Reflection

The Writing In the Disciplines Workshop was truly helpful to me on a number of levels. First, a list, which is one of my preferred pedagogical practices.

1) Syllabus

I appreciated feedback on my syllabus from my colleagues. As a new faculty member, though I did receive some feedback from the Writing Program admins, it was nice to spend a little more time where I could ask questions and collaborate on approaches. Related to Bean and Mezler, I think the biggest changes I would make to the syllabus would be incorporating more outside readings, but in particular, the concept of introducing an *idea* through other texts. So this isn't necessarily a secondary text about the primary, but something more tangential, that can introduce some of the concepts the primary text engages with, to get them thinking about it before they are exposed to the (in this instance) novel's ideas and subtext.

2) High/Low Stakes

This was a really helpful component of the workshop. Having my assignments critiqued allowed me to not be alone in imagining what happens inside student's heads when they read and engage with the assignment. I think I will revise my high stakes assignments to be a little less verbose, without, hopefully, getting rid of the more useful elements. I appreciated the feedback on the usefulness of my "Getting Started" and "Completing the Assignment" categories.

With regards to Bean and Mezler, the most immediate take-away for me regarding low-stakes, which was not necessarily a new idea, but another thing I'd forgotten to embrace this semester, is leading questions. While I do low-stakes reflections, and I often try to tailor those to be about engaging in *analysis,* I'm realizing that these prompts could be more dynamic and engage in a more scaffolded approach, as my major assignments do..

3) Rubrics & Grading

Joshua was so helpful in this category in particular, and I feel like this is one of my greatest take-aways. Learning new approaches to developing rubrics, seeing the different grading categories people are using, and understanding, on a deeper level, the philosophical and practical components of grading, really helped me to develop my pedagogy around one of the most complicated parts of teaching writing, which is *grading* writing. Rubrics of course help us create a template for scoring, but it's not like math or science where there is one right answer. English professors are required to interpret their students' writing according to the guidelines we set, and we know that will never be a perfect system. Thus, the guidelines/rubric is kind of essential. So discussing and engaging in strategies to try and develop alternative systems and embrace progressive ideas around this has been so helpful to me as I develop my Fall course and beyond.

4) Approaches to Difficult Texts

I loved this section! I have often shied away from providing students with texts that are, in my mind, perceived as "too difficult." But this really changed my thinking. It doesn't mean that I will be providing exclusively difficult texts, but framing a conversation around **why** difficult texts matters, and having that with the students themselves, instead of just presenting difficult texts and making claims about it being important without digging into the why–including why it is even perceived as difficult text to being with – well, it shouldn't have been such a revelation, but it was. I do this with poetry sometimes. As a poet, I'm always arguing poetry is only inherently "difficult" because of our perception of it being so. So maybe in some ways I already do this. But extending that to secondary materials – articles, essays, theory – where I primarily avoid assigning more difficult texts for fear of abandonment! (just kidding-ish), maybe that's something to explore further, and bring that pedagogical approach to these texts, too.

5) Some Other Thoughts

More Freewriting: One of the things I did pretty quickly into the workshop was start incorporating more freewriting into the classroom. Although I always personally enjoyed freewriting, for whatever reason, I got out of the practice of incorporating it regularly. I almost immediately remedied that after our second meeting seeing how helpful re-engaging in freewriting was for me personally. And this was to great results for the students as well. I have several reflections from them now on their approaches to writing, how they feel their writing practices have changed, etc. and that, I believe, was not only helpful to them, but also for me to see how they've grown from their own perspective.

Outlines: Our group had a really generative discussion on outlining and it made me rethink some approaches, and make a more formal lesson on outlining earlier in the semester.

Ungrading: We talked a lot about "ungrading," an alternative approach to grading (seeing as we can't eradicate it altogether), and I'm looking into implementing that either next semester or next year. This isn't an idea directly presented by Bean & Melzer, but we talked about it both in the context of rubrics, and in other areas. I particularly like the approach that makes student's active participants in their grading, in the sense that they grade themselves so you can see what their own perception is of their performance and growth, and how that also requires them to reflect on that in a meaningful way.

Pretend you are sitting down to write an article for a journal in your field or work on a chapter of a master's thesis or dissertation. You are just starting to write. How do you move forward? (10 minutes)

How I move forward when writing an article or essay depends on how long I've been thinking about the topic. Often, I will have scattered notes in various notebooks; I may start by returning to those notes and trying to synthesize them. If it's a more fresh idea, I will start by free writing or making a list of thoughts/ideas/references, and then try to synthesize those. I truly love lists. I love the associative leaps that can come out of them. In a way, this also mimics my creative process. Some poetry is written by the sheer force of creative momentum—the kind of poems where I need the world to stop to start writing it. Sometimes that will be a poem that is written in a single session. Other times, it's just a beginning, or an ending. When I'm feeling the creative spirit but not called to write about any one thing, I will sit down and make a list of words I take randomly by opening to random pages of random books. I'll collect a list of random words, and try to use all of them in a poem. Even if a full poem doesn't come out of that, there's often a line, or a turn of phrase, I'm inclined to do something with. It brings unexpected words together, which, for me, gives poetry its lifeblood. Writing about poetry, however, is a bit of a different process, but the more I think about it, the less different it feels. Usually, I start with the material. I mark passages. Find strands, or threads, in the work. Make lists of lines, or lists of ideas about a poem, or a recurring image. I pull out, or on, the most interesting threads. And, if I'm inclined to be critical, the least interesting ones, too.

Think back to something you read (in your field) in the last few months that was challenging for you. How did you approach it?

This isn't really in my field, per se, but part of my research for a hybrid poetry manuscript is on the concept of parasitology. And I'm trying to read Michel Serres text Parasite, which is derived from french fables, and I don't know the french fables. So I found a resource that highlights the french fables in particular that Serres is discussing and now I'm working on finding translations of those texts so that I can better understand the points of reference to understand his arguments.

So I guess this is an issue of translation, in perhaps a very specific way, but I find that most of the challenges I face relate to the concept of translation. Whether that be translating theory into practice or translating dense language into more manageable parts.

There was an essay I read about Ursula LeGuin titled Storytelling as Way of Translation and it was about LeGuin both literally translating the tao te ching and about how the tao te ching itself is translated through her other writing.

Summary vs Analysis exercise

Outline for papers exercise