

# WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## English Department

ENG 446 (*WI Course--5 credits*)  
Teaching Writing in the Elementary School  
Winter Term 2010

❖❖❖ Winter Weather Hotline: (360) 650-6500 ❖❖❖

Dr. Nancy J. Johnson  
Office: Humanities 351  
Phone: (360) 650-3227  
e-mail: Nancy.Johnson@wwu.edu

**Class Time/Location:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:00 – 5:50 pm. + 1 hr./wk. arranged  
Humanities Hall, Room 110

**Office Hours:** Mon. 3:30-5:30 p.m.; Wed. 1:30-4:00 p.m.; Thurs. 10:30-11:30 a.m. & by appointment  
Please take advantage of my office hours to stop by and discuss your writing as well ideas, insights, questions, and wonderings prompted by the readings and class discussion. You don't need to wait for "official" writing conference time to stop by and talk.

### **Course Overview:**

This course invites you to experience writing (and teaching writing) from the inside out—by writing, rereading, and revising your own work—in order to better understand the writing process and how to teach it more effectively. This means we'll look (and re-look) at ourselves as writers while we learn from effective teachers of writers, seeking to understand current beliefs and best practices that can be adapted across the grades/ages. Writing (and teaching) is risky business, but I trust you'll discover the rewards and pleasures that come from such risk as you read/write/learn in the company of trusted colleagues.

### **Essential Questions:**

- What does it mean to teach children to become writers and how do I create classroom rituals, routines, and focus lessons that meet the needs of all students?
- What happens to writers and writing when I partner my teaching with literature?
- Who are my most trustworthy mentors as a writer and a teacher of writers and what can my students and I learn from them?

*"There is no greater gift a writing teacher can give than to help another person know he or she has a story to tell."* [Lucy McCormick Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing*]

### **Course Texts:**

#### Core Texts/Resources (required):

*What a Writer Needs* [Ralph Fletcher]  
*Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide* [Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi]  
*A Writer's Notebook* [Ralph Fletcher]

#### "Expert Team" Texts (select one):

*Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry in Elementary and Middle School* [G. Heard]  
*Boy Writers: Reclaiming Their Voices* [R. Fletcher]  
*Into Writing: The Primary Teacher's Guide to Writing Workshop* [M. Sloan]  
*Is That a Fact? Teaching Nonfiction Writing K-3* [T. Stead]

#### Additional Resources (optional):

*Seeing the Blue Between: Advice and Inspirations for Young Poets* [P. Janeczko]  
Student Membership in either/both professional organizations:  
National Council of Teachers of English (journal: *Language Arts*)  
International Reading Association (journal: *The Reading Teacher*) and NSSRC

#### Materials:

Writer's Notebook and pens/pencils

*"Teaching writing well is no different than teaching any other subject. The teacher has to know the subject, the process, the children, and the means for the children to become independent learners."* [Donald Graves, *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*]

### ***Course Expectations:***

As a five-credit, writing intensive course, we'll meet four hours each week plus one hour arranged. Expect to spend about 15 hours each week on this course (four hours in class and 11 hours away from class to work on required reading/writing assignments). To fulfill the one hour "arranged" expectation, you will participate in two writing conferences outside of class time, attend the March 4<sup>th</sup> NSSRC meeting with illustrator (and author/reteller) Gerald McDermott, serve as hosts at the March 5<sup>th</sup> CL Conference Reception, and attend the March 6<sup>th</sup> Children's Literature Conference.

**Attendance and Participation** -- Your attendance and participation are valued (and expected!). Arriving late or leaving class early is both unprofessional and distracting. Please make every effort to show up on time and prepared to bring your rich experience with language, an interest in nurturing children as writers, and your own writing histories and abilities to this class. Since learning is a collaborative endeavor, your involvement, ideas, concerns, questions, and risk-taking are vital to this class. Our work as writers (and as teachers of writers) is dependent upon class participation and preparation. As such, there is no way to make up a class you have missed. If you miss more than three classes, I will advise you to withdraw from the course. Not only will your grade be impacted by your absence, you'll also miss key learning opportunities.

**Writing and Reading Activities and Projects** -- This course is listed as a WI-course. This means you'll be expected to write both extensively and intensively, producing a variety of working drafts, revisions, and some writing of publishable quality. To meet this expectation, you will participate in the following: four draft-to-product writings: two notebook entries, literature-writing trait responses, and a Writing-A-Fair piece. While you'll spend a good deal of your "homework" time writing, you are also expected to read and respond to work by respected writers and teachers of writing, and actively engage in these readings during class discussions. Each assigned reading and writing activity is explained in more detail below. Please note that all assignments must be submitted on the dates listed on the course calendar in order to receive full response and maximum credit. *Late papers and projects will only be accepted under unusual circumstances and with approval.*

*"If language has never taken you by the hand and led you off the road . . . and introduced you to surprise, you cannot encourage it or recognize it. But if you write on your page what you do not expect to write, then you can entice your students to write what they do not yet know, instead of imprisoning them in what they know."* [Donald Murray]

### ***Writing and Reading Activities and Projects:***

**1) Readings** -- Much of our class discussion and many of the theory/practice ideas will be based on information gleaned from the required readings. Please complete assigned chapters/pages **prior** to each class session as background information and preparation for our work together (see calendar on pg. 6 and 7 for reading assignments).

**2) Writer's Notebook** -- Maintain a writer's notebook this term. Let it develop into a dynamic record of the risks and explorations you take as a writer, as well as a place to cultivate your own writing habits by collecting and generating ideas. Ralph Fletcher, a writer whose work you'll read this term, comments on the value of keeping a writer's notebook: "It is a bank account you will dip into again and again. It gives you a regular place to record whatever you think might be a catalyst for a sustained piece of writing. And often what you record is nothing more than a glint, line, gesture, or fragment."

Think of your notebook as a place to collect things you "notice and wonder about, memories and ideas, favorite words and responses to reading" (L. Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing*). It can become a container to rehearse pieces you'll return to and revise. Your notebook may include small snippets of your writing as well as entire narratives and poems. It will become the place to create, to try out ideas from class, to gather bits and pieces of writing that you treasure, and to plant some writing seeds of your own. Use your notebook as a place to experiment with writing forms, styles, and audiences as you gain insight into the processes involved in writing, your own writing (and reading) abilities and interests, and the joys as well as the frustrations that writing elicits. While you'll have limited opportunity to write during class, you should always come to class prepared to read/share from your notebook. How many pages should you fill each week? I don't know. Nor do you. If you keep your notebook with you at all times, and make a commitment to write regularly, and with abandon, I promise you'll reap writing rewards. [For more on Writer's Notebooks, see page 5.]

*"Basically, if you want to become a good writer, you need to do three things. Read a lot, listen well and deeply, and write a lot. And don't think too much. Just enter the heat of words and sounds and colored sensations and keep your pen moving across the page."* [Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones*]

**3) Writer's Notebook Entries & Conference** -- Twice during the term you'll select one Notebook Entry worthy of revision (aim to select one prose piece and one poem). You'll revise each to the point where it feels "just right." Then, write a reflective letter to your writing partners and to me about the piece considering what you were working toward, how it changed during revision, and how you feel about the "new" piece. *Make three copies of the reflective letter, drafts, and the polished piece to distribute for comment and response.* Your second Notebook Entry will be discussed during a 15-minute conference. **Due: February 2<sup>nd</sup> and February 16<sup>th</sup>.**

**4) Literature-Writing Trait Responses** – In response to the work being done in many classrooms, schools, and districts in our state and across the country, we'll spend some time this term focusing on a 6+1 traits model of writing (ideas & content, organization, voice, word choice, fluency, conventions, and presentation). This writing model allows teachers to focus on the craft of writing, to guide teaching practice, and to provide criteria for assessment of writing pieces. To better understand the traits or qualities of "good writing" and to plan focus lessons, we'll partner with children's literature as demonstration models. In particular you'll read picture books (lots of picture books!), with an ear for text that you can highlight through read alouds, and revisit to teach yourself and your students what's possible as writers. A handout explaining this project will be distributed in class as we explore how to select literature as mentor texts. **Due: March 9<sup>th</sup>.**

**5) Expert Team Professional Book Project** – To familiarize you with the wealth of professional books supporting writing teachers, you will select one book (from too many good choices!) to read and discuss with a small group of your classmates. Then you'll collaborate on a written and oral presentation of this book to the entire class. A complete explanation of this project will be presented in class. Some class time will be designated for discussion and presentation planning. **See course calendar for meetings and presentation dates.**

**6) Writing-A-Fair & Writing Anthology** -- In lieu of a final exam, we will all participate in a celebration of writing where you will display one piece of writing based on something you've written this term and make copies for everyone to bind into a class anthology. This "display" can take almost any form--wall display, table display, a book, videotaped or audiotaped display--whatever final format best showcases something you've written, revised, polished, and prepared for public viewing. Upon completing your final draft and plans for a visual display, you will prepare a reflection (3-4 pages, double-spaced) and attach it to all drafts of your written piece and display plan. The paper should explain:

how/why you selected your Writing-A-Fair piece, decisions made throughout revision, the process of preparing it as a visual display, and your response to how it turned out (what worked well, what didn't, what surprised you, what you'd do differently next time). Time to set up displays will be limited. Plan accordingly so there will be time to circulate, view, and respond to everyone's display. *The Writing-A-Fair will be presented during our scheduled final exam period on Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup> from 1-3 p.m.*

**AND LAST, BUT NOT LEAST . . .**

**Children’s Literature Conference** – Mark your calendar for Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, to attend WWU’s 7<sup>th</sup> annual Children’s Literature Conference featuring five significant contributors to the field of children’s literature: Marla Frazee (and her editor, Allyn Johnston), John Green, Gerald McDermott, and Linda Sue Park. Don’t miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn about writing from those who do it professionally. There is a reduced registration fee for students and numerous opportunities to help with the conference. In particular, ENG 446 students are invited to help setting up and hosting guests at the Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup> Meet the Author Reception from 3:30-5:30 p.m. Please clear your calendar for that event – it not only qualifies you for volunteer registration rates, it offers you a memory-making opportunity. I’ll offer specifics about your role in class. Conference information can be accessed at [www.wwucl.com](http://www.wwucl.com).

*“If you are not a writer . . . You will not understand the difficulties of writing. If you are not a writer, you will not know the fears and hopes of the writers you teach. If you are not a writer, you will not be aware of the needs of writers: needs such as real purposes for writing, and a real response to writing . . . “* [Mem Fox, *Radical Reflections* . . . p. 163]

***Assessment/Evaluation/Grading:***

Grades for this course depend on the satisfactory and timely completion of all Course Expectations and Writing and Reading Activities/Projects, as well as on the quality of work produced. Projects will be responded to and evaluated on thoroughness, clear thinking and presentation, timeliness, professional appearance (which includes grammatical and spelling correctness), and creativity (when appropriate). On time attendance and participation are valued and will be calculated into the final grade. If you miss more than three classes (for *any* reason, including illness) you’ve missed one quarter of the course and will need to withdraw. Activities/projects are worth the following points:

		<i>Points and Grade Equivalents</i>	
Attendance/Participation/Response/Conferences	20	149-155	= A
Writer's Notebook/Writing Entries	50	144-148	= A-
Literature-Writing Traits Response	15	139-143	= B+
Expert Team Professional Book Project	25	134-138	= B
<u>Writing-A-Fair Display &amp; Paper</u>	<u>45</u>	129-133	= B-
<b><i>TOTAL Points Possible</i></b>	<b><i>155</i></b>	124-128	= C+
		119-123	= C

*“It’s risky business, this writing, to spread your truth out for all to see.”*

[Karen Hesse, Books for Children Luncheon, NCTE Convention, November 1998]

*"Good writing glories all writers. You aren't in competition."* [Malcom Cowley]

## Keeping a Writer's Notebook

### *What is a Writer's Notebook?*

- a place to think, discover, create, explore, wonder
- a place to capture insights, lines, images, ideas, dreams, questions, fragments of talk, snippets of language . . .
- a place to gather the writing you admire
- a place to experiment with topics, form, and genre
- a place to record reactions, emotions, events
- a place to live like a writer
- a tool for writing and living and learning

### *Why Keep One?*

- Your captured ideas can be turned into pieces of original writing.
- It provides a place to freeze moments, insights, stories, events, and emotions so they are not forgotten.
- You develop the habit of noticing small things; you become a better observer; you lead a “wide awake life.”
- It offers you a place to collect, record, and explore what amazes, delights, puzzles, disgusts . . .

### *What to write in a Writer's Notebook?*

- Questions without answers; questions that “haunt the edges of your consciousness”
- Lists; favorite words; names
- Lines and insights; one-liners, snatches of talk, conversation, gossip, slang
- Memories
- Inspirations by other writers; poems or passages that take your breath away
- Mind pictures
- Troubling insights, dark memories, things you'd rather forget
- Secrets
- Odd facts and fascinations
- Responses to “What really matters? What do you hope never to forget?”

### *What to include in a Writer's Notebook (in addition to writing)?*

- Drawings, doodlings, sketches
- Artifacts
- Articles and clippings
- Photographs

### *(A few) Nuggets about Notebooks:*

“A writer's notebook works just like an incubator: a protective place to keep your infant idea seeds safe and warm, a place for it to grow while it is too young, too new, to survive on its own.” [Ralph Fletcher, *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You*, p. 30]

“A notebook is where you keep dew drops from a dew drop morning. It's where the sun sets. It's the wind in your face at the beach looking out over the water. A notebook is where you're playing with your dog. It's where you have dreams about walking on rainbows. It's where the good feelings and the bad feelings spend the night.” [Briana Carlin, 5<sup>th</sup> grader]

**English 446 Course Calendar and Assignments**  
(*subject to change with notice*)

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
1	January 5 <sup>th</sup>	Getting Acquainted Course Overview	
	January 7 <sup>th</sup>	Nurturing a Writing Life Why Write? Where? When? What form? Booktalk: Expert Team Book Choices	<i>What a Writer Needs</i> : p. vii-Ch 1 <i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Intro-Ch. 2
2	January 12 <sup>th</sup>	North Sound Reading Council Meeting Teaching Writing from Primary to MS Guest Speakers: Megan Sloan & Shelley Barker [We'll carpool, leaving campus @ 4 p.m.]	<i>Time</i> : 4:45-8:00 p.m. <i>Location</i> : Burlington Sr. Center
	January 14 <sup>th</sup>	Where do ideas come from? Honoring Ordinary Things & Personal Experiences	<i>What a Writer Needs</i> : Ch. 2-3 & 13 <i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Ch. 3
<b><i>Writing Conferences (team) ~ January 20, 21, 22 ~ Bring: Writer's Notebook</i></b>			
3	January 19 <sup>th</sup>	Writing Process in Action: Examining Beliefs and Practice	<i>Writing Workshop</i> : Intro-Ch 4 <i>What a Writer Needs</i> : Ch. 4
	January 21 <sup>st</sup>	Expert Team Meeting #1 (45 min.) Come prepared with response, questions, "words of wisdom" Explanation: Writer's Notebook Entry	(see handout for how many pages to read) 1 pg. response to ET book
4	January 26 <sup>th</sup>	Where do ideas come from? Inspired by Images Bring: photo(s) that matters to you	<i>What a Writer Needs</i> : Ch. 5-6 <i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Ch. 4-5
	January 28 <sup>th</sup>	Writing Process in Action: Focus on Conferencing	<i>Writing Workshop</i> : Ch. 5 <i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Ch. 6-pg.68
5	February 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Literature/Writing Connections: Writing Under the Influence of Literature  Distribute Writer's Notebook Entry #1	<i>Writing Workshop</i> : Ch. 7 <i>What a Writer Needs</i> : Ch. 7 <i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Ch. 7 Writer's Notebook Entry (3 copies)
	February 4 <sup>th</sup>	Literature/Writing Connections: Choosing Mentor Texts Explanation: Lit.-Writing Traits Response	<i>What a Writer Needs</i> : Ch. 8 <i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Ch. 8 Bring: well-crafted picture book
6	February 9 <sup>th</sup>	Teaching Writing/Creating Writers Guest teachers: Sherri Ballew & Kate Morris	<i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Ch. 9-10 <i>What a Writer Needs</i> : Ch. 9 Return Notebook Entries
	February 11 <sup>th</sup>	Reading/Writing Connections (cont.) Expert Team Meeting #2 (45 min.) Come prepared with response, questions, "words of wisdom"	<i>What a Writer Needs</i> : Ch. 10-11 (see handout for how many pages to read) 1 pg. response to ET book

*"The important thing is not HOW you write, but IF you write."*

[Donald Murray, *Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, Poem*, p. 16]

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
7	February 16 <sup>th</sup>	Writing Process in Action: Focus on Editing and Acquisition of Skills Distribute Writer's Notebook Entry #2	<i>Writing Workshop</i> : Ch. 8 <i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Ch. 11 Writer's Notebook Entry (3 copies)
	February 19 <sup>th</sup>	Expert Team Meeting #3 [presentation planning session]	ET book, pgs. _____ 1 pg. response to ET book
8	February 24 <sup>th</sup>	Focus on Editing and Skills (cont)	<i>A Writer's Notebook</i> : Ch. 12 <i>Writing Workshop</i> : Ch. 6 Return Notebook Entries
	February 26 <sup>th</sup>	Expert Team Presentations (2)	Professional Book Review
<b><i>Writing Conference #2 (individual) ~ March 3<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup></i></b>			
9	March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Expert Team Presentations (2)	Professional Book Review
	March 4 <sup>th</sup>	NSSRC with Gerald McDermott Class meets from 4:30-7:00 p.m. because of NSSRC	
	March 5 <sup>th</sup>	Meet the Author/Illustrator Reception ~ 3:30-5:30 ~ Wilson Library	
<b><i>Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup> – WWU 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Children's Literature Conference</i></b>			
10	March 9 <sup>th</sup>	Assessing & Evaluating Writing	<i>Writing Workshop</i> : Ch. 9 Lit.-Writing Trait Response
	March 11 <sup>th</sup>	Putting the Pieces Together	<i>Writing Workshop</i> : Ch. 10-12 <i>What a Writer Needs</i> : Final Thoughts
	Thurs, March 18 <sup>th</sup> 1-3 p.m.	Writing-A-Fair (location TBA)	Writing-A-Fair Display & Paper 15 copies of Writing-A-Fair piece

*"If we had to say what writing is, we would define it essentially as an act of courage."*

[Cynthia Ozick]

*"And finally, don't confuse getting published with writing. Getting published is wonderful, of course, but it's not the point. The point is to get what's in your heart and head on paper and then shape it in a way that satisfies you and speaks to others. There are lots of ways to share your work with the world. You can read it aloud or give it to someone. You can make your own book, by hand or via computer and copier. You can send it in a letter to a friend. Formal publication, if it comes, will probably take a long time. Don't let that stop you from writing. Be tough. Have fun."* [George Ella Lyon, *Seeing the Blue Between*, p. 75]