

Documents Related to Spring 2011 Research Project on Writing and Learning in ASEM

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Invitation to Participate

The ASEM Committee, in collaboration with the Writing Program, invites up to 11 professors to join a project to investigate student writing in ASEM courses. Participants selected will receive \$1000 for engaging in the following activities, which will be led by Doug Hesse:

1. Meeting twice as a group (about an hour each time) in the early spring 2011 quarter to discuss data collection, set up a student questionnaire, gather faculty interests, and characterize the project goals.
2. Provide a copy of all writing assignments made in a spring ASEM course.*
3. Randomly identify five students in the course and keep copies of all of their writing during the quarter. (We will analyze some or all of these artifacts at the end of the quarter.)
4. Have all students complete a brief questionnaire at the end of the quarter about their writings and their attitudes toward writing, not only in this course but in general at DU.
5. During June, write a brief (two or three pages) reflection on how they thought writing functioned in the course, including their impressions of student writing and their own experiences teaching the course.
6. Attend a two-day workshop in June where we will analyze the writings collected, characterizing the kind of strategies students use and describing how well they “write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions.” During these meetings we will also generate preliminary findings and recommendations. Faculty from the writing program will join the group to provide expertise and analysis and to glean information for the final report, which they will draft.
7. In August 2011, read and respond to a draft of a final report on this project. A writing team will synthesize these responses into a final draft, which will be available in September.

To apply for this initiative, please send an email to Doug Hesse (dhesse@du.edu; copied to Amy Kho at amy.kho@du.edu). In your email, provide your name, department, and the title of the ASEM course you’re teaching. Also include a sentence explaining your availability and willingness to take part in all aspects of the project. Optionally, include a sentence about your interest in the project.

If more faculty are interested than spaces are available, the ASEM committee will choose from the applications, first looking at breadth and diversity among types of courses and departments in the mix, next looking at a mix of relatively senior and relatively junior faculty.

Emails of interest are due to Doug by April 1, 2011, and the project team will be announced by April 8. Please contact Doug with any questions.

Two ASEM Goals

“Studying in this setting, students demonstrate their ability to integrate different perspectives and synthesize diverse ideas through intensive writing on that topic.”

“A second requirement of ASEM courses is to help students ‘write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions.’”

Faculty Participants

Doug Hesse, Project Leader
Juli Parrish, Writing Program
Geoffrey Bateman, Writing Program
Jarl Ahlkvist
Brian Bates
Linda Bensel-Meyers
Ann Chu
David Ciepley
Dores Cruz
Robert Handley
Carl Rashke
Chip Reichardt
Nancy Wadsworth
Kate Willink

Plan after First Meeting

Thanks to all who were able to attend Friday's meeting of the faculty involved in the Research Project on Writing and Learning in ASEM.

In the course of making decisions about how to select students and assignments, we had a productive discussion of the possibilities and risks involved in this kind of research project. We will have many hundreds of pages of student writing (and assignment prompts) to consider during our two-day workshop in June, and with 13 of us contributing to the analysis, we are likely to have many ideas about the uses to which this analysis can be put.

In order to use our June workshop time fully, we'd like to keep the project fairly limited at this point. We will use a descriptive rubric to analyze the writings collected, characterizing the kind of strategies demonstrated and describing how well they "integrate different perspectives and synthesize diverse ideas through intensive writing" and "write effectively, providing appropriate evidence and reasoning for assertions" (ASEM Goals). With that in mind, please be assured that we are NOT evaluating the quality of your instruction, assignments, or student achievement. Our primary goal is to understand what happens in those papers.

Next Steps

we'd like to ask each of you to do begin doing three things:

- **Choose the five students whose work you will collect for the rest of the quarter.**

We discussed a number of options for collecting student work; ultimately, the consensus was that random sampling was not necessary for this project. Your sample of five students might depend on the willingness of students to participate

or on a small class enrollment. If possible, select two students whose written work you find to be above average, two students whose written work you find to be average, and one student whose work you find to be below average. (We will send you an electronic copy of a consent form that you can ask students to sign.)

- **Assemble all writing prompts/assignments in your class for weeks 1-10.**

Although we are all mindful of the two ASEM writing goals that inform this project, we decided not to filter the selection of specific assignments or writing projects through those goals. So that we are able to look at any and all assignments as productive sites of student work, we decided that each faculty member should assemble all writing prompts/assignments for his or her class, from discussion board assignments to formal projects.

- **Begin to collect clean copies of all work these students produce in weeks 6-10.**

Several faculty members no longer have some of the work their students produced during the first half of the quarter, so we decided to ask each of you to collect all the texts that your five students produce for the second half of the quarter. We will set up a Portfolio community site to which you can upload all assignments and student work; if you prefer to make photocopies, we ask that you make clean copies (i.e. papers with no grades or comments).

Student Informed Consent

Characteristics and Qualities of Student Writing in Advanced Seminars

You are invited to participate in a study that will study the characteristics and qualities of writing that students do in Advanced Seminars at The University of Denver. The Principle Investigator for this study is Doug Hesse, Professor of English, and he can be reached at dhesse@du.edu, at 303-871-7447, or in Penrose Library Room 202B.

Participation in this study in this study will take about 15 minutes of your time. Participation will involve two parts.

As a recognition of your efforts participating in this study, we offer you an honorarium of \$20.

Part 1: Survey: You will complete an online questionnaire consisting of 25-30 items that ask about your writing experiences at DU and your beliefs and attitudes about writing. Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data, and any reports generated as a result of this study will use group frequencies, averages, statistical descriptions, and edited wordings.

Part 2: Writings. You will permit the principle investigator to collect your ungraded and unmarked writings from your Advanced Seminar course. This collection will require no effort from you. Your ASEM professor will gather writings from students selected for this project, and he or she will provide them to the Principle Investigator. The investigator will immediately remove all identifying information from your writings, and you will be identified only by a code number. Researchers, who will have no means of identifying you, will analyze characteristics and qualities of all writings in the sample. This analysis will take place after your course has ended. Findings from this analysis will be reported mainly as frequencies, averages, and other statistical descriptions and measures of the entire group. Findings may include some quotations or paraphrases for the purpose of illustrating categories and values, but in no case will anyone be able to identify you or any other participant from any publication or presentation resulting from this study.

Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. However, you may discontinue at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

While it is extremely unlikely, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in the survey address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.

Informed Consent

Characteristics and Qualities of Student Writing in Advanced Seminars

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called Characteristics and Qualities of Student Writing in Advanced Seminars. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name: _____

Additional Information to Receive the \$20 honorarium. Note: if you wish to participate but you decline the honorarium (you're simply donating your time), you may leave the rest of this form blank.)

DU ID number: _____

Mailing Address after June 5, 2011: _____

Email: _____

Survey Questions for Characteristics and Qualities of Student Writing in Advanced Seminars

- 1 What is your major?
- 2 About how many credits have you earned at DU?
- 3 How would you characterize yourself as a writer at this point?
- 4 Compared to the last quarter, how much writing have you been assigned for courses this quarter?
- 5 Following are several types of writing. Which types will you have done for your classes this quarter? Check all that apply.
- 6 About how many hours per week do you spend writing for your courses? (Estimate the total for all courses.)
- 7 About how many hours per week do you spend doing assigned reading for your courses? (Estimate the total for all courses.)
- 8 Think for a moment about the research and writing skills you have learned at DU. Which of these research and writing skills are you using in your current classes? (select all that apply)
- 9 How important do you think writing will be in your career after graduation?
- 10 How important do you think writing will be in your personal and public life (life outside of work) after graduation?
- 11 About how many hours per week do you spend doing writing that isn't required, that you do because it interests or engages you (creative writing, email, facebook, blogs, fiction or poetry, keeping a journal, writing for a group, etc.)?
- 12 About how many hours per week do you spend doing non-required reading (newspapers, magazines, novels or other books, blogs, and other sites on the Internet, etc.)?
- 13 What has been the most enjoyable writing you've done this past year at DU? Why?
- 14 What has been the least enjoyable writing you've done this past year at DU? Why?
- 15 What has been the most personally beneficial writing you've done this past year at DU? (For example, what writing experience has taught you the most?) Why?

Now we'd like to ask you about writing in your ASEM course.

- 16 What is the name of the ASEM course you're taking this quarter?
- 17 About how many individual writing assignments will you have in this course?
- 18 About how many total pages of writing are required in this course?
- 19 Which of the following types of writing will you be doing in this course? Check all that apply.
 - Short essays/papers (1-4 pages)
 - Medium-length essays/papers (5-10 pages)
 - Longer essays/papers (11 or more pages)
 - Essay exams and quizzes involving writing
 - Lab reports, case studies, field notes, etc.
 - Journals, course notebooks, blogs, wikis, etc.
 - Online discussions/responses (as in Blackboard)
 - Memos, letters, course emails
 - Multi-media (PowerPoint presentations, Web pages, Podcasts, Videos and so on)
 - Does not apply
- 20 About how much of the writing in this course requires you to write about readings or use readings in your writing? Such assignments might involve things like summarizing, analyzing, synthesizing, responding to, or interpreting published articles, books, online sources, and so on.
- 21 About how much of the writing in this course requires you to writing about quantitative data—information that comes in the form of numbers or statistics? Such assignments might include reporting lab findings or survey results, explaining statistical information, discussing mathematical computations, analyzing tables, and so on.
- 22 About how much of the writing in this course requires you to write about qualitative information? Examples could include conducting or writing about interviews, doing first-hand observations of events or groups of people, systematically analyzing TV shows, music, films, and so on?
- 23 In this class, will you have the opportunity to revise your writing after feedback from your instructor?
- 24 In this class, how much class time is spent on matters related to writing (discussing assignments, generating ideas, peer response, talking about strategies or revisions, reading other students' papers, etc.)?

