

Fall 2021

English 309: Approaches to Teaching Composition

Dr. Sarah Morris (smorri10@mail.wvu.edu)

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00-2:15

“If our teaching is to be an art, we must draw from all we know, feel and believe in order to create something beautiful. To teach well, we do not need more techniques and strategies as much as we need a vision of what is essential. It is not the number of good ideas that turns our work into art but the selection, balance and design of those ideas.”

—Lucy Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing*

English 309: Approaches to Teaching Composition is a methods course designed for future teachers of writing. In it, we will explore underlying theories and foundational principles that inform what we know about writing instruction; we will research attitudes and techniques for pedagogy; we will experiment with methods of teaching writing; we will develop our identities as writers and teachers of writing.

Because writing helps us to know what we think, to articulate what we know, and to make meaning in a community, will write daily, individually and collaboratively. Because accountability standards pervade teaching realities today, we will prepare for working toward those standards and still preparing students as writers in the world.

Course themes:

Being a writer; teaching writing
Assignment and unit design
Responding to and assessing writing
Writing workshop and peer response
Digital literacy and argument writing
Place and project-based learning
Diversity and Anti-racist pedagogy

Course work:

Exploratory writing
Writer’s notebook
Practice teaching
Reflective responses
Process mentor texts
Research and theory text analysis
Pedagogy research project

“I won’t be ruled by tests I don’t believe in. I won’t be told how to teach writing by people who never write. My students and I are the most powerful forces in the classroom, not the tests.”

—Penny Kittle, *Write Beside Them*

“Engaged writing and reading, practical minilessons, close reading of poems, a diversity of genre studies, letter-essay critiques of books, editing protocols, and individual editorial conferences more than satisfy, for example, the Common Core State Standards.”

—Nancie Atwell, *In the Middle*
