***ENG 3670: Writing Center Theory & Practice (CRN 50202)***

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|  | Meeting Days/ Times/ Place: | T/R  9:30-10:45  Room: WC 148 |
| Instructor Contact Information: | Elizabeth Kleinfeld, Ph.D.  she/her/hers [ekleinfe@msudenver.edu](mailto:ekleinfe@msudenver.edu)  <http://sites.msudenver.edu/ekleinfe/home/>  Twitter: @lizkleinfeld  Office: KC 454 /303-615-1316  Cell: 303-915-5895 (texts preferred) |
| Office Hours[[1]](#footnote-1): | M 2-3, T 8:30-9:30, W 11:30-12:30, R 8:30-9:30 / by appointment / by chance  You can make an appointment with me outside my office hours by going to <https://calendly.com/elizabethkleinfeld>. |

Welcome to ENG 3670!

This course embraces scholar Karen Rowan’s assertion that writing center work is about “ongoing learning” rather than “static knowing.”[[2]](#footnote-2) This goes for me as instructor as much as it does for you as student. I am still learning and will continue to learn about writing centers and writers. There is quite a lot that is known about writers and writing centers, but as writing technologies, social values, student populations, our concepts of identity, and institutions of higher learning continue to evolve, even what is known must be revisited from time to time.

This class combines seminar with a practicum in the Writing Center to prepare students to become peer tutors. In seminar we will explore writing processes, examine the roles of peer writing tutors, and develop effective tutoring practices. In the practicum students will observe and reflect on peer tutoring in the Writing Center and progress to supervised tutoring by the end of the semester. A significant focus of the course is tutoring learners from diverse cultural, linguistic, and (dis)abled backgrounds. We will grapple with issues including the social aspects of writing, authority in writing centers and writing instruction, accessibility of writing centers and tutoring and teaching methods, responsibilities of the writing tutor, confidentiality in writing centers, struggle in writing processes, ownership and writing, and writing and identity. We’ll also consider the writing center as more than a tutoring place; we’ll look at it as a place of inquiry, action, dialog, change, indoctrination, colonization, and more.

This class and the Writing Center support MSU Denver’s mission to “provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, post-graduate education, and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global, and technological society. To fulfill its mission, MSU Denver’s diverse university community engages the community at large in scholarly inquiry, creative activity and the application of knowledge.” In addition to supporting the University’s mission, this class supports the MSU Denver English Department’s stance on diversity: “MSU Denver English Department embraces the University's mission of inclusive excellence and strives to offer courses that value diversity in all its forms: race and ethnicity, gender, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations, religion, socioeconomic class, national origin and nationality, linguistic diversity, age, disabilities, individual differences, and cultural affiliations.” This means that no matter what your previous schooling experiences, linguistic background, documentation status, (dis)ability, religion, race, sexual identity or orientation, body type, and history are, you belong here, and so do your colleagues. WELCOME. I’m glad you’re here.

To ensure that this classroom is humane, inclusive, and just, I ask us all to practice the following behaviors in class:

* Arrange your chairs in a circle when possible and face the person speaking.
* Make room for others to share their perspectives by inviting them to comment.
* Listen to understand and ask clarifying questions before determining whether or not you agree with someone else.
* Disagree respectfully.
* Acknowledge that we are all works in progress.
* Dare to fail.

This course will help you:

1. Demonstrate understanding of writing processes and techniques useful for assisting writers with generating ideas, drafting, revising, and editing.
2. Demonstrate understanding of current composition theories and pedagogies.
3. Demonstrate understanding of how to reduce student anxiety about writing.
4. Demonstrate understanding of issues of diversity, authority, accessibility, and confidentiality as they relate to tutoring writing.
5. Apply a variety of strategies to build rapport with students being tutored, including demonstrating appropriate demeanor and personal presentation.
6. Analyze, evaluate, and prioritize issues in a variety of areas, including audience and task orientation, idea development, focus, organization, research, logic, clarity, style, and grammar, in a variety of written texts.
7. Use appropriate tutoring methods in the Writing Center with people who have different backgrounds, learning styles, and levels of writing proficiency.
8. Apply theory in practice related to writing and tutoring processes.
9. Conduct ethnographic research in a writing center setting.

Texts:

Required:

Geller, A. E., Eodice, M., Condon, F., Carroll, M., & Boquet, E. (2007). *The* *Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*. University Press of Colorado.

Goodson, P. (2013 or 2016). *Becoming an Academic Writer: 50 Exercises for Paced, Productive, and Powerful Writing*. 1st or 2nd ed. Sage.

MSU Denver Writing Center staff manual (on BlackBoard).

Articles on Blackboard.

Additional readings from these three books are on reserve at the Auraria Library:

Dunn, P.A. (2001). *Talking, Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies in the Teaching of Writing*. Heinemann.

Greenfield, L., Rowan, K. (2011). *Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialog and Change*. Salt Lake City: Utah State UP.

HIGHLY Recommended:

*Getting Things Done* by David Allen, *Time Management from the Inside Out* by Julie Morgenstern, or another book on time/action management. Time management and the discipline to revise laboriously are two of the most overlooked and sorely lacking skills in writers. Do not underestimate the importance of these things. YOU WILL NOT MAKE IT ON SHEER TALENT AND INSPIRATION. Trust me.

*You Majored in What?* By Katharine Brooks. This is an excellent book for anyone majoring in the liberal arts or sciences, disciplines that are not generally mapped to specific careers.

Another helpful resource for folks majoring in the liberal arts or sciences is the Career Services Office. Their website has information on careers for folks with different majors.

Blackboard:

Class handouts, answers to frequently asked questions, and online resources will be on BlackBoard. Please commit to checking BlackBoard regularly.

Evaluation:

Grade Contract. Instead of grading the traditional way, I use a grading contract[[3]](#footnote-3). This means that instead of getting a percentage of points possible on each assignment, you will simply get credit for doing it or no credit for not doing it. Contract grading allows you to make mistakes and learn from them without being penalized, and making mistakes is a very important part of learning. The premise of the contract is simple: *If you turn in every single assignment on time (or use late tickets) and miss no more than three classes, you will earn at least a B in the class.* Turning in incomplete assignments, skipping assignments, and missing more than three classes will result in grades of less than B, as the chart below shows. In other words, grades of B or lower are wholly dependent upon the quantity of work done.

If you turn in work that is complete and on time (or with late tickets) but is not of passing quality, you will receive a revise and resubmit request (R&R). This means you have one calendar week from the time of the R&R to revise and resubmit the work for credit. If the resubmitted work is of passing quality, you will get full credit for the assignment; if the resubmitted work is not of passing quality or if you choose not to resubmit it, you will get no credit for the assignment. You can (and should) consult me and/or a Writing Center consultant during your revision process.

The grade of “A” is the only grade dependent upon the quality of work. An A grade in the course is earned by doing everything required for the B—turning in every single assignment on time and missing no more than three classes—and completing a final project that is exceptional in quality. All members of the class will play a role in judging whether or not these pieces are of exceptional quality.

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|  | **# of absences** | **# of late assignments (not including use of late tickets)** | **# of skipped assignments (never turned in)** | **# of incomplete assignments (missing a required component)** | **additional criteria** |
| A | ≤ 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | quality of final project as determined by the class |
| B | ≤ 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |  |
| C | ≤ 3 | 1+ | 1 | 1 |  |
| D | 4+ | 1+ | 2 | 2 |  |
| F | 4+ | 1+ | 3+ | 3+ |  |

Assignments. Many of the assignments have flexible parameters that allow you to choose how you want to demonstrate to me that you have met the assignment outcomes. Note that in terms of credit for assignments in fulfilling the contract, every assignment carries equal weight. Each assignment is described in more detail on BlackBoard (go to Content > Assignments).

* Reading responses
* Tutorial report
* Shadow reports and field notes
* Participation in class co-gens
* A practicum in which you tutor students in the Writing Center
* Presentation on research findings
* A research project

Class Policies, Three Habits of Highly Successful Students, and Frequently Asked Questions are on BlackBoard and considered part of the syllabus.

Schedule:

| week | Activities & Assignments.  \*\*For each class meeting, do ONE reading response, alone or collaboratively, that touches on all of the readings assigned for that day. Reading responses must be shared with me ([liz.kleinfeld@gmail.com](mailto:liz.kleinfeld@gmail.com)) by 11:59 p.m. the day before class.\*\* | |
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|  | **Tuesday** | **Thursday** |
| 1 | 8/20: What is writing? What is a writing center? What is ENG 3670?  Co-gens: TBA | 8/22: How do writing centers fit into institutional frameworks? Who has a stake?  Co-gens: TBA  Read & respond to before class: Geller at al. chapters 1, “Introduction,” and 2, “Trickster at Your Table” |
|  | Before 11:59 pm on Friday, 8/23, take the syllabus quiz on Blackboard and post as much or as little of your contact information as you like on the Class Member Information Sheet on Blackboard  \*\*BONUS OPPORTUNITY TO GET A LATE TICKET: Come by during my office hours (or make an appointment outside my office hours) this week for a conversation about who you are and where you are going. Bring at least one class-related question, tell me why you’re interested in this course topic, or ask about the research in the field. [[4]](#footnote-4) | |
| 2 | 8/27: How does time function in writing centers? Writing processes?  Begin tutorial report.  Co-gens: TBA  Read & respond to before class: Geller at al. chapter 3, “Beat (Not) the (Poor) Clock” | 8/29: How do we learn? How do we learn to write?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Geller et al. chapter 4, “Origami Anyone? Tutors as Learners” |
| 3 | 9/3: What is research with human subjects?  Co-gens: TBA  Guest speaker Mike Heathcoate, Human Subject Protection Program Manager  Begin field experience  Before class, do the CITI training (on Blackboard) and bring your completion certificate to class. | 9/5: Workshop: Bring 3 hard copies of your tutorial report draft.  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Goodson preface and chapter 1: Get Ready to Practice |
| 4 | 9/10: Who or what is a writer?  Co-gens: TBA  Bring field notes to class  Read and respond to before class: Geller et. al. chapter 5, “Straighten Up and Fly Right: Writers as Tutors, Tutors as Writers” | 9/12: How are writing centers sites of oppression & empowerment?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Bawarshi and Pelkowski, “Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center” |
| 5 | 9/17: What are healthy writing processes?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Goodson chapter 2: Establish and Maintain the “Write” Habit | 9/19: How are writing centers sites of oppression & empowerment? (continued)  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Geller et al. chapter 6, “Everyday Racism: Anti-Racism Work and Writing Center Practice” |
| 6 | 9/24: What do writing center consultants need to know about how sentences work?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Goodson chapter 4: Polish the Grammar | 9/26: What do writing center consultants need to know about linguistic diversity?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Reading TBD from Greenfield and Rowan (on reserve in Library—the actual building) |
| 7 | 10/1: What are healthy writing processes? (continued)  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Goodson chapter 5: Get Feedback | 10/3: Who are writing centers for?  Co-gens: TBA  Bring 3 hard copies of your shadow report draft.  Read and respond to before class: Salem, “Decisions . . . Decisions: Who Chooses to Use the Writing Center?” (on Blackboard) |
| 8 | 10/8: How will the practicum work?  Co-gens: TBA  You can begin your practicum now – tutor four students between now and end of week XX. Email Yvonne at [yreed@msudenver.edu](mailto:yreed@msudenver.edu) to schedule your shifts.  Read and respond to before class: Goodson chapter 6: Edit and Proofread and the MSU Denver Writing Center Employee Manual (on Blackboard) | 10/10: Who are writing centers for? (continued)  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Denny, Nordlof, Salem, “’Tell Me Exactly What It Was that I Was Doing that Was So Bad’: Understanding the Needs and Expectations of Working-Class Students in Writing Centers” (on Blackboard) |
| 9 | 10/15: What is UDL and how can it be used in the Writing Center?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Dunn chapter 1, “Challenging Theories of Knowing”(on reserve—this is an actual book and you’ll need to go to the Auraria Library in person to read it or copy it) | 10/17: No class meeting (EK at IWCA)  Work in teams |
| 10 | 10/22: How can consultants meet students where they are?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: the WLN issue on reading (on Blackboard) | 10/24: Presentations  Co-gens: TBA |
| 11 | 10/29: Presentations  Co-gens: TBA | 10/31: How do you design a research study?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Goodson TBD |
| 12 | 11/5: What makes a good research question?  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Goodson TBD | 11/7: Research design  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Goodson TBD  \*\*NOTE: Friday, 11/8, is the Writing Center Symposium. |
| 13 | **11/12 -** Research design  Co-gens: TBA  Read and respond to before class: Goodson TBD | 11/14 – No meeting (EK at Fem Rhets)  Work on research designs. |
| 14 | 11/19 – Research design  Co-gens: TBA | 11/21 – Research Design  Co-gens: TBA |
| 15 | 12/3 – Workshopping  Co-gens: TBA | 12/5 – Workshopping  Co-gens: TBA |
| Final Exam | Poster sessions  Consider ENG 3672 – Research in Writing Centers to continue your work | |

1. You should come by during my office hours to ask questions about class readings or content; explore writing and/or writing center ideas or theories that interest you; bounce ideas around related to writing and/or writing centers; get advising related to courses, degree plans, graduation, and beyond; to get feedback on assignments and drafts; get moral support when you have hit an obstacle in your education; or you want my input on something for any reason. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rowan, Karen S. "Review Essay: Towards a Disability Literacy in Writing Center Studies." *Writing Center Journal* 34.2 (2015): 175-190. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Asao Inoue is a writing assessment scholar who has researched the effectiveness of grade contracts versus conventional grading. He observes that,

   Most courses that have writing in them ask us to write something, turn it in to the professor, and get back a grade . . . We are writing for grades, not for feedback, not for developing the ideas we find most valuable, not for expressing those ideas in ways that we see as important. If we get comments from our teacher on our writing, typically, we are likely to read those comments so that we can figure out what the teacher wants, what will get a better grade. If we get comments or feedback from our colleagues in class, we may feel conflicted about listening to them or taking their advice. If they suggest something, would the teacher agree? What if we took their advice but the teacher did not agree with that advice? Furthermore, using conventional grading systems to compute course grades often leads us to think more about our grade than about our writing, to worry more about pleasing a teacher or fooling one than about figuring out what we really want to learn, or how we want to communicate something to someone for some purpose. Additionally, conventional grading may cause us to be reluctant to take risks with our writing or ideas. It doesn’t allow writers to fail at writing, which many suggest is a primary way in which people learn from their practices. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A recent study connects students’ use of faculty office hours with academic success (Guerrero & Rod, 2013), but in my experience, students are reluctant to use faculty office hours; hence, this actual bonus opportunity to motivate you! Guerrero, M., & Rod, A. B. (2013). Engaging in Office Hours: A Study of Student-Faculty Interaction and Academic Performance. *Journal of Political Science Education*, *9*(4), 403-416. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)