**Working with Texts:**

**Summary of CRC Projects on Integrating Material from Readings**

*Rick Armstrong*

*Valerie Bell*

*Lesley Broder*

*Matthew Gartner*

*Emily Schnee*

**Background and Overview**

Both English 12 and English 24 are intended to help students become increasingly adept at responding to things they read in their own writing. As expressed in the student learning outcomes for English 12, by the end of the courses students should be able to, “Build an argument through reading based discussion including summary, paraphrase, quotation; and analysis and synthesis of texts.” Similarly, one of English 24’s learning outcomes is that students, “Use quotation, paraphrase, and summary by way of analyzing other ideas and developing/elucidating own ideas; incorporate quotation, paraphrase, and summary smoothly, accurately and appropriately (MLA or APA style).”

But we know that students struggle at every stage of the process, from reading the assigned material to the technicalities involved in citing. With this in mind, several instructors committed to addressing this issue in their own teaching as part of the fall semester of 2016, as part of their work on the Course Review Committee in fall 2016. This workshop aims to share their findings and spark a deeper inquiry into the complicated process of “working with texts.”

**Starting with Reading**

In their projects, Matthew Gartner and Valerie Bell both emphasized the importance of skillful reading. After looking carefully at student work, Matthew concluded that, “The art of paraphrase is more than just playing with language so that you re-state another writer’s ideas in your own words. Rather, to practice this art well, as a product of meaningful reading, is first of all to choose the best, most important, most relevant, most exemplary and illuminating passages to focus on, in order to extend and elaborate your own discussion.”

Valerie experimented with a structured annotation exercise as one way of encouraging active reading that could lead to more effective use of text in students’ formal writing. In brief, she asked students to use colored highlighters or colored post-its and create a color-coded annotation system: to identify main idea, to define unfamiliar vocabulary, to mark confusing or challenging parts of text, and to choose sections for creating questions. She found that “students take a little more time to read and annotate, but actually save time when referring back to the text for studying or discussing the text in class.”

**Scaffolding Text-based Writing**

After a close reading of several student essays showed that “students are not well prepared to integrate sources into their essays in English 24,” Rick Armstrong developed an exercise he hoped would support students moving toward better use of sources. This worksheet asked students to do the following after locating sources.

1. Write down a research question for your essay
2. After writing down your research question, write down your working thesis.
3. Highlight two passages that are important for your essay in these sources you turned in to me.
4. After highlighting your sources, offer a coherent explanation of how these sources will help you illustrate and develop your working thesis on the same piece of paper where you list your question and working thesis.

**Confronting Plagiarism Head-on**

Both Emily Schnee and Lesley Broder identified a need to be more frank and explicit about plagiarism. Reflecting on the work of a student who ultimately failed the class and plagiarized repeatedly, Emily noted how easy it is to overlook plagiarism early on in the semester, when “I have no idea who the student is as a writer yet.” While her comments directing the student back to the assignment sheet and asking her to revise, “implicitly directing her to eliminate what is plagiarized,” Emily writes that in reviewing her own feedback later she wishes she “had been more explicit.” “In retrospect, my reluctance to be a plagiarism cop, and to give her the benefit of the doubt on this first formal writing assignment of the semester, definitely did her a dis-service as she never cut the copied and pasted sections of this essay despite the fact that I repeatedly suggested that they did not belong in her essay.”

Lesley noted that while services like Blackboard’s SafeAssign or Turnitin can be useful, there are some limitations. In addition to these resources, she developed a worksheet for students adapted from materials from Turnitin [See handout]. She explains that, “The worksheet asks students to reflect on and critique their writing. Even if they will not master the skill of paraphrasing in one semester, at least they can become more mindful about their writing choices.”

**Relevant Articles**

Downs, Douglas and Elizabeth Wardle’s. “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)visioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as Introduction to Writing Studies”. *CCC* 58.4 (2007): 552-584.

Rick writes: “despite their view of the centrality of text based instruction, the authors never move towards an explanation of pedagogical strategies to enable students to effectively integrate sources into their own writing. They spend most of the article arguing for rhetoric and composition texts as the main focus of a composition class…”

Khrismawan, Beleven and Utami Widiati. “Students’ Perceptions about Paraphrasing and their Cognitive Processes in Paraphrasing.” *TEFLIN Journal*. 24.2 (2013): 135 – 157.

Nist, Sherrie L. “Teaching Students To Annotate and Underline Text Effectively: Guidelines and Procedures.” *College Reading and Learning Assistance Technical Report* 87.2 (1987).

Robillard, Amy. “We Won’t Get Fooled Again: On the Absence of Angry Responses to Plagiarism in Composition Studies.” *College English*. 70:1 (2007): 10 – 31.

Emily writes: “I particularly liked the piece by Robillard because it dealt with the affective dimension of plagiarism for instructors. I’d be interested in exploring the affective dimension of plagiarizing for students as well going forward.”

Schwabl, K., Rossiter, M., & Abbott, M. “University Students’ and Instructors’ Paraphrasing and Citation Knowledge and Practices.” *Alberta Journal of Educational Research,* 59.3 (2014): 401-419.

Simpson, Michele L.; Nist, Sherrie L. “Textbook Annotation: An Effective and Efficient Study Strategy for College Students.” Journal of Reading 34.2 (1990):122-29.

Walker, Angela L. “Preventing Unintentional Plagiarism: A Method for Strengthening Paraphrasing Skills.” *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 35:4 (Year?): 387 – 395.