

# Seminar in Writing Program Administration

ENGL 680, Bradley Dilger, Spring 2016

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Heavilon Hall 303B, tentatively TWR 10:30–noon, appointments always welcome

In this seminar, we take up the highly specialized field of writing program administration. Recognizing that not all universities are research institutions with large numbers of graduate students, we'll think of administration broadly, considering not only the traditional WPA, but a variety of types of WPA work, including research, program building, developing intra-institutional relationships, and more. We will consider a broad range of questions, focusing on several which I believe are enduring, but working together to find other questions to consider:

- Is WPA work different from other types of intellectual and service work undertaken in universities? How and why? What can the study of WPA history offer those asked to perform WPA work?
- Should WPAs focus on traditional roles such as mentoring graduate students, or reposition themselves as public intellectuals?
- What roles should assessment, research, and data-driven decision-making play in contemporary WPA work?
- What responsibilities do WPAs and writing programs have for ensuring at-risk and/or under-represented students, staff, and faculty are treated fairly and respectfully, and supported successfully?
- How should writing programs, writing centers, English departments, and other institutional units be interconnected and/or organized?

When possible, we'll cooperate with Harry Denny's writing program administration course to consider these issues. If you're enrolled in both courses, I encourage you to consider the similarities and differences between the types of administrative practices our courses engage.

## Texts

Our key questions map to five books — three (\*) available as downloadable PDFs:

- Linda Adler-Kassner, *The Activist WPA*.\*
- Sid Dobrin (ed), *Don't Call It That*.
- Brian Huot, *Rearticulating Writing Assessment*.\*
- Rita Malenczyk (ed), *A Rhetoric for WPAs*.
- Susan McLeod, *Writing Program Administration*.\*

We will add selected articles from *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, *CCC*, *College English*, *Composition Forum*, *Composition Studies*, edited collections, etc — both texts I already have in mind and those we select together based on the focuses which emerge for us.

I will distribute PDFs of any texts not easily found via my course web site.

## Assignments

Students will develop unique focuses and forms for a two-part semester project, with the first and larger academic element focusing on academic audiences, and the second smaller activist project explicitly intended to cross the disciplinary boundary of rhetoric and composition: taking our work public, or writing another field into connection with ours. You'll build this work beginning with the readings we share, but that will be just a start, as in about twelve weeks of meetings we can only scratch the surface of the literature in writing program administration. We'll present our projects at a department-wide showcase including Denny's course.

Consistent, active, and engaged participation in classes and using Purdue's Mixable platform will be expected. Mixable will help us share our reactions to the readings before and between classes, so our class time is more productive.

Please see the more detailed assignments for specifics.

## WPA-L

WPA-focused seminars often require graduate students to subscribe to the WPA-L, the email discussion list unofficially associated with the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA). However, I recommend the reverse: do not subscribe to the list. The email volume is very high, and unfortunately the signal-to-noise ratio is not. Lately, there have been too many instances where conversations on the list devolved into flame wars, and I have too often seen new voices (e.g. graduate students) shouted down by long-time list members. When the immediate past president decides to unsubscribe, that suggests a serious problem. Your time is better spent searching the list archives, reading back issues of *Writing Program Administration*, or reading our course texts.

## Grading

If I have to consider anything other than an A for your work, there's a problem and we'll be talking about it. Students whose work is not exemplary may earn grades of B or lower.

Semester project: 70% (60/10± academic/activist).

Participation: 30% (20/10± in-class/Mixable).

## Policies

In a graduate course, we can get by with a very small amount of legalese. See the end of the syllabus for policies Purdue requires and/or strongly recommends.

1. **Be nice.** Our classrooms and electronic spaces are places where everyone should feel welcome. Be generous in your responses to your colleagues, face to face and online. When we work in the community, we should make people want to know more about us.
2. **Talk with me.** I text, web, tweet, Facebook, Skype, Gmail chat, etc. and welcome conversations with you in all those forms (just not voice mail, which I avoid due to poor hearing). Please send me a friend request or follow me if you like (I don't initiate social media contact with students, but gladly reply to it.) I welcome office visits, too — with or without an appointment — and I'm eager to help you not only with this course but with anything related to your graduate work.

3. **Prepare.** Read the texts carefully; I highly recommend you take notes (your gift to your future self). Use the detailed schedule to focus your reading. Please bring all relevant texts to class on the days we are engaging them. Paper and electronic versions are equally welcome.
4. **Engage.** Participation is a requirement. Share your work early and often. If you miss a class, please discuss it with me in advance or as soon as possible thereafter.
5. **Learning accommodations are gladly made.** If you have a special learning need, let me know ASAP (in person or via the Disability Resource Center) and I'll do my best to make arrangements which are mutually acceptable and beneficial.
6. **Privacy matters.** Purdue is serious about FERPA; I respect your privacy too. Office hours are best for discussing your coursework.
7. **Use computing wisely.** I invite you to bring a laptop or tablet to class and use it as you see fit. But don't get lost in it—or distract others around you.

## Overview schedule

A detailed schedule including links and other useful information will be published on the course web site before the start of week two. Please use it early and often.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Readings and activities</b>
1 (Jan 12, Jan 14)	Syllabus, introductions, assignments; WPA Outcomes; McLeod
2 (Jan 19, Jan 21)	McLeod + articles TBD
3 (Jan 26, Jan 28)	Adler-Kassner; <b>Preliminary project ideas</b>
4 (Feb 02, Feb 04)	Adler-Kassner + articles TBD
5 (Feb 09, Feb 11)	Malenczyk
6 (Feb 16, Feb 18)	Malenczyk; <b>Project proposal &amp; lightning review</b>
7 (Feb 23, Feb 25)	Dobrin
8 (Mar 01, Mar 03)	Readings TBD
9 (Mar 08, Mar 10)	Readings TBD; <b>Project conference</b>
10 (Mar 15, Mar 17)	<i>No classes — Spring Break</i>
11 (Mar 22, Mar 24)	Huot
12 (Mar 29, Mar 31)	Huot + articles TBD; <b>Project draft</b>
13 (Apr 05, Apr 07)	<i>No classes — ATTW + CCCC</i>
14 (Apr 12, Apr 14)	Readings TBD; please attend ICAP Showcase on your own
15 (Apr 19, Apr 21)	Readings TBD
16 (Apr 26, Apr 28)	Presentation week; <b>Project presentation</b>
17 (May 03, May 05)	<i>No classes — exam week; Final projects</i>

## Purdue policies

**Academic Integrity:** Purdue offers a detailed “Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students” at <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php>.

**Attendance:** The Dean of Students has established attendance, absence, and grief absence policies; find them at [http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/regulations\\_procedures/classes.html](http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/regulations_procedures/classes.html).

**Emergencies:** As per Purdue policy, “In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor’s control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructors or TAs via email or phone. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis. For more information about Emergency Preparedness, see [http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency\\_preparedness/](http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/).”

**Nondiscrimination:** “Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. ... Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or status as a veteran. The University will conduct its programs, services and activities consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and orders and in conformance with the procedures and limitations as set forth in Executive Memorandum No. D-1, which provides specific contractual rights and remedies.”

**Student conduct:** Purdue University’s Student Conduct Code applies to all work related to our course (in classrooms, completing course work, etc.): [http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student\\_conduct/index.html](http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student_conduct/index.html).

**Students with disabilities:** “Purdue University is required to respond to the needs of the students with disabilities as outlined in both the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 through the provision of auxiliary aids and services that allow a student with a disability to fully access and participate in the programs, services, and activities at Purdue University. ... It is the student’s responsibility to notify the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.purdue.edu/drc>) of an impairment/condition that may require accommodations and/or classroom modifications.”