



CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Kimberly Emmons
Director of Composition
Associate Professor of English

Guilford House, Room 322
Case Western Reserve University
11112 Bellflower Road
Cleveland, Ohio 44106-7117

Date: August 17, 2009
To: First Seminar Faculty
RE: Writing Support and SAGES

Phone: 216-368-6924
Fax: 216-368-4367
E-mail: kimberly.emmons@case.edu

Welcome to a new academic year. As the Director of Composition, I will be happy to answer your questions about writing support in SAGES courses and our writing programs at Case in general – please feel free to use any of the contact information listed above. As you make final teaching and advising preparations for a new incoming class of first-year students, I hope the following information helps orient you to the writing component of our advising and teaching work. Further information, including pedagogical resources, handouts, and details about the services our writing programs provide, can be found on the Writing@Case website: <http://www.case.edu/writing>. Please have a look!

ADVISING FSEM STUDENTS ABOUT WRITING

What writing-related materials are in advising folders?

Each advising folder should contain a short writing sample (in the form of an essay) from each student enrolled in the seminar; all students spent an hour during new-student Orientation composing these essays.

What should I do with these materials?

You should review your students' essays quickly and share them with your Writing Instructor, if one has been assigned to your seminar. For essays that indicate a student may need additional structured writing support, please advise the student to register for English 183 (Academic Writing Studio, a 1-credit course) during the Add/Drop Period.

In addition, some students will benefit from regular consultations in the Writing Resource Center or with a Peer Writing Crew member. Initial appointments can be made online: <http://www.casewconline.com> for the Writing Resource Center, and <http://tutortrac.case.edu> for the Peer Crew. Writing samples can be integrated into classroom activities in the first class meetings of the semester – the prompt for the essays invites students to discuss classroom environments in which they have learned best.

Is English 183 required for some students?

English 183 is a one-credit, Pass/No Pass elective course that works specifically on the kinds of writing students are expected to do in First Seminars. Completion of English 183 is not a degree

requirement, but students should know that they will improve their chances of doing well in First Seminar with this supplementary course, which is open to all writers.

What other curricular resources are available to First Seminar writers?

English 180 (Writing Tutorial) and English 181 (Reading Tutorial) are graded, one-credit individual courses administered through the Writing Resource Center and Educational Services for Students, respectively. English 148 (Introduction to Composition) and English 150 (Expository Writing) are three-credit courses that fulfill general education requirements for Cleveland Institute of Music students and are available to Case students as well. One-time and recurring appointments with Writing Resource Center and Peer Writing Crew consultants are available throughout the semester (<http://www.casewconline.com>).

I have a non-native speaker of English in my First Seminar, and I'm not sure I have the resources to help the student with her or his writing. What can I do?

The SAGES program offers an array of First Seminars designed for non-native speakers of English. If you suspect a student for whom English is a second language needs more assistance than you can provide in your First Seminar, please contact Dr. Jessica Gerard (jessica.gerard@case.edu) to discuss the student's needs and whether another seminar might be more appropriate.

I have a native speaker of English in my First Seminar whose writing skills appear significantly underdeveloped (signs of this might include pervasive sentence fragments, run-on sentences, or excessive "choppiness" and lack of cohesion in student writing). I'm not sure I have the resources to help the student with her or his writing. What can I do?

The SAGES program is developing First Seminars designed for writers whose test scores and writing samples suggest they might benefit from seminars that work more intensively on questions of usage, expository writing, and revision. While space in these seminars is limited, please contact Sean Thomas Dougherty (sean.t.dougherty@case.edu) to discuss the student's needs and the possible support services available. Students struggling with the writing in your seminar or who simply need extra opportunities for instruction and practice in writing might benefit from enrolling concurrently in English 183 and/or setting up regular appointments with the Writing Resource Center or SAGES Peer Writing Crew.

WRITING PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTORS

What do Case's writing programs cover?

The Department of English and the College of Arts and Sciences offer courses ranging from those helping students to meet general education requirements (SAGES writing for all Case undergraduates; English 148 and 150 for Cleveland Institute of Music undergraduates); to those developing writers within particular disciplines (English 217B: Writing for the Health Professions; English 398: Professional Communication for Engineers); to those providing general writing support across the curriculum (English 180: Writing Tutorial; English 183: Academic Writing Studio). In addition, the Writing Programs includes individual tutoring and writing support to all undergraduate students through the Writing Resource Center and the Peer Writing Crew. The Writing Resource Center also provide services – including group workshops – targeted to graduate and professional students.

Who teaches writing in SAGES?

Faculty and Fellows leading First Seminars and University Seminars are the primary teachers of writing in SAGES. Because strong thinking unfolds in good writing and strong writing takes shape contextually, in contact with sound subject matter, we assume faculty and Fellows know best what constitutes good writing in relation to their seminar topics. A number of seminars also feature an instructor trained in composition pedagogy, and in these seminars collaboration around writing instruction takes different forms, depending on the expertise and experience of the collaborating teachers. Writing Instructors who collaborate with faculty and Fellows in First Seminars might be graduate Teaching Assistants from the College of Arts and Sciences, Lecturers from the Department of English, or Lecturers employed specifically by the SAGES program to provide writing support.

What kinds of training do Writing Instructors have?

All graduate TAs who provide writing support in SAGES seminars must have completed English 400: Rhetoric and the Teaching of Writing at Case, or have completed an approved equivalent semester-long graduate course in composition pedagogy at another institution. Most graduate TAs have also worked as consultants in the Writing Resource Center for at least one semester. English Department Lecturers have PhDs in English or a related discipline and have taught a number of writing courses at Case and other institutions. SAGES Lecturers have graduate degrees in English or a related discipline and have completed a semester-long graduate course certified as equivalent to English 400. All graduate TAs and Lecturers new to Case are also required to attend a weekly, semester-long Pedagogy Seminar Series run by the English Department dealing specifically with writing instruction at Case.

What kinds of support do Writing Instructors have during the academic year?

Writing Instructors are required to attend orientation sessions in August and December as well as monthly staff meetings at which program-wide information is disseminated and grading practices and standards are calibrated. The Director of Composition oversees all English graduate TAs serving as Writing Instructors; the SAGES Instructional Coordinator oversees all English and SAGES Lecturers teaching writing in SAGES. In addition, all Writing Instructors are invited to meet with the Director of Composition at least once per semester.

What kinds of writing resources are available to First Seminar faculty and Fellows during the academic year?

The Department of English, SAGES, and the Writing Resource Center collaborate on an annual series of workshops across the academic year. The Writing@Case website (<http://www.case.edu/writing>) has a section devoted to faculty resources, including an archive of handouts, sample assignments, and grading rubrics that have been used successfully in the SAGES program. The Writing Resource Center in Bellflower Hall 104 houses a library of materials pertaining to the teaching of writing. It is available for faculty consultation (e-mail writingcenter@case.edu or call 368-3798 for hours and/or for an appointment), and the Director of the Writing Center and the Director of Composition are also happy to talk with faculty about classroom activities, assignments, grading strategies, and other writing-related matters.

TEACHING WRITING IN FIRST SEMINAR

What should I be teaching students about writing in my First Seminar?

The SAGES page for Faculty and Fellows at <http://www.case.edu/sages/fellows.htm> includes a comprehensive set of desired learning outcomes for First Seminar. In 2006, the English Department developed a set of specific writing outcomes that complement them (they appear just below the SAGES learning outcomes). In general, First Seminar is designed to initiate students into university-level discourse, including academic genres, forms of critical thinking, and citation practices. University Seminars introduce students to independent research writing in broad disciplinary domains.

How much should my students write this semester?

The SAGES program describes each seminar as “writing-intensive,” a designation that nationally tends to denote a course in which students write 20-25 finished pages, produce a range of formal and informal writing, and revise at least one substantial assignment.

Is there a recommended writing textbook that I should use in my First Seminar?

To help your students meet the writing outcomes mentioned above, the Writing Program suggests that you consider ordering Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein’s *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* (W. W. Norton, 2006; 978-0-393-92409-1; \$18.75). The text is the result of the authors’ teaching in a writing-intensive, seminar-based general education program, and a number of faculty at Case have used it successfully in SAGES classrooms since 2006. The book helps students make the transition to university-level reading and writing by approaching written work in the university as a way of participating in academic conversations. Graff and Birkenstein offer concrete suggestions (in the form of templates) about how students can identify such conversations, understand their significance, begin to enter them, and reflect on their own “moves” within them. The text fits nicely with First Seminars’ emphasis on integrating students into the university, its structures, and its contexts.

If you wish to have your students purchase a traditional writing handbook, you can peruse a variety of possible choices at the WRC Library (104 Bellflower Hall). In the past, the SAGES program has recommended Andrea Lunsford’s *The Everyday Writer*, which may also be suitable for your seminar. In addition, online resources are becoming more common and useful: we recommend the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue for handouts, exercises, and other materials related to writing instruction (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>).

What should students be doing in my First Seminar about the Writing Portfolio that fulfills their University Composition Requirement?

Encourage your students to retain their work and organize it in such a way that it can be augmented as students move out of your First Seminar at the end of the semester and into a University Seminar. Students will also benefit from opportunities to exercise critical thinking skills in relation to their writing in reflective essays that do more than simply itemize errors and corrections. Consider introducing your students to *Portfolio Keeping: A Guide for Students* by Nedra Reynolds and Rich Rice (Bedford Books, 2nd ed., 2006), and invite them to set up a Filer folder at <http://filer.case.edu> for their Writing Folder for your First Seminar, which can evolve into a Writing Portfolio as they move through the SAGES program. Guidelines for the Writing Portfolio are available at <http://www.case.edu/sages/portfolio.htm>. Questions about compiling the

final SAGES portfolio may be directed to the Portfolio Coordinator, Ashley Seitz Kramer (ashley.kramer@case.edu).

What other writing resources are available for my students?

The Peer Writing Crew has prepared an undergraduate guide to writing, entitled “Beyond Typing: The Students’ Guide to Writing” (<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/education/resources/sagesguide>). The Peer Writing Crew and consultants from the Writing Resource Center are available to speak to your classes as a whole or work with students on an individual basis. (A WRC flyer that can be copied for distribution to undergraduates, and which includes a separate list of FAQs, is included in your First Seminar Advisor’s binder.) WRC consultants can also conduct workshops on particular writing topics in your First Seminar classroom. Over the semester, several undergraduate workshops and faculty brown-bag sessions will be offered:

Undergraduate Writing Workshops WRC Library – 104 Bellflower Hall	Faculty Writing Brown Bag Lunches Crawford 111
Friday, September 25, 12:30-1:45	Thursday, September 24, 11:30-1:00
Friday, October 23, 12:30-1:45	Thursday, October 22, 11:30-1:00
Friday, November 20, 12:30-1:45	Thursday, November 19, 11:30-1:00

For topics and more information about these workshops, please visit the WRC website: <http://www.case.edu/artsci/engl/writing/wrcworkshops>.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

ADMINISTRATIVE E-MAIL ALIASES:

writing@case.edu for general inquiries about Case’s writing programs

writingcenter@case.edu for inquiries about the Writing Resource Center and its operation

PEOPLE:

Professor Kimberly Emmons (322 Guilford, kimberly.emmons@case.edu, 368-6924)

Director of Composition

Dr. Megan Swihart Jewell (220 Guilford, megan.jewell@case.edu, 368-3799)

Director of the Writing Resource Center

Dr. Erika Olbricht (220 Guilford, erika.olbricht@case.edu)

SAGES Instructional Coordinator

Dr. Jessica Gerard (311 Guilford, jessica.gerard@case.edu)

Director of ESL Writing

Sean Thomas Dougherty (318 Guilford, sean.t.dougherty@case.edu)

Writing Foundations Coordinator

Professor Peter Whiting (peter.whiting@case.edu)

Associate Dean for SAGES

Professor Mary Grimm (106 Guilford, mary.grimm@case.edu, 368-2355)

English Department Chair

Janet Alder (jra20@case.edu, 368-5830)

Alegra Martin (alegra.martin@case.edu, 368-8954)

SAGES Program Administrative Assistants