

English Department Minutes
Monmouth College
Monday, October 29, 2007
3pm-4:15pm

Absent: Belschner; Watson in at 3:10pm; Price in at 3:40pm; Willhardt and Solberg out at 4pm

1. Revision Strategies for English 110

Rob Hale requested department members to share successful revision strategies used in English 110 since this topic was a concern in meetings from last spring and this fall. The following ideas were offered:

- A focus on audience may help students revise assignments for the position and proposal papers. Since counterargument is often a weak point among 110 students, this assignment helps them find an opposing audience while they revise. The target audience is written at the top of the draft and students revise that draft, then a peer review is focused on that oppositional view. (Mark W.)
- A peer editing handout was provided which gives a targeted revision focusing on one issue at a time. Students often feel that their draft is fine without editing, there is nothing more to change, there is no clear idea of what to work on first, they are bored with the draft, or a peer editor has no suggestions for improvement. Writing the changes on a hard copy, then waiting till later to make changes on the electronic copy helps students with revision. (Erika S.)
- Students make significant changes when using progressively different rough drafts (draft #1, draft #2, etc.). (Rob H.)
- Students can rewrite final drafts within one week for an averaged grade with a new draft. (Mary B.)
- A “key-hole” model/“umbrella” model allows students to work on micro and macro revision. Students write a thesis statement, then they write topical sentences to make an “abstract paragraph” based on the thesis statement. This holistic approach tends to give students success in peer group reviews. (Craig W.)
- Show two models/drafts of the same essay. The class then evaluates the original draft with criteria, the moves to the revised draft with better changes. Students can see how time to reconsider drafts makes for a clearer piece of writing; however, students often cannot apply this concept/exercise to their own writing. (Rob H.)
- Using sample essays/paragraphs works well and students can revise the samples as an exercise. (Rob H.)
- Revision can be a three-stage process as outlined in Good Reasons. Students consider global revision, editing, and proofreading as separate stages in the revision process. A “revision log” due to the instructor helps guide students with revision and helps students

address every component of an essay during revision. This also includes the “so what?” test: always focus on the purpose of the essay and answer “so what?” with major arguments or information. (Cyn K.)

- Graded/critiqued rough drafts from the instructor offer guidance to students early in the writing process. A focus on “why” information is included and “how” the argument succeeds are key points in revision. (Kevin R.)

1A. The following comments were made regarding the revision process and English 110 students:

- Students need to acknowledge their responsibility in the writing/revision process
- Discovering the “heart of meaning” as a source of excitement is important in the process.
- Students need to spend more time on pre-writing and less time on drafts
- Part of the problem is the presence of a “disaffected” student body, a struggle throughout their entire educational career
- Revision is developmental for students. Their vision of revision changes over time. An experienced writer sees it as meaning.
- Students do not know what the revision process entails.
- Students need to have a “stake” in the argument/topic
- Much energy is often devoted to the “bottom” five students in an English 110 class
- Students sometimes only give “lip service” to suggestions made in a conference with an instructor. Students may leave with four or five specific things to work on, but the changes are not made on the next draft. This may be a work ethic problem.
- Students may not have the “parts” to see the “whole” in the revision process since focused revision is a step back from holistic revision.

2. Report on Meeting with Dean

Rob Hale met Friday, November 2, with the dean and with chairs of departments who teach in Wallace Hall. Each department may eventually have a room in Wallace Hall that is solely for that department with appropriate technology and furniture.

Another section of English 200 is being added in the spring which Watson will teach; he will drop the American poetry class. This will not set a precedent for the department.

All chairs met last Thursday, November 1, to discuss grade data/distributions from Datatel.

3. Registration Update
Registration begins Tuesday, November 6; please make sure all advisees are cleared for registration if eligible.
4. English 110 Final Exam
Kevin Roberts has requested samples of possible final diagnostic readings for the December 110 exam.
5. Additional Meetings
The department will meet once more on Monday, November 12, 2007, at 3pm for discussion of English 110. This meeting may regard how to approach the sourced essay, best practices in 110, or more practicalities tied to the 110 text. A possible “post-mortem” of the book and strategies in 110 could be scheduled for next semester, as well as additional agenda for the spring.

Respectfully submitted by Kevin Roberts.