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ENG 470

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## Final Composition & Pedagogy Unit Plan

### **Description of the Unit**

As someone who has studied to become a teacher for the past four years, I have spent a lot of time and energy dreaming up lessons and units that I want to teach in the secondary classroom. I have quickly learned, however, that the process of creating units becomes a lot more complicated once you actually have to think about all the details necessary in creating a relevant, engaging, and beneficial unit plan. That is why I would like to first say a couple of things before I actually reveal my plan for this writing unit. Then, I will get into a description of my lessons through the lens of the three pedagogies I used to frame this unit: community-engaged pedagogy, process pedagogy, and collaborative pedagogy.

First, I am a firm believer that a teacher has to know her students before she actually can teach them effectively. By this, I do not mean just knowing your students' names and the activities they are involved in. Of course, these are both relevant, but I am referring to really understanding where your students are coming from on both an academic and personal level. Once students step foot in my classroom, I want to make a point to let them know that I care about them and see them first and foremost as a *person*, and not just as a mere letter grade. That being said, I do also want to emphasize to my future students that the study of English, and

especially writing, is so immensely important. Truly, being able to write well gives you a certain power in the real world. I really do believe that, and I want to try to instill that in my students. That is why I think this unit plan will be beneficial to my future classroom. It will help me to get to know *them* and what they are passionate about, and it also will help me *help them* become a better writer. Before this unit can all take place, however, I want to already have started to establish a meaningful relationship with each student in my class. I think this is necessary because for students to care about the content, they need to know that their teacher cares about them.

Second, this unit is certainly dependent upon the students that I have in my classroom. Because this unit was designed without a specific group of students in mind, I am fully aware that it is not going to work with *all* classes. However, I do think that adjustments can be made in order to make this project work with all different types of students. I think this unit will vary greatly dependent on what type of writing instruction these students have had prior to my class (each district is different), what kind of area I am teaching in, and whether or not the administration of the school I am working at supports my unit at all. It may be that the principal/assistant principal does not feel comfortable with me having students go out into the community representing the school. Certainly there are also legal concerns that come into question when sending students out to volunteer in the community. These problems and concerns will be completely dependent on the district and administration, and they will have to be addressed before any of this unit plan can take place.

Lastly, my third point is that this unit will not be taught in sequential order. I have written disclaimers at the beginning of almost every day because writing this paper requires students to

work outside of class, which will definitely take more than one night. Not only that, I, as the teacher, need to have time to grade and give feedback on assignments. Therefore, it is to be expected that students will be participating in other activities while simultaneously working on this project.

All of this being said, my goal behind this unit plan is that students will learn how to participate in a discussion about something they care about by hands-on experience and by problematizing an issue. The first way this will be accomplished is through community-engaged pedagogy. As Laura Julier, Kathleen Livingstone, and Eli Goldblatt say in their article “Community-Engaged Pedagogies,” having students engage in this sort of service learning forces them to an experience that is both meaningful and applicable to their lives (57). These two things—meaningfulness and applicability—are something that a lot of students do not seem to find in the secondary English classroom. This community-engaged writing is a great way to get students excited about their writing because they see it has a direct purpose. Of course, there is also a direct purpose in literary analysis and persuasive writing, and I plan on teaching this to my students, but I think having them do this community-engaged writing would be a great stepping stone to get students to really start realizing the value of writing in a more generalized sense.

Donald Murray tells us that “[Y]ou don’t learn a process by talking about it, but by doing it” (5), and this idea of process pedagogy is something I also tried to bring into this unit especially. Research projects can be daunting to students, but I tried to break this research portion down a little bit so that it is not as intimidating. They do pre-writing “research” by actually participating in a volunteering activity and answering questions beforehand. However, as the project goes on, students are giving more instruction on how to write questions to guide

their direct research. By setting the project up this way, my hope is that students will become genuinely *curious* about their issue and the questions they came up with through their personal experience volunteering for the organization. This takes students through the writing process in a very concrete way. Throughout drafting, too, students are deeply invited into the process because the teacher will be giving them feedback in a one-on-one conference. Not only that, students will have work time in class to get feedback and discuss where they are in their paper with their peers. Students also will constantly be reflecting on their work, and they will share these final reflective insights with their classmates at the very end of this project during the presentations. Students definitely will be actively participating in the writing process; they will not just be hearing about it through their teacher.

Although I believe direct instruction is necessary to the success of a writing student, I genuinely think they learn so much more from collaborating with those around them through collaborative pedagogy. This is why throughout the entirety of the unit, students are required to work with their peers in researching, drafting, and presenting their projects. When students work with one another, Kenneth Bruffee argues in his article “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” we allow students to collaborate and discuss with one another in discourse, and are therefore inhibiting them to challenge one another to develop essential knowledge (402). Students learn so much more when they actually “generate” knowledge themselves rather than having their teacher spoon feed it to them. That being said, however, in the secondary classroom, this needs to be guided by the teacher. This is why after having students discuss with one another, I have them turn “exit slips” or other assignments in to me in order to keep them on the right track. Again, it will be essential to know my students well during

this project, too, because I will need to know who will/will not work together on certain aspects of the project. Collaborative learning is more than just putting students together to talk; good teaching is all about *intentionality*, and that is manifested in placing students in groups as well.

This unit is a way for students to get excited about writing and learn about how to meaningfully connect their own experience with objective research by complicating an issue—but it is also more than that. Students will learn how to work with one another, participate in the writing process, and engage with the community around them. Although this unit might not work in every single classroom, it surely is a good stepping stone in helping students to ignite the hidden passion they might have for articulating their thoughts through written words.

**Standards Addressed in this Unit (via ND State Standards):**

Grades 11-12 W.7 → Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer complex questions (including self-generated questions) or solve problems.

- a. Develop a complex research question or set of questions.
- b. Narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate.
- c. Synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Grades 11-12 W.8 → Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources.

- a. Use advanced searches effectively.
- b. Assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience.
- c. Integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas.
- d. Avoid plagiarism.
- e. Avoid overreliance on any one source.
- f. Follow a standard format for citation that is appropriate for the discipline and writing type.

**Driving Question** → What is something you are passionate about? Why is this issue more complicated than it seems?

**Pedagogies that will be Addressed** →

- Community-engaged

- Process
- Collaboration

**Lesson 1** → Introduce project and expectations

- **Objective:** Students will understand the expectations and standards of the service hour portion of this project.
- Start the lesson by having students answer the question → What is an issue you think is more complicated than people make it out to be? Why?
- Introduce the main idea of the unit to the students with transparency (**hand out Steps 1 & 2**)
  - Students must conduct a service project about something they are passionate about
  - Students must do some brief research before they conduct their service
  - Students must write reflective journals while completing their service
  - Students will be asked to come up with an issue to research and write about in relation to their observations
  - Students' writing assignment will be to connect their research with their personal experience in a meaningful way by problematizing the issue
  - Make sure to tell students that this final writing assignment will *not* just simply be a reflection or a reiteration of their journals. It will be writing *to define the complicated nature of this issue* (idea retrieved from Thomas Cooley's *Back to the Lake*)
- Give students ideas of things they could do for a service project → provide examples (Minneapolis area)
  - Sharing & Caring Hands
  - Volunteer tutoring at the elementary schools
  - Volunteering with a religious organization
  - Food shelters
  - Try to encourage doing service **within our school community** → school dances, charity fundraisers, special events, etc.

## English 11 Service Writing Project

What is something you are *passionate* about? What do you want to tell others about it?

**Your goal:** To write a paper that shows the complicated nature about an issue that you (1) are passionate about, and (2) have been involved with in our community .

## How will this be accomplished? → 7 Easy Steps

### Step 1: Find and Organization & Do Initial Research

- You are required to complete at least 15 volunteer hours within the next 10 weeks at an organization of your choosing within our community.
- Before you can volunteer you **must** get your organization approved by Miss Sharp and sign a conduct policy agreement
- You will do research beforehand by answering the following questions in a 1-2 page description:
  - What is the name of the organization you will be serving and what are its goals?
  - Why are you passionate about this organization?
  - What will you be doing for your service hours and who is your contact person?
  - What is your plan for getting these hours done? How will you get there and what will be your schedule?
  - Who are the people this organization serves, and what is important to know about them before you complete your service?
  - What are some things you want to better understand/learn while you are serving this organization?
- NOTE: This portion of your initial research is due *before* you start your hours
- (another) NOTE: When researching, make sure your sources are *credible*. I suggest looking at official government websites, organization websites, websites that end in .org, etc.
  - Try to stay away from blog posts, Wikipedia, Google reviews, etc. → Any questions about this, please don't hesitate to ask

### Step 2: Complete Service Hours & Reflective Journals

- 5-8 hours required (feel free to do more if you wish)
- For each time you complete volunteer hours, you must:
  - 1. Get a signature from your contact person to prove that you completed your hours
  - 2. Complete a reflective journal by answering the questions →  
What did you do today at your service organization? What did you learn from your experience? What questions do you have? Do you have any ideas of what issue you want to write about for your paper after your experience today?

- NOTE: You must complete a minimum of *three* journals. This project is supposed to be volunteering for a sustained period of time, not just once
- Example of how I want your journals to be formatted:

Bob Smith, Volunteer Journal #1

Organization: Sharing & Caring Hands Tutoring Center

Date: 12/1/2019 → Completed 3 hours from 12pm-3pm

Signature of my contact person: *Miss Kathy Klement*

[Description answering the questions: What did you do today at your service organization? What is something interesting/revealing/surprising that you noticed? Did anything really not surprise/fulfilled your expectations? What questions do you have? Do you have any ideas of what issue you want to write about for your paper after your experience today?]

### Code of Conduct

By signing this document, you are agreeing to:

1. Get your volunteer organization approved by Miss Sharp *before* you start volunteering there. You almost must submit the contact information of your supervisor/contact person to Miss Sharp.
2. Conduct yourself in a respectful manner at all times. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Arriving to your volunteer hours on time
  - Listening and following directions
  - Being pleasant and friendly to those around you
  - Speaking in a respectful manner and tone
3. Be aware that you are not only representing our school, which is certainly important, but you are also always representing yourself. Therefore, always treat yourself and those around you well, especially as you are completing these volunteer hours.



Failure to abide by this code of conduct will result in consequences that may include failure of the project or class. Consequences will be determined by Miss Sharp and, if appropriate, the administration.

We all want you to succeed, but in order to do so you *must* be respectful and conduct yourself in an appropriate manner while you are out in the community (and at all times!).

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### Lesson 2 → Begin research

- (Lesson 2 will take place *after* the service has been completed)
- **Objective:** Students will decide on an issue to write on and formulate research questions in order to appropriately and effectively complete research for the issue they will use for their final paper.
- Go through real-world examples with them
  - For example: A student who is passionate about helping children with special needs would need to ask questions like
    - 1. What organizations are me help students with special needs?
    - 2. What kind of special needs are more common in children?
    - 3. What are strategies/good things to be aware of when working with students with special needs?
- Give examples of how *not* to write research questions. For example
  - Yes/No questions → Example: Is this organization important?
    - Change to → Why is this organization important? What services do they provide?
  - Questions that are easily answerable: When was his organization founded?
    - Change to → What is the history behind this organization? Why were they established and how have they developed?
- Hand out **Step 3** to students

### Step 3: Research Questions

- After you have completed your service, review your journal entries. Are there things you still have questions about or at least want to learn more about?
- Come up with a few issues from the experience you have had and the brief research you have done already at the beginning of the project. Keep this question in mind

→ What issue the organization you observed or the people you assisted is more complicated than it seems?

- After you narrow down your issue, come up with a few research questions you want to address. These questions should *not* be easily answerable. They should help you in connecting your research to your experience as a volunteer.
- You should prove your completion of this step by writing a brief description of your issues and research questions.
- Example:

I spent the past 10 weeks volunteering at Sharing & Caring Hands Tutoring Center, which mostly serves children who are refugees from the Middle East. Tutors at Sharing & Caring Hands help students with their literacy; this could mean anything from teaching a student the letters of the alphabet to helping them answer comprehension questions after reading a short story.

From my experience, here are some issues I have come up with that I want to research more about:

1. The process of bringing refugees from third world countries to the U.S.
2. How students learning English as a second language are treated in the American education system
3. The education of third world countries (specifically Somalia, since that is where most of my students were from) and how it differs from the United States.

I have decided that I want to do my project on the third issue. Here are the research questions I have come up with:

1. What does education look like in Somalia? What does this culture consider the goal of education to be and who has the right to it?
  2. What does education look like in American? What is our goal?
  3. Why are organizations like Sharing & Caring Hands important in aiding of the education of these children from Somalia?
- Next, you will conduct your research using credible sources (I do not have a set number you need to have, but I do not think this is possible with less than three). I suggest to look at places like:
    - Organization websites
    - Government websites
    - Scholarly articles
  - As you conduct your research, make sure you are thinking about what you want your **argument** to be in your paper (Answer the question: Why is this more complicated than it seems?). Think about:
    - 1. What do I want to tell my audience about my issue for them to understand the context?

- 2. How is this issue more complicated than it seems? Are their misconceptions about this issue?
- These are just some questions to think about to get you started. Your argument doesn't have to be limited to these example questions.

- Have students work independently to come up with research questions. Once they have an idea, have them get up and form two circles around the room.
- Have students rotate about the circles and share their research questions with their classmates → encourage students to give feedback to one another and give other students ideas about further research they could do

**Lesson 3** → Get feedback on research and begin drafting a thesis statement

- (Will be conducted after students have completed a good amount of research)
- **Objective:** Students will complete a short research presentation to share with their peers in order to get feedback and come up with an idea for their thesis statement.
- Give the students this model for their thesis →
  - This issue is more complicated than it seems *because...*
- Students will be assigned into groups of three or four. They will share where they where they completed their volunteer hours, the research they have conducted, and an idea of what kind of argument they want to make in their paper about the complicated nature of their issue.
- After each student presents, their peers will give them feedback
- Before each student leaves the classroom, they will give the teacher an exit slip which will be the “first draft” of their thesis statement → The next class period, students will be given back their thesis statements with feedback from the teacher

**Lesson 4** → Explain introduction and outline

- (Will be conducted once students have completed their research)
- **Objective:** Students will understand how to write an introduction and the narrative outline as well as their benefit for the overall project.
- Explain to students the *purpose* of an introduction →
  - 1. Engage the audience
  - 2. Tell us what your paper is about
  - 3. Tell us why this issue is important → Contextualize the situation
  - 4. Tell us your thesis statement
- Have students read a few introductions as a class
  - 1. Past student example (1 strong one and 1 poor one)
  - 2. Example from my writing

Title of Paper: The Printing Press, the Internet, and the Necessary Suspension of Judgement

For many in their 20's and younger, it is difficult to imagine a world without the internet. Sometimes we are so dependent upon it that it is hard to comprehend what life was like before its invention. Picturing a world without printed texts, however, is an even harder concept to grasp. Both the internet and the printing press are so incorporated into our daily lives as individuals in modern society that we do not usually notice its effects on our language, though they affect the way we write and speak every day. Although scholars agree that both the internet and the printing press have influenced the English language, it is hard to pin down exactly what its impacts have been, therefore it is difficult—and perhaps even problematic—to make a value judgement about either at this point in time.

- Have students read these two introduction and discuss:
  - 1. Are these well done?
  - 2. Do they complicate the issue? Make it important? Give a thesis statement?
- Tell students that they have to write a narrative outline of their paper (**hand out Step 4 below**)
  - Pretty informal
  - Piece together what research should go with what, as well as where they will fit in their insights from their experience volunteering
  - Narrative description of what they are going to write about and in what order

**Step 4: Writing a Narrative Outline**

- After you have conducted your research by using several sources, I want you to think about what you want your paper to look like. What research do you have and how can you put it together with the insights of your experience in a meaningful way?
- Your paper should work to *define* the complicated nature of your issue. By this, I mean that your thesis statement should be something like: “Sharing & Caring Hands is an organization that works with children from third world countries, especially from Somalia, to bridge the gaps in their education, since the American and Somalian education systems are so vastly different.”
- Requirements for the narrative outline (1-1 ½ pages)
  - 1. Introduction → Tell us what your paper is going to be about, why it is important, and your thesis statement. Make it engaging!
  - 2. A brief narrative of what you are going to write about in your paper. Here is an example of what I am looking for: “First, I am going to write about the education system in the United States by using the statistics I gathered from the official U.S. Department of Education website. Then, I will connect this to my own experience of education...”

**Lesson 5** → Explain draft and give work time

- (To be conducted once the narrative outlines have been graded)
- **Objective:** Students will understand the expectations and guidelines for the draft and begin to articulate their thoughts in a meaningful way.
- Hand back narrative outlines with feedback
- Go through draft prompt with students → Hand out **Step 5 and rubric** to students
- Have students talk to the person next to them and engage in a discussion about the outline of their paper → encourage students to give one another feedback
- Have students begin to draft their papers
- Ask students if they have any clarifying questions

**Step 5: Writing a Draft**

- Write, write, write! Use your outline to guide your paper, but don't feel confined by it.
- Your final paper should be between 3-4 pages. It will include
  - 1. Introduction → Why is this issue important? What is this paper going to be about? What is your thesis statement?
  - 2. Body → You are writing an essay that will define the complicated nature of your issue of your research in light of your experience. The organization of your paper will really depend on your research and experience. Think about what it is necessary for the audience to know in order to define the complication of your issue. You will have a meeting with Miss Sharp to discuss this further after your first draft.
  - 3. Conclusion → Connect back to your introduction, tell us the implications of your argument, and restate your thesis.

**Service Learning Project Rubric** (completed using <http://rubistar.4teachers.org>)

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Organization	Information is very organized with well-constructed paragraphs and subheadings.	Information is organized with well-constructed paragraphs.	Information is organized, but paragraphs are not well-constructed.	The information appears to be disorganized. 8)

<b>Mechanics</b>	No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.	Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors	A few grammatical spelling, or punctuation errors.	Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.
<b>Sources</b>	All sources are accurately documented in MLA format.	All sources are accurately documented, but a few are not in MLA format.	All sources are accurately documented, but many are not in ML format.	Some sources are not accurately documented.
<b>Quality of Information</b>	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.
<b>Connection of Research &amp; Experience</b>	All information about research and personal experience is integrated in relevant and insightful way.	Most information about research and personal experience is integrated in relevant and insightful way.	Some information about research and personal experience is integrated in relevant and insightful way.	No information about research and personal experience is integrated in relevant or insightful way.
<b>Complication of the Issue</b>	The paper shows the complicated nature of the issue by showing evidence both from research and personal experience.	The paper somewhat shows the complicated nature of the issue by showing evidence both from research and personal experience.	The paper somewhat shows the complicated nature of the issue by showing some evidence of either research and/or personal experience.	The paper does not show the complicated nature of the issue.

**Lesson 6** → Draft work day

- **Objective:** Students will continue to formulate their argument and articulate their thoughts of their experience and research in this draft work time.
- Students will work in class working on their draft. Teacher will be checking in with students, answering questions, and aiding in their discussions.

**Lesson 7 and 8** → Feedback Day: Conferences & Peer Evaluation

- (These lessons will be conducted once students have completed a draft and turned one into the teacher already)
- **Objective:** Students will give and receive feedback from one another and begin to understand a “re-vision” for their paper.
- Each day, students will bring two copies of the paper to class. They will exchange their papers with two other students, whom the teacher will choose. They will evaluate the papers by using **Step 6** below → not so much an evaluation, but rather just observations

### Step 6: Re-vision & Editing

- When you get your peer’s paper, please answer the following questions:
  - 1. What is their argument/thesis statement?
  - 2. What is the main point of each paragraph?
  - 3. Why is this issue more complicated than it seems?
- After you get done conferencing with Miss Sharp, revise your paper
- Once you have revised → Edit for grammatical mistakes and sentence structure issues
- Turn it in when finished!

- Each student will have a one-on-one conference with the teacher. Students will get feedback from the teacher verbally, with probably a few very brief written comments. Students will be encouraged to take notes during this discussion and ask questions to their teacher.

### Lesson 9 → Prep for presentation

- (To be conducted once final drafts have been turned in and graded)
- **Objective:** Students will understand the expectations of the presentations and begin to synthesize their final thoughts on this issue.
- Give students the expectations of the presentation
- Tell students that students from the younger grades will be invited to come and watch their presentations → They look up to you!

### Step 7: Present!

- You’ve put a lot of work into this project, and we want to hear about it!
- Please include these elements in your presentation
  - 1. Where did you volunteer? What is their mission and who do they serve? What did you do?
  - 2. What is the issue you wrote on and why did you choose it?

- 3. Why is this issue more complicated than it seems?
  - 3. Explain your research and thesis statement → How did you come up with it?
  - What did you learn from this project? What would you do differently if you could do it again?
  - Are you considering still being involved with this organization or something like it? Why or why not?
  - If not, is there some other issue you would like to further research or volunteer for?
  - What did you learn about writing in this process? Do you feel like you have improved in anything specifically?
  - Please include a few visual elements in your presentation → any medium is fine
- Give students time in class to work on this presentation and to talk to one another about ideas
  - Hand students back their final papers and have them take feedback from that and *apply* it into their paper
  - As an exit slip, have students spend about 10-15 mins in class reflecting on this project. What went well? What didn't? Are you satisfied with your grade? Why or why not?
  - Depending on how the project goes → Might give students the opportunity to redo corrections I gave them in their final paper and get partial credit back

**Lesson 10** → Presentations (definitely will require more than one day)

- **Objective:** Students will synthesize their final thoughts on this project and present this information to their classmates.
- Each student will present their final presentation to the class → There will be a question and answer time after each presentation
- Younger grades will be invited to the presentations in order to get them thinking about this project in the future, and also because I think it maybe will inspire them to go into the community to get involved with something they care about

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