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CC: Julie Knight, Evaluator;
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I am invited to submit a self-evaluation as part of the AHC evaluation process for part-time faculty. I am teaching my first-ever section of college composition (English 101). The grade in every class I have ever taught assessed student writing, *but* it has generally been in a content-area course. I have always been a passionate supporter of writing across the curriculum. I was excited when department chair Tina Nuñez offered me the section.

The syllabus

I spent considerable time in the spring and summer thinking about the readings and structure of the class. I took the college's "culturally responsive curriculum" workshop in June. The syllabus should be aimed at students where they are and thus the instructor needs to have some idea where they are.

I imagined that the majority of students in the class would be first-semester Hancock students (that has proven to be the case). I imagined that many of them would be first-generation and Latina or Latino; that has also been correct. I further imagined that many students would be ambivalent about college. High rates of attrition and failure (Ws and Ds or Fs)—especially since the advent of AB 705 and AB 1705—made me think that building course readings around the value of education in lives not unlike that of our students would make for more attractive readings. Knowing that English 101 is intended to prepare students for a wide range of college writing assignments, I balanced that list of memoir readings with a mix of essays from *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and similar sources. Finally, both Allan Hancock College and the California Community College system have placed considerable emphasis on Guided Pathways as a means of helping students identify the pathway or (better yet) major, transfer path, and career best suited to each student. Thus, the research essay for my section asks students to explore their major /career interest as the focus of the research essay required of all English 101 students.

Because I think part of what community college students especially need to reorient their thinking about the nature and value of higher education, I also built the syllabus around habits of mind and have tried to get students to reflect on their own habits and how they support (or don't) their academic success.

Grading

I imagined that some (at least) students would not see themselves as capable writers and so I include two components in the class for which students earn full credit if they *complete* the assignment. One of these is weekly copying assignments; the other is weekly Canvas discussion posts responding to the week's readings. Just as we learn to speak by hearing and emulating proficient speakers, I see value for students in copying verbatim good writing. The exercise won't help them *think*, but it should help them acquire a better feel for the structure of writing, from sentence to paragraph to essay—and where to put commas. Students report that this weekly

assignment has been helpful. There are also weekly writing assignments in Canvas which ask students to comment on themes in the memoir readings. These must be a minimum of 250 words and give evidence of spell-checking and proofreading to earn full credit. My hope was that students would be more attracted to the points if they knew that completion of the assignment would earn them those points.

Three essays comprise the majority (57.5%) of points in the class, with the topics starting in the memoir readings and working toward the student's research into their path. A major portion of each class is focused on discussion of the memoir writings and students are assigned to jump-start co-lead those sessions; an essay accompanies those sessions. So far (the halfway mark), students have been allowed to revise essays for both improvement and enhanced scores.

One other detail: students need a wide range of support—from academic support (ARC, Counseling Services, Library) to material needs (Financial Aid, Food Share, Health Services) and because the research project is focused on an academic pathway, I have given the last half hour of each class to address those needs. For the first several weeks of the class, we visited (the ARC, the Library) or were visited by Hancock faculty who could make students aware of resources for their support (Ben Britten, Christine Reed, Joanna Davis). In mid-October we pivoted to a faculty member who came to share their enthusiasm about a particular pathway (so far Earl Murray and Kurt Kruse have come and Ron Lovell will come on Oct. 19, with other pathways coming later in October and November).

Is it working?

At mid-semester, what do I see? In no particular order:

- most students fit the profile I imagined (all but two or three are Latina or Latino, almost all were in high school six months ago, and few have done much planning (SEPs) for their intended pathway;
- the average level of student writing is better than I imagined it might be; most know how to write sentence and paragraphs and how to organize paragraphs into essays;
- attendance is erratic—some students have perfect attendance and some others have missed more than they have attended (Title V-funded sections are encouraged not to drop students and I have not done so—I *will* drop any students who can't pass before the November 75% deadline);
- I find myself more focused on what the COR calls for students to learn and less on keeping track of how late the work may be;
- most students have appreciated the readings, though a few are now finding the genre repetitive; happily, those students can shift their attention to the expository essays that accompany every memoir reading.

This is the first time I have worked with an embedded tutor and I have had to grow into the potential the position adds; I have shifted responsibility for co-leading discussions to student leaders and the embedded tutor (Zoe). Students have accepted Zoe's role and a number have asked for her feedback on drafts and met with her during her office hour in the ARC.

Student engagement with the Canvas prompts has been disappointing. Some students are doing very well, but others aren't doing them weekly. This is odd since I begin class with a quiz on the reading and the quizzes suggest the majority of students *are* reading and understanding—but not setting aside the modest amount of time to complete the Canvas assignments.

The class meets on Saturday, and on the afternoon of the mid-semester meeting (Oct. 12), I sent an email to every student summarizing their progress (quiz points, copying points, Canvas points, and overall percentage). I noted both where students are losing what should be easy points to earn but also the quality of their best work as evidence of what they are capable of. A few students emailed me within a day apologizing for getting off track and pledging to get back on track. I hope they do; I know most faculty won't do as much hand-holding as I have (and I perhaps raise unrealistic expectations about how patient other instructors might be); I would still rather try to get as many students to a successful conclusion.

I have also been asked to complete a form comparing my previous syllabus to the version I created after taking the Culturally Responsive Curriculum training back in June. I am neglecting the form both because I have no previous syllabus to modify and because I couldn't fit content into those boxes. Some of what follows will be repetitive.

Syllabus is attached.

Course Units: 4 (three hours in person, one hour by Canvas)

Reading Assigned/Textbook: There is no textbook; readings fall into two categories: (1) memoirs with a focus on family and education and (2) short expository essays from major media (*The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *the New York Times*, etc.). There are 22 of the former and 34 of the latter. All the memoir readings are chapters short enough to fall within fair use guidelines and all are available in Canvas for students to print and read (we visited the ARC and the Library where students learned about free printing).

The memoir readings are primarily from writers of color, including African American (Frederick Douglass, James Baldwin, Anne Moody, James McBride, W.E.B. DuBois, Barack Obama, Malcolm X), Latino (Ernesto Galarza, Richard Rodriguez, Francisco Jiménez), Native American (Sherman Alexie, Black Elk, N. Scott Momaday, Asian (Maxine Hong Kingston), and Jewish or Middle Eastern (Elie Wiesel, Art Spiegelman, Marjane Satrapi). In retrospect, I see the syllabus as a little male-heavy and I would rebalance that in the future. Class is also an issue for several of the above writers plus Richard Ford, Sarah Smarsh. I have not spent much time emphasizing the fact that race shaped the experience of these writers as young people—I didn't need to as my students were able to make that connection with no prompting from me.

Instructional Methods: We meet once weekly on a Saturday morning. Our time is divided approximately as follows: (1) 10-15 minutes for a quiz on the reading; (2) 60-75 minutes of discussion (student led with support from the embedded tutor) on the memoir reading(s) for the day; (3) short (10-minute) break; (4) a 30-45 minute discussion of either the expository essays for the day or students progress in the various writing assignments; (5) a guest who take the last 30-40 minutes to talk about either support services available to students or one of the college's guided pathways.

Assignments: (1) daily (10 minutes) copying of well-written sources to acclimate student to what good writing looks like (15 points per week on submission); (2) weekly short (250 word) Canvas posts on the week memoir reading with tie ins to the expository essays (15 points per week on submission); (3) three progressively more challenging essays ("Where I Came From," "Where I'm Going, What I want to be when I grow up"—the last of which is the course's required research essay. The essays are worth 150, 175, and 250 points; they may be revised until the subsequent essay is due. Finally each student submits a short one-two page essay on the book for which they helped lead the discussion.

Activities/ Instructional Methods/Classroom Environment: The class is discussion-based as much as I can make it. At mid-semesters, I still have 17 students who should be able to pass. I have several thoughtful and articulate students and I have several who do not speak unless a

question is posed to them individually. Despite their shyness, their answers are generally well informed by the reading and the discussion around them.

Grading Policies: I have grown more aware over time how much syllabi reward promptness over demonstrated progress with learning outcomes. While students clearly need to earn to get work done on time, I have substantially de-emphasized penalties for late work—usually requiring additional work in lieu of the lateness rather than imposing a penalty on the late work.

Learning Goals: I am not a composition teacher though I have always been a writing teacher. My goal for the class is that students come out with much improved writing skills. I see a variety of English 101 writing assignments in my role in the ARC/Writing Center and sometimes worry I am not giving assignments that are prescriptive enough, but I see improvements in student writing and so far I'm staying the course. I do periodically discuss the learning objectives and SLOs in the COR (and syllabus) with my students to make them aware of the progress they're making.

My greatest frustration is the frequency with which many students skip assignments that can't be made up, particularly the weekly copying and Canvas assignments.