

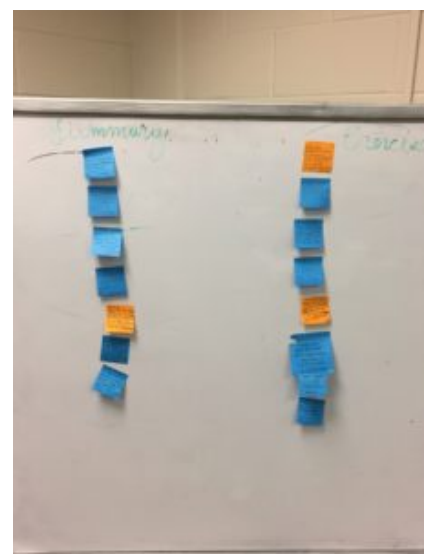
Writing and Work

Thank you for your attention and participation today. I know I consistently ask you to do things a little outside of your comfort zones and I am appreciative of your effort!

Today's class had the goal of enriching the understanding of how the service course's main aim is to get students ready to write for the world of work.

To do this work, we had three activities planned: discussion of student found readings, discussion of assigned readings, and then an exercise based on student answers to "what is good writing?"

However, as the students were working now writing a quick takeaway and then how use the take away in class, I realized that the student found articles weren't going to do the work that I had hoped. Totally, my fault. While you did exactly as I asked you to do, the sound articles were typically too theoretically focused and so diverse in topics that it was difficult to make the connections between them, everyday work practices, and the teaching of TPC. Sometimes exercises don't work so that meant doing a quick pivot.



the takeaway on one side and the

classroom
application the
other. Small
stickies to work on
concise language.

Half of the student found articles worked ok in that they had specific actionable things that could be worked out, but since the rest didn't we shifted to doing one of my favorite service course exercises. We all searched for a report online. As is always the case, you found lots of different examples from legal, journalistic, informational, recommendation, and one that did a number of things. The point of that exercise was to talk though the different ways generic conventions can play out. A "report" can mean a lot of different things in a lot of organizational settings and cultures. The key is to understand what the purpose of the report is and match it to the purpose and goal.

This led into a great discussion about the readings I had assigned. Y'all did a great job in distilling down the big takeaways:

- organizational cultures
- different types of writing that have some similarities
- rhetorical situations are messy and complicated (including writing issues of grammar an convention)
- one must let go of the singular author and embrace corporate authority since that's how much of the writing is done in the workplace



Atchafalya River Basin

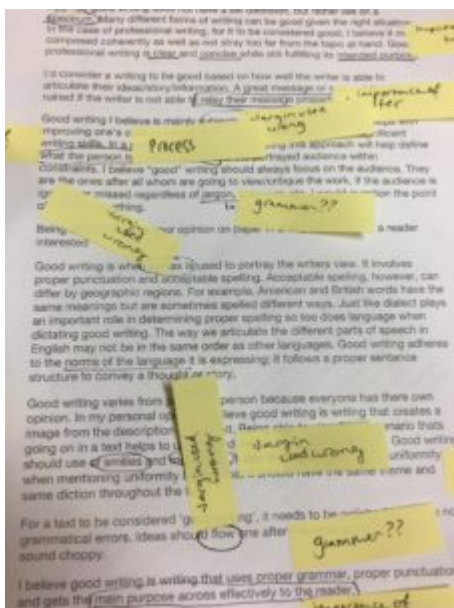
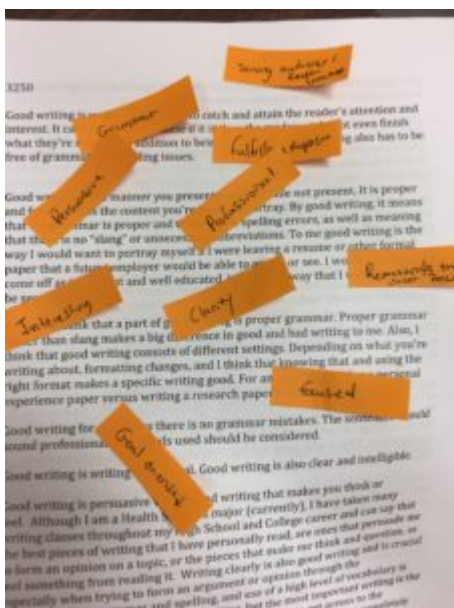
I was most impressed with your “reading landscapes” exercise as you took the things that you know (like close reading and literary analysis) and applied it to material spaces. This exercise was designed to get you thinking about how you and your students can begin to understand the organizational cultures that impact how business is done, including the writing that takes place.

Anyone can learn a lot about an organization by reading the physical, material spaces and asking informed questions. This is the key to orienting the purpose of the writing to the goals of the organization. It’s also a key in getting students to shift from academic writing to writing in the workplace. And it will help new members of an organization figure out what type of report they need to write! While it took you a minute to warm up, y’all finally got the hang of reading landscapes and after enough pointing out things you saw and asking follow-up questions (like what could it mean that the instructor work station is far from the screen?), y’all finally hit on many of the concepts that I was hoping you’d get. You were able to read the material space and make some informed decisions about what the organization values. (It’s always pretty easy to find a space to compare any humanities classroom too!)

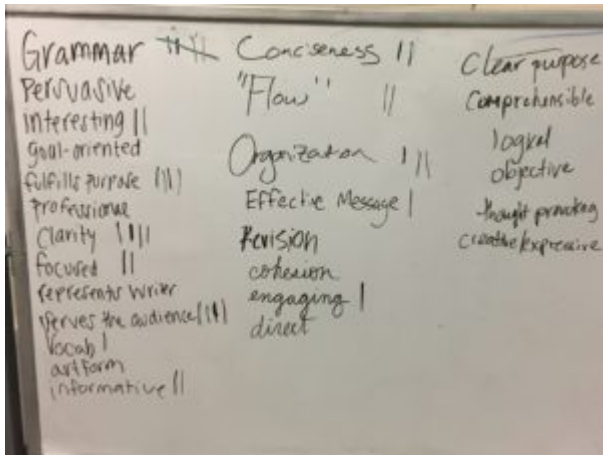
We ended the class by looking at student responses to the prompt “what is good writing?” This is an exercise that can be useful in the service course to get students thinking about writing and the different aims of writing. As one student aptly pointed out, using these responses in class would be a good way to open a lot of different discussions. This was a great connection and illustrates that I’m trying to model practices and processes for you to incorporate (with your own style and flair) into your courses.

The two images below are samples of the students working

through trying to find themes, similar ideas, perspectives, or whatever your favorite term is.



Here's the summary of the big theme's that y'all find in the responses:



This last exercise was also a way to start thinking about pedagogical and programmatic research and attempting to craft questions from the data that you have. But, it's also important to build your research skills—particularly in framing good research questions—no matter what job you do. If you stay in higher education (as professor, alt-ac or any number of positions), you'll be doing research of some type or another, and if you move onto to industry, you'll either be doing research or supervising people who will be doing it. We'll talk more about the questions you brainstorm next week.

Good job everyone!!