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On Teaching at Half-Life

Terri Susan Fine



Terri Susan Fine is Professor of Political Science, Associate Director of the Lou Frey Institute, and Content Specialist for the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship. Her primary areas of teaching and research interest are political participation and political communication, with a core focus on minority integration in American political systems.

I came to UCF in 1989, over 23 years ago. As UCF begins celebrating its semicentennial, I realize that I have worked at UCF for almost half its life.

People often ask me what it is like to teach at the second-largest university in the nation. Of course, when I started teaching here, UCF had 20,000 students. Today, that number has nearly tripled.

Yet when I am asked what it is like to teach at UCF, I don't reflect so much on larger class sizes and the challenges associated with teaching, a common refrain, but instead I focus on the opportunity to contribute to the growth of the university. As I tell those who ask the question, I answer that while I have no control over whether the university is growing, every person associated with UCF can influence how the university grows, in a very small way that, collectively, is quite impactful.

I recall a job interview at a midwestern university in 1989. I was teaching "Women and Politics" that year, and, noting that the course was not a part of their catalog, I inquired if I might be able to teach it there. Quickly, the response from the chair and other senior faculty members was negative. That department would

never be adding courses due to an ongoing conflict with the Economics Department over which department could teach "Political Economy." Political science had proposed such a course, and it was vetoed at the university level due to vociferous opposition from the Economics Department representative. From that point on, I was told, political science vetoed any courses proposed by economics and vice versa.

Fast-forward 18 years. Late on a Friday afternoon I received a call from that same university asking if I would be available to conduct an accreditation review, which I happily accepted. Upon visiting that university, I saw that things had changed there, but not for the better. In 1989, when I interviewed, the university had 20,000 students—18 years later, 19,000. I saw the effects of a shrinking university—high faculty turnover, shrinking budgets, difficulty attracting students, and other requirements tied to teaching that seemed, at the very least, unfounded and inappropriate and, in some respects, draconian.

Yet I look at UCF with its concerted and institutionalized efforts to support faculty. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, the Office of Research and Commercialization, the United Faculty of Florida, and a world-class, technology-forward library all support faculty in their efforts to manage their own professional lives in such a fast-paced environment.

My own department has experienced growth in two critical need areas that only a growing university can accommodate. The state legislature has designated the Lou Frey Institute, a part of the Political Science Department, with key responsibilities for implementing the teacher training, curricular development, and teacher support needed to implement the Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act (2010), which requires civics education in K–12, including an end-of-course exam in seventh grade that, if the student is not successful, impacts promotion to high school. In requiring that civics be taught to all students in

elementary, middle, and high schools, Florida is serving as a model for the nation on how best to confront the nation's anemic civic health. The consequence, though, is finding a way to serve those teaching the 2.5 million public-school students in Florida.

Parallel to that experience is that the Political Science Department will be offering UCF's most recently approved PhD program beginning fall 2013. The program emerged from a ten-year effort to bring a security studies focus to UCF's political science program offerings, including courses, and certificates and minors that include such courses, focusing directly and tangentially on securities studies concerns facing the United States and the world, particularly in the last decade. The UCF Security Studies PhD will address the demand for qualified professionals needed to focus on issues of terrorism, counterterrorism, and international security. This PhD is the first of its kind in Florida and will contribute to the \$52 billion defense industry in Florida that supports over 723,000 jobs.

It is only at such a dynamic, growing university that two such diverse initiatives could emerge from the same department and college at around the same time. I myself have developed several new courses since coming to UCF with the support of my department and campus administration. These courses have been developed to serve my department and other interdisciplinary programs, and in concert with faculty from my own and other colleges. Memories of that 1989 interview and the 2007 return visit to that midwestern university remind me that while, indeed, we cannot control whether UCF grows, we do have a small say in how that growth happens, and we should embrace it.

Encouraging Global Citizenship through Community Engagement

Joanna Z. Mishtal



Joanna Z. Mishtal is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology and specializes in sociocultural and medical anthropology, focusing on reproductive rights and policies in Poland, Ireland, and the European Union. She received her PhD from the University of Colorado Boulder and completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship at Columbia University. She joined the UCF faculty in 2008.

As a sociocultural anthropologist, I have a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between classroom learning and the outside world. Anthropological knowledge, skills, and methods all seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of

contemporary human concerns, ranging from health, migration, and globalization, to human rights, research ethics, and development, to name a few common areas of research and debate. In 2008, when I began my appointment at UCF, I was tasked with teaching applied (or public) anthropology at both undergraduate and graduate levels in the Department of Anthropology. As the most rapidly expanding subfield in anthropology, applied/public anthropology strives to bring public and policy attention to important social concerns that are often hidden or marginalized. Simultaneously, we try to do so in a way that is engaging. In other words, rather than relying on the traditional academic-style writing that might come across at times as “jargony” and obfuscating, we try to contribute to public discussions by making our arguments and contributions clear, and therefore compelling, to the wider public. Direct engagement with the community is also central to this endeavor.

Engagement with the Local Community

In the spirit of getting beyond the classroom and engaging with the community and the wider public, my applied/public anthropology classes (both undergraduate and graduate) involve students in projects that entail participation in the work of local nonprofit organizations. Last fall, with the help of Volunteer UCF, my students conducted experiential-learning projects with numerous community organizations, including the Coalition for the Homeless, Read-2-Succeed, Hope Helps (food pantry for Oviedo homeless), Central Florida Partnership on Health Disparities, and Habitat for Humanity, to name just a few. Since 2008, my students have completed 105 community-service projects with local nonprofit organizations in central Florida. While most projects last one semester, as they are integrated into my courses, some students have continued their service; for example, a student dedicated a year to the Florida Literacy Coalition, and another went on to volunteer for a summer at the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. I recently heard from another student who, following a service-learning project in my class back in 2008, pursued an AmeriCorps position and was eventually hired by the nonprofit Hope Community Center to run their service-learning program. While a few students might initially resist going outside of their comfort zone that is the traditional classroom, on the whole, students find community engagement positively challenging and rewarding. Undoubtedly, these projects also “look good on paper” and can potentially help our UCF graduates stand out in a competitive job market.

Engagement in the “Virtual” Community: The Op-Ed Project

With a class of 59 anthropology students last fall, I decided to expand my students' engagement to the “virtual” community in addition to their experiential-learning projects. Using

the Internet to link students at various universities into an intellectual forum, I involved students in participating in the Op-Ed project, hosted by the Center for a Public Anthropology's Community Action Website, in October and November of 2012. In this interactive virtual community, my students connected with undergraduate students from 25 universities across North America in a project that focused on ethics in human-subject research. My aim was to spark students' interest in active, informed, global citizenship, namely by taking interest and participating in matters of public policy. Thus, for this project students considered the current revisions of Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures undertaken by the US Department of Health and Human Services as they update ethics regulation, and then wrote Op-Ed papers expressing their educated positions about how the current revisions should proceed. In order to prepare them to write informed and well-thought-out Op-Ed pieces, students were required to study carefully the current federal IRB regulation, as well as several cases of ethics violations that have occurred in research with human subjects over the last few decades and have been highlighted in the media.

While initially some students were not even aware of what an Op-Ed was, the class quickly became enlivened by the assignment. Students were excited about connecting with peers from other universities, and many liked the sense of competition as much as the kinship of the project.

“Six of my students won Public Anthropology Awards for this competition by placing in the top 5 percent of the 3,600 participants.”

Challenges of Lucid Writing and Peer Review

Two aspects of this experience stand out as particularly valuable from a teaching perspective: the experience of lucid writing and the experience of a blinded peer review. Getting students to write in an articulate yet clear way can be tricky. Some students interpret “articulate” as needlessly complicated prose filled with discipline-specific buzzwords (indeed jargon). “Clear,” on the other hand, can be mistaken by students as excessively informal or conversational. Helping students to find the balance between these extremes can take some effort and several drafts. In class discussions, I emphasized how an Op-Ed is akin to a cover letter for an application to graduate school or a job in that it is relatively short and concise but “meaty” in content. That is to say, in an Op-Ed every word counts. In addition to class discussions to help guide this project, my trusty graduate student assistant, Hugo Puerto, and I worked with individual students on their Op-Ed drafts. We also held a group meeting where we workshopped some students' papers, though I wish I had made this meeting mandatory rather than optional, as more students could have benefited from this process. Finally, we sought the help of the

UCF Writing Center to guide students in their final editorial polishing.

Once students submitted their Op-Eds to the “virtual community” on the Community Action Website, the pieces were then peer-reviewed in a blinded process: each of our UCF students peer-reviewed two to three Op-Eds from students from other universities and vice versa. Op-Eds were scored according to five criteria: (1) original, well-argued position; (2) persuasiveness of writing; (3) capturing the reader's attention with hook and structure; (4) clarity of writing; and (5) respectful, professional tone. In preparation for the peer-review phase and using a sample Op-Ed, I dedicated one class period to having students work in small groups to peer-review and score the sample according to these five criteria. We then compared different groups' scores and collectively discussed how they arrived at their decisions. I was pleased to see that students took the peer-review process very seriously and cared about being fair. Students' feedback indicated that the small-group practice in class was very useful ahead of conducting the reviews in the virtual community.

In the end, 3,600 students participated in this Op-Ed project from 25 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. Six of my students won Public Anthropology Awards for this competition by placing in the top 5 percent of

the 3,600 participants. Moreover, 24 of the students chose to submit their Op-Eds to their members of US Congress. I was proud of our students' success and their engagement in global citizenship, but I was equally pleased to see our students contribute their voices to issues of public and collective concern and real-world ethical challenges. This project also validates for me that our students respond well to being challenged to engage beyond the classroom, be it in real or virtual communities.

Successful Alliances

Kathleen Bell and John Venecek



Kathleen Bell is Associate Professor in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric. She began her UCF journey in 1991 as Director of Composition and later served as Director of Learning Communities. She now directs the Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing.



John Venecek is a Reference Librarian at UCF's Orlando campus library. Prior to his arrival at UCF in 2007, John spent several years teaching English and also served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Yekaterinburg, Russia. His main area of interest is exploring how new and emerging technologies can be used to enhance information-literacy instruction with particular focus on enhancing faculty-librarian collaborations in the humanities.

Kathleen

When I began teaching Advanced Expository Writing online, I ran into an unexpected problem when I required students to use sources to develop their arguments. A prerequisite for the course is the completion of ENC 1102, a first-year composition course in argument and research that includes library instruction in research strategies using databases. In my upper-level writing course, however, a high percentage of students were AA transfers who did not have that library experience. "How could I provide the orientation those students needed online," I asked Elizabeth Killingsworth, who heads the Library's Information Fluency program. At that time, however, we did not have the learning modules now available, so Elizabeth recommended I contact Andy Todd at the UCF Cocoa campus library.

Andy and I discussed the potential for embedding a librarian in the online course, but first we needed to know more precisely where the students' research strategies were lacking. To gather this information, I assigned the class to describe the process they would use to research the concept of global citizenship, a theme for the course. The results were so informative that Andy decided to translate the students' research processes into concept maps. As you can see from the examples provided online (<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/Publications/FacultyFocus/images/StudentConceptMaps/>), students had a wide range of approaches but most were severely limited.

At that point our heads were spinning with possibilities for designing experiential-learning programs for students at upper

levels to learn more about research strategies and databases, but first we needed immediate instruction for my class. Andy enlisted the help of his colleague on the Orlando campus, John Venecek, and they started by creating a series of exercises designed to help students become more fluent in navigating the library's online databases.

John

The exercises we created focused on databases that were most relevant to the topic of global citizenship: Academic Search Premier, Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO), Modern Language International, Oxford English Dictionary Online, PAIS International, and others.

The exercises were fairly straightforward—they simply required students to access a specific database and follow the prompts described in the assignment. These prompts were prescriptive but designed to help students go beyond basic search skills and learn more about the importance of subject-specific terminology, Boolean searching, and making effective use of the advanced search limiters that are unique to specific subject databases. This approach allowed us to identify trends in student responses, which then allowed for more in-depth follow-up instruction that was conducted primarily through the online discussion board.

Kathleen

Meanwhile, Andy and I began meeting with people in the gaming community to explore the possibilities for designing a research exploration experience for students that would be more interactive, but our own research revealed that both Columbia University and Arizona State University had invested a great deal of time and funding to develop similar virtual interactive experiences only to receive lukewarm reception from students. Eventually, Andy and John designed an online exercise prototype using concept maps.

John

(See concept map at:

<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/Publications/FacultyFocus/images/ConceptMap/>)

We wanted to demonstrate how subjective and idiosyncratic research can be, a point that can be difficult to convey during more traditional library instruction where the focus is on the nuts and bolts of catalog and database searching. Concept maps, conversely, effectively highlight the creativity and complexity of the research process, a process that is often circuitous and serendipitous. Concept maps are typically built around a key question or focal point. They start with the most general concepts first, then flow into more nuanced points from there. As the map grows, the hierarchical structure illustrates the researcher's thought process with a particular focus

on how specific resources or discoveries may have affected the direction and outcome of his or her research. The prototype that Andy and I created focused on a research question based on the historical influences of Czech playwright Václav Havel. Branching out from there are general types of resources students would be expected to consult when researching this topic (books, databases, and “other” resources). These are basic starting points, but from here the map would grow and change according to each student’s approach to researching this topic. The map referenced here represents one possible approach and includes likely search terms, key databases, and a variety of other less traditional resources (e.g., websites, on-line image archives, etc.).

Kathleen

In addition, we looked for a different medium, one with which students could easily identify in a relaxing but informative way—something akin to the popularity of YouTube. That’s when we approached OIR about helping us to develop a prototype video we could use to support a grant proposal for an entire video series. Our plan worked; I was awarded a CASTL grant to develop a research series based on students and faculty in the College of Arts and Humanities (CAH) who participated in the annual Showcase of Undergraduate Research (SURE). I chose to focus on CAH faculty and students because students often find it difficult to envision research processes in the arts and humanities; the video interaction between students and faculty mentors would provide the kind of behind-the-scenes and associative thinking that John and Andy captured in the concept maps. The content for the videos followed a similar sequence:

- Researcher’s introduction of self and the specific research project.
- The origination of the research idea: why the researcher chose that idea.
- How to frame the background of the idea; literature review sources and professional contacts consulted to situate the idea historically in the field.
- The various paths of inquiry the researcher followed to develop his or her idea; perhaps how keywords and advanced limiters factored into discovery.
- The ways the researcher specifically used the library—databases, collections, personnel, services—to conduct research.
- What sounding boards, such as colleagues, conferences, and professional blogs, the researcher used to obtain feedback for his or her ideas.
- How others have responded to the completed research project.
- How this specific project is likely to lead to another research project.

The decision to film the student researchers at the SURE event provided us with live footage as student participants presented and student visitors listened with interest. Equally important was the new alliance we formed with Kimberly Schneider, the Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR). Kimberly viewed the series as a perfect way to get students interested in undergraduate research, so she offered to house the series on the OUR website. In fact, Kimberly was awarded an Information Fluency grant to expand the video series beyond the CAH focus. We now have 20 videos in the Research Rewards series—from nursing, nano science, and microbiology to art history, civil engineering, theater, and hospitality management (<www.our.ucf.edu/videos>), and the students’ responses to the survey on the site have assured us that the videos help to demystify the research process and help students not to be intimidated.

John and Kathleen

Our three-year conversation on how to solve the problem of increasing students’ understanding of the associative thinking that research involves, the possible lines of inquiry, and the potential sources available resulted in rich campus alliances from a variety of sectors. Further, the unique demands of this class caused John and Andy to think more creatively about how to encourage students to engage effectively with library resources. This approach provided an opportunity to look beyond the “one-shot” instruction sessions that have been commonplace for so long and expand the scope of traditional library services. Such endeavors—what we now refer to as “embedded librarianship”—have become more common in recent years, especially as hybrid, blended, and online learning become more prominent around campus. Librarians have responded, adapting their services to these diverse learning communities. In addition to working with concept maps, librarians have been involved with projects that include blogs, wikis, workshops, and information-literacy modules.

How Can I Write My Term Paper? One-Day Writing Workshop

Martha Garcia



Martha Garcia is Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. She is a UCF alumna and returned as a faculty member in 2005 from Vanderbilt University where she earned her doctorate degree. She teaches Spanish language classes and courses in her areas of research: Medieval and Golden Age Literature and Theater. She is currently working on her third book manuscript and other projects.

One of the most crucial aspects of upper-division courses and graduate classes is the final term paper, which represents a high percentage of the final grade and is an efficient assessment tool to measure language proficiency and analytical and research skills. Even though faculty detail instructions in their syllabi and/or handouts, the results sometimes are not predictable because our students come from an interdisciplinary group including the sciences and humanities. Based on my attendance and participation in previous workshops at the FCTL and consultations with the Writing Across the Curriculum Program, I have learned and incorporated in my courses, at the undergraduate and graduate level, a “one-day writing workshop.”

One-day writing workshop for undergraduate students

Some of the challenges that students encounter in introductory courses in Spanish literature, especially if they are double majors or are taking the course for their minors, is the fact that they are not very familiar with the guidelines and expectations for our specific subject of study. Learners may know the content and master the language skills; however, when they have to write a term paper following a new format and writing manual, students may not achieve their maximum potential, not because they do not understand the content but because they do not know how to transfer the knowledge into a new style of writing. My approach to improve this situation is to devote one entire class (or more than one if time allows) to a writing workshop. I schedule the workshop after the midterm and before students submit their first term paper because, in this way, they still have enough time to do the research and write a well-presented work before the end of the term. In this one-day workshop, I refresh the following aspects of writing:

1. **Time Factor:** I provide some practical tips for college students to practice time management. We converse in class about how we use our time in the 21st century and the benefits of implementing individual ways to obtain some balance between the “real world” and the “virtual world,”

trying to avoid additional distractions such as dedicating excessive time to social networks or the Internet.

2. **Modern Language Association:** I present and introduce the MLA style, which is the official manual containing the guidelines that we use and honor in our discipline. We discuss the need to use and follow a structure accepted by students, faculty, and scholars in our field of expertise, which distinguishes our discipline and represents the premises of the organization that determines the comprehensive academic and editorial rules and norms.
3. **Reliable Sources:** At the beginning of each term, I organize one class where students attend an informative session taught by a librarian and customized for each course, where learners may become familiar with the different databases and practice searching materials appropriate for my courses. For that reason, during the one-day workshop, I mention, solely as a reminder, the difference between academic sources and non-academic materials.
4. **Introduction, Body, and Conclusion:** At this point, I explain the aspects that are required in each of these parts of the term paper. We talk about the need to maintain an organic coherency between content and format.
5. **Works Cited:** I make an emphasis on the importance of including all the works cited following the appropriate style and ensuring that all the sources mentioned in the paper are properly indicated as entries in this section.
6. **Samples of Papers:** We review together samples of well-written papers so students can visualize in practice what we have been covering in theory up to this point.
7. **Acceptable versus Unacceptable Practices:** We discuss the different types of term papers. I present how some of them may differ from others, for instance, reports versus essays. I take this opportunity to clarify what is considered acceptable in our field. It does not mean that a specific practice or format is incorrect or it does not have merit, it is about what is considered the standard practice in our specific field of expertise.

One-day writing workshop for graduate students

For the one-day writing workshop for graduates, I cover most of the same items above adapted to the graduate level. I add the following points:

8. **Theory and Rhetoric:** We converse about the aspects related to theory, criticisms, rhetoric, literary analysis, and research methodologies—when it is applicable.
9. **Writing an Abstract in Class / Peer Review Feedback:** At the graduate level, students are able to write an abstract in the classroom taking advantage, at the same time, of the peer-review practice. Because their classmates will be their first readers, they may provide each other with valuable feedback before I read their abstracts for review and approval.

10. Presentation of Abstracts: If time allows, graduate students may present their abstracts at the end of the one-day workshop as preparation for their final presentation, which leads to a more engaging dialogue about the content of their choice, once the structure has been addressed and revised in class.

Measurable outcomes

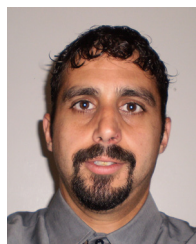
After implementing this teaching practice, at the beginning through informal settings and more recently in a formal one-day writing workshop stated in my syllabi and lesson plans, the final paper reflected a significant improvement in student writing, incorporating, in the majority of the cases, each of the aspects covered during the workshop. Learners were able to identify through self-assessment and collaborative work the areas that may need more attention. For those students learning a language, this practice helps them to understand at a deeper level the benefits of researching and writing formal term papers in the target language. The skills acquired through this practice are transferable into their own disciplines for those students pursuing a double major or for those in minors. The largest percentage of the students earned outstanding or very good grades on their final term papers. As a logical consequence, the students feel more confident and the results overall are generally more predictable.

Conclusion

Colleges and universities are entering a new era in which learners must embrace a more complex system at an earlier stage than in previous generations, which requires a different pattern of formation and preparation in the classroom in order to become successful learners. Even though I have applied this implementation of a one-day workshop in class in courses where I may assume that students already know and master these aspects of the discipline, the reality is that investing one—or two—classes in refreshing these concepts that I considered the basics, I learned—firsthand—that these concepts may not be the basics for each of the students in the classroom. These “basics” may be highly complex for a considerable group of the current student population. I am willing to maintain this exercise because the results and outcomes speak for themselves. Everyone involved acquired some kind of benefits, including myself, because the final term papers have become very pleasant to read and grade at the end of each term.

UCF Faculty Writing across the Curriculum: An Examination of the Reading, Writing, and Research Processes of UCF Faculty from across Disciplines

Dan Martin



Dan Martin is a full-time instructor in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric. He has taught writing at UCF since 2004. He is currently investigating connections between composition theory and writing in the disciplines and across the curriculum.

If you are looking for a way to initiate a discussion with your students about the writing you want to see from them in your courses, then the Writing and Rhetoric Department has a valuable resource to help start that discussion.

In an attempt to investigate the writing, reading, and researching processes of scholars from multiple departments here at UCF, I am video-recording interviews with faculty from across disciplines and publishing them on UCF’s Writing Across the Curriculum website. This project has caused me to ask several questions about writing and how it is taught here at the university: Where do academic writing and approaches to research for one discipline connect with the writing and research approaches of other disciplines? Can we use these connections to better prepare students for the challenges and rigor of writing in the university and other professional environments? How can other disciplines contribute to, or build upon, the writing knowledge gained in first-year writing courses?

In “Helping Students Use Textual Sources Persuasively,” Margaret Kantz explains that “professors may have to do some preparatory teaching about why certain kinds of texts have certain characteristics and what kinds of problems writers must solve as they design text for a particular audience. They may even have to teach a model for the kind of writing they expect.” Regardless of how hard I try to teach students how to write for every writing situation they may encounter, I can’t. Writing is much bigger than one person and one department. However, each department can play a valuable role in improving how students write and understand writing.

Exposure to the expansiveness of academic writing does many things for our students. First, students can see that writing is highly contextual and audience specific. While some approaches to writing carry over into all disciplines, each department represents different perspectives about writing and what writing does for its field. Second, academic writing requires vast knowledge of a particular discipline because each

discipline communicates in unique ways, using specific concepts, methodological approaches, and perspectives to structure, shape, and revise writing for its audiences. Excelling at one form of writing in one discipline does not mean we will excel at other forms of writing in the same or different disciplines.

These video interviews can help UCF faculty articulate to their students how writing is shaped in their field. Use them to reinforce or introduce specific concepts about writing that need more emphasis in your courses. Students can watch a video interview with someone from a specific discipline talking about drafting and revising his or her work, where good ideas come from, and how writing and texts are connected to other texts. There are ideas for questions to accompany the video interviews at the end of this article, but we encourage faculty to create their own questions that reflect the writing goals for their courses.

I would personally like to thank Hakan Ozoglu, Victoria Loerzel, Alvin Wang, and Jeff Kaplan for representing the History, Nursing, Psychology, and Education Departments, respectively, and participating in this project as interviewees. We would also like to invite all UCF faculty to participate in this project. We welcome all questions, comments, and ideas for improving the pedagogical value of these video interviews. If you would like us to create a video interview with more detailed and personalized questions for your department and/or course(s), please contact Pavel Zemlyanskiy (our Writing Across the Curriculum Director) or me at your convenience.

Please feel free to visit the WAC website and watch some of these video interviews at <<http://wac.cah.ucf.edu/node/39>>.

Ideas for Assignments and Discussion Questions to Accompany the Videos

1. Watch three videos from three disciplines and note something similar that each writer does and then note something different. Now write a 400-word response that reexamines your definition and perspective of writing in light of the similarities and differences you noted.
2. Watch at least three videos from three disciplines and write a two-paragraph reflection on what you learned about drafting, revision, generating ideas, etc. What surprised you? What tips did you pick up?
3. Design your own set of questions for discussion or a writing assignment to accompany a video that fits best with your course's writing needs and goals.
4. Watch Hakan from the History Department describe his composing process. He uses a construction metaphor to de-

scribe his process. What metaphors can your class come up with to describe this process and how might that metaphor be helpful for understanding the complexities of process?

5. Watch at least three videos from three disciplines and describe how each writer contributes to their field in new ways with their writing. How are they extending discussions in their field and how can you use that knowledge to increase your own ability to extend discussions? Write a two-paragraph reflection to answer this question.

Never Has the Carpet Been So Red **Alla Kourova**



Alla Kourova is Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures where she teaches Beginning and Intermediate Russian and Applied Linguistics in TESOL (Teaching English Speakers of Other Languages). Her research interests include cross-cultural projects in foreign language programs, the role of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching, and the impact of cultural awareness on the acquisition of the Russian language.

When John F. Kennedy entered office, he arrived to the White House young, resourceful, and idealistic. During his term, international exchanges gained a new energy with newfound importance. Kennedy's task forces on Education and International Education Exchanges (Graham, 1984, pp. 10–11) underscored an era of nationalism and international unrest. The president's enthusiasm and commitment to improve and reinforce international educational exchange programs resulted in an increased support for such programs from both the legislative and executive branches (Coombs, 1964, p. 50; Bu, 2003, pp. 230–231). In the words of Task Force Chairman James Davis: "Never has the carpet been so red" (Quoted in Bu, 2003, p. 231).

In this fashion, the College of Arts and Humanities is working to revive the Russian program at UCF. For the first time in ten years, the study of the Russian language at UCF is being presented in a holistic fashion. Through an approach of simultaneous linguistic and cultural understanding, students can develop the competence required to study all facets of Russian life, language, and culture. This approach features communicative, form-focused, and cultural instruction that promotes critical awareness through targeted competencies.

"Connection—human connection—is the key to personal and career success." — Paul J. Meyer

Students in the Intermediate Russian Language and Civilization course at UCF have traversed the globe to eliminate cultural barriers and language gaps and to foster enduring connections. Through an ongoing project called Connecting Classrooms, UCF students who study Russian are paired with Lyceum #7 (Novocherkassk, Rostov-on-Don, Russia) students who study English. Together, the students collaborate across borders on curriculum projects that encompass both Russian and English communication.

Connecting Classrooms allows students not only to exchange language but also to foster cultural diversity, tolerance, and real-life interactions that enrich their views about the global society in which we live today. With every conversation, students from both ends of the spectrum go beyond their typical boundaries of communication. Through Skype conferences and ongoing e-mails, students have shared their lives and backgrounds with international students for two years.

In the summer of 2012, the Russian Language and Culture Study Abroad Program was successfully held in Moscow. After the program, five UCF students visited the Novocherkassk region to be guests in the homes of their Russian pen pals (from Connecting Classrooms). In the spring (March 16–27), our UCF students will return the favor and host their Russian pen pals, their English teacher, and their school principal. This will be an invaluable opportunity not only to come full circle on foreign-language study, but also to set a positive international impression about the United States and the American way of life.

Here are some excerpts from journals kept by students as a part of Connecting Classrooms:

“I’ve got a tattoo that says ‘For once you have tasted flight, you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you will long to return to’ (Leonardo da Vinci). This quote perfectly described my experience with study abroad, and it also perfectly suited my experience in Russia. There I have been, and there I will long to return to.”

“I will miss the cotton floating through the air. I will miss the beautiful and logical metro system. I will miss the large assortment of new and good food that I tried. I will miss the beautiful architecture and history. I’ll miss the friends I made. I’ll even miss the weird locks and stairs that seemed to blend together, so I tripped over them. Overall, I will miss not only Moscow but Russia very much. I have already started discussing a future trip with my family.”

“I learned not only Russian language and grammar but also cultural information about things like how to act in certain

situations, how Russians dress, eat, etc. I think I also grew more as a person.”

During the Russian Tea Hour (monthly one-hour group discussion on Russian culture) centered on study abroad, students discussed their experiences and their questions about the program. When asked about culture shock, a student responded:

“Honestly, I did not experience a significant ‘culture shock’ in visiting Russia. But, to be fair, Dr. Kourova [had] spent the last two years instructing us in Russian culture, so nothing truly came as a surprise. Between what we learned in class and the additional tea hours that she held, my expectations for what Russia would be like were right in line with what I found.”

Activities like Russian Tea Hour and Russian Club help students become more perceptive and understanding of other cultures and traditions. Overseas experiences and direct exposure to foreign cultures also make students understand themselves and their own culture and heritage more completely. Combined, these aspects of international study facilitate the development of culturally responsive citizens and provide insight for the possibility of change in foreign countries and at home.

With the creation of the Russian Studies Minor at UCF, programs like these can continue to thrive and grow. This program and others like it are integral ingredients to a peaceful, global society in the future. As the Russian program continues to gain momentum, larger involvement in projects like Connecting Classrooms can work to break down cultural barriers until they no longer exist. In this modern age of globalization, mutual cultural understanding has never been more important. Never has the carpet been so red.

Study Abroad Spotlight: Faculty Advice from a Successful First-Time Program Leader

Dede Wilson Mosley & Gino Perrotte



Dede Wilson Mosley is Assistant Director in the Office of International Studies. She graduated from UCF with a BA in Anthropology and an MA in Interdisciplinary Studies.



Gino Perrotte is a visiting instructor with the Nicholson School of Communication. His academic interests focus on intercultural communication, Italian studies, gender and identity construction, and hegemony.

Study-abroad options for UCF students are expanding at a faster rate than ever before. The number of US students who are studying abroad has increased by 53 percent from 1999–2000 to 2009–2010. UCF has mirrored these trends; during the 2011–12 academic year, there were 30 semester exchange programs and 31 short-term programs (internships and faculty led). A spotlight faculty-led program from summer 2012 was “Applied Intercultural Communication: An Italian Perspective.” This newly designed course did an exceptional job at meeting the needs of the students. Visiting Instructor Gino Perrotte created “Applied Intercultural Communication: An Italian Perspective.” According to Gino, the inspiration for the course “came from my own academic growth and personal development that I experienced by studying and traveling in Italy over the past decade. I believe that students describe their study-abroad experience as ‘life changing’ because for many of them it is the first time that they have had the opportunity to step outside of their normal lives and routines within their home cultures. Traveling to a foreign culture enables a person to reflect upon who they are and, at the same time, develop an idea of who they would like to become. Studying abroad allows a student to go through this development process with less pressure to conform to the expectations of family and friends or adhere to the norms of the person’s home culture. For me, my frequent studies and travels abroad have marked pivotal moments in my life. One of those moments was facilitated by UCF.

“During the summer of 2006, while working on my MA in Interpersonal Communication, I participated in UCF’s Italian language study-abroad program. We spent a month in beautiful Bergamo, Italy, learning how to communicate and about

the culture. I could not have imagined how those 30 days would transform my life. That program gave me a renewed sense of purpose in life, introduced me to some of my most treasured friendships, and ultimately helped to guide me into a career in academia. So, understanding how important study abroad can be for a student, I wanted to provide the opportunity for similar experiences for my own students.”

Although it is true that studying abroad can be a personally life-changing experience, the students at UCF are asked to focus on the added value to their curriculum. Students express a desire not only to experience a different culture but to understand how this experience is going to benefit them academically and professionally. Students have become more informed and have begun to look at study-abroad opportunities as a vehicle to enhance their academic endeavors.

Understanding the importance of the academic component of study abroad, Gino explains how he structured his program. Gino participated in the 2011 UCF Summer Faculty Development Conference where he learned about the process of developing a program and had an opportunity to work with staff on transforming his idea into a viable program. “First, I decided upon learning objectives. I knew the overall experience that I wanted students to walk away with. Next, because I am so familiar with traveling through Italy, I made a rough draft of the places and things that we wanted to visit. Together we worked out the logistics of my proposed itinerary while I focused on the curriculum of the course, which I developed based on my years of study of Italian culture and language, as well as my thesis research on nonverbal cultural displays of masculinity.

“The course exposed students to various communication concepts and theories from the curriculum, including interpersonal, intercultural, nonverbal, and persuasive communication. The first four weeks of the summer A term were spent on UCF’s Orlando campus becoming familiar with the topics of study and situating the discussions around what the students could expect to observe and experience while in Italy regarding these topics. Students built a travel journal to document their perceptions while in Italy. The daily topics guided students in their analysis of the day’s learning opportunities to help ground them in their mastery of concepts such as ethnocentrism and xenocentrism, culture shock, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, worldview, and nationalist discourse.”

When students inquire at the Office of International Studies (OIS) about the opportunities available to them, they are encouraged to discuss their options, goals, and expectations with their academic advisers to ensure that their plans are well integrated into their curricular course schedule. Study abroad at UCF is a collaborative effort. Many departments and offices work together to provide these opportunities to students. Al-

though support of the colleges and departments is essential for study abroad, students also receive support and information from academic advisers, Financial Assistance, the Registrar's Office, Disability Services, the Travel Clinic and Pharmacy, Victim Services, the Counseling Center, Student Development and Enrollment Services, and the UCF Police. Additionally, departments that work with OIS on programs behind the scenes include Student Academic Services, Finance and Accounting, the International Services Center, and the Emergency Management team. Good collaboration helps students find a program that best fits their interests and needs.

Matching student interests and needs with the program also benefits the program director. Gino explains how he focused on student selection. "I knew the type of students that would appreciate the program. So I scheduled 30-minute face-to-face interviews with all of my applicants. I looked for a flash of excitement in their eyes when they described why they wanted to participate. We talked about the differences between a vacation and a study abroad. We discussed the guidelines and the expectations of behaving as a responsible adult. After completing the interviews, I narrowed our group down to 16 students." The students began the travel portion of the program on June 11 and over the next 14 days visited Naples, Sorrento, Rome, Chianti, Florence, Bergamo, Venice, and Milan. The highlights of the trip included the Vatican Gardens, the Sistine Chapel, Saint Peter's Basilica, the Uffizi Gallery, a Tuscan cooking class, Michelangelo's *David*, the Duomo in Milan, the Colosseum, the Boboli Gardens, and a gondola ride in Venice. On their program evaluations, students commented that their favorite parts were "interacting with the Italians! Traveling from city to city and seeing the different cultures. I loved it all!" and "how close everyone that I was traveling with got. I seriously feel like we all became a family, our professor included."

Gino says, "Thankfully, the program went very smoothly and was a big success! The minor obstacles that arose were easily dealt with because both the students and I had a unified mindset that we were going to enjoy our moments in Italy together. So, looking ahead to the next program, there are some changes that I will make. Of course, there will be some revisions to the curriculum and the itinerary. The changes will be based on student feedback and my own observations."

Departments or individual faculty members who are interested in learning more about study-abroad options at UCF are encouraged to contact OIS Assistant Director Dede Wilson Mosley or Director Angel Cardec or to visit the Faculty Forum website <<http://www.international.ucf.edu/faculty/>> to review the program leader handbook.

FACULTY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Study Day

Instituted during fall semester 2012, "Study Day" is scheduled the day after the end of the term, and prior to the beginning of the final exam period. On this day, classes do not meet and exams are not given. Study Day is meant as a day for students to prepare for upcoming final exams. Spring 2013's Study Day is *Tuesday, April 23, 2013*.

Summer Faculty Writing Activities

This summer we will again offer programming to support faculty writing activities. Our Faculty Writing Club, which is open to everyone, will continue to meet each Thursday and Friday from 10 to noon. We will also offer workshops on writing a journal article in twelve weeks. We expect to offer a number of options for this activity, including a track for writers in the STEM fields, a track on writing articles and book chapters for Associate Professors, and a track for newer faculty members interested in setting a long-term research agenda. Applications will be available in early April and sessions will begin in May. Look for the announcement on the FCTL website and listserv soon.

STEM Education Research Reading Group

Interested in STEM education but need motivation to keep up with the research? The STEM Education Research Reading Group meets every other Thursday to discuss and reflect on recent literature publications. Meetings are held from 1:30-2:30 in the Physical Science Building room 146. March meetings will be March 14th and March 28th and will continue until the end of the semester. Contact Erin Saitta at erin.saitta@ucf.edu or Jackie Chini at jacquelyn.chini@ucf.edu for information regarding the current reading.

Summer Faculty Development Opportunities

This summer FCTL will host two special events for faculty. On Friday, June 14, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., we'll hold a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Day including a variety of presentations and workshops designed to recognize faculty members who are participating in this important work and to support those who are interested in doing so. Topics will include findings from SoTL research conducted by UCF colleagues as well as introductions to research design, finding venues for publication, creating research collaborations, and more. On Friday, July 12, we will hold a Teaching and Learning Day. This event will feature presentations by recent campus teaching award winners and will include workshops on creating an effective learning environment, communicating expectations to students, providing effective feedback on student assignments, and participating in peer review of instruction. Pencil these events into your calendar now.

Submissions

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full-time and part-time faculty and teaching assistants at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university's community of teachers and scholars. It is envisioned that this publication will inspire more dialogue among faculty whether in hallway discussions, departmental meetings, or in written articles. This represents an opportunity for faculty members to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The *Faculty Focus* invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay.

See the guidelines for submission online at <<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/Publications/FacultyFocus/submission.php>>. Please send your submissions to fctl@ucf.edu.



Check us out online!
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