

Rethinking Canvas Discussions



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Online Peer Writing Groups



- **An opportunity for students**
 - To begin a writing assignment in advance of the deadline.
 - To offer feedback to writing-in-progress.
 - To respond to feedback from peers and to revise their writing.
- **An opportunity for faculty**
 - To build drafting/revision into an assignment or course.
 - To ask students to provide substantive feedback to drafts, even in a larger class.

Online Peer Writing Groups



- **Preparations:**
 - Talk with students about peer feedback strategies:
 - ✦ Avoid the “comfort” reading: giving only positive feedback and no suggestions for revision. (*It was good. I liked it.*)
 - ✦ Avoid giving feedback that is too general (*It was good. I liked it. There are sections that could be reorganized or developed.*)
 - ✦ Consider language and tone when offering revision suggestions.
 - ✦ Be specific in revision suggestions, pointing to specific issues or places in the draft for writers to consider.
 - ✦ Focus on the ideas/concepts in the draft first, before mentioning small changes in wording or editing issues.

Online Peer Writing Groups



Preparations continued:

- Add a peer writing group thread in Canvas Discussions or use Groups.
- Set the “Student Settings” in Discussions so that students can upload files.

Ask students to

- Post the draft to Discussions.
- Read the drafts of their group members.
- Provide and share their feedback before the next class.

Online Peer Feedback



- **Assess the quality of students' feedback.**
 - **Formative:** Letting students know how they might improve in offering feedback.
 - **Summative:** Grading the feedback itself (was it timely, did it offer useful comments for revision, etc.).
 - **Assessing Student Feedback Emphasizes:**
 - ✦ The importance of the quality of the feedback.
 - ✦ The importance of the timeliness of the feedback.
 - ✦ The importance of revision as part of the process of writing.
 - ✦ The value of doing this work.

Online Feedback Before a Class Workshop



- Schedule specific class workshop times so that all students have their drafts read by the whole class.
 - ✦ (See ENG 308 Sample Schedule)
- Students scheduled for the workshop post their drafts to Canvas Discussion.
- Students in the class read and respond to the posted drafts.
- Writers read feedback just prior to class, and ask follow-up or direct questions based on the feedback they've received.

Online Feedback Before a Class Workshop



- *Some Benefits of Asking for Online Feedback Before a Class Workshop:*
 - Students read and respond to drafts **prior to** the class workshop.
 - Students become familiar with one another's work-in-progress.
 - Writers have the opportunity to think about the feedback and formulate questions in response.
 - Workshop time is used more efficiently and effectively and moves deeper than the initial feedback.
 - A writing community develops more quickly.

Online Reading Groups



- Preparation: Ask Students to Post Individual Reading Responses (I call them One-Pagers).

- Continue the Conversation Online in Reading Groups:
 - ✦ Arrange online reading groups of 3-4 students.
 - ✦ Ask the members of each reading group to read one another's responses.
 - ✦ Ask reading group members to write and post individual letters that build on key points raised in each of the reading responses, and that moves the class discussion about the readings online.

- ✦ Reference: George Gopen, "Why So Many Bright Students and So Many Dull Papers?: Peer-Responded Journals as a Partial Solution to a Fake Audience" *WAC Journal 16* (Sept. 2005): 22-48.

Online Reading Groups



✦ *Extending the Conversation Further: The Bridger:*

Ask one student to read the reading responses posted for the previous week, taking notes on points that were not raised in class discussed or that connect with the current week's readings.

Rationale for Online Reading Groups: This letter-writing approach invites students...

- To continue to think about past readings.
- To make connections between readings from week to week.
- To rethink previous readings in light of new ones.
- To consider ideas for longer projects/papers.
- To explore their questions, speculations, analyses and critiques of course readings.
- To continue class discussion beyond one class meeting.