



2022

Building Community in an Asynchronous Write-to-Learn Course

Mary K. Tedrow

Shenandoah University, mary.tedrow@verizon.net

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wte>



Part of the Educational Methods Commons, Educational Technology Commons, English Language and Literature Commons, Higher Education and Teaching Commons, Liberal Studies Commons, Online and Distance Education Commons, Other Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons

Recommended Citation

Tedrow, Mary K. (2022) "Building Community in an Asynchronous Write-to-Learn Course," *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/wte/vol11/iss1/7>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Teaching/Writing: The Journal of Writing Teacher Education* by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



Building Community in an Asynchronous Write-to-Learn Course

Cover Page Footnote

Author: Dr. Mary K. Tedrow, NBCT Mary K. Tedrow taught in the high school English classroom beginning in 1978, ending her K-12 career as the Porterfield Endowed English Chair at John Handley High School in 2016. She currently directs the Shenandoah Valley Writing Project and works in teacher education at Shenandoah University in Winchester VA. Tedrow is also a lecturer at Johns Hopkins University and is the author of *Write, Think, Learn: Tapping the Power of Daily Student Writing Across Content Areas* published by Taylor Routledge.

Building Community in an Asynchronous Write-to-Learn Course

Mary K. Tedrow, *Shenandoah University*

Introduction

My career in the high school English classroom spanned four decades from 1978 to 2016. During that time my knowledge and understanding of how to engage and motivate learners grew as I puzzled through both curricular and student demands. Effective teaching requires continual instructor learning to facilitate student learning. The search for effective pedagogy was perpetually intriguing and ultimately satisfying when student growth was positively affected. The National Writing Project (NWP, nwp.org), starting in 1981, was my professional home for learning applied to my classroom work. Collaborating with teacher peers via the NWP resulted in shifts in pedagogy that caused observable results in both student engagement and growth, another satisfaction that led to more sharing and learning with like-minded peers. Teaching in the classroom was a dynamic and intellectually engaging career affording many pleasures in the shared company of adolescents.

By the time I completed my K-12 work, I felt I could identify classroom characteristics that foster meaningful learning. These include taking time to build a classroom community where students feel safe enough to share experiences, engaging student interest by accommodating choice in course requirements, providing lots of low-stakes practice with continual feedback, and asking students to reflect, set goals, and evaluate their own work. In the final years in the classroom, I was generally tinkering with better ways to achieve all of these pedagogical goals.

After leaving the classroom, I was invited to create a course for teachers about using writing in a literature course. The course, *Writing in Literature*, runs in the Johns Hopkins Advanced Academic Programs and is offered entirely online as part of the Master of Arts in Teaching Writing. Course participants are either pre-service or in-service kindergarten through university instructors. In the degree program, students must take nine courses, with at least one reading-focused course (Johns Hopkins, 2020, August 11). *Writing in Literature* is primarily a reading

course that employs writing as a tool for learning but also addresses critical writing through the genres of poetry, drama, and prose. It is offered as an elective in the master's program. Because the course is available to the entire English-speaking global community and has included students located in China, South Africa, Croatia and multiple regions of the US, it demands an asynchronous design.

I had not spent much time investigating asynchronous online instruction in my K-12 career. In considering the course design I asked myself then, as I ask myself now, how to create a safe, sharing community in an asynchronous space where participants have no access to the spontaneous feedback via verbal cues, body language, and tone easily apparent in face-to-face classrooms. Since the course is intended for working or pre-service teachers, I strive to model effective practices using writing to learn featuring the characteristics outlined above.

The pandemic crisis threw nearly every instructor and most students into distance learning and adds urgency to course design that effectively accommodates learning from a distance. The application of successful pedagogy to distance learning is currently in high demand.

Looking Back to Move Forward

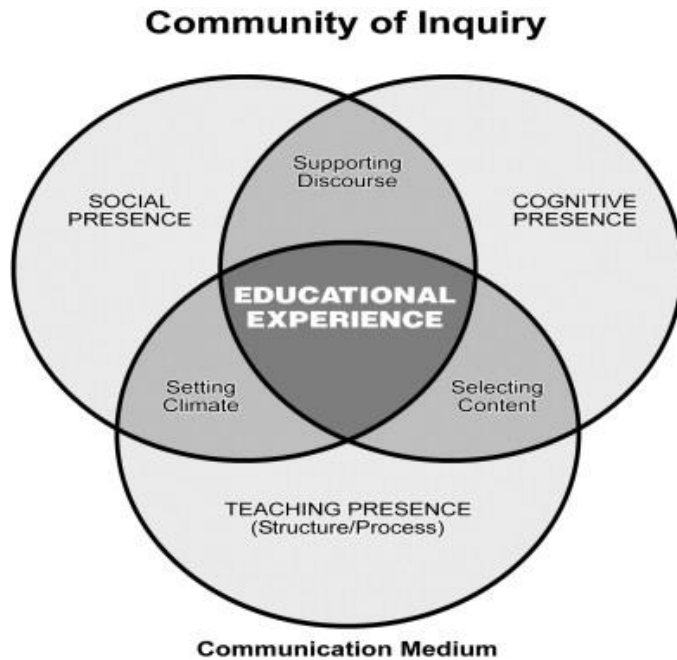
The move to distance learning has paradoxically pushed the education sector backwards into an examination of effective and quality traditional, face-to-face postsecondary teaching. As more and more students move to online learning, with postsecondary numbers rising steadily since 2012 (Seaman & Seaman, 2018), and large swaths of the world's students now facing a screen during the shutdowns caused by the Coronavirus pandemic (United Nations, August 2020), the question of whether distance learning is an effective, quality alternative has pressured the online community to provide empirical data that impacts student success. But, as Michelle Miller points out in her review of online instruction *Minds Online* (2014), this sort of study has never really been demanded of traditional postsecondary instruction. The need to define quality online instruction forces a definition of quality instructional practices in the classroom setting before applying those to asynchronous online spaces. Though various studies use a variety of terminology to describe these pedagogical practices, there is remarkable consistency in recurring features that have proven to impact a student's ability to learn, retain, apply, and extend content in postsecondary education (Graham, et. al., 2001; Miller, 2014; Eyler, 2018; Darby & Lang, 2019). In fact, these factors are now built into various tools used by public institutions for assessing and designing online instruction. The qualities of effective online instruction have been codified into guidelines for course construction by practicing faculty working in collaboration with instructional technicians by such agencies as Quality Matters, "the global organization leading quality assurance in online and innovative digital teaching and learning environments" (MarylandOnline, 2020. n.p.) or the National Standards of

Quality (nosqol.org). Most postsecondary schools with robust online instruction ascribe to some professional guideline for quality assurance. Johns Hopkins Advanced Academic Programs, where the course under study is located, is a member of Quality Matters (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg, 2013, June 27).

As early as 1989, physics professor Michael Moore identified three types of interactions for engaging students in practicing and developing the necessary critical thinking skills demanded for understanding in a traditionally taught science class. These skills are also generally necessary for all course work in higher education. They include the ability to think critically, to be able to recognize and transfer thinking processes, and to apply learning to resolve problems (Moore, 1989). Though students can gain content knowledge from exerted study of *any* course material, Moore called for specific interventions to develop reasoning skills, the lack of which limits students from achieving deep understanding of concepts in science. From Moore's study on engaging students, online course designers have extracted three pillars necessary to engage students that many suggest should be included in effective course design. These three pillars, referenced in some form in the quality assurance programs, include provisions for learner to learner interaction, learner to content interaction, and learner to instructor interaction. The instructor-guided inclusion of these interactions promotes the type of critical thinking demanded in postsecondary education. The pillars have also been incorporated into a framework for a Community of Inquiry recommended as a guide for designing effective online instruction (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2010). The three pillars are represented in Figure 1 as Social Presence (learner to learner), Cognitive Presence (learner to content), and Teacher Presence (learner to instructor). The effective nature of the framework has been validated through associated research (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010). In online instruction, research has determined that, though learner to instructor is important to creating a sense of the instructor "[s]tudent to student, student to content have been reported to be the most important categories of interaction with student to instructor interaction of less impact, but still important" (Simonsen, 2019b, p.39). Interactions between the student and instructor are implied through course design and assignments and should not be forced to expand the learner to instructor frame.

Many effective instructional strategies outlined in recent literature easily fall into the three categories of interactions (Graham, et. al., 2001; Miller, 2014; Eyler, 2018; Darby & Lang, 2019). For that reason, this project will employ these three broad categories to explore effective online course design for writing instruction and to correlate these best practices with the general guidelines suggested by the research for effective online instruction.

FIGURE 1



(Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2010)

Terminology

Before proceeding, some terms need to be clarified. Mary K. Tallent-Rennels and her team (2005) note that the research field in distance learning has not settled on specific terminology to consistently describe variations in temporal and spatial learning contexts. Simonson (2019a) also admits that because we are currently in “[a]n environment in which technology, society, economics, politics, and theories of learning are all in transition [this environment] suggests that definitions, theories, and the practice of distance education will continue to be contested” (p.31). It is certain that the terminology has been shifting even faster as distance education has expanded exponentially in the pandemic climate of 2020-21.

To adhere to a consistent vocabulary, I will employ the terms defined below throughout the project. These are in current usage as indicated by their inclusion in the 4th Edition of *Distance Education: Definition and Glossary of Terms* (Simonson, 2019a).

Face-to-Face (F2F) This term refers to schooling that happens in a physical brick and mortar space and is enacted by appointment at specific dates and

times. The instruction occurs in real time with the students in a face-to-face setting. Students must adhere to the scheduling of the course.

Blended/Hybrid This term includes courses where some instruction occurs in a structured time and place while other learning is supported in a digital space with the time online and the physical location controlled by the student. This might include courses that are currently held at a distance but include set scheduled times for meeting in an online space.

Asynchronous online – This final category is the focus of this project. The entirety of the course takes place in a virtual setting with the physical learning space and timing controlled by the students but within the confines of temporal deadlines and structured interactions designed and controlled by the instructor. The engagement in learning is asynchronous, meaning that students are accessing and interacting with the course on a varied temporal schedule. This opens the possibility of instruction to a wider geographical area, an option limited in F2F teaching.

The Intersection of Quality Asynchronous Online Instruction and Writing Instruction

The Position Statement of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) for Online Writing Instruction clearly states in Position 4 that “[a]ppropriate *onsite* composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be *migrated and adapted* to the online instructional environment” (p. 2, emphasis mine). The attributes of any high-quality online course design have many parallels with effective writing instruction whether that instruction is delivered F2F or online. These overlaps are reviewed here using the framework suggested by Moore (1989) and further enhanced by the Community of Inquiry framework (Figure 1). In keeping with CCCC position statement 3 that recommends that “[a]ppropriate composition teaching/learning strategies should be developed for the unique features of the online instructional environment” some recommended practices are included in the three pillars of the framework. Also integrated are principles outlined by the CCCC for the postsecondary teaching of writing (2015). For cross comparison of the principles of the CCCC and recent research in quality instruction both F2F and online, see Table 1. The three texts reviewed in the chart are recent additions to postsecondary pedagogical practice. Josh Eyler’s *How Humans Learn* (2018) is a comprehensive review of research on the science of learning, including what motivates learners and compels their engagement with new learning, ultimately enhancing student success. Eyler directs the Center for Teaching Excellence at Rice University and his audience is the F2F postsecondary instructor. Though he does not address distance learning and, in fact, expresses some doubts that teaching from a distance can be as effective as F2F teaching, he presents a well-researched and comprehensive overview of the characteristics of effective

instruction. Both Michelle Miller (*Minds Online*, 2014) and Flower Darby (*Small teaching online: Applying learning science in online classes*, 2019) are faculty at Northern Arizona University where Miller’s Introduction to Psychology and Darby’s first year writing course have been lauded for effective distance instruction. Their texts are also aimed at postsecondary instructors and integrate much of what Eyster has researched into online course design. Together, the three texts review the most recent research in teaching and learning in both F2F and online settings. The chart examines how their texts align and overlap with recommendations for online instruction, online composition instruction, and F2F postsecondary teaching of writing.

Table 1: Crosswalk of Online Instruction and Writing Instruction

Recommended Effective Online Instruction Course Design (Moore; Garrison et. al; Quality Matters)	Terminology via Miller (<i>Minds Online</i> , 2014)	Terminology via Darby & Lang (<i>Small Teaching Online</i> , 2019)	Terminology via Eyster (<i>How Humans Learn</i> , 2018)	Recommendations via CCCC “ A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction ” (OWI), 2013	Recommendations via CCCC “ Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing ,” 2015
Backwards Design (all parts of course aligned with outcomes) <i>Teacher Presence</i>	Well-designed online learning shows gains	Plan assessment first	Not defined though backwards design is implied by noting that activities are planned with outcomes aligned to specific learning goals	“OWI Principle 4: Appropriate onsite composition theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be migrated and adapted to the online instructional environment.” (p.2) “OWI Principle 5: Online writing teachers should retain reasonable control over their own content and/or techniques for conveying, teaching and assessing their students’ writing in their OWCs.” (p.2)	Principle 10: Extends from a knowledge of theories of writing
Provide Purpose <i>Teacher Presence</i>	Recommends an engaging teacher-directed hook before instruction	Instructor provides purpose prior to instruction	Build Curiosity	Effective practice 3.4: “Teaching...should be explicit and problem-centered.” (p.13)	Principle 1: Sound writing instruction emphasizes the rhetorical nature of writing
Provide frequent feedback <i>Teacher Presence</i>	Frequent feedback	Frequent feedback: Giving Feedback (Chapter 5)	Allow opportunities to fail and receive redirection	Effective Practice 3.12: “Provide clarity around when students can expect feedback.” (p.14)	Principle 6: Depends upon frequent, timely, and context-specific feedback from an experienced

				Effective Practice 3.5: "...teacher response to student writing should be explicit in how to improve writing...." (p. 13)	postsecondary instructor
Break projects into multiple low-stakes assignments <i>Learner to Content</i>	Short term goals with frequent opportunity to respond	Scaffolding	"provide students with the opportunity to fail when the stakes are low" p.173	Effective Practice 4.1: "...teachers should break their assignments, exercises, and activities into smaller units to increase opportunities for interaction between teacher and student and among students..." (p. 14)	Principle 4: Enables students to analyze and practice with a variety of genres Principle 5: Recognizes writing processes as iterative and complex
Provide opportunities to reflect (Dewey) <i>Learner to Content</i>	Highlight deep structure; focus on process not just product; Work with analogies and deliberate reflection	Reflection	Failure and metacognition, reflection	Effective practice 4.2: "...enable and enact knowledge construction." (p.15)	Principle 8: Supports learning, engagement, and critical thinking in courses across the curriculum Principle 12: Is assessed through a collaborative effort that focus on student learning within and beyond writing courses
Provide authentic meaningful work (Dewey) <i>Learner to Content</i>	Projects with emotional connection have stick	Provide meaningful work References <i>The Meaningful Writing Project: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education</i> (2006)	Provide authenticity (situated cognition)	Effective Practice 3.10: "Teachers should moderate online class discussions to develop...a constant habit of written expression with a genuine audience." (p. 14)	Principle 2: Considers the needs of real audiences
Create a community of learners <i>Learner to Learner</i>	Making students feel connected; sharing with peers; involves emotions	Building community (Chapter 4)	Sociality – learning is a social activity	"OWI Principle 11: Online writing teachers and their institutions should develop personalized and interpersonal online communities to foster student success." (p.3) Effective Practice 4.1: "...increase opportunities for interaction between teacher and student and among students..." (p. 14)	Principle 3: Recognizes writing as a social act Principle 12: Is assessed through a collaborative effort that focus on student learning within and beyond writing courses
Learner centered (with teacher oversight)	Take student knowledge and	Making Connections (Chapter 8)	Constructivist	Rationale for OWI principle 3: "...pedagogies can	Principle 9: Provides students with the

<i>Learner to Content</i>	understanding into account;			address the diverse learning needs of students...” (p.12)	support necessary to achieve their goals.
<i>Modeling Teacher Presence</i>	Teachers model online etiquette, clarity of communication throughout	Provide Models	Not overtly named but recommends instructors join the learning community as fellow participant	Effective practice 2.8: “Students and faculty often use writing to connect for guiding tasks, sharing and critiquing assigned texts or student writing, and evaluative commenting.” (p. 13)	Principle 6: Depends upon frequent, timely, and context-specific feedback from an experienced postsecondary instructor
Universal Design: Accessible and inclusive to accommodate all types of learner	Universal design	Universal design	Not addressed	“OWI Principle 1: Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible.” (p.2)	Principle 9: Provides students with the support necessary to achieve their goals.

Learner to Learner (Social Presence)

During writing instruction in F2F settings, instructors are reminded that writing is a social act (CCCC, 2015, Principle 3) and effective instruction enhances that understanding by providing opportunities to draft texts in collaboration, share in peer response groups, and provide opportunities to compose in the wider context of a rhetorical situation. Principle 5 states that “sound writing recognizes writing processes [are] iterative and complex” requiring multiple drafts created over time (CCCC, 2015). These practices are in concert with the learner-to-learner mandate for developing the critical thinking needed at the postsecondary level since iterative drafts in an effective composition course are shared in peer groups and knowledge of composing processes and concepts are shaped in part by the interaction of learners around a shared draft (Bruffee, 1984).

Guidelines for online course creation require the building of relationships among the participants of the online course so that students feel connected to one another and that personal connection will drive them back to the site to continue to learn (Miller, 2014; Darby, 2019). Quality online instruction is learner-centered (MarylandOnline, 2020; McCombs, 2015) and some knowledge and understanding should be co-created by the learners in collaboration with the instructor while following the needs of the students. When students are working collaboratively with drafts or ideas in an online setting via small groups and document sharing, the development of ideas surfaces in the student-to-student discussions. Additionally, the iterative nature of composing demands that assignments are broken down and provide multiple opportunities for interaction with peers, the instructor, and the content for drafting and redrafting (CCCC, 2013, Principle 4.1). Quality asynchronous online instruction should provide both small and whole group opportunities for interaction and teaching effective writing instruction asynchronous online instruction should also include peer groupings.

Learner to Content (Cognitive Presence)

Every measure of quality asynchronous online instruction emphasizes using backwards design to carefully plan for the final assessment prior to building the course (see Table 1). Both Miller (2014) and Darby & Lang (2019) indicate that each course should start by considering the assessment or goals for the course before designing activities. Eyler (2018), too, recommends that instructors have a clear goal for student understanding and extensive knowledge of course concepts and potential stumbling blocks for student understanding before beginning instruction. Once learning goals are set, instructors can build interactions that move toward the final goal by incorporating frequent, low-risk opportunities to succeed as well as timely intervention when student work goes awry. Likewise, effective writing instruction recognizes the iterative, problem-centered nature of composing and builds in multiple opportunities for students to break writing projects into smaller pieces. These smaller units are also subject to feedback, discussion, and questioning by both peers and the instructor (CCCC, 2015, Principle 5). Multiple interactions provide the opportunity for students, with instructor and peer guidance, to build their own knowledge of composing processes (CCCC, 2013, Principle 4.2, p. 15). Composition courses should, just as is suggested by the online course design principles, build in a reflective process developed through teacher-directed activities so students gain an awareness of their composing process. Reflection offers the potential to extend the process of composing to other disciplines (CCCC, 2015, Principle 12). In composition courses, it is the individually identified and idiosyncratic process that is the deliverable for the learner. Engaging students in the problem-resolution of composition is the content we wish them to transfer to subsequent postsecondary learning. The CCCC suggests capitalizing on the archival nature of online courses by having students review work from the entirety of the course for final reflections that highlight their gains in the composing process (2013, Principle 3.11 p. 14). These gains can be described in end-of-course portfolios or reflection essays.

Ideally, the content of an online writing composition course should draw its writing topics and audiences from issues and concerns that are both authentic and of high interest to the students. Rather than limiting instruction to a single genre (generally a research project of some sort) students should have routine practice with a variety of genres (CCCC, 2015, Principle 4).

Learner to Instructor (Teacher Presence)

All of the recommendations for quality asynchronous online courses call for breaking content down into small, low-risk assignments that receive frequent and rapid feedback so students can learn from errors, make corrections, and absorb

learning. Eyler (2018) also argues that failure and the teacher facilitated recentering of understanding is an important part of the learning process. This means that low-risk activity can absorb the inevitable missteps of a novice without punishing students with poor evaluations while they are still learning. Instructors should plan for opportunities to guide students through their learning with frequent feedback, redirecting and explaining when student understanding takes a misstep. Writing *is* an iterative process and student success in a composition course “depends on frequent, timely, context-specific feedback from an experienced postsecondary instructor,” (CCCC, 2015, Principle 6) just as is recommended by good online design for any course. In the composing process, students present text to readers, often their peers and certainly their instructor, to gauge audience response to messaging. They can then use the feedback to return to drafts to correct and add information for clarifying a message for an intended audience. These interactions can be handled online through the development of small groups and document sharing.

The online setting also provides many opportunities to see writing situated in real life interactions via the many tools “emphasize [and model] the rhetorical nature of writing” (CCCC, 2015, Principle 1). The OWI principles of the CCCC indicate that instructors should continually model appropriate compositional decision shifts based on the nature of the student/teacher interaction. These teacher models can be an implied source of instruction through repeated interactions. Through carefully written directions, as well as multiple online interactions, teacher modeling can reveal the rhetorical use of communication in a variety of online interchanges—such as the messaging, emails, and student feedback that naturally occur in the Learning Management System (LMS) (CCCC, 2013, Positions 3.8 p. 13 & Position 4.4 p. 15). In addition, the CCCC OWI Position demands a teacher presence via the assessment of learner needs and the provision of supportive materials readily available in the online environment (video, links, etc.). Teachers can further support students by moderating discussions (CCCC, 2013, Position 3.10, p.14). This emphasis on learner-centered instruction echoes the quality recommendations of learner-centered instruction in online spaces (McCombs, 2015; Simonsen, 2019b).

Limitations of Online Instruction

Though instruction can be carefully crafted for student success, there are a number of limitations to asynchronous online instruction. The first obvious one is the lack of information provided via body language, facial expressions and tone of voice among participants in a F2F classroom. The immediacy of this feedback can drive interest and engagement in student learning as well as incorporate redirection when needed. Without attaching the physical feedback to online messaging, written

messages can be misconstrued and misinterpreted. For that reason, many recommend that online instructors teach online etiquette and expectations for messaging at the outset of any course and monitor student interactions to head off difficulties.

Additionally, the public nature of the appointments of F2F classes help some students show up who may lack the inherent discipline to attend to the socially invisible asynchronous online coursework. The success of an online experience is dependent in many ways on the skill set of the student who elects to learn at a distance. Those without the internal motivation to move to the computer and log in will find success elusive. Students who are unable to manage time or organize sessions and course material will be at a disadvantage.

Another limitation to student success is created by the nature of the LMS. Online courses are text heavy and can limit access by students who are poor informational readers (Warnock, 2015). The LMS itself can prove to be a blocked gate to student access both due to the text-heavy nature and the necessity for supportive electronic devices and digital access via service providers. These requirements add economic pressures that might be prohibitive (Harris and Greer, 2017).

Affordances to Online Instruction

The chief affordance of online instruction has proven its worth in the current pandemic situation. With asynchronous instruction, students are able to set both the time and location of learning, and this advantage has allowed instruction to continue in some form while large social gatherings, a feature of F2F schooling, are prohibited. Additionally, distance learning provides access to instruction that might be inhibited by institutions that are out of reach geographically or do not fit into the schedules of working adults. Distance education has made learning possible for many who would otherwise have to forego postsecondary education.

In spite of their text-heavy nature, the discussion boards and emails, properly managed, can be an effective tool for engaging every student in the construction of knowledge. In a F2F setting, students with more thoughtful or introverted natures are frequently excluded from classroom discussion. The discussion board requires postings and responses often composed offline and over time. These bring every student's ideas and opinions into consideration whereas the F2F setting privileges more extroverted students. The screen can also provide a buffer from F2F pressures on the reluctant (Miller, 2014). Interestingly, inkshedding, a collaborative freewriting activity predating online instruction and begun in the early 1980's by Canadian professors Russ Hunt and Jim Reitehr, parallels the activity of discussion boards in a F2F classroom (Horne, 2011). When inkshedding, students write freely to a discussion prompt and pass their papers to classmates, responding freely again to their classmates' thinking prior to beginning

any discussion. Both methods, discussion boards and inkshedding, give students time to construct a meaningful response that might not be possible in a quickly moving, purely oral F2F discussion. The construction of the messages is a form of retrieval practice that has been shown to support student memory and understanding in course concepts (Karpicke & Roediger, 2008). Learning is further processed through the writing and thinking is developed in the student's own expressive or home language. This first draft of idea conception can later be translated into the demands of academic writing.

For a course in writing, the LMS is a boon. The various opportunities to write are authentic experiences in practicing composing skills. On the public forums, all students regularly confront a real audience that reads and responds to composed messaging. Additionally, everything a teacher writes serves as an ongoing model (Warnock, 2015). Thoughtful instructors will carefully craft instructions, feedback, discussion boards, emails and other online missives so students are continuously exposed to a consistent and strong model of the shifting rhetorical demands on written text "from an experienced postsecondary instructor" (CCCC, 2015).

Finally, the aforementioned insistence on quality online instruction from the institutions of higher learning has had its impact on F2F teaching as it simultaneously drives theoretical models for how to teach online (Warnock, 2015).

Conclusion

In the U.S. Department of Education 2009 metanalysis, the most often quoted conclusion is that "...on average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction" (Means, p. ix). Michael Simonson (2019b) points out that this conclusion may cause some to credit the medium as central to the effect of increased student gains when, in actual practice, it is the thoughtful design of a course that may lead to higher motivation among students who are then likely to expend more learning time in the online setting. As other researchers have noted, good teaching is good teaching no matter the setting, and, just as in earlier decades when a much-heralded new tool promises gains in learning, it is the intentional practitioner who thoughtfully designs instruction that is the key to leveraging new technology. In 1983, Richard Clark cautioned against crediting any media for educational gains since "...the media are mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievement any more than the truck that delivers our groceries causes changes in nutrition..." (as cited in Simonson, 2019b, p. 445)

We can thank the move to online instruction for forcing a review of pedagogical practices at the postsecondary level. The examination of quality has served all three models of instruction currently available: F2F, blended/hybrid, and asynchronous online. Indications are that research in the field is now moving

toward the examination of learner-centered practices taken into the virtual space (Simonson, 2019b). Barbara McCombs (2015) maintains in her study that online instructors who exhibit high-frequency, learner-centered practices receive high scores for student motivation and low negative scores for work-avoidance. She recommends that five domains exist for learner-centering instruction: create positive relationships; adapt to class learning needs; facilitate the learning process; encourage personal challenge and responsibility; and provide for individual and social needs.

Clearly, the framework that orients the learner to the content, the instructor, and the other members of the course and has been researched and found effective is a constructivist learner-centered model. Ultimately, it is the experience of the student in carefully designed spaces that determines the quality of instruction. It is these student-centered experiences that will be under examination. My research question for this project is what affordances or limitations exist for collaborative, student-centered instruction in an asynchronous online writing course?

Project and Methods

An asynchronous course I created, *Writing in Literature (WiL)* AS.492.652, currently exists in the Blackboard LMS in the Johns Hopkins Advanced Academic distance learning program. The Hopkins program includes “[m]ore than 40 master’s degree and graduate certificate programs [that] are available to meet the needs of busy professionals” (Johns Hopkins, 2020). The stated expectation is that the program will attract working professionals who desire to improve their professional status or change careers. The instructional goal for the course is to expand teacher knowledge of how to use writing as a tool for learning in a literature based course. Though participants experience the typical literary summative writings (essay, explication, character analysis), the bulk of the writing is exploratory and expressive as participants work to create their own thinking in relation to the readings before producing the high stakes summative analyses.

Participants in the *WiL* course are adults typically working as English Language Arts (ELA) teachers or whose intention is to become an ELA teacher. The current instructional assignments or teaching aspirations range from elementary to postsecondary instruction. The course is an elective in the *Teaching Writing* master’s program in the Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences. *WiL* has run twice in three sections and ran post-study during the pandemic spring of 2021. I developed and designed the course with the assistance of an Instructional Technology technician but prior to any reading of best practices in asynchronous distance learning on my part. My experience with online teaching and learning had been limited to my participation in a few courses. These courses had wildly different levels of quality.

The aims of the course were developed from my experience with successful F2F instruction in writing and literature in a high school classroom as was outlined in the previous discussion and course framework. It is these best practices that I intended to incorporate into the original course design, leaning heavily on an instructional technology resource person for direction in how to create experiences to mimic or replicate those I had come to rely on. My primary goal is immersing teaching professionals in an environment that mirrors effective practice and incorporates hands-on learning through the use of writing as a tool for responding to and analyzing literature.

The original course design, with minor modifications made from the first teaching experience to the second, ran with two sections in the spring of 2020 which included the global pandemic shutdowns and subsequent shift to online instruction. I used this opportunity to survey the participants on their experience in the online course via a Google form. The survey questions queried participants on the characteristics I hoped to include in an asynchronous online setting (see Appendix D). These Likert-style questions asked about the frequency of learner-centered experiences within the asynchronous course. This included questions about the opportunity to choose a direction for learning, to construct understanding with peers, to draw on personal experience, to collaborate, and to experience Invitational Theory, defined as a sense of regard by the instructor that they are able, valuable, and responsible students (Purkey & Novak, 2015). Additionally, participants were provided with two open responses. The first open response asked participants to comment on any of the Likert-style questions that had gone before and fall into the categories listed above. The second openly asked for any additional comments or suggestions in improving the course design. All surveys were anonymous, requested after the course completed, and conformed to the requirements of the IRB as outlined by both Murray State University and the IRB board at Johns Hopkins University.

Writing in Literature

Though writing essays is certainly what most teachers think of when they consider writing in literature, the asynchronous online course under study, *WiL*, focuses more on engaging students in low-stakes writing to uncover their thinking *before* asking them to summarize their ideas in high-stakes summative literary analysis papers (Emig, 1977). As stated above, a primary goal is engaging learners in the pedagogical philosophies I embraced over a multi-decade career in the high school English classroom and is based on assignments developed for my high school students. My pedagogical aims are to illuminate the value of and methods for building a learning community (Booth-Olson, 2011; Bomer, 2011), to provide an introduction to and experience of Invitational Theory that assumes all learners are able, valuable, and responsible (Purkey & Novak, 2015), to illustrate the

management and experience of participating in literature workshops (Blau, 2003), to underscore the value and management of student choice in the classroom (Berhman, 2006; Tedrow, 2008), to engage learners in using writing as a tool to reveal thinking (Emig, 1977), and to ultimately create traditional literary analysis papers by drawing on all of these experiences. Additionally, participants are asked to apply their learning to their own teaching by creating and delivering a writing-to-learn lesson, and to reflect on their own gains and understanding throughout a semester of work in a final reflective portfolio, made possible through the archival nature of the LMS (Darby & Lang, 2019; Miller, 2014). It is expected that participants will have highly individual responses to the experiences in the student-centered design of the course, but that they will be able to articulate and identify those responses in the final portfolio.

The course has run three times with a total of 35 completing participants and four who ultimately dropped the course. I have made minor adjustments to assignments and schedules over those three iterations; however, herein I examine the course as it exists and follow that examination with revisions to bring the course into greater alignment with the above stated goals and current thinking on effective online instruction.

Below are ways that the course currently fits with the recommended framework of learner to learner, learner to instructor, and learner to content as outlined earlier in the quality control assessments for online instruction.

Learner to Instructor (Teacher Presence)

My presence is intentionally part of the initial welcome to the course via the video software provided by the university. In the video, I explain my philosophy and expectations for participants, allowing the students to both see and hear me and gain a sense of who I am. To meet the expectations of universal design, a transcript of the video is also provided (as it is with all videos mentioned). In the video, I explain my intention to provide lessons that recreate the experience of being a student like those in their classrooms. For that reason, they are asked to choose literary texts from the lists provided that they have *not* read or taught. My goal is to have them approach literary texts as novices. In this way, they can observe how the tools offered act on them while simultaneously considering, as a teacher, how their own students might respond to the exercises.

The first lesson in the first week requires the development of a Literacy Biography. I use my own literacy journey as a model for the one they will reflect on for their peers. Pictures of me and my family and the books that I remember are presented through slides with a voiceover and script in VoiceThread. In the model biography, participants are directed to stop and write about their own literary experiences throughout the demonstration and are encouraged to use my biography as a model to create their own. In the model I show my progression from being a

non-reader to one who serves as the “master reader” in the high school classroom. The Literacy Biography assignment (Gillespie, 2010) was one I used with my own students so we could explore both my reading history and theirs at the beginning of a literature based course. My literacy biography (see Figure1) is intended as a presentation of myself as a fellow learner in the literature classroom (Booth-Olson, 2011; Bomer, 2011 Darby & Lang, 2019; Miller, 2014; Eyer, 2018).

Figure 1 – Instructor Literacy Biography in VoiceThread



An additional first week assignment is for the student to introduce him/herself and current teaching assignment to the group as a whole. I include my own introduction as another model for the introductions. Though I rarely interject my views into the discussion boards, I comment on each of these postings with a welcoming message. In subsequent discussion boards my presence is felt in that forum when I confirm an observation or correct a misconception. With graduate students, misconceptions are rare though I sometimes challenge philosophical stances through questioning. Occasionally, I post a question to deepen a discussion that has stalled or offer an additional resource. For the most part I merely read and stay abreast of the discussion because I have found that my views carry an outsized weight in the conclusions drawn. Since most of the discussion boards are designed to develop student thinking in collaboration, I tend to limit my comments to individualized feedback on the boards when they are graded at completion.

Almost every week, as needed, I videotape a short VoiceThread to address questions or concerns that might benefit the entire group. I further reveal my presence by responding to the content of every assignment turned in and provide further direction if needed. Because I forget to go to the Blackboard open forum (a flaw in the design since it is not easily accessible), I encourage students to email me for one-to-one questions and I habitually respond to within 24 hours. Feedback is continual and individualized on assignments throughout the course.

Learner to Learner (Social Presence)

Like most online courses, an initial discussion board post is an opportunity for the students to introduce themselves to one another. It is also offered so students are prompted to interact with the LMS from the very beginning, forming good online learning habits (Darby & Lang, 2019; Miller, 2014). The first posting is my own introduction, offered to humanize me through my personal and professional background and physical location, heightening teacher presence. I use the information provided by the participants to form the small groups they will be working in throughout most of the course. In the Blackboard LMS, there is an option to provide a small group discussion, and teacher/participants are grouped in these during the fourth week. Because the course is intended to assist in developing and sharing strategies, I group participants based on their teaching assignments. Besides sharing their views on the literature, the participants will be expected to share teaching experiences. This models the professional communities of practice often recommended for the reform of education at the classroom level (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Like the introductory discussion post, the Literacy Biography is another method for developing community. These biographies are created and shared in the first week. Just as with discussion boards, students are expected to post their biographies mid-week and then visit two or more of the postings to view and comment. In this way, it is hoped that the teachers will gain insight about one another and their reading history and preferences. The VoiceThread tool for the biography allows us to hear the voices of participants in the asynchronous space. The voices are surprisingly helpful in transcending the asynchronous nature of the course by making participants seem more present. Comments can be provided by either text or voice at the poster's discretion.

Other opportunities are designed to increase the learner-to-learner bond and to underscore my philosophy that teachers learn and improve by frequently sharing practices in a normed professional community. For instance, once in their small groups, the initial group introductory post is a description of individual hopes and fears for the course. This is generally very revealing and has the dual effect of goal setting while sharing resources and support in the small group. Later, they will share strategies they have read about in their independent choice reading. Additionally, they collaborate to choose a novel, a drama, and a character for exploration as a group. They are also taught a protocol for assessing teacher lesson plans and then use the collaborative protocol in their groups to provide feedback on the required lesson plan. One of the three required summative papers is an on-demand essay in response to questions the group has written on their selected novel by using Advanced Placement essay questions as models. All of these activities are intended to build the community of learners, to engage meaningfully with content, and to place the responsibility for learning in the students' control.

The class is kept in the large group for the first four weeks while they work together on the poetry unit. This unit is first because it is generally one that both teachers and students approach with trepidation. An early first experience with poetry, an additional tool for building a learning community, is a Harkness discussion guided by the instructor and managed through the discussion board. The Harkness is a variation on the Socratic Seminar. In this model the students manage the discussion and any evaluation is based on the effectiveness of the group to initiate and sustain the conversation (see Appendix III). An initial prompt opens the discussion and participants then share observations on the poem “The Warden said to me the Other Day” by Etheridge Knight (1968). This extremely short poem (58 words) is offered with little introduction other than defining the word “warden,” a word often not a part of student working vocabulary. Annotation is taught and applied to the poem prior to the discussion. The annotation exercise forces students to question and search for textual references. Because of the poem’s brevity, students are able to easily locate and make textual references throughout their discussion. In the high school classroom, this skill of supporting observations with textual evidence is practiced continually and the first Harkness with this short poem is meant to introduce both that skill and annotation.

Additionally, the poem often reveals one’s cultural awareness (or lack of) in the context of a poem written by an African American man in the 1960’s. This further welcomes all student experience as a valuable resource in building group understanding. In all three sections of *WiL*, the poem has not failed to generate a highly engaging discussion online, typically ending with the group arriving at an understanding of purpose. Even though these respondents are professional ELA teachers or graduate students, the online discussion follows the same trajectory I observed with high school seniors. Remarkably similar observations and commentary are offered. That adults follow a similar exploratory path reveals to me, once again, how eager and capable our K-12 students are when properly supported.

Along with the poem, participants read about Sheridan Blau’s literature workshops (Blau, 2003) and his claim that students are capable of arriving at their own interpretations of literature. This first content-related discussion is designed to apply that claim to their current situation and to emphasize that they are in a learning community where they can use one another as resources. Later, they will be relying on one another in their small groups to make critical assessments of a novel and a drama. Support for these explorations come through prompted response logs written by all students.

Learner to Content (Cognitive Presence)

Throughout the course, participants are given multiple opportunities to choose their readings. My goal is heightening student responsibility and ownership of learning.

Choice is also intended to increase student autonomy and engagement with the course materials (Berhman, 2006; Tedrow, 2008). First, course participants are provided with a list of professional texts about using writing in a literature class and must select one that aligns well with their own teaching assignment. This independent reading assignment uses the write-to-learn tool of logging responsive thoughts during the reading. Three logs, one for each third of the reading, are due over a span of weeks during the course. Guidance and due dates for this practice are provided in the course modules.

For the literature portion of the course, students are allowed to choose a poem from the *Poetry Out Loud* website for use in applying the cognitive practices presented for analyzing the poem (among them Sheridan Blau's (2003) *three readings* practice, annotating a poem of their own to explain their choices as writer, and adapting a model for the independent development of a thesis statement). Additionally, students are guided in the production of their own poetry and revisions and annotating their final work to show the thinking behind their process of choosing, writing, and revising.

In the prose unit, a novel is selected by small-group consensus from a curated list. In this unit, participants use reading logs, small group discussions, and tools gleaned from their independent choice reading of teaching strategies to explore the literature. The sharing of strategies for learning extends peer group support.

Finally, the small groups choose a drama to view—not read—and respond via a Fever Chart with specific prompting. In this unit, participants in the small group select a single character they all agree to chart throughout the drama and are given prompts to guide their discussions. The Fever Chart is a data-collection tool for charting changes over time, in this case the mood and reactions of a character. Again, they are asked to use and share strategies they have read about in the independent professional reading.

Each of the genre units—poetry, prose, drama—have a summative writing drawn from all the small and large group written logs, discussions, and teaching strategies. They write a poetry explication of their selected poem, respond to a self-selected, on-demand and participant constructed essay question for the novel, and create a collaboratively written character analysis for the drama. They are simultaneously discouraged from consulting critics in the formation of the summative assignments. Ideally, participants are well prepared through their writings and discussions to present and support plausible theses.

The course also requires that participants apply their learning to their teaching. A lesson plan is developed and reviewed by the peer group and then is enacted, videotaped and reflected on—mirroring the National Board process (NBPTS, 2019).

The final assignment for the course is a portfolio that addresses articulated learning. This portfolio asks participants to review all the writing archived in the course and to draw on their work to provide evidence of growth in three areas of the teacher’s experience, that of writer, learner, and teacher. In addition, the portfolio is introduced by a general statement that “includes reflection on the meaning of the work as a whole to the individual student, including its characteristics, qualities, and usefulness to learning” (Tedrow, 2018, n.p.). Participants are given two earlier opportunities to reflect on learning in dialogue with me through the LMS journal tool at roughly the 1/3 and 2/3 mark in the course. These low stakes writings are offered prior to the final reflective portfolio so participants can get feedback on the reflective process and redirection if needed.

The final assessment of the course is based on points accumulated (see Table 2). This reflects my philosophy that much of the writing-to-learn should be low-risk practice and rehearsal for the summative writings (Elbow, 2000). All learning activities accrue points for completion. The completion points support my theoretical platform that it is the practice in thinking and the engagement in discussion that is the primary goal. The summative writings are scored on a rubric that reflects routine expectations in academic writing. The portfolio, the regular postings, and the summative writings are weighted through the point assignment, reflecting the importance attached to each of the categories. The teacher lesson plan, representing application of all the learning, is a final category of its own and carries considerable weight as is reflected in the point total. Regular feedback throughout the practice writings is intended to correct missteps and to offer instruction with little risk to the student’s success in the course (Tedrow, 2018a).

Table 2 Course Grading

Assignments	Due Dates	Assignment Value
Assignment 1: Course engagement: Points will be given on completion of each online assignments to include discussion board postings, journals, course reflections, and other write to learn activities Full points awarded for on time completion that adheres to criteria (i.e. # of postings and/or length of logs--content varies per student).	As assigned	30 engagement activities @ 10 pts each = 300 points
Assignment 2: Summative papers to include Poetry explication; Character analysis with integrated classmates, Chosen timed essay question	As assigned	3 Summative Assessments @ 100 pts each = 300 points
Assignment 3: Lesson Development (4 components)	Week 14	210 points

Assignment 4: Portfolio	Week 15	300 points
Total		1110 points

(Tedrow, 2018a, p. 3)

Data Collection and Results

The Blackboard LMS provides some insight into how the participants spend their time online. From the courses that have run, there is data from 35 completing participants in the three sections. The course reports indicate that students spend an average of 132.58 hours on the course site. This is certainly well in excess of the 45 hours typically spent in a F2F classroom. Since participants are expected to also view a drama, read a novel, write three summative papers, write and analyze poetry, plan and videotape a lesson, and read an independent text offline, one can assume that hours spent on coursework far exceed this average spent on the site. The 132 hours online indicate that there is high engagement with the LMS. Additionally, the LMS provides a breakdown of the area of the course where students spend the bulk of their time.

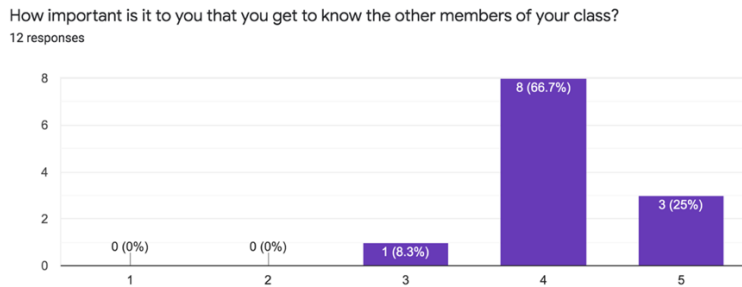
Because of the archival nature of the LMS, I retain access to most of the work completed by participants, though some encountered technical difficulties and work was emailed, not archived. Since this is a writing course, I selected one average poster from the three courses and ran a word count on all of the work produced by the student in the fourteen weeks. It was not feasible to get a word count for all students due to the high volume of work produced, so I selected a typical student from the group based on the average hours spent online. This one student produced slightly more than 26,000 words across the discussion posts, journals, and summative and reflective writings. As has been explained earlier, online courses require a great deal of writing and this proved to be the case. This is a clear affordance in a writing course since those who write more, both meaningfully and authentically, improve their writing over time (Graham & Harris, 1997; Sargent, 1997; Buhrke et. al., 2002). Since *WiL* is based on my successful teaching of high school students in the F2F classroom, the word count compares favorably with that course. The high school students were required to gather and estimate their words from their personal journals, class assignments, and other writings prior to assembling a portfolio based on their perceived gains in composing. Typically, a high school student would produce 20,000 words during the semester-long course that met daily for 90 minutes, or 135 hours. The *WiL* students are similarly producing a large output of alphabetic text in the asynchronous course.

In the spring of 2020, *WiL* ran in two sections. Though 23 began the semester, only 19 completed the course for a variety of reasons. Most often, the teacher/participant dropped out due to overwhelming circumstances in their lives,

and for at least one, this included a bout with Covid19 (he recovered). The recent course run offered an opportunity to gauge student experience. To avoid influencing student opinion, a survey was distributed after grades were posted. Only those course participants who agreed to participate in the study were offered the survey via the expectations from the Institutional Review Board (IRB, Appendix II). Surveys were collected anonymously through Google forms where neither emails nor names were recorded. The survey questions queried participants about the characteristics I hoped to include in an asynchronous online setting (see Appendix I) as was described above. Of the 19 participants, 12, or 52%, agreed to be included in the data collection.

The initial question on the survey asked participants how important they felt it was to know the other members of the class. The answer provided a rank from (1) not important at all to (5) essential. Interestingly, all respondents felt that knowing classmates was at least of middling importance (3), while 92% gave these relationships great importance (a rank of 4 or 5). This question was prompted since student attitude toward socialization might affect the responses to the questions about student experience in a course demanding peer collaboration that followed.

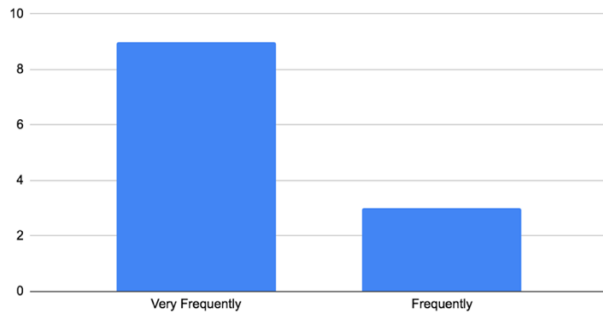
Table 3: Initial Survey Questions



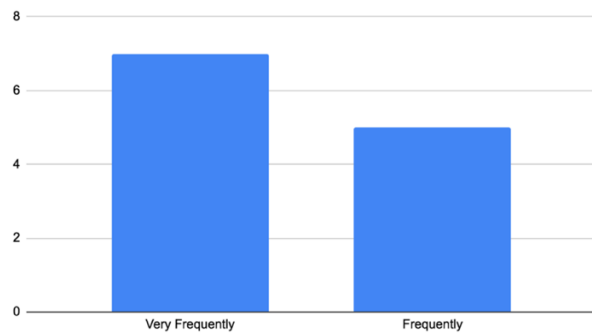
Based on the other responses, it appears that the intentional course design to create a community of learners was largely a success. One hundred percent of the course members surveyed indicated that they either frequently or very frequently were engaged in “the social construction of knowledge,” collaboration, and the opportunity to write expressively. Additionally, most of the students (92%) felt that their voices and experiences were valued either frequently or very frequently (See Table 4). One felt this was experienced only occasionally.

Table 4: Social Construction of Knowledge Questions

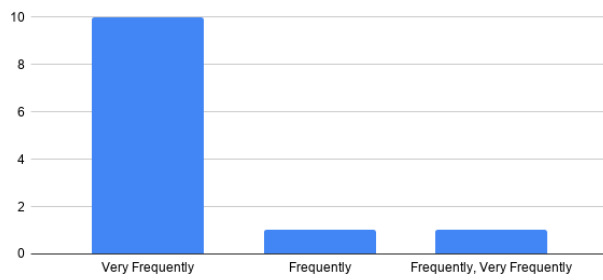
How often did you experience the social construction of knowledge (i.e. learning from and with peers)?



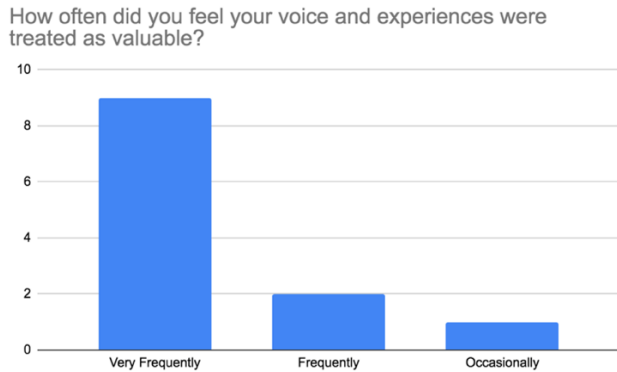
How often were you engaged in collaboration?



How often did you experience the opportunity to write expressively? (Expressive: using language which is nearest to speech/thoughts?)

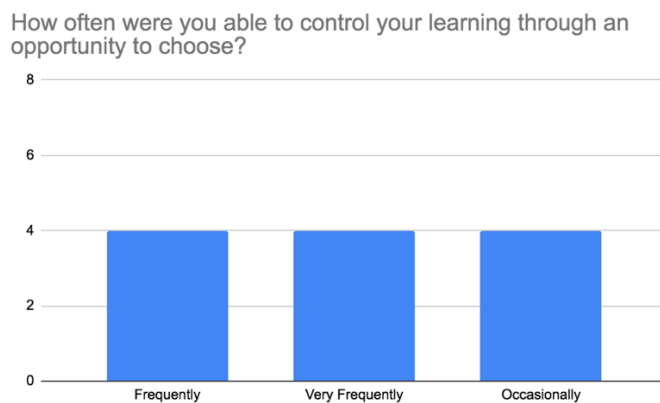


Count of [How often did you experience the opportunity to write expressively? (Expressive: using



I intended to provide student choice as a motivator during the course. All 12 responses supported evidence of this characteristic. The students experienced the opportunity to choose frequently or occasionally in equal measure (~33%). Clearly, they acknowledged the opportunity for choice provided but differ in the conception of the opportunity for choice (See Table 5).

Table 5: Student Choice

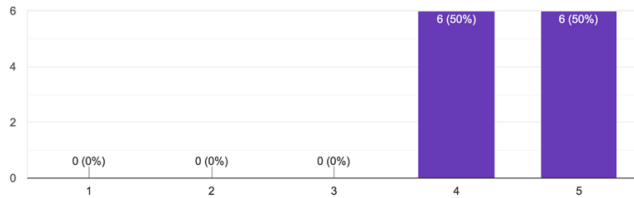


Finally, respondents were asked three questions on their direct experiences with course design (Table 6). Below are the questions with responses confirming that students were engaged in the targeted experiences. The questions, in part, are a rewording of the above Likert-style questions.

Table 6: Course Design Features

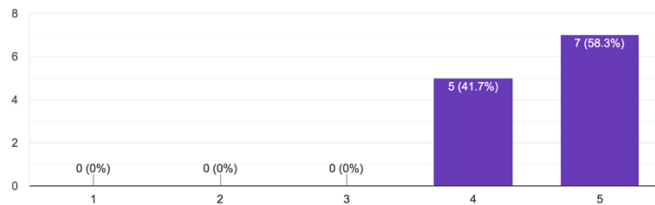
To what degree did you feel the online platform created a community of learners engaged in sharing and learning from one another?

12 responses



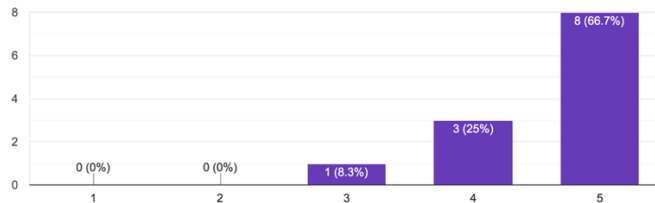
To what degree do you feel the online platform helped you connect your experiences to your readings?

12 responses



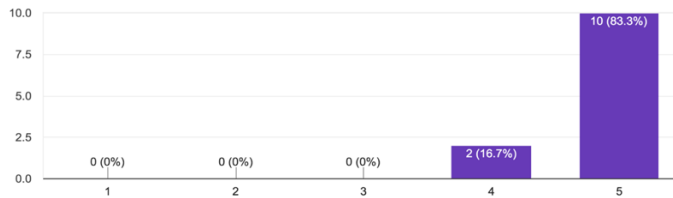
To what degree were you engaged in professional discussions around your teaching practices?

12 responses



The intention of the course design was to model the pedagogy of invitation which suggests that all students are able, valuable, and responsible. To what degree did the course design support these descriptors?

12 responses



In the open response portion, none of the students engaged in any further commentary on the survey questions but did offer comments on the course design in general. The positive comments were certainly affirming. For instance, the following two comments are full throated endorsements of the course design:

This course was well thought out and afforded me the opportunity to learn a lot about writing in the classroom. There were so many new ideas that can be readily adapted to the classroom. The virtual nature of the class sometimes just faded into the distance as the learning activities were so relevant and moving.

I felt the superlative of this course centered on experiencing the power of student-based learning by doing it. In the context of this course, I found the small group work the most enlightening. This course probably influenced my teaching philosophy more than any other course in the master's program. I have finished 7 of my 9 required courses now.

Because building a close-knit community was important to the learning process it is notable that one commenter felt the “virtual nature of the class...just faded into the distance” and more fully mimicked the interchanges in a F2F classroom. Additionally, the second commenter indicated that “small group work [was] enlightening,” a hoped-for outcome of the course design where learner-to-learner relationships and understanding could be built. An additional, but less anticipated outcome is the awareness that the structure provided “so many new ideas” and “the power of ... learning by doing...,” all benefits of collaboration to help students construct their own learning.

Some suggestions were made about allowing students to interact more with the entire class so learning might extend beyond the scope of their small collaborative groups. These were offered as thoughts on how to accommodate the larger group in the LMS: “I find that my curiosity from information and advice I could learn from the rest of my classmates sparks the desire to rotate groups at least once during the semester, with perhaps an assignment based rotation to keep inquiries and discussions across the entire class more fluid.” Another commented, “I don't know how I would incorporate more whole-class dialogue through the rest of the semester without detracting from the collaborative nature of the closer-knit small groups. Maybe more use of VoiceThread?” Both of the offered comments reflect teacher knowledge on course design by those who spend their professional lives planning for student interaction.

The Portfolio

The end-of-course portfolio of most of the participants (23 out of 35) is still available from all three sections archived in the LMS. This assignment requires

participants to reflect on their gains in the course and are an additional source of data about the student experience in the asynchronous setting. The portfolio requires that they use their initial “hopes and fears” posting where they describe expectations for the course as a beginning point against which to gauge any change. The portfolio requires that participants converse with this initial statement, comparing those hopes and fears to their eventual perceived outcomes. Among the participants, this initial posting followed similar patterns. Most expressed the desire to gain some useable strategies to improve their teaching practices. Fears frequently centered on meeting requirements with limited time. Several also expressed a fear of being “found out” as a less-than-adequate writer or literary critic, a reaction commonly referred to as the impostor syndrome.

In reading through the portfolio responses, it is clear that participants touched on a number of similar themes that are important to the course design and confirm some of the desired outcomes of the course. Some admitted that the course outcomes far outstripped their initial hopes for the course and allayed many fears. Fear reduction was credited to the low-risk nature of most assignments and the ongoing opportunity and encouragement to use one another as collaborative learners. It appears that the low-risk writing and the emphasis on using peers as resources provided in the design resulted in attaining my instructional goals.

All of the existing portfolios from the three sections of *WiL* were printed (82 pages of single space type), read multiple times, and coded. The coding followed the first reading and revealed consistent themes emerging. Commentary by the participants was highlighted and then charted in an Excel sheet that was divided into the obvious categories touched on by the participants. The themes that emerged in the reflective comments include: 1.) commentary about collaboration; 2.) experiential learning; 3.) comments on reflection; 4.) statements about confidence as a learner or writer; 5.) observations on the reading/writing connection; and 6.) some form of transformational statement. In terms of the latter, all but two of the participants made a transformational statement. A transformational statement, one that acknowledges a major shift in thinking, was in some ways demanded by the portfolio assignment itself because it asks participants to comment on “where you feel you shifted your view of instruction” and to describe “learning gained” and “problems surmounted” (Tedrow, 2018b). These shifts in thinking were addressed by 20 participants and coded as transformative though individual statements varied from making a shift in teaching philosophy to life-changing gains in confidence in the subject matter, sometimes even prompting a reconsideration of career goals. Of the two who did not make a declarative transformational statement, one was clearly already a highly effective teacher and the other had no prior teaching experience to use as a basis of a shift in thinking. Interestingly, five made unprompted comments on the design of the course and its effect on their learning, an additional category of commentary noted in the coding.

The commentary on collaboration fell into four categories and showed up in every reflective statement except one (91%). These topics in the 23 examined portfolios and the number of individuals who mention them are as follows: collaboration as an effective learning community (18), collaboration increasing equity by extending their understanding of peers who come from other backgrounds and cultures (9), trust built through collaboration with peers that allowed them to ask for support and guidance (6), and collaboration as an important and valued feature of professional work (4). It is not surprising that this feature of the course would appear so heavily in the documents since the small collaborative groups are a key course feature, however the responses provided reflection on the value of the work done in those groups and an understanding of how to guide student learning through this configuration in their own classrooms.

A number of the teacher/participants seemed to confirm Vygotsky (1978) and his zone of proximal development in their comments about learning through collaborative peer groups. One seems to paraphrase Vygotsky when she indicated that, "Having to reflect upon my own work and evaluating those of my peers just demonstrated to me that I was learning not only from Blau, but from my peers as well." This is a clear statement of the hopes for guided, small group work.

The participants also provide confirmation of John Dewey's (2015) premise that experiential learning is deep, meaningful, and transformative. This was clearly expressed in this portfolio entry:

One thing I want to comment on is my early statement that I couldn't confirm or deny the assertion that reading is a social act. Having now walked through the class in its fullness, I can definitely agree that reading - done right - is a highly social act that profits everyone in the community. This is perhaps one of the most significant things I've learned and practiced as a result of this course.

This statement indicates that the student had previously been unable to agree with the concept of reading as a social act until experiencing it personally. Since the course emphasizes that the teacher/participants would experience teaching strategies in the context of the literature their groups selected, preferably works they would approach as novices, the theme of learning via experience appeared in 18 of the 23 final reflections. Most of these comments focused on how experiencing the process gave them insight into how to help and support students.

Several (6 or 26%) tied their learning to specific course-required acts of reflection where they had to review their learning and define what they felt they understood at various points. In the final portfolio this appeared in passages. One provided a reflective entry as evidence of how reflection aided understanding by stating, "I also present a reflection log that shows how I learned to deepen my

understanding of the text by writing about my confusion.” Dewey (2015) also places emphasis on reflection following experience because “[a]ctivity that is not checked by observation of what follows from it may be temporarily enjoyed” (87). The commentary on reflective opportunities to write also confirm this observation.

An unexpected theme emerging from the portfolio review were the 9 respondents who articulated a clear reading/writing connection as a result of the assigned work. One participant specifically stated that “...reflecting on the choices I made in creating my poem was an unexpectedly great help in understanding how to read poetry.” She could see how the writing required had assisted in the evaluation of the reading. It was a surprise to see the reading/writing connection made so clear in the reflective evaluation since it was not a stated objective for the course development but is important support for integrating writing into coursework. These comments deepen the concept that students are entering into a discussion with literature—and that writing is the vehicle for expressing responses to reading. Including an understanding of the reading/writing connection could be added to course objectives.

The four teacher/participants who commented on the course design all made reference to the low-risk and frequent nature of the writing assignments they felt built both confidence in their writing and their thinking around the course summative assignments.

It should be noted that gains in learning were clearer and more fully realized for the participants who currently work in a classroom or who had some extensive experience in leading a classroom. Those who had never taught showed less depth of understanding their gains. By far, the greatest satisfaction was expressed by teachers who were able to experiment with writing-to-learn in the classroom as it was presented in the course.

Revisions

Though pleased with the student response to the original course design, the review of the surveys, the data provided from the LMS, and the portfolio have prompted a number of revisions prior to the launch of the fourth section of *WiL* in spring 2021. These revisions fall into the framework presented above where course design focuses on Learner to Instructor, Learner to Learner, and Learner to Content.

Learner to Instructor Changes

Initially, the course ran for 14 weeks and the first revision is the extension of the course into 16 weeks as is now required by the university. Due to the continuing limitations of the pandemic, the university has also eliminated a spring break. These required accommodations are included in the updated calendar and provided some other affordances included in the changes outlined below. Instructor presence is an implied aspect of the assignment calendar as well as part of the expression of

directions in assignments. Because spring break is eliminated and student online and offline work hours is high as referenced above, a reading week was added mid-course to alleviate student anxiety. This consideration of student time is a component of instructor presence.

Several assignments were revised to improve clarity based on frequent questions by participants. The syllabus has been revised to include changes in the calendar, changes in the readings based on observed student behavior, an expanded section on what to expect in the course and how to increase success based on suggestions by Miller (2014) and Darby & Lang (2019). The research indicates that syllabi should include expectations about important features of the course, like the necessity for collaboration and outlining expected department in the online discussions. These aspects of the syllabi were revised. The assessment points were also recalibrated to an even number (1100 versus the previous 1110), a change I wished to make in the first two launches of the course but were problematic due to limited time.

Several of the portfolio directions were revised to eliminate any confusion on the part of participants. This rewording was based on questions from students in previous course runs.

In the initial getting-to-know-you discussion post, I added a multimedia introduction created for the ENG 752 course in the DA program and features pictures of me and my physical environment. The pictures with voice-over video is offered to enhance teacher presence. Participants are permitted to choose an alternative text for these introductions.

A final revision was initiated by the university itself. New software links appear beside every assignment offers downloads into alternative formats to accommodate student diversity and to comply with requirements for universal design. Students can choose to download in electronic braille, as an MP3 file, or in a quick read format, or adjusted for an iPad. This addition accommodates most learners. The new calendar and changes to the syllabus are in Appendix IV.

Learner to Learner Changes

The first week of the original design was deliberately aimed at building connections between the members of the course so they might trust one another and take risks with their thinking and writing over the ensuing semester. I suspected that this first week might be overburdening the student with initial work and the data provided in the “User Activity in Forums” report by the LMS confirms this. In all three sections of the course, students were spending up to 15% of their online time in this unit. With the expanded course time, this portion of the course has been extended into two weeks. By using the second week to give students time to secure and then read the important introduction to the required text and engage with the other

members of the class, this should help cement some of the basic theories of the course while strengthening the ties in the large group.

The initial Literacy Biography assignment was time consuming because it asked participants to create and post their own biography and then to visit and comment on their peers postings. With the added week, the assignment has been changed to posting the biography in the first week and then visiting and commenting only on the members of their small collaborative group in the second week. These changes, along with the five-day Harkness discussion, bring the participants back to the LMS multiple times in the first three weeks. Both Miller (2014) and Darby & Lang (2019) indicate that frequent early contact with the LMS forms good habits for engaging with the course.

Additionally, I have indicated a time limit on the biographies. Many of the student products went on for 30 minutes and the compressed time, between 10 and 15 minutes, should force participants to plan more carefully. This will reduce the burden of time for the viewers, including myself, who will be watching them all.

I also rebuilt the small group section of the website so participants could join a group of their own choosing. Parameters for the small groups are now set for a minimum of three and maximum of four members. This number for effective grouping and discussion is suggested by Sheridan Blau (2003) and has proven to be optimal in the F2F classroom. Some of the participants have worked together in other courses in the master's program and likely have a better idea of who they can collaborate with effectively. I will be assessing this choice over the previous method of placing them in groups based on their teaching assignment. In the high school classroom I surveyed students at the beginning of the year asking "who are three people you feel you can work with and one you cannot." These surveys were kept confidential but it helped me form compatible groups. I believe adults can handle this choice on their own. (We'll see.)

Two of the participants indicated interest in having more opportunities to work with other members of the class outside of their small collaborative groups. I rejected the suggestion that the small groups would shift between the two units of the novel and the drama. In the past, participants were placed in the groups based on their teaching assignments so they can offer advice on instructional practices. Even if they are not grouped on teaching assignment, I feel that a level of trust is built between members when groups are held intact over time, so I did not follow through on this suggestion. However, I did try to find a way to connect the entire group again before the course ends. It should be noted that the students spend five weeks together before breaking into small groups to study a novel and a drama.

To accommodate one more large group discussion, I added an additional reading and discussion board in the fifteenth week for the entire group. The only other assignment that week is to meet the deadline for the teacher lesson plan assigned in week eleven. With four weeks to complete this, hopefully, one more

article and discussion will not be a burden. The article was encountered while doing research for this project and fits nicely with the logging and experiences they have had in the course. This final discussion board is rather open. The directions read: “After reading ‘Peer Response to Low Stakes Writing in a WAC Literature Classroom’ by M. Elizabeth Sargent (1997) tie the reading to your own experience in this course, to observations or connections to your teaching, or to any other aspect of *Writing in Literature* you feel compelled to discuss. Include three takeaways you have from the course. Return to comment on at least two of your colleagues' postings.” This is a final chance to reflect on experiences and have their attention drawn to the course takeaways of all the classmates. The three takeaways are a final opportunity to review content and is suggested in Darby’s *Small Teaching Online* (2019).

Learner to Content Changes

During week nine, students were assigned the planning and videotaping of a lesson that incorporates writing-to-learn into a literature lesson. In the first section of the course, many of the students ran into planning difficulties when this assignment was held to the end of the course. Based on that experience, I moved the assignment to mid-course to give students half the course time to plan, prepare and tape the lesson. Still, this assignment will be revised yet again.

First, the assignment now appears in week eleven of a sixteen week semester instead of week nine. Previous course runs revealed that the tapes were too long and could not be reviewed easily. Since taping a lesson and reflecting on it mirrors the work of teachers in the National Board process, this assignment is revised to reflect the nature of the NBPTS self-study. Participants will be asked to limit the tape to “one 10-minute unedited, date-stamped video recording that may be segmented into a maximum of three parts (within each segment, there can be no edits).” (NBPTS, 2019, p. 20). Additionally, there will be specific reflective questions based on NBPTS reflective questions, rather than the broader “What went well?” and “What would you do differently?” in the earlier assignment. The new questions are: “What is the age group of the students seen in the video? How has your learning or professional growth been applied in this lesson? What is the broader context for the instruction? Why is this instruction important for these students at this time (or a time imagined in the future)? What impact do you think your teaching had? What do you think went well? What would you do differently? How does the video reflect your understanding of writing in a literature-based course?” The original assignment also called for feedback from the students. That will be left in since student experience is a valuable tool for teacher reflection and revision as is mirrored in this project. Participants are asked to respond to these questions: “What went well? What suggestions would you have to change this lesson?”

In the unit on the novels, six titles are offered for participant choice, negotiated in the small collaborative group. This list of novels has been revised to provide more international and gender diverse offerings. Titles have been outside the typical canon offered in most English courses and are drawn from award winning lists. I have avoided texts that are available in video or television formats to keep the assignment text-based. Participants already “read” video in the drama unit where they watch rather than read the play. Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) has been replaced with the Booker-Mann winner *The Testaments* (2019). I have dropped *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (1958) since this is more frequently taught in high school classrooms than in the past and replaced it with Junot Diaz’s *Brief Wonderful Life of Oscar Wao* (2008). Additionally, *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro (2006) has been made into a feature film and has been replaced with the 2019 International Mann Booker winner *Celestial Bodies* by Jokha Alharthi. Also added is an eighth title to the previous list of seven: *There there* by Tommy Orange (2018).

A secondary goal of the assignment is to expand the awareness of participants to include multi-cultural and international literary fiction that may be more accessible to their students. When I initiated similar lists of literate choices to my students for their reading I noted at the time that students tended to choose texts that represented mirrors of their own existence. One goal is that teacher/participants will learn similarly from their engagement with choice in *WiL*. Because the new semester drops spring break and extends the class to sixteen weeks, a reading week has been provided at the onset of the novel unit. Throughout the course the participants must read two books, a professional choice book and a novel, along with other short reads. It is hoped that this reading week will assist participants in completing these assignments.

The course was revised and launched for the Spring 2021 semester with eleven participants. Though the course will not be complete by the time this study is completed I will be making observations on student engagement with the changes.

Discussion

Asynchronous instruction is a relative newcomer in the education sector and is still engaged in providing and delivering effective strategies for a quickly evolving context. In 2018, when I began developing an asynchronous course, online instruction was already viewed as an inevitable direction for delivering a large portion of postsecondary education, partly because it affords student control over both the time and location of learning, a boon to working adults with many responsibilities. According to a review of the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics (Seaman & Seaman, 2018), beginning in 2002 distance education saw steady annual growth. By 2012 that growth had begun

to expand, with public institutions commanding the greatest gains in online enrollments even as for-profit, distance education saw losses. Data in 2018 indicate that six percent of postsecondary students took at least one online course. This trend toward online learning has been apparent since 2012, but the current pandemic has pushed that growth into overdrive.

The disruption of F2F schooling in March of 2020 affected 90% of the world's student population (UNESCO, August 2020). Though it is unlikely that F2F schooling will disappear, numerous education leaders are predicting that learning will likely be transformed in a post-pandemic world. Education leaders throughout the world are calling for an increased attention to the quality of education offered at a distance and for increased training of teachers on the best practices for delivering education online *and* in F2F teaching to better accommodate students who have faced learning loss due to lack of access during the pandemic (United Nations, August, 2020).

It is likely that some portions of the education sector have changed for good, and I believe strongly that asynchronous learning, for its convenience and cost, will replace large swaths of F2F instruction, particularly in collegiate settings. Additionally, those who are currently trying to manage learning from a distance in the current pandemic would benefit from learning systems that do not require by-appointment scheduling since there are likely to be multiple household members competing for screen time. Since an examination of quality education has been driven largely by distance learning researchers, this project to better understand quality online instruction is both timely and necessary and can be extended backwards to F2F teaching while also setting standards and goals on the forward-looking virtual landscape. Indeed, research in the online instruction field has recently shifted to an emphasis on student-centered instruction and the social construction of learning in these environments (Simonsen, 2019b; McCombs, 2015; McGuire, 2016; Swan, 2005; Tallent-Runnels, et al., 2005).

Building Community Asynchronously

Clearly, the experience of the students in *WiL* as described in the surveys and portfolios indicate that it *is* possible to build a learning community online that lends itself to socially-constructed learning via careful backwards design if the goals and objectives of the course self-consciously include opportunities for learning communities to develop. In fact, researchers have found that “participants in online courses often feel less psychological distance between themselves and their classmates” (Swan, 2005, p.9) likely due to the heavy reliance on text in the absence of verbal and physical cues. Though the experiences of the collaborative groups I have observed vary in intensity, several of the groups in the three sections of *WiL* expanded their relationships to both the literature and each other beyond my initial expectations for distance learning. All of the groupings in all of the three sections

achieved some success with the assignments. One group, however, was hit hard by attrition from students who dropped the course and some reconfiguration and adjustment to expectations was required on my part. Outside of this, the majority of the groupings functioned well and saw the value of their collaboration as was reflected in the portfolios.

In my observations during the Spring 2020 course, but also reinforced in the portfolios, it was clear that one group of women had experiences that transcended the mere learning of effective classroom pedagogy. In all three portfolios, these women expressed a deep, respectful relationship for one another borne of the collaborative learning in response to the literature they chose to study together—*The Poisonwood Bible* and *Fences*. Through the course of the discussions, each of the women linked important life experiences in their responses to the literature, sometimes expressing surprise at their willingness to share very personal histories. One woman with Caribbean roots and residing in South Africa at the time of the course, shared openly her reactions to both pieces based on her lived experience as a woman of African descent. *The Poisonwood Bible* features missionaries in the African Congo and *Fences* explores the thwarted dreams of an African American man. The other two women, from different regions of the United States, both shared their relationships to childhoods steeped in deeply religious families and periods of abuse at the hands of men—motifs that also appeared in the novel and colored their perceptions of relationships in *Fences*. It was serendipitous that the women were able to connect so deeply to the pieces but this happenstance was made possible through their ability to collaboratively choose what they would be reading and studying together.

In independent reflections that were not shared among the other group members, all three women in the Spring 2020 group wrote at length in their course reflections about the collaborative experiences they had in their small group, often commenting on achieving a better understanding of others through the shared reading and writing. One clearly stated that

...these experiences created opportunities for me and my peers to bond over common experiences and grow towards a better version of ourselves as individuals who are students and teachers living our human experiences....

This revelation voices an expectation far beyond curricular goals.

All three commented in some form on “a greater appreciation of the depth gained when including diverse perspectives” in their group. One group member wrote in the final portfolio:

In fact, the differences of our opinions led to better discussions appreciating the diverse lives and backgrounds of the individuals in our groups. We were

able to discuss why we expressed ourselves the way we did on our paper. It helped us realize how one's life affects one's reading of a text. In the end, all of us noted how thankful we were to be grouped together over the course of this class and how much we've learned and grown from the experience, due primarily to our respect for each other and our differences.

This awareness of differing lived experiences supports the building of equity in a classroom where all experience is welcomed and supported in reaction to literature. Well beyond learning, the women felt "thankful we were to be grouped together."

Still another of the women highlighted the collaborative nature of their learning by saying:

Through the community approach we took in our writing group and the collaborative efforts of my classmates, my paper moved from being a one-sided opinion piece to a broader perspective that pulled in two views that didn't necessarily compete with mine but that added depth and richness to it....

These comments indicate that the learner-to-learner aspect of collaboration resulted in a growing awareness that compositional experiences benefited from contact with an authentic reader and responder who could expand on student understanding (Bruffee, 1984). This awareness expressed by the third group member extended into changes in attitude toward the process of writing where she indicates that the supportive group led her to "[embrace] risk-taking in my own writing, as well as a greater appreciation of the depth gained when including diverse perspectives." These experiences extended a sense of humanity to those who otherwise might be considered "others." She says, "While I wouldn't call our perspectives opposing, each of our upbringings informed our perspective of a single character."

As an instructor following the discussions as they evolved, I could clearly see a bond forming between the three women. I had observed connections forming in my high school classrooms when students were permitted to work in the same small groups over an extended period. Similarly, when I provided choice in reading, my high school students, just as these women did, gravitated to titles linked in some way to their experiences. In the current course section running in Spring 2021, one group has chosen *Bless Me Ultima* for their novel. All in the group have been linking this narrative to their religious and cultural backgrounds, thus learning the text and each other simultaneously.

It is for this reason, providing choice and the time needed to develop trust and safety, that I did not revise the course to shift the group assignments as one participant suggested in the survey. I had similarly surveyed my secondary students

at the end of the year and routinely found the collaborative writing groups were far and away the most favored classroom activity. They, too, valued the trust built as the small groups gathered to discuss the written commentary and narratives of their peers. Their relationships extended from the reading and writing done in the class.

The interactions in the group of three women I witnessed confirms that an asynchronous environment, with careful planning, can replicate and sustain deep human connections even when the participants are not in the same space of time and place. Writing and sharing personal histories in connection to text, whether in the F2F setting or in an asynchronous world, can build equity among diverse participants since, as a student once noted, “You can’t really hate someone once you know their story.”

References

- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things fall apart*. Bacon, C. W., Heinemann (Firm), & Windmill Press.
- Alharthi, J. (2019). *Celestial Bodies*. Berkeley: Catapult.
- Atwood, M. (1995). *The handmaid's tale*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Atwood, M. (2019). *The testaments*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Behrman, E. H. (2006). Teaching about language, power, and text: A review of classroom practices that support critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(6), 490-498.
- Blau, S. (2003). *The Literature Workshop: Teaching Texts and Their Readers*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Bomer, R. (2011). *Building adolescent literacy in today's English classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Booth-Olson, C. (2011). *The reading/writing connection: Strategies for teaching and learning in the secondary classroom. Third edition*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Bruffee, K. A. (1984). Collaborative learning and the “conversation of mankind.” *College English*, 46(7), 635-652.
- Buhrke, L., Henkels, L., Klene, J., & Pfister, H. (2002). Improving Fourth Grade Students' Writing Skills and Attitudes.
- Clark, R.E. (1983). Reconsidering research on learning from media. *Review of Educational Research*. 53(4), 445-459.
- Conference on College Composition and Communication Committee. (2013, March). A position statement of principles and example effective practices for online writing instruction (OWI). PDF retrieved from <https://prod-ncte-cdn.azureedge.net/nctefiles/groups/cccc/owiprinciples.pdf>
- Conference on College Composition and Communication Committee. (2015, March). Principles for the postsecondary teaching of writing. Retrieved from:

- <https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting#principle1>
- Darby, F., & Lang, J. M. (2019). *Small teaching online: Applying learning science in online classes*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Richardson, N. (2009). Research review/teacher learning: What matters. *Educational leadership*, 66(5), 46-53.
- Dewey, J. (2015). *Experience and Education*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Diaz, Junot. (2008). *The brief wonderful life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead books.
- Elbow, P. (2000). *Everyone can write: Essays toward a hopeful theory of writing and teaching writing*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Emig, J. (1977). Writing as a mode of learning. *College composition and communication*, 28(2), 122-128.
- Eyler, J. R. (2018). *How humans learn: The science and stories behind effective college teaching*. West Virginia University Press.
- Garrison, D.R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2010). The first decade of the community of inquiry framework. A retrospective. *The Internet and Higher Education* 13(1-2), 5-9.
- Gillespie, T. (2010). *Doing literary criticism: Helping students engage with challenging texts*. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Graham, C., Cagiltay, K., Lim, B. R., Craner, J., & Duffy, T. M. (2001). Seven principles of effective teaching: A practical lens for evaluating online courses. *The Technology Source*, 30(5), 50.
- Graham, S., & Harris, K. R. (1997). It can be taught, but it does not develop naturally: Myths and realities in writing instruction. *School Psychology Review*, 26(3), 414.
- Harris, H. S., & Greer, M. (2017). Over, under, or through: Design strategies to supplement the LMS and enhance interaction in online writing courses. *Communication Design Quarterly Review*, 4(4), 46-54.
- Hicks, T. (2009). *The digital writing workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Horne, M. (2011). Writing into the knowledge society: A case study of vulnerability in inkshedding. *Perspectives on Writing*, 237. WAC Clearinghouse, Parlor Press.
- Ishiguro, K. (2006). *Never let me go*. New York: Vantage.
- Johns Hopkins Advanced Academic Programs. (2020, August 11). Degree details and courses: Johns Hopkins Advanced Academic Programs. Retrieved from <https://advanced.jhu.edu/academics/graduate/ma-teaching-writing/degree-details-and-courses/>
- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for Teaching and Learning. (2013, June 27). JHU Quality Matters subscription and

- workshop. Accessed September 15, 2020
<https://www.qualitymatters.org/why-quality-matters/about-qm>
- Karpicke, J. D., & Roediger, H. L. (2008). The critical importance of retrieval for learning. *Science*, 319(5865), 966-968.
- Knight, E. (1968). The warden said to me the other day. *Poems from prison*. Broadside Press.
- MarylandOnline. (2020). About. Why QM? Accessed September 15, 2020.
<https://www.qualitymatters.org/why-quality-matters/about-qm>.
- McCombs, B. (2015). Learner-centered online instruction. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2015(144), 57-71.
- McGuire, B. F. (2016). Integrating the intangibles into asynchronous online instruction: Strategies for improving interaction and social presence. *Journal of Effective Teaching*, 16(3), 62-75.
- Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., & Jones, K. (2009). Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies. *US Department of Education*.
- Miller, M. D. (2014). *Minds online*. Harvard University Press.
- Moore, M. G. (1989). Three types of interaction. *The American Journal of Distance Education* 3(2) <https://doi.org/10.1080/08923648909526659>
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). 2019. Profile of professional growth. *NBCT Certification Renewal*. Pearson.
- Orange, Tommy. (2018). *There there*. New York: Knopf.
- Purkey, W. W. & J. M. Novak. (2015, September). An introduction to invitational theory. PDF
https://www.invitationaleducation.net/docs/samples/art_intro_to_invitational_theory.pdf
- Rovai, A. P. (2007). Facilitating online discussions effectively. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 10(1), 77-88.
- Sargent, M. E. (1997). Peer response to low stakes writing in a WAC literature classroom. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 1997(69), 41-52.
- Seaman, J. E., Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2018). Grade Increase: Tracking distance education in the United States. *Babson Survey Research Group*.
- Simonson, M. (2019a). *Distance education: Definition and glossary of terms, 4th Edition: Vol. 4th edition*. Information Age Publishing.
- Simonson, M. (2019b). Research in distance education: A summary. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 20(3), pp. 31.43.
- Swan, K. (2005). A constructivist model for thinking about learning online. *Elements of quality online education: Engaging communities*, 6, 13-31.

- Tallent-Runnels, M. K., Cooper, S., Lan, W. Y., Thomas, J. A., & Busby, C. (2005). How to teach online: What the research says. *Distance Learning*, 2(1), 21.
- Tedrow, M.K. (2008, May 28). Best practices: the miracle of choices. *Education Week Teacher*. Retrieved from: https://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2008/05/28/35tln_tedrow.h19.html
- Tedrow, M.K. (2018a). Syllabus. *Writing in Literature*. Johns Hopkins University, handout.
- Tedrow, M.K. (2018b). Week #14 Portfolio Assignment. *Writing in Literature*. Johns Hopkins University, handout.
- United Nations. (2020, August). Policy Brief: Education during COVID 19 and Beyond. Retrieved from: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. *Readings on the development of children*, 23(3), 34-41.
- Warnock, S. (2015). Teaching the OWI course. In B. Hewett & K. DePew (Eds.), *Foundational practices of online writing instruction* (pp. 151-181).