

English 304
Preliminary course description
Practical Rhetoric: Issues in Tutoring Writing
Fall 2010
Tuesday 6-8 p.m.

Barbara Shwom

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TEXTS

Required texts (at Norris):

The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors, Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood, Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2003

The St. Martin's Handbook, Andrea Lunsford, Bedford/St. Martin's Press, Fifth edition, 2003

Additional readings will be handed out in class or posted on our BlackBoard web site.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Purpose of the course

Practical Rhetoric: Issues in Tutoring Writing is a practical course in helping others with writing, using a facilitative, collaborative approach. The course is intended primarily for students wishing to become tutors in the Writing Place. The course will combine readings, discussion, and experiential practice in peer tutoring. By the end of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- understand the writing process, the basic theory of the peer tutoring, and the codes of professionalism in writing center work;
- be able to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of another writer's paper in all areas, including rhetorical aptness, argumentation, structure, style, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics;
- be able to prioritize tasks to work on with a writer, in accordance with a valid understanding of the writing process and the writer's particular abilities and circumstances;
- be prepared to deploy a wide range of tutoring strategies to assist a writer, such as directed questioning, serving as a transparent reader, playback and feedback, modeling, error-pattern analysis, and directing the writer in analyzing assignments, brainstorming, glossing and "WIRMI," and using writing resources.

Work to be completed and grading

In the course, you will be graded on four kinds of work:

- Tutoring web log and tutoring (20%)

At least once a week, write in our Writing Place tutors web log about your tutoring experiences—the successes, problems and questions—and your thoughts about them. Your initial entry is due by Friday of each week; however, since this web log should constitute a group conversation, I'd like you to read all the other entries and to respond to several each week. Your entries in this web log will be one of the ways that I assess your tutoring over the quarter, so be sure that you say enough to provide a picture of yourself as a tutor.

– Writing Place Handout (15%)

Each student in the class will produce a handout that he or she feels will be useful at the Writing Place. Producing this handout will likely involve some research on your part. I'll expect you to put the handout through at least two drafts—and to get feedback from other tutors in the process.

– Writing project (20%)

Choose any aspect of tutoring writing that interests you, do some reading or other research, and produce a 6-8 page paper that you think would be interesting and useful to other tutors. As always, I'll ask you to produce this in a few drafts, and to get feedback along the way. If the paper is good enough, I can help you submit it as an article to the Writing Lab Newsletter or other publication. Toward the end of the quarter, you'll have an opportunity to present your ideas to your classmates (and other tutors) in a 15 minute presentation.

– Reflective essay on being tutored (20%)

As part of this course, you're required to go to the Writing Place **as a client** at least three times over the quarter. Go with papers that you are working on for other classes or for this class. Ideally, you'll work with three different tutors. Then, write a 3-5 page essay reflecting on your experience in being tutored. What did you learn about yourself as a writer through this process? What did you learn about yourself as a tutor (or about different tutoring styles) by being on the other side of the desk?

– Class participation (15%)

Each week, we'll be doing exercises in class, practicing various aspects of the tutoring process. Your active participation in these exercises is a key element of the course.