

Fall 2025

## English 309/509: Approaches to Teaching Composition

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

Tuesday and Thursday, 11:30-12:45

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“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*

**English 309/509: Approaches to Teaching Composition** is a combined level methods course designed for certifying future teachers of writing, in which graduate students take a leadership role. 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 and responding to writing; we will develop our own processes and 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 classroom and in the world.

### Course themes:

Being a writer; teaching writing  
Process and practice  
Modeling and mentoring  
Assignment and unit design  
Responding to and assessing writing  
Writing workshop and peer response  
Digital literacy and argument writing

### Course work:

Writer’s notebook  
Practice teaching and responding  
Reflective writing  
Process model/mentor texts  
Classroom mentoring project  
Book groups  
Unit plan OR Classroom ethnography

“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*

“Because writing can support a high level of learning in all subjects, it matters in any classroom where inquiry, knowledge, and expression are valued and recognized by students and teachers.”

--National Writing Project, *Because Writing Matters*

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