

Framework for Saint Michael's College Graduate Education Syllabus YWP Digital Writing Classroom Practicum

DETAILS:

Title: Digital Writing in the 21st Century – A Practicum

Instructor's Name: Geoffrey Gevalt, Director of Young Writers Project

Office Hours: By phone or email anytime

Phone and email: (802) 354-9537 or 482-5625, ggevalt@youngwritersproject.org

Mailing Address: Young Writers Project, 20 Winooski Falls Way, Suite #4, Winooski, VT 05404

Classroom Location: *There will be two sections of this course, one in Northern Vermont and one in Central/Southern Vermont to be held at Hartford Memorial Middle School. Most work will be done online; teacher participants will be provided a working Web site to use in their school classroom during the year and will do most reading, writing and reflection on a similar Web site designed for this course. There will be five sessions during the year, with teacher participants from schools in the North meeting at YWP's headquarters at Champlain Mill during the year and those in the Central/South region to be meeting at a central location to be determined upon the beginning of the course. The instructor will visit each participant's classroom once during the year.*

Deadline for enrollment: Sept. 14.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE:

This three-credit Masters-level course (accredited through St. Michael's College) begins Sept. 21 and ends May 6. During the year, five progress trainings/discussions will be held in late afternoon (N: Winooski; S: White River Junction. Date depends on whether you are in the North or South section): September 20(N) or 21(S) (kickoff) 3 – 8 p.m. (food served); October 26(S) or 27(N), January 18(N) or 19(S), March 16(S) or 17(N) and April 18(N) or 25(S) (dates subject to change based on needs of group.) Additionally, there will be one instructor visit to each participant's class for observation and consult. The first gathering will last four hours; the others will last 4 hours. Participants will be provided a working, interactive Web site to use for instruction at their schools during the year. YWP will provide training and follow-up instruction at the second meeting to ensure that teacher participants have sufficient skills and confidence to adequately participate in the course. In addition, YWP will have one in-school visit during the year at participant's convenience to observe and provide individual mentoring; this session will be at least two hours.

This course is a rigorous, practicum that will quickly bring teacher participants into 21st Century Digital Teaching Practices by providing teachers knowledge of how to use Web applications – primarily their YWP Digital Classroom – to help students improve their writing skills; how to engage students even as the teachers' are going through their own learning processes; and how to experience – and promote within the classrooms – the benefits of collaborative learning. The core of the work will take place online on a special site that mirrors the participants' own classroom site; participants will write online, individually and collaboratively with the other Practicum participants and with their own students; they also will give and receive feedback as the year progresses.

The participants' classroom site, set up specifically for their school (for more, go to *ywpschools.net*) will be where participants engage their own students in writing assignments as well as exercises designed to raise those students' digital literacy skills including writing for a private online audience of their peers, incorporating digital images, audio and video into their writing projects; giving civil, constructive peer-to-peer feedback; using the Web for additional learning and connecting to other communities.

A separate Web site, *digitalteachers.net*, will serve as a space for participants to try out the tools and practices in their own learning process, reflecting on their own experiences, and collaborating with other participants. It also will be the space where they can best connect with their instructor and seek assistance with upcoming projects. All the sites will have full technical support from the Young Writers Project.

Participants will read leading-edge course materials and follow selected blogs and other writings of teachers from around the world who are successfully incorporating digital technology into their writing classrooms. They will also engage in their own Web exploration for examples of how other schools around the world use digital technology to enhance student learning.

Participants will write about their online classroom exercises as publishable documents to be shared with other teachers around the state and country. Their exercises will be focused on their developing skills, confidence and knowledge around at least seven digital literacies that will lead to at least one larger classroom project of their own design by the end of the year.

Participants will be required to write short reflections and assessments on five of their exercises during the year and to contribute to the group by commenting on other participants' work. They will also be asked to assess their students' progress in writing and commenting as part of their final self-assessment of their year.

Participants will be expected to assign work that requires their students to use the site; participants will:

- develop and study best practice ideas to engage students online,
- assess the results of their digital exercises; and
- assess the quality of their students' work and the effectiveness of their students' comments to each other.

The rationale behind this course is two-fold:

- Vermont and N.H. students are not proficient in writing; and
- Educational leaders are pushing schools to raise students' digital literacy in order to prepare them for the demands of twenty-first century citizenship.

REGISTRATION:

Registration is through the Champlain Valley Educator Development Center Educational Services Agency, Champlain College, 163 S. Willard St., Burlington, VT, 05402, tel: 802-651-5933

Register on-line: cvedc.champlain.edu

For questions, contact: worth@champlain.edu

For more information, go to: www.youngwritersproject.org/wewrite or call Geoffrey Gevalt, 802.860-0570, or email him at ggevalt@youngwritersproject.org

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Participants in this course will increase their knowledge and expertise in:

- Using a Web site as a classroom
- Using a variety of exceptional Web-based applications and desktop applications to enhance their and their students' work;
- Incorporating best-practice digital teaching and learning techniques;
- Using an online classroom to enhance their students' reading and writing skills;
- Enhancing their students' writing and critical thinking skills;
- Increasing their and their students' digital literacy
- Fostering a spirit of collaboration and enhancing a peer-to-peer learning environment;
- Assessing students' progress and improvement in digital environment;
- Increasing their ability to express their own ideas and teaching techniques;
- Improving their ability to innovate and try new ideas;
- Understanding how digital technology can help them teach;
- Keeping on top of emerging literacies; and
- Gaining experience in how to work on a Web site and online learning community.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

Participants will:

- Gain the knowledge and confidence to necessary to become leaders in integrating technology in the classroom;
- Increase the collaborative and peer-to-peer learning models in their classrooms;
- Learn the value of getting students to regularly write and comment on each other's work; and
- Learn the value of using multimedia, online spaces and Web applications to engage their students in deeper learning.

REQUIRED READING:

Will Richardson's *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts and Other Powerful Tools for Classrooms* (newest edition)(This book will be supplied to participants.)

David Weinberger's *Everything is Miscellaneous* or Clay Shirky's *Here Comes Everybody* or Daniel Pink's *A Whole New Mind*

D.R. Garrison's and Terry Anderson's *E-Learning in the 21st Century*

ONLINE:

Videos of Michael Wesch (<http://www.youtube.com/user/mwesch>) and Karl Fisch (youngwritersproject.org/node/16321)

Henry Jenkins' White Paper for the MacArthur Foundation (digitalllearning.macfound.org/)

Ewan McIntosh's Edu-Blog (edu.blogs.com/)

Henry Jenkin's blog (www.henryjenkins.org/)

Danah Boyd's white papers (www.danah.org/)

Barbara Ganley's resource list: (bgsocialsoftwareworkshop.pbwiki.com/Resources)

Innovateonline (*innovateonline.info*)

Teachers teaching teachers (*teachersteachingteachers.org*)

Vicki Davis (*coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/*)

Bud Hunt (*budtheteacher.com/blog/*)

Paul Allison (*paulrallison.blogspot.com/*)

Clarence Fisher (*mr-fisher.edublogs.org/*)

And a variety of links located on this course's Web site at <http://digitalteachers.net>

Participants' links – As part of this course, participants will develop their own resource list of examples of how other schools are using digital technology in their classrooms.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

David Warlick's *Redefining Literacy Encore*

Pamela Takayoshi's *Teaching Writing with Computers*

Jean Twenge's *Generation Me*

Ken Robinson's *Out of our Minds*

Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture*

Pierre Levy's *Collective Intelligence*

James Paul Gee's *Situated Language and Learning*

William Kist's *New Literacies in Action*

Howard Rheingold's *The Virtual Community*

Bertram Bruce (editor) *Literacy in the Information Age*

RECOMMENDED CONFERENCES:

Christa McAuliffe Technology Conference (**November 29 - Dec. 1, 2010**) Manchester, New Hampshire (<http://www.nhcmtec.org/>)

Vita-Learn's Vermont Fest 2009 – **November 4-5, 2010** at Killington (<http://homepage.vita-learn.org>)

COURSE SCHEDULE:

This course will allow participants to establish their own schedule for doing most of the exercises required for this course. For that reason, this course is open to participants regardless of computer/technology skills. However, those with limited experience should make arrangements with the instructor for some special mentoring during the early part of the year. All participants are expected to integrate their regular course work onto the Digital Writing Classroom site. This is, after all, a practicum.

All participants will be expected to research, create and assess exercises for a regular series of lesson plans on the Web for their students. (We suggest that they should do at least one assignment/lesson plan per month, but they are required only to write about five; Each write up should include: The Lesson Plan (the purpose, detailed assignment and expected outcomes; template provided); the reality (how it went and a reflection on what could have been done better, and what went well.) These writings are enhanced with examples and student comments. If participants post their plans *well before* they give the exercise in class, they can take advantage of feedback from colleagues.

Participants also will be expected to have their students write regularly and to use the site for non-assignment work – quick “free write” exercises, sharing of additional work, regular commenting.

STAGES

The **first part of the course** will be spent getting used to the site and getting students to use it regularly – small, timed writing; regular commenting; some introductory assignments. The **second part** of the course will be to set up more in-depth assignments on the school sites. The **final part** of the course will be to incorporate digital media into the assignments and the students’ work: images, audio, slideshows, embedding of other Web work, resource lists, RSS feeds, etc.

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Course participants will be expected to post their writing on the Practicum’s Digital Classroom space on <http://digitalteachers.net>. They are expected to read and comment on their colleagues’ work as well. The deadlines set up below are intended as guideposts but they should be seen as general deadlines; participants are free, however, to do projects sooner.

Blog Post 1: Fear of Flying. Keyword: digital fears

Deadline: Before the first meeting: This is to be a quick write to have you learn by doing and to express your own fears and concerns about introducing or developing digital technology for your classrooms. This exercise is also designed to get you to understand that writing requires you to take a risk. You also must comment on at least three other participants’ posts.

Meeting 1: Introduction

Sept. 20, 21 at YWP (North) and Site to be determined (South)

This will be a four-hour session in the afternoon/evening. Participants are expected to familiarize themselves with their sites *before* this meeting (including Post 1). This gathering will provide you with an overview on digital writing and the Web, some logistics and specific training on use of the sites. Food provided.

Blog Post 2: Plans for Succeeding. Keyword: digital plans

Deadline Sept. 29: So now what? You are going to outline what you generally plan to do with this practicum – how you will incorporate it into your everyday classes, what types of things you want to do first, how you will incorporate media into your and your students’ work and how you are going to resolve some of their fears (Post #1). This post should include a plan for having the students write regularly on the site during the school year be it 7-minute free writes, journaling, discussions, etc. *You should be revising this as your year progresses to reflect changing realities and knowledge.*

Blog Post 3: First assignment and commenting

Deadline Sept. 29: Participants will write their first specific post on something they are planning and executing in their classroom that will include, as a major component, student commenting *Revise with reflection within two weeks.* This plan should focus on

student commenting. Peer-to-peer feedback is the most vital part of this practicum; students gain confidence, learn about each other and build community in direct proportion to the quantity and quality of the online classroom commenting. How are the rules to be established? What are the expectations? What type of commenting should the students be doing? How often? How many? How in-depth?

Blog Post 4: Reflections

Deadline Oct. 18: It's all been a buzz – the new year, new students, new technology. This post is intended to have you focus on ONE thing that worked well and ONE problem that you are having. Please make sure to give examples and links so colleagues can give detailed response. Post this, comment on at least three other participants' posts and be prepared for a 5-minute presentation on this during the second meeting.

Meeting 2: Reflection and Assessment

October 26, 27: Participants will tell the class one thing they had success with and one thing that still is a problem. *Participants must post this in Blog Post 4 a week before hand.* The presentation is aimed at getting participant colleagues to help resolve each other's problems.

Additionally, YWP will discuss blogging, commenting and offer ideas for regular writing. An hour will be reserved for additional site training. *Note:* Participants should contact the instructor before this meeting with any technical or support issues to make sure that teacher participants are confident in using the site.

Blog Post 5 & 6: Best idea and second assignment

Two days later:

Blog Post 5: Best idea

Write about one thing you learned from a colleague at the second meeting that they plan to use in their own classrooms. This also could be done as a comment to a colleague's Post 4.

Blog Post 6: Second assignment and commenting: Write a plan (expected outcomes, etc.) for the second formal online classroom assignment that will also include commenting. This can be an idea you liked of a colleague's, an existing assignment that you want to do online or a new idea you devised from reading or something you saw on the Web. Write about your plan *before* you do it so that you can get feedback from your colleagues. *Revise this in two weeks with your reflection on how things went, what was learned. Include student examples and student comments to each other and, if possible, about the assignment.*

Blog Post 7: Third assignment – a quick one.

Dec. 6: This is intended to show you how much progress you have made. Create your third formal assignment with the online classroom, incorporating everything you've learned: What works, how to get in-depth commenting, something that will extend the work to home as well. This should not be a big project, but a quick one. Try to have this assignment be something that you might not be able to do with paper and pencil. *Revise in two weeks with outcomes, examples and student comments to each other and, if possible, about the assignment.*

Blog Post 8: Reflections

Jan. 11: This post should highlight one success and one problem you have been having. Please give examples and links so your colleagues can provide definitive comment and response. Comment on three other participants' posts.

Meeting 3: Reflection and Multimedia Intro.

Jan. 18, 19: Multimedia. Participants should plan to present for 5-10 minutes on their success and problem. Class discussion will focus on lingering technical issues (How do you do ... type things) and on using multimedia. Class will focus on images and sound; how to make a podcast, how to upload slideshows, using images and sounds as prompts and as enhancement to story. Class also will discuss how to create a Photo Story.

Blog Post 9: Multimedia #1

Two days later: Plan the first multi-media assignment. Keep it simple. Strive for success. Blog should include plan, expected outcomes and, *two weeks later*, a reflection on how things went, with examples, links and student comments. Comment on three.

Blog Post 10: Reflection and making assessment

March 6: Write about your most recent assignment. Pay particular attention to how student commenting affected the process and impacted other students in their effort to accomplish the assignment. Provide examples. Also write about a problem you are having. Comment on three colleagues' posts.

Meeting 4: Assessing and Multimedia #2

March 16, 17: Participants will show their colleagues one example of how they used multimedia in an assignment and discuss successes and outcomes.

Part of the class will focus on methods for assessment: How you and your colleagues are assessing student work, how it can be done and how other teachers on the Web assess online work.

Part of the class will focus on how to incorporate additional multimedia into the classrooms such as digital stories, video commenting, slideshows and more on podcasting. Examples will be given.

Blog Post 11: Assignment 4

Two days later: Set up an assignment with multi-media. This assignment can, again, be simple – simple is good given the complexities of computers in schools. Idea can be borrowed from a colleague or the Web or on your own. Write the plan, expected outcomes and, two weeks later, reflect on how things went with examples and student comments. Provide links in the later reflection for your colleagues.

Blog Post 12: Assignment 5

April 4: Look at the plan you have been revising during the year. What one thing do you want to make sure you do before the end of the year? Devise an assignment and commenting plan and expected outcomes. *Revise in two weeks with reality: Examples, links and student comments.*

Final Meeting: Sharing and impact

April 18, 25: You will be asked to share biggest success of the year AND will be asked to share how they are assessing student work. You should come prepared to write; participants will be given 30 minutes to start Blog Post 13 – Impact. Class time will be spent on these questions: What more do you need to know? How do you continue your learning? How do you become a leader in your school?

Blog Post 13 – Impact and plans

May 6: Answer these questions: How has this course and the online work changed how you teach? How has your use of online space and digital teaching impacted your students? Please provide links and examples. AND how are you going to let parents, the community, your school colleagues, your administrators know what your students have accomplished? How are you going to continue your learning?

ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS:

To get an “A” on this course, participants are expected to 1) get their students to write regularly on the Web site; 2) to actively integrate their regular class work onto the Web site; 3) complete their writing assignments in a clear, concise and timely fashion and in a way that reflects learning from readings and Web research and that shows strong assessment of student results; 4) actively participate in the work of others posted on this practicum’s site: digitalteachers.net; 5) complete all required readings; and 6) innovate – devise new ideas to be tried out on the school online classroom and to be shared with other teachers. The assessment breakdown:

- **Online participation** – blog posts and commenting on other participants’ posts – will represent **60 percent** of the grade. The posts should be brief, clear and reflect the plan and the goals as well as outcome and reflections of each online project undertaken in the school classroom. The posts should also reflect understanding of course readings, materials and resources. The comments should reflect in-depth reflection of other participants’ work.
- **In-classroom accomplishments** – the degree to which writing and commenting becomes a regular part of the participant’s school online classroom activity and the degree to which the participant relies on students to help determine the online classroom learning process – represents **25 percent** of the grade. This assessment is intertwined with the blog posts and reflects the effectiveness of the participant’s actual class work. Since participants will have different levels of understanding of technology, this assessment will be made on the basis of the participant’s progress not on a benchmark for all participants.
- **Meeting participation** – sharing of what participant’s accomplished in his/her classroom, questions for other participants, engagement in the in-class exercises – will represent **15 percent** of the grade. In the event of meeting absences that have been cleared ahead of time by the instructor, a participant can offset by providing more commenting to other participant’s work.

During the course, the instructor will provide regular and timely response to participants’ posts on digitalteachers.net. In some cases, participants will receive private messages, emails or phone calls about their work. Teachers are welcome to have the instructor visit their school and classroom during the year.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Young Writers Project has considerable material on writing and writing exercises as well as materials on digital learning on its main Web site, youngwritersproject.org, under Writers' Library and on digitalteachers.net

During the year, students will receive updates that will include links to additional resources, applications and examples.