

## Teaching Portfolio Grant Application (part 2)

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*2.- A description of your teaching approach in a writing class, addressing such general questions as*

*a) How would you describe your ideal classroom atmosphere in a writing class? What do you do to foster it?*

You don't *teach* writing, for the same reason you don't *teach* critical thinking. One can *model* good writing, one can *instill* good writing and research habits, but the student has to do the *critical thinking* work and struggle through the writing process on his or her own. As a writer and translator myself, I truly believe that writing *is* a process, sometimes frustrating and sometimes very rewarding. It is never a linear process; it meanders around uncertainty and veracity. Writing is never finished, closed, a "done deal"; it is an open process of discovery. It requires time, dedication, and discipline. In order to be successful, the writer has to understand that it is a process and be willing to embark in it.

Having said that, I believe the ideal writing class should be delivered in a seminar format:

- Has to be assignment-based and student centered.
- Has to provide ample time and space to explore and practice writing.
- Should be collaborative in nature.

It is important to allow students to conduct research and write on a topic of their choice, something they feel passionate about. Also very important is to understand the crucial role that information literacy plays in today's digital world. Know where to search and how to find, evaluate, and use the information ethically is key to writing an effective academic paper.

Students need to see the instructor as a writer herself. It is important to share your own publications and to have the students peer-review your writing.

Ideally, I wish we didn't have grades for writing intensive courses because putting a grade on a paper compromises the whole *process*. The minute you talk about a grade, students get anxious and, of course, they all think they deserve an A.

*b) What goals/aims do you have for your students in regards to their ability to write in the course(s) you teach and more generally as an IWU student?*

I want all my writing students at the 100 and 200-level courses to be able to

- generate and articulate ideas, both orally and in writing;
- distinguish between an idea and a thesis statement;
- understand that purpose and audience have an impact on what you write;
- support ideas with evidence;
- build a solid argument;
- locate, evaluate and use information ethically;
- *read* a citation;
- use MLA style and be aware of other citation styles (Chicago and APA);

- understand that writing is a process of discovery;
- enjoy the process as much as possible, and to
- be proud of what they write.

c) *What assessment tools do you use to evaluate students' performance for writing assignments and/or how do you assess the effectiveness of your assignments?*

Measures & Tools	WI Goals				Context	Use
	1	2	3	4		
Information literacy quiz at the beginning /end of courses	x	x			<b>Indirect:</b> Questionnaire concerning the information literacy skills of students.	Used by Lynda Duke to evaluate information literacy skills and revise activities for information sessions with students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Span 280 Student Manual.</li> <li>▪ Gateway Detective</li> </ul>
Student Writing Portfolio (Span 280 only)	x	x	x	x	<b>Indirect:</b> Collection of sample writing.	The assessment is reviewed for course evaluation and revision, as necessary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Span 280 Student Manual.</li> </ul>
Survey monkey questionnaire (end of semester)	x	x			<b>Indirect:</b> A simple 10-question questionnaire eliciting responses concerning multiple aspects of writing and assignments.	Information is reviewed for course evaluation and revision, as necessary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Span 280 Student Manual.</li> <li>▪ Gateway Detective</li> </ul>
Student public poster presentations	x		x	x	<b>Direct:</b> students present their research orally to peers outside of classroom.	Part of each assignment grade.
Student in-class oral presentations	x	x	x	x	<b>Direct:</b> students present their research orally to peers in the class.	Part of each assignment grade.
Student self reflection (spring 2011)	x	x	x	x	<b>Indirect:</b> written reflection on each assignment addressing questions on the process of writing and research.	Information used to evaluate and revise Gateway and Span 280 in the fall 2011, and spring 2012 respectively. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Span 280 Student Manual.</li> <li>▪ Gateway Detective</li> </ul>
Writing rubrics					<b>Direct:</b> evaluation of formal student writing.	Part of each assignment grade.
Instructor self reflection (spring 2011)					<b>Indirect:</b> writing and compiling information for this Teaching Portfolio Grant (spring 2011)	Information used to evaluate and revise Gateway and Span 280 in the fall 2011, and spring 2012 respectively. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Span 280 Student Manual.</li> <li>▪ Gateway Detective</li> </ul>
Student course evaluation					<b>Indirect:</b> series of questions on course content, instructor, etc.	Information used to revised assignments accordingly.

This table is adapted from *Hispanic Studies Self Evaluation* document (2011) prepared by Carolyn Nadeau.

WI (1 2 3 4) indicates Writing Intensive flag goals (2010-11 General Education Handbook)

▪ Span 280 Student Manual: textbook/workbook for Span 280. Prof. Ferradán.

▪ Gateway Detective: preliminary information literacy activities prepared by Prof. Ferradán.

Assignment type and percentage of grade for each assignment:

1) Research and pre-writing (30% of final grade for the assignment)

working bibliography (10%)

abstract(10%)

oral presentation on the topic (10%)

in-class free writing \*

2) Writing (30% of final grade for the assignment)

Drafts

3) After writing (40% of final grade for the assignment)

final version

self reflection \*

survey monkey questionnaire\*

\* Indicates a non-graded or free-writing activity.

### **3. A syllabus for each course, including a one-paragraph commentary on how the class addresses the goals and criteria of the writing intensive flag and some of the outcomes for the Writing Program.**

*Writing Intensive Courses (from 2010-11 General Education Handbook, 34-35)*

*In keeping with the overall goals of the General Education program, in particular the goals of developing students' capacities for expressing and communicating ideas in writing, using writing as a means of discovery and understanding, and developing students' capacities for critical thinking, intellectual independence, and imagination, courses given this designation seek to:*

- 1. give students significant practice in writing;*
- 2. focus on writing as a process, with opportunities for revision;*
- 3. enable students to understand that writing varies according to purpose and audience;*
- 4. give students opportunities to use writing as a tool for invention and discovery.*

#### **Span 280 and Gateway**

1 and 2. Both courses are divided into 4 content units. Students write one formal essay per unit (with one revision each), and several informal assignments for each unit. For formal assignments, length varies from 2-3 pages for the first 2 assignments, to 4-6 pages for the last two. Informal writing is usually 1-2 pages long. Each informal assignment is meant to be preparation for the formal essay.

3. Each unit has a variety of assignment types and writing activities depending on purpose and audience: letters to the editor, summaries, bibliographies, opinion pieces, arguments, poster presentations, etc.

4. In both courses students have plenty of opportunity to use writing as a tool for discovery. Non-graded exploratory writing and self-reflection pieces are just two examples. Students love the poster presentation sessions: they feel confident and proud of explaining their research to passers-by.

*Gateway Colloquium (from 2010-11 General Education Handbook, 15-16)*

*In keeping with the overall goals of the General Education program, in particular the goals of developing students' proficiency in writing and its use as a means of discovery and understanding, and of developing students' capacities in critical thinking, independence, and imagination through active learning, Gateway Colloquium seminars seek to:*

- 1. introduce students to the process of intellectual inquiry and develop students' critical thinking skills;*
- 2. develop students' ability to evaluate competing ideas and experiences;*
- 3. develop students' skills in the conventions and structures of presenting knowledge in written academic and public discourse, and on strategies for effective revision;*
- 4. engage students in learning activities that prepare them for academic life in the university.*

1. The preliminary unit in my Gateway course is the "Gateway Detective" (please see description below). I developed it to address goal number 1 of the category.

2. My Gateway course explores the idea of Revolution as a radical change, a fundamental shift in social conventions. We read a variety of articles on the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, for example. One of the topics students are more interested in is the contrasting views for the ideal woman during the 1930s and 1940s in Spanish society.

3. Students produce well over 30 written pages over the course of the semester, on a variety of topics and lengths, and for different purposes and audiences.

4. My Gateway is assignment-based and student centered. Students have the opportunity for in-class debate with peers, and also out of class presentations. Students in my class are required to attend two university-sponsored activities of their choice throughout the semester, and to write a one-page reaction paper.

***5. A description of an innovation you made to your course materials or assignments and a brief explanation of how well it worked or might work.***

#### Gateway Detective

A preliminary unit for my Gateway class, directly written to the student and designed to be used as homework in conjunction with 2 library sessions conducted by Prof. Lynda Duke (Hispanic Studies library liaison). It consists on a 20 pages, content/work-sheet combo on information literacy concepts and basic MLA citation style in electronic format (Moodle).

#### Objectives:

- Introduce students to the Ames Library and its services.
- Introduce students to the scholarly work of IWU professors.
- Introduce students to the process of research, writing and publishing in Academia.
- Presents the library as a center for conducting research.
- Presents and provides hands-on practice in basic information literacy concepts, with emphasis in evaluating sources.
- Provides practice in reading citations and MLA style.

One of the activities included in the Gateway Detective is a "scavengers hunt" at Ames. Students will work in pairs for this activity. Each pair is given a list of citation items. They have to find the actual source, check them out at the counter, and bring them to the class. Students will find several obstacles in the search, like electronic versions versus printed versions, journal articles both online and in print, items Ames doesn't have, reference materials they can't check out, etc. Also, some of the citations will be missing information, misspelled or simply wrong. Students have to

The objective of the “scavenger hunt” is for the students to get acquainted with library materials and services, as well as to learn how to navigate the space.

How well it worked:

I am happy with Gateway Detective, and students liked it. Of course, it would not work at all without the library sessions with Prof. Duke.

Next fall, I am planning on adding one more “scavenger hunt” activity in the library with more challenging items.

