College English III: Service Learning & Academic Writing
Fall, 2009, National Chengchi University

Time: Friday, CD
Classroom: 研究大樓 202
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Goals:
By the end of the semester, students will
1. develop effective strategies of academic writing.
2. be familiar with academic writing conventions in various writing modes such as, narration, comparison/contrast, and argumentation essays.
3. be able to confidently express personal values, present critical opinions and make arguments to participate in public debates relating to social welfare.
4. be able to apply and transfer daily life experience/observation to academic knowledge.
5. improve writing literacy in aspects of observing, problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, and interpersonal strategies.
6. establish competence of autonomous learning and create a sense of knowledge ownership.

Objectives:
1. Academic writing conventions as well as writing processes will be introduced, including topic sentence, thesis statement, essay structure, coherence, sentence variety, styles, idea generation, audience analysis, multiple drafting, peer review and etc.
3. Students will be encouraged to think, read and write critically to respond to the topic related issues.
1. Students will be challenged to apply the service learning experience to their academic writing through researching the topic related issues, participating in group discussions, critically analyzing readings, and integrating and synthesizing information

Method:
1. Authentic materials will be adopted to introduce three academic writing modes and mainstream academic writing conventions. Concept of process writing will be introduced; students will have to form peer review groups to discuss and revise drafts for their peers.
2. Students have to volunteer for community services. All writing tasks have to be based on students’ real-life participation in community services. Three writing projects are required:
narration, comparison and contrast, and argumentation essays. In the narrative essays, students could describe, explain or shed light on the offered services, contexts, served kids, personal conflicts or negotiations of doing community services, critical insights into issues of disadvantaged kids, educational systems, social welfare, and etc. For the comparison and contrast essays, students could analyze the issues they perceived through service learning, research related information to make comparison and contrast with other countries or other issues. Moreover, students are requested to provide personal critiques and opinions toward the issues and suggest possible solutions in their argumentative essay.

3. Through engagement of real-life community services, interactive discussions with peers and TAs, independent project research, hands-on writing projects and interpersonal collaborations, students are expected to become autonomous learners, critical thinkers as well as active participants of public affairs.

Requirements:
Students are expected to:
1. preview the assigned readings.
2. participate in classroom discussions.
3. collaborate with peers and TA to volunteer for community service activities and peer reviews.
4. turn in writing assignments on time.
5. reflect upon service learning experience in journals.
6. Participate in community services.

Grading Criteria:
Participation/Service learning: 20%
Writing projects (x3): 60%
Journals (x2): 20%

Rationale:
**What is service learning?** According to Seifer (1998), service learning is defined as “a structured learning experience that combines community service with explicit learning objectives, preparation and reflection” (p. 274). S-L students are reported to be able to acquire content related knowledge (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996; Eyler and Giles, 1999), develop writers’ awareness of citizenship (Eyler and Giles, 1999) as well as enhance learning motivation (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Bryant and Hunton, 2000), critical thinking and other meta-cognitive competences (Deans, 2000; Batchelder and Root, 1994).

Ellen Cushman (1999) further theorizes S-L as a combination of postmodern ethnography and notions of reciprocity (p.332). Through participating in volunteering services
and hands-on engagement, S-L students investigate a particular issue in terms of its tradition or subculture, and they explore the behaviors or values of the particular group of people or the target subjects. The real context experiences and the complexity of real world projects encourage students to observe issues behind surface as insiders, and empower them to make their writing arguments more critically. In other words, “S-L in writing” enables students to explore critical insights through shuttling between their view points of an outsider “stepping in” and an insider “stepping out” because S-L students “step in” as insiders to observe and learn the unfamiliarity, then turning the strangeness into a profession for accumulating knowledge through writing; while they are writing, they “step out” to adopt an outsider’s perspective to defamiliarize the ordinary in order to find extraordinary within, or “render the familiar strange” (Sullivan, 1996, 99).

However, incorporating S-L method in teaching EFL writing is rather an unconventional practice or even an agitated pedagogy in Taiwan. Under intense competition, Taiwanese students generally are test driven and purpose oriented for learning; however, the interconnectedness of academic writing and community services is not manifest to most teachers and students. This study attempts to report application of S-L method at a national university in Taiwan; moreover, it also explores construction of students’ textual identity and development of writers’ content knowledge ownership.

Educators have increasing interests in helping students learn content related knowledge through effective participation and hands-on engagement. Service learning (S-L) has been defined as a “credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity in such a way that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995, 112).

Traditional EFL writing teachers teach and assign writing tasks based on writing textbooks, in which introduce various writing rules and writing modes such as descriptive essay, cause/effect, comparison and contrast, argumentative essay and opinion essay. To generate ideas to compose and accomplish writing assignments, students evoke inspiration by reading writing samples, retrieving personal experiences or relying on imagination. Writing, hence, in a sense, becomes an isolated classroom or personal activity constrained within imitation of writing samples or decontextualized memories retrieval. Moreover, writers usually focus on writing rules and mechanical problems on sentence levels.

S-L bridges community service to one’s academic learning. In a S-L incorporated EFL writing classroom, the served subjects become the resources of students’ writing. Students may be highly motivated because the addressed issues in their writing tasks are real situations that they are engaging. In other words, S-L provides students a real context within which they
experience and participate in the situations as insiders. These real experiences increase the quantity and depth of students’ understanding of various issues, which may enable them to view things more critically and empower them to write more insights. In particular, the complexity of real-world projects can help students become more open to uncertainty, recognize greater complexity in the problems they analyze, think strategically, and bring in to academic context to enrich their writing and learning. Moreover, during S-L experiences students may encounter people from diverse backgrounds who hold different points of view. Interfacing with such people can challenge students to reconsider or reaffirm their own perspectives, which increase their understanding of other viewpoints, and contemplate a wider range of possibilities (Rama, D.V., Ravenscroft, S. P. Wolcott, S. K. & Zlotkowski, E., 2000).

Reference:


Required textbook:

Supplementary books:


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