

## Notes from TLC Roundtable: Grading Writing Assignments for Non-English Classes

- After an assignment you might wish to ask students to reflect on the assignment and respond to the following questions:
  1. What three strategies for improvements can you design based on this assignment?
  2. What's the best thing you did on this paper?
- Ask for comments about the writing assignment—Was it clearly assigned? What questions did you have that were well answered and what questions did you have that were not well answered in the assignment sheet?
- To assignment sheet add mission statement line about writing well to show students why they should learn to write well—b/c it is in keeping with mission of school.
- Tell students why they need to write clearly—b/c:
  - Many companies today consider email messages to be legal documents and you must write well to communicate your ideas clearly and to protect yourself.
  - You need you write well to present yourself in a resume and cover letter to be able to get the interview in the first place.
  - When using discussion boards with students be sure to tell them that they must write well then too. Could say no emoticons, no contractions (if you want to make sure they don't misspell it's and its) and tell them that they must use correct capitalization so that they don't use all caps (which is yelling in email).
- Create some simple writing assignments to use in class that may or may not be graded (you can ask that this be written ahead of time or in the first 5 minutes of class). Ask them to respond to the following:
  1. What are the three most important things you learned from this reading?
  2. What terms or words did you learn from the reading that you did not know before.

- Write thorough assignment sheets to give students. Include the following:
  1. What is purpose of assignment?
  2. Who is audience for assignment?
  3. What are your formatting or documentation specifications? (12-point type, double-spaced papers, etc.)
  4. List your grammar pet peeves—don't turn in papers in pink or purple type, don't use "alot"
  
- Be sure to give students a rubric when the assignment is made.
  
- Offer sample papers where appropriate—cutting and pasting a good paragraph from a discussion board entry is a good idea when teaching on Blackboard.
  
- Create a grading consensus workshop with students—by:
  1. Give students 2 sample papers that could possibly be turned in for the assignment—one good and one bad.
  2. Ask students to work in groups and evaluate and grade the paper and discuss why they graded it as they did.
  3. Have each group write on board what grade they gave the two papers.
  4. Then tell them the grade you gave the papers.

This whole process helps students set expectations for each other.

- Tell students that resources are available to help them write papers—
  - Eng 111 Handbooks are on reserve in library
  - Library Web site gives them MLA style guide
  - CLC/Writing center there to help
  
- Can set up peer reviews in Blackboard discussion boards but say that the comments must be substantive
  
- Give students symbols you might use when grading papers and tell them what the symbols mean—be creative and design your own symbols. Example:
  - ! means funny
  - \* means good point
  - ? means you are not sure what they mean
  - + means strong point in paper
  - underlined or circled words mean good words or phrases are used

- Point out strengths as well as areas of improvement in papers.
  - Effective word choice
  - Good placement of ideas
  - Good attention to details
  - Strong conclusion
  - Compelling title
  - Engaging first line
  
- Ask written questions of students while grading their paper. Engage students in thinking further about what they say in their paper.
  
- Suggest other authors or films the student might read based on what you read from their paper.
  
- Make sure that students provide evidence for what they say within their papers.
  
- Above all—expect college-level work and rigor!