

# Teaching and Learning in Secondary English 2

Fall 2023  
TLL 2871  
4 credits

Modays and Wednesdays, 4:30-5:45 pm

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Office hours by appointment

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**Community Statement:** Our learning space is a community where intersectional and cultural connections are consciously uplifted...a space to take a deliberate pause and feed our mind...a space for art, culture, and thought to intentionally collide...by creating such a space together, we can inspire social change and continue to transform our communities and the world.

I invite you to embrace moments of inquiry, instances of discomfort, and opportunities for critical vulnerability. The information below outlines how we will work together to develop and sustain community and learning. Your presence is welcome and appreciated.

**Welcome** to TL2 where traditional syllabi are set aside in favor of a vibrant, collaborative learning community. This course is designed around the principles of co-design and the central role of writing as both a practice and a presence that informs our growth as educators and writers. Together, we will explore and shape our learning environment, drawing directly on the methodologies and values of the National Writing Project.

The National Writing Project (NWP), a network of sites anchored at colleges and universities, has been at the forefront of improving the teaching of writing in schools across the nation since 1974. The NWP emphasizes the importance of writing and writing instruction as essential components in education. It supports the idea that teachers of writing are themselves writers. Our course takes inspiration from this model, encouraging you to engage as active participants in shaping our educational experiences. By integrating the proven approaches of the NWP, we will cultivate a space where innovation, critical thinking, and community engagement are at the forefront of our educational experience.

As members of this course and contributors to our learning community, you will not only learn to become better educators in ELA classrooms but also develop as committed, reflective writers. Through a shared leadership model, we will collaboratively create a curriculum that supports personal and professional development, aligns with evidence-based practices, and reflects our collective goals and values.

As the Director of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project and a tenure-track professor in Language, Literacy, and Culture, I bring a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to community-engaged teaching. My pedagogical approach is deeply informed by my background in writing studies and my active involvement in research-practice partnerships with schools. This course leverages the robust network and proven methodologies of the National Writing Project, particularly emphasizing the transformative power of writing as both a personal practice and a professional skill. My role as Director of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project allows us to draw upon a rich array of resources and expertise, ensuring that our learning community benefits from broad perspectives and innovative practices in the field of education.

## **Learning Goals**

Upon completing this course, participants will be able to:

### **1. Design and Implement Effective Writing and Reading Tasks:**

- Develop and teach writing and reading assignments that are scaffolded to support diverse learning progressions.
- Ensure that these tasks are culturally relevant, engaging students by reflecting their identities and experiences.
- Differentiate instruction to cater to the varied learning styles and needs within a classroom setting.

### **2. Align with Educational Standards:**

- Create learning activities that align with the Pennsylvania Core Standards, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards, and the Common Core State Standards, ensuring that teaching practices meet national benchmarks for quality and rigor.

### **3. Curriculum Development and Adaptation:**

- Assess existing school-specific curricula and texts, identifying opportunities for enhancement to better meet the educational and cultural needs of students.
- Adapt and expand upon these resources to design inclusive and effective educational experiences that foster both academic skills and critical thinking.

### **4. Foster a Community of Learners:**

- Cultivate a classroom environment that emphasizes collaboration, respect, and mutual learning among students.
- Implement teaching practices that encourage students to view themselves as active contributors to their own learning processes and to the learning of their peers.

### **5. Reflective Practice and Continuous Improvement:**

- Engage in regular reflection on teaching practices and their impacts on student learning.
- Utilize feedback from peers, students, and educational research to continually refine and improve teaching strategies and classroom interactions.

## **Course Format and Pedagogy**

This course is structured around a pedagogical framework deeply rooted in Black feminism, emphasizing dialogue, self-reflection, and criticality. The principles of Black feminist thought—particularly its focus on voice, the interlocking nature of identities and experiences, and the value of narrative and counter-narrative—are central to our approach. Here, writing is not merely a method of assessment but is recognized as a form of pedagogy and a praxis reflecting both process and outcome.

## **Key Course Components**

- **Regular Writing Practice**  
Every class meeting is an opportunity to engage in writing. This consistent practice serves to hone your skills as educators and writers, embedding the act of writing as a critical element of teaching and learning.
- **Creation of an Anthology**  
We will culminate our semester's work by collectively creating an anthology of your writings. This project will serve not only as a tangible outcome of your learning but also as a means to reflect on your growth and the diverse voices within our learning community.
- **Guest Speakers**  
The course will feature guest speakers, including active and retired teachers who are fellows of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project. These sessions will provide valuable insights into the practical applications of our pedagogical approaches and offer real-world perspectives from experienced educators.
- **Writing Workshops**  
Integral to our course are the writing workshops, where you will have the opportunity to present your work and receive constructive feedback. These workshops are designed to be supportive spaces that encourage risk-taking and growth, fostering a community of writers and learners.
- **Engaged Dialogues**  
Discussion is a cornerstone of our classroom environment. We will engage in rich dialogues that challenge our thinking, deepen our understanding, and enhance our educational practices.
- **Design and Presentation**  
Participants will design and present various projects throughout the course. These activities encourage the practical application of theoretical concepts and provide a platform for sharing innovative ideas and teaching strategies.

- **Explorative Learning**

We will explore a range of topics and perspectives, constantly seeking to expand our understanding of what it means to teach and learn in diverse educational contexts.

### **Pedagogical Goals**

Through these activities, the course aims to embody the pedagogical values of writing as a reflective practice, a tool for engagement, and a means of transformation. By integrating the tenets of Black feminism, the course not only advances an academic agenda but also supports a broader social and cultural mission, advocating for change and equity in educational practices and outcomes.

In this course, grading transcends traditional metrics and instead focuses on a philosophy of commitment—commitment to your personal and professional growth, to deepening your understanding, and to the lifelong journey of becoming an educator. This approach reflects our belief in the transformative power of education and the role of writing in fostering significant personal and professional development.

### **Assignments**

- **Daily Journaling**

You will write daily in journals, which serve as a reflective space to explore your thoughts, experiences, and evolving insights as an educator and writer. This practice is designed to cultivate a habit of self-reflection and continuous learning.

- **Reflective Annotation Project**

Throughout the course, you will engage in a reflective annotation project to chart your journey as a budding educator. This assignment will help you visualize your growth, identify areas for further exploration, and connect theoretical knowledge with your personal teaching philosophy.

- **Teaching Demonstrations**

You will design and conduct a teaching demonstration, offering a practical application of your learning. This will be followed by a peer review session, where constructive feedback will be provided, focusing on enhancing pedagogical skills and strategies.

- **Contributions to the Course Anthology**

Your writings, refined through our workshops and personal reflection, will be submitted for inclusion in the course anthology. This collaborative project not only showcases your development but also contributes to the collective knowledge and experience of our learning community.

- **Lesson Plan Reviews**

By annotating and reviewing lesson plans and educational materials, you will develop critical understandings of the form and function of these professional documents. This exercise emphasizes the importance of critical engagement with content that shapes educational practices.

- **Commitment Statements and Teaching Philosophy**

You will articulate your commitment to the values and responsibilities of the teaching profession through a statement and develop a comprehensive teaching philosophy. These documents will reflect your educational beliefs, pedagogical approaches, and your dedication to lifelong learning.

### **Commitment to Lifelong Learning**

The absence of traditional grades in this course does not diminish its rigor or the seriousness with which we approach our work. Instead, it emphasizes that the true measure of your learning lies in your engagement, the depth of your reflections, and your willingness to continuously evolve as a writer and educator. This approach is rooted in the pedagogical values of writing, where writing serves not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful tool for professional growth and personal transformation. Through these assignments, we not only focus on developing your skills and knowledge but also on fostering an enduring commitment to education—a commitment that extends beyond the confines of this course and into your lifelong journey as an educator.

### **University Policies and Resources**

While traditional syllabi typically include detailed sections on university and departmental policies, this course adopts a different approach to encourage a focus on our learning community and the practice of co-design. To ensure that you have access to necessary institutional information, our Canvas page includes a dedicated section outlining the relevant policies of the University of Pittsburgh, the School of Education, the Department of Teaching, Leading, and Learning, and the Master of Arts in Teaching program. This repository will provide comprehensive details on academic integrity, accommodations, student support services, and other essential policies.

### **Resources Available**

- **University Resources:** Detailed information about academic and support services available to you at the university level.
- **School and Departmental Resources:** Specific resources within the School of Education and our department that can aid in your academic and professional development.
- **Pittsburgh Community Resources:** A guide to the educational and cultural resources available throughout the city of Pittsburgh, which can enrich your experience and learning.

Furthermore, you are encouraged to visit the University of Pittsburgh's official website to review other relevant academic policies and expectations. By housing these details on our

Canvas page and the university's website, we aim to keep our course space focused on pedagogical engagement and the rich dialogue central to our educational approach.

### **Course Policies**

**No Traditional Policy on Cell Phone Use, Technology, or Attendance:** In alignment with the Black feminist ideals that underpin this course's pedagogy, we do not enforce traditional policies on cell phone use, technology, or attendance. Instead, we foster an atmosphere of mutual respect, responsibility, and engagement. We believe that learning is best facilitated in an environment where community and communication are prioritized, and where all members feel valued and free to contribute.

This approach reflects a commitment to creating a learning space that not only respects but actively involves you in the shaping of our educational environment. By minimizing procedural and contractual limitations, we open up more space for creative, critical, and collaborative engagement, deeply rooted in the principles of equity and inclusion that are central to Black feminist pedagogy.

### **Seminar Flow**

#### **Week 1: Introduction and Foundations**

- **Session 1:** Course introduction, overview of Black feminist pedagogy, and discussion of community norms.
- **Session 2:** Introduction to the writing practices and journal setup. First journal entry.

#### **Week 2: Engaging with Core Concepts**

- **Session 1:** Discuss foundational readings on writing pedagogy and Black feminist theory.
- **Session 2:** Writing workshop: Reflecting on readings in journal entries.

#### **Week 3: Building Our Learning Community**

- **Session 1:** Guest speaker from the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project.
- **Session 2:** Group discussion and reflection on the speaker's insights.

#### **Week 4: Exploring Educational Standards**

- **Session 1:** Introduction to Pennsylvania Core, NCTE, and Common Core Standards.
- **Session 2:** Annotate sample lesson plans; discuss alignment and adaptations.

#### **Week 5: Reflective Practices**

- **Session 1:** Workshop on writing reflective annotations and teaching philosophies.
- **Session 2:** Peer feedback on early drafts of reflective annotations.

**Week 6: Midterm Reflections and Feedback**

- **Session 1:** Midterm personal reflections shared; group feedback.
- **Session 2:** Continuation of reflective practices and adjustments.

**Week 7: Developing Teaching Demonstrations**

- **Session 1:** Planning and preparing for teaching demonstrations.
- **Session 2:** Peer reviews of teaching plans and approaches.

**Week 8: Teaching Demonstrations**

- **Session 1:** First round of teaching demonstrations.
- **Session 2:** Feedback and discussion on demonstrations.

**Week 9: Advanced Writing Techniques**

- **Session 1:** Workshop on advanced writing techniques for educational contexts.
- **Session 2:** Apply techniques in journal entries and anthology contributions.

**Week 10: Guest Speaker Insights**

- **Session 1:** Second guest speaker session, focus on differentiated instruction.
- **Session 2:** Reflective writing session based on the speaker's topics.

**Week 11: Preparing the Anthology**

- **Session 1:** Selection and refinement of pieces for the anthology.
- **Session 2:** Editorial decisions and layout planning.

**Week 12: Finalizing the Anthology**

- **Session 1:** Final edits and compilation of the anthology.
- **Session 2:** Preparation for the anthology release and presentation.

**Week 13: Course Wrap-Up and Reflections**

- **Session 1:** Final teaching demonstrations and peer feedback.
- **Session 2:** Final course reflections, feedback, and discussion of next steps post course.