

Monterey Peninsula College
Dept. of English: English 111 Faculty Meeting
Feb. 18, 2009

At our English 111 faculty meeting, we discussed the need to consider our course sequence rationale and expectations. We turned then to an exchange of ideas about common assessment methods: essays, journals, summaries, research projects, reading response papers, dialogue in class and conferences, and occasional reading quizzes. The links between reading course instruction and the English 111 curriculum was reviewed, and we talked about the value of summary-style assignments to reinforce skills needed in many classes.

Since a basic research project is included in most English 111 classes, we all shared our approaches to the project, frustrations along the way, and some successful strategies. Several faculty have found that doing the project in a series of shorter assignments, building to the final project, is very effective. The benefits of having the paper also designed as a “position” or Argument paper were discussed too. Some faculty use a skill-based set of quizzes or tests to reinforce specific research and argumentative elements.

We all use in-class essays as a tool, and we considered a variety of approaches: how much topic info and prep work is allowed, use of sources, role of prewriting, a general framework but surprise topics, etc. We noted that some students seem to be more fluent and productive in the pressured, timed essay setting than they are when preparing a draft of an out-of-class essay.

Grammar review and instruction was our next topic. Most of us focus on grammar and technical concerns as central to the proofreading/editorial practice in the class, with a focus on patterns of error showing up in student work. We often add a workshop component to the class if many students appear to have the same issues with grammar problems.

General pedagogical topics we discussed included effective ways to generate class discussion, such as tips on how to “read” the class for readiness to discuss and partnering students up to “teach” each other as a strategy. We talked about the value of teaching basic “college survival” and study skills, one of our SLOs, in English 111. We compared notes on our text selections, and how the text itself could assist in student learning and success.

We reviewed the SLOs as developed by the English 111 Faculty committee in 2008 and agreed that the SLOs reflected our focus and approaches in the classroom. We discussed the variety of strategies used, the value of teaching students the “modes” or “patterns of development,” and the relationship between grades and SLO attainment. Concerns were raised about ESL students struggling in the course, to meet the objectives and the SLOs, and we discussed potential problems with initial placement and the various support services for ESL students (tutoring, ESSC, the ESL center).

Overall, we agreed that we are constantly reviewing our teaching patterns, adjusting as we go, and reflecting on the effectiveness of changes we have made.

Faculty in Attendance: Zimmerman, Osburg, Dennehy, Gerard, Kary, Johnson