize two assigned sources (Coulter versus Chomsky).
    - Graded essay: collect and synthesize six sources over the course of a week.
    - Final assessment: issue analysis.
  - Communicating with students:
    - Moving beyond summary.
    - Instead of writing "Chomsky says..." use evidence from his article as a representation of a wider opinion: "Some people believe that..."
    - Compare it to fifth grade dinosaur reports: You don't focus on what "x author says," but on the *content*; not paleontologist and author Bob Hughes, but the T-Rex.

## **III. Source analysis: Eric Schmitt**

- Derived from the "old" 2000 sequence that built from primary to secondary research: portrait/profile/explaining an issue sequence but takes it one step farther, to the issue analysis.

- New sequence: explaining an issue/source analysis/issue analysis.
- Source evaluation has always been a big concern, but never had space to teach it in isolation before.
- Eric wrote his own as a model in order to get a sense of what it means to analyze a source. Broke it down into several parts: researching some corroborating/refuting sources, the author himself, and the author's political and philosophical influences.
- Assignment steps: 1) overview of the source, 2) fact checking, 3) rhetorical analysis, 4) analyze political/philosophical background. Interpretation is allowed and encouraged, but explicit position taking isn't.
  - These steps could be simplified to be used for annotated bibliography.

#### **IV. Literacy narrative as causal analysis: David Riche**

- (See attached handout)
- The literacy narrative begins with the question that all students seem anxious to answer: how do you feel about writing/reading? And then asks "why?" and therefore forces analysis of it.
  - It's analytical in that it asks students to psychoanalyze themselves, in a sense, or conduct a causal analysis (derived from stasis theory).
    - Since nobody learned how to write in a vacuum, there was always a cause behind that learning.
    - Elements of a causal analysis: *conditions*, *influences* and *precipitating causes* (events).
- Other ways to incorporate analysis (see handout).
  - Focus on language, process, habit, event, audience.
- Incorporating research and synthesis
  - Sample assignment (see handout) using digital archive: search for themes across multiple LNs and synthesize them into a theme, moment or question.

#### **V. Discussion: your strategies, questions, assignments, dilemmas, etc.**

- "Analysis" is hard to define
  - DR's assignment sheet breaks it down nicely by types of analysis.
  - Frustration: we are all good at analysis, but it's incredibly hard to explain it to people who are still learning.
    - *Writing Analytically* includes an assignment a lot like this.
    - Also includes useful tools and methods, but doesn't define types of analysis, which would also be useful.
- Successful strategies for teaching analysis
  - WA exercise of going through an article and circling repeated words seems tedious but students have said it's very helpful.
    - Teaching them to read analytically as a forerunner to writing.

- In-class visual analysis practice
  - Problems: First time teaching it, instructor couldn't get class to see beyond the obvious.
    - Tried using three appeals: logos, ethos, pathos.
  - Suggestions:
    - *Rhetorical Analysis* (Longaker) offers analysis of a VW Golf ad based on logic, structure, style, Toulmin. Can supplement that sample with more recent Golf ads from TV, considering kairos, the appeals, etc.
    - Celebrity and political ads as an entry point, because they are overtly persuasive. Sets students' mindset before they consider at more nuanced advertising persuasion.
    - Draw on the politics of representation: race, age, gender, etc.
      - Perhaps use a model excerpt from a gender studies text (i.e. Naomi Wolf, Jean Killborne (sp?)): implied/outright violence and other stuff beyond just portrayal as sex objects.
      - [www.commercialcloset.org](http://www.commercialcloset.org) is a great resource.
    - Analyze a cartoon using the 10 to 1 strategy from WA. Listed observations, dismissed those that were generalizations and then honed in on specific observations and their implications.
      - The issue seemed to be that they weren't used to spending that much time looking at/thinking about one thing.
- The more time students spend focused on one text, the more they can get from it. What are ways to get students to *dwell* with a text?
  - Break an exercise into multiple steps.
    - Judith Ortiz Cofer, "The Story of My Body." Read at home, list labels she deploys (small groups), compile into a class list, then categorize list via color coding = 4 hits on the same text.
  - Spiral: return to texts throughout the semester, as the occasion arises.
    - Ex. "Powerpoint is Evil" reading: students became more critical of it after a librarian used a great PowerPoint as a guest teacher.
  - Have students *listen* to analyzable essays that are particularly well-read and engaging.
    - Highlight/underline text as they listen to it.
  - Guiding questions after the readings in *Writing Analytically* have been helpful.

## **VI. Closing/Looking Ahead:**

- The assignments shared today will be posted on the website this week.
- Next workshop: Week of October 17 on grading.

- Collectively evaluating student work samples (that you bring) against criteria.
  - Similar to norming sessions from past assessment meetings.
  - Address grading dilemmas or questions.
- November: Revision. Looking for teachers to share like Jerrod, Eric and David did this week!