WRITING *at* QUEENS

Q QUEENS COLLEGE

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Script for Four Ways to do a Peer Review Workshop (for Workshop Leaders)

Set-up and general notes

- Copies of Chapter 3, "The Writing Workshop" from Kerry Walk's Teaching with Writing (http://writingatqueens.qc.cuny.edu/files/2010/05/Walk_TWW.pdf).

- Copies of "Responding to Writing" from Bard's *Institute for Writing and Thinking* (attached).

- Writing Sample (attached).

- Shortened copies of Mark Gaipa's "Strategies" (attached).

- Copies of "Mad-Libs" and "Script for Draft Workshops" (attached).

- Copies of Prof. Hacker's "Speed-Dating" Peer Review (attached).

- Whenever possible, workshop leader should participate in the activities.

Introductions

5 minutes: Ask participants to state their names and whether they use Peer Reviews in their classes.

Activity 1: Responding to Writing (15 minutes total)

Hand out Bard's *IWT* "Responding to Writing" list and writing sample.

5 minutes: As an entire group, practice responding to sample writing, using two prompts from the list.

10 minutes: In groups of 3-5, each participant takes his or her writing sample and reads a portion aloud to group. Reader specifies two ways of responding from the list. Workshop leader will need to keep track of time, based on how many per group to ensure that each member gets a turn. Time can be tracked via a timer or by playing (non-intrusive, probably instrumental) music.

Note: participants can stay in same groups for Activity 2.

Activity 2: Mad Libs Script (15 minutes total)

Hand out Gloria Fisk's "Mad Lib" script and "Script for Group Workshop."

5 minutes: Explain that this peer review method was developed specifically for instructor-led small group conferences in lieu of or outside of class. Each participant will have already read

their group members' writing, as well as the instructor's comments on it. Emphasize that this method of peer review and the scripts are both adaptable. Ask participants to fill out the "Mad Lib" script as best they can, using the sample writing they brought in.

10 minutes: One by one, participants share "Mad Libs" script with group members who then offer advice.

Post-Mortem/Wrap-up

5 minutes: Hand out Chapter 3 of Kerry Walk and "Speed-Dating Peer Review" by Ryan Cordell of the Chronicle's Prof. Hacker.

5 minutes: Discussion, Q&A. Review closing points about Peer Review. Reiterate importance of students' commenting on each others' work, how it can help everyone, especially the instructor, but that reviews should be specific and directed.

Responding to Writing (from Bard's *Institute for Writing and Thinking*)

This document outlines a variety of ways to respond to writing in the context of peer editing workshops. Typically these procedures are first explained to students by an experienced teacher and are practices in the full group under the guidance of the teacher before separating into smaller groups of 3-5 students. Focusing a given workshop on just one or two of these procedures can be particularly effective.

Active listening: the simple act of reading a text aloud to attentive listeners can heighten an author's attention to the writing and prepare the way for future discussions.

Say back: listeners record striking words and phrases as the text is read and subsequently read them back to the author without additional comment.

Centers of gravity: "centers of gravity" are specific places in a text that seem especially important, interesting, or generative. A given center of gravity may or may not be the ostensible thesis or main idea of the piece.

Summary: respondents summarize their understanding of the text. Discrepancies between what the writer "meant to say" and what respondents "heard" may tell writers how their texts are being construed or misconstrued and thus serve as useful guides for revision.

What's lurking?: what is "coming through" to the reader that is not being said overtly? Identifying this can help writers to recognize further implications of what they've written and to think through possible revisions.

More about: what do respondents want to hear more about? Answering this question can help writers better understand readers' desires.

Voice and tone: in academic writing, one often struggles to find an appropriate voice (public yet not impersonal or abstract), and it can be helpful to attend directly to this issue. A discussion of voice can also help writers make important stylistic decisions or recognize and reflect on their attitudes toward their subjects (e.g., is there a latent sarcasm in the piece? Is the writer guarded or overly deferential?).

Structure: how do the various parts of the text (paragraphs, sections, stanzas) relate to one another and contribute to the whole? Responding to this question can help writers think about how the text is organized and how it might be revised.

Preparation

There are plenty of ways to prepare students for this type of Peer Review. Here are two:

1. In previous classes, practice using the responding to writing prompts with assigned readings. Then before the Peer Review session, pass out the list and remind students that they have been using these strategies already, and that they should use them now for advising their colleagues on their own writing. This creates a connection between the course readings and students' own writings.

2. Use an exemplary piece of student writing from a previous class (ideally, the same or a similar assignment) to practice on. This is effective because it shows students the successful end result of the writing assignment.

Advice for students

Do comment, listen, rephrase (e.g., "this phrase stood out to me ...", "I notice that you make the following assumptions. . .", "From my understanding, your main point seems to be . . .")

Don't judge or evaluate (forbidden phrases: "I really liked the way you...", "It didn't quite work when you . . .")

These restrictions compel students to break out of the limiting and unhelpful I like/don't like dialogue that Peer Review can quickly turn into. The goal of this Peer Review is for writers to get a sense of how their ideas are interpreted by specific readers, and requiring students to focus on these types of non-judgmental responses encourages more careful and meaningful responses about the content of their peers' writing.

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Teaching Statement: The Pedagogy of Epiphany

I began to write this teaching statement with a pre-draft activity that I like to give my students: I made a list. I wrote successful classroom activities in two columns, differentiated by student enthusiasm and learning outcomes. Then I chose one activity that appeared in both columns to write more about. Through writing, I realized that what I like most about this activity is that it strives to create a moment of epiphany in students, which can then be used to create more exciting, creative, and nuanced academic essays. Representing concepts visually often uncovers foundational assumptions upon which written claims depend. To identify teaching practices that encourage a learning environment in which students are more likely to discover, seemingly on their own, previously unknown perspectives, I performed another pre-draft activity. I drew a very basic organizational chart to trace the classroom conditions that need to be in place in order for the in-class activity I chose to work. First, students must be excited about the material. Second, scholarly inquiry needs to be portrayed as a creative journey that engages multiple modes of intellectual discourse. Third, activities, assignments, and readings should all work in tandem with each other. Finally, students have to trust the instructor and each other.

To encourage a fresh, innovative classroom atmosphere where the students will be as excited about the material as I am, I refashion my course design each semester based on previous teaching experiences, conversations with colleagues, workshops I've attended, and texts I've encountered. To ensure that learning goals are not sacrificed on the altar of change, I create essay assignments that answer course-specific learning goals. Then I compose low-stakes activities that develop the intellectual skills demanded by the graded assignments. Finally, I create lesson plans to accentuate the low-stakes activities. Constructing specific assignments and activities with the end goals in mind creates a scaffolding effect wherein skills and knowledge build upon and reinforce each other. Likewise, when we begin writing the graded essays, I ask students to identify what the assignment asks them to do by completing writing tasks similar to the ones I used for this statement; this way, students perceive that they have already practiced the intellectual tasks necessary to complete the essay successfully.

In order to emphasize that scholarly inquiry and academic writing are dynamic, creative endeavors, I draw on my undergraduate experience as an art student. The art school pedagogical model, of professors acting as collaborators on a creative journey and peers offering engaged criticism, navigates students from theory to production. Art school teaches students not only to think but also to do—ideally, humanities education accentuates the same. When students make things, it helps them on their esoteric pilgrimage by creating a bridge from the abstract to the concrete. Drawing inspiration from excerpts of Mark Gaipa's article "Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority for Their Writing," sometimes we draw cartoons to illustrate the stance and motive of assigned readings. Other times we'll color-code relevant portions of an article with highlighters in order to discern its structure, or draw an annotated map of previously covered course material. This semester my first year writing students made soundscapes that explore a tension between sources using Audacity and created a visual representation of their research essays with Photoshop. Many students already excel at

visual and auditory interpretations: multi-modal assignments emphasize how these existing skills transfer into academic writing. Low-tech or high-tech, we make things not only because it's fun and engages multiple learning styles, but also because production nudges the brain to epiphany.

Amazing teaching moments occur when students realize how course themes and writing assignments work together. Last spring, in an introductory literary studies course, we read *Brother, I'm Dying* by Edwidge Danticat. Students respond enthusiastically to the revived historical trend in contemporary literary analysis: it offers a respite from theorizing, a refreshing objectivity, and satisfies cultural curiosity. However, this historical approach can augment an existing tendency for dangerous reductionism; efficient search engines tempt us to find causes quickly and assign effects conclusively. I wanted to devise an activity that offered some insight into Haitian history that wouldn't overwhelm the literary discussion of Danticat's book, but that also countered the increasingly hasty ways many of us search for information. Initially, we watched and read interviews in which Danticat spoke about her childhood and family in Haiti. Then, as a class, we divided Haitian history into sections. In groups, students devised a short presentation based on a 30-second Google search of their assigned time period. At the end of the presentations, I asked students to answer a series of structured writing prompts intended to encourage differentiation between the information found on the search, Danticat's narratives of her family, and any first-hand information they might have about Haiti through friends, neighbors, or relatives. Students selected portions of their writing to share with the class, and several commented that the overwhelmingly negative portrayals of Haiti on Google contrasted with Danticat's more nuanced recollections. Since the population of Queens College is incredibly diverse, several students had friends and relatives from Haiti and offered personal anecdotes that further complicated the Googled information. We then had a lively discussion on alternative histories and the politics of representation. We accomplished some of the factual nitty gritty stuff, but we also learned that dominant historical accounts only give part of the story. Furthermore, by intertwining memory, history, and culture, students came to realize how their own mini-narratives mirrored the literary methodology Danticat uses in *Brother, I'm Dying*.

To accomplish these moments of realization requires not just careful and concise planning but also respect, trust, and rapport. My students need to know that although we'll have a bit of fun, there is assuredly an end goal to whatever unusual task we undertake, and the twists in the activities are not there to make them feel silly, but to help them create connections for themselves. They also need to trust each other so they can goof up; they should feel relaxed enough in class to shout out an epiphany or offer a speculation that seems totally out there. Creating a community where this is possible begins on the first day and is reinforced throughout the semester. The first day of class we create personalized name tags. Whenever possible, I arrange the chairs in my classroom in a circle and sit down with my students. I try to offer information and perspectives based on their dialogue and their views. I write with them and participate in class activities. This community-building fosters friendships among the students that sustain a welcoming academic environment and encourages scholarly collaboration. Engagement, empathy, and creativity, combined with targeted writing assignments, relevant readings, and meaningful in-class activities all establish the atmosphere in which critical thinking and intellectual connections flourish.

Gloria Fisk's Mad-Lib Script for Your Group Conference

Adapt it as you like.

Hi, Friends,

I have some tentative plans for my revision of my research essay that I want to run by you. Please help me, because I want to write the best revision that I can possibly write (!).

As I revise, I think I might need to _____ my **thesis** by
                                       (verb)

_____...
  (verb, gerund)

I also plan to _____my **motive**. Can you help me name it?
                     (verb)

My **structure** is a little _____, so I think I'll
                              (adjective)

_____...
         (verb)

My **evidence** seems _____ to me, and I have some questions about
                        (adjective)
how I'm using it. For example…

One other question that I have is…

Wow, thanks, guys. You're awesome! Let's talk about how we can keep helping each other over the next couple of weeks, and let's plan our next step now…

Your Script for the Draft Workshop, by Gloria Fisk

(Begin by deciding which of these questions are most relevant to you, because
you don't have to ask every question, and you may want to add some of your own.
The only one that is required is #1.)

1. One thing that I think is awesome about my draft is the fact that I wrote it. What else
do you think is awesome about it? Please be specific.

2. Can you locate my thesis in my introduction, and can you paraphrase it in your own
words? Does it guide you through my essay securely, or are there places where you lose
sight of it?

3. Can you describe my "motivating move"? Which of Gaipa's eight strategies do you
think I'm using?

4. Did you find my evidence convincing, and did I include enough of it to support the
claims that I make? Are there any places where you think I need to make more specific
reference to the texts?

5. Does my analysis of the evidence make sense to you, and are there any places where
you think I need more or less of it to prove my claims?

6. Did each paragraph convey to you a clear main idea that advances my thesis? If not,
where did you see me wander?

7. Was there any place where you, my reader, furrowed your brow in confusion, irritation,
or disagreement?

From *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "Prof Hacker" Blog, November 3, 2011

" 'Speed Dating' Peer-Review Writing Workshops" by Ryan Cordell

We write about writing regularly at ProfHacker. If you're new to ProfHacker, you absolutely should review Billie's wonderful "Writer's Bootcamp" series for tips about developing good personal writing habits and helping students with their writing. My students do quite a bit of writing in all of my classes—blog posts, writing exercises, digital projects, and more traditional papers. I aim to help my students develop their writing skills, both when composing their own texts and when critically analyzing the texts of others.

Because I hope to develop these skills, we do some writing in-class and my students workshop each other's papers before turning them in for my evaluation. Like any classroom activity, however, workshops can grow stale if they always follow the same form. Throughout a given semester, then, I vary the format of our workshops to focus on certain skills or elements of writing.One of my favorite workshop formats is "introductions speed dating." As the title should indicate, this workshop focuses on students' introductions, helping them think about how their initial paragraph(s) draw readers into their arguments—or fail to do so.

The format is pretty simple, though it requires some preparation and classroom reorganization. Here's what I do to set up the workshop:

1. I ask students to bring a printed copy of their introductions to class. Because this exercise requires students to move frequently (more on that shortly), laptops can be unwieldy.

2. I arrive at the classroom at least ten minutes prior to the start of class. I move the chairs (and, if the room has them, tables) so that there are two concentric rings of chairs. The chairs in the inner ring should face the chairs in the outer ring. When students arrive I make sure they sit in the rings.

3. I also bring some music to class—a song that plays for approximately 4 minutes. I usually plug my iPhone into the classroom sound system (if there is one), but you could just as easily bring in a portable music player or some laptop speakers.

4. I ask students to get out their printed introductions, one piece of paper, and a pen or pencil.

After this preparation, the workshop is pretty simple. When the music starts, facing pairs of students exchange introductions. They read each other's paragraphs and then give their partners one specific piece of advice about how to improve their introductions. This advice is delivered aurally, and students write down their partner's advice on their papers. Hopefully they can do this before the song ends (which doesn't always happen in the first round but almost always happens within a few rounds). When the music stops, the students in the inner ring stand up and rotate to the next partner. I restart the music and they begin the process again. In 40 minutes students get feedback from 10 of their peers.

I like this format for several reasons:

1. It's focused. Students hone in on a single aspect of their papers, which makes the workshop less overwhelming, especially for less confident writers.

2. It's cumulative. At the end of the workshop, I tell students to look through the list of suggestions their classmates made and identify trends. "It you see three or four comments pertaining to one element of your introduction," I tell them, "you know to work on that." This addresses one of the most common problems with peer review workshops—uneven partnerships. In this format, students' workshops aren't sunk by one unhelpful partner.

3. It changes the pace of the class. Students have fun with the music and the frequent movement. There are usually moments of laughter during the "shifts," and students also seem to appreciate the "dating" motif.

8 Strategies for Critically Engaging Secondary Sources
Adapted from Mark Gaipa

The strategies below are adapted, and the figures reproduced, from Mark Gaipa's "Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority in Their Writing," *Pedagogy* 4.3 (2004): 419-37. Note that these strategies may be used globally, as a way of framing an argument, or locally, as a way of engaging sources at a particular stage in an argument.

Strategy 1: Picking a Fight – Knock down a scholar's argument and, in the best version of this strategy, replace it with one's own.

Strategy 2: Ass Kissing, or Riding a Scholar's Coattails – Agree with a scholar to gain evidence and authority. Possibly go on to defend the scholar from attack by another scholar, thus resolving a larger controversy.

Strategy 3: Piggybacking, or Standing on the Shoulders of a Giant – Agree with a scholar (i.e., kiss ass), but then complete or extend the scholar's work, usually by borrowing an idea or concept from the scholar and developing it through application to a new subject or new part of the conversation.

Strategy 4: Leapfrogging, or Biting the Hand That Feeds You – Agree with a scholar (i.e., kiss ass), then identify and solve a problem in the scholar's work—for example, an oversight, inconsistency, or contradiction.

Strategy 5: Playing Peacemaker – Identify a conflict or dispute between two or more scholars, then resolve it using a new or more encompassing perspective.

Strategy 6: Taking on the Establishment, or Acting Paranoid – Pick a fight with everyone in a critical conversation—for example, by showing how the status quo is wrong, a critical consensus is actually unfounded, or a dispute is based on a faulty assumption.

Strategy 7: Dropping Out, or Finding Room on the Margins – Focus on an issue in the margins of the critical conversation, illuminating that issue and (in the best version of this strategy) ultimately redefining the conversation itself.
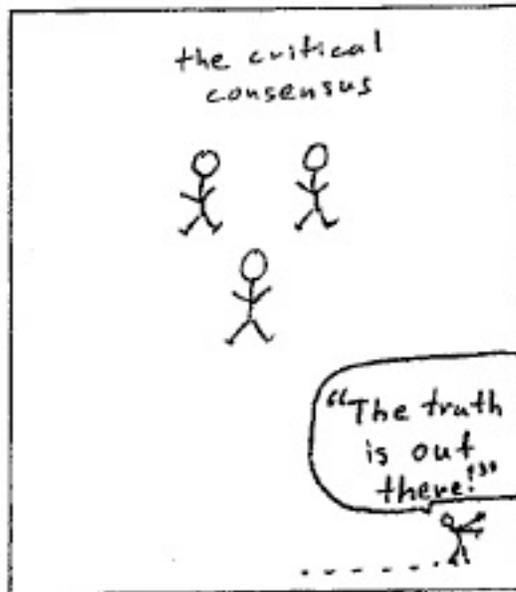
Strategy 8: Crossbreeding with Something New – Inject really new material into the critical conversation to produce a new argument. For example, bring in a theory from another discipline to reinterpret the evidence, bring in new evidence to upset an old theory or interpretation, or establish an original framework (a combination of theories, a historical understanding) to reinterpret the evidence.