

A Guide for New [and Old] Instructors of NPD 1000

North Park Dialogue 1000 performs a number of curricular functions. As a core course, it is intended to help build a sense of North Park as a learning community. As the first course in the writing sequence, it is intended to help students improve their writing by understanding the expectations of college level writing. As a course addressing the question, "What does it mean to be human?" it asks students to wrestle with a big question from a variety of points of view. Finally, the course is also intended to help students adjust to college life. You will not only be their instructor, you will also be their academic advisor.

This is a wide range of course goals, but also what one would expect from an interdisciplinary core course. Consequently, this course needs to be approached differently from the way one approaches courses more closely associated with a single discipline.

The Dialogue sequence is intended to be transformational. We want our students to reflect on texts and experiences that will cause them to question and evaluate their assumptions about the world. However, we wish our students to raise these questions and reflect on their experiences in a safe environment. Class discussion should be an opportunity to test their ideas and receive reactions and criticism from their peers and their instructors. The writing assignments are designed to help students present their ideas in a formal, polished manner. The emphasis should be placed, therefore, on the questions we raise, not on the insights we supply.

Format

Each Dialogue 1 instructor chooses the topic and the readings for the course. The only common reading is St. Augustine's **Confessions**, which is the first reading of the year.

Your class should include texts from a variety of disciplines, including at least one work of literature. To help students prepare for NPD 2, you should help your students to understand that human nature must be understood in a social context. To the extent possible, the section meeting should be conducted as a discussion. In addition to reading and discussion, writing is the third important goal of the course. To help our students become better writers, you should, if possible attend the writing seminar offered each year by the Writing Center. You should devote between one third and one half of class time to writing instruction. This should include informal writing assignments as well as formal instruction or revision of writing assignments. You should cover such topics as thesis refinement and essay organization. The three formal writing assignments will address narrative, summary, comparison/contrast and argument. While the Writing Coordinator will suggest a format for the essay, you should adapt the prompt to your particular section. You should decide what kind of informal writing assignments you wish to incorporate into the class. For the care and feeding of our hard working Writing Advisors, when setting up your class schedule, allow at least two weeks between the due date of the essay draft and the due date of the final essay. Also, please avoid scheduling writing conferences during quad finals week (mid-semester) or during the last week of classes.

Your Peer Advisor

Use the following job description as a basis for how you employ your PAA in the course:

PAA Responsibilities

- Meet with your Dialogue course instructor on a regular basis to discuss how to best serve the class. [e.g. participate in or lead class discussions; lead study sessions etc]
- Attend all Dialogue class sessions.
- Attend or lead all out-of-class Dialogue activities and events.
- Work 4-hours a week, on average, helping students with their Dialogue assignments.
- Organize and lead a midterm and final review session for the Dialogue course if your instructor requires exams.
- Participate in, and lead, activities as a member of the Threshold staff. This would require that you are on campus by the Wednesday before the first week of classes. If this is not possible because of work or other obligations, other arrangements can be made.

Your Role as Academic Advisor

During the first week of classes you should meet with the Dialogue Director to discuss your role as academic advisor to each of the students in your class.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Practical Issues for Adjuncts:

Where is my office and mailbox?

Your office will be in either C-12 or C-14. Because this office space is shared, we will have to work out a schedule so that the space is not any more overcrowded than it has to be. Your mailbox will be near the entrance to the GOAL Office on the first floor of Carlson Tower.

Where do I go for photocopying?

You may either use the copiers in the basement or on the 6th floor of Carlson Tower. The copier code is 32452. You may also use the copier in the Scandinavian Room of Caroline Hall. The copier code is 90500. To use the copier in Magnusson Hall, ask at the front desk for the copy card.

What about AV equipment?

If you frequently use audio-visual material in your class, you may want to get a smart classroom. The Dialogue Director would be happy to make those arrangements. If your needs are infrequent, you can order AV equipment from Media Services at x5577. You may also put media on reserve. Their office is located in the basement of the library.

Who do I go to for problems with being paid?

You should bring all questions about your paycheck to the Dialogue Director (x5723), who will try to resolve them as quickly as possible.

Practical Issues for Everyone:

What aspects of the syllabus may I change? Which are carved in stone?

Unless we as a faculty agree to make changes, you should consider the lecture schedule and the writing assignment schedule carved in stone. While you can make some small adjustments with when particular assignments are due, the writing advisors have arranged their schedules to accommodate the printed schedule. Before you change when an assignment is due, as a courtesy, ask your writing advisors if it is all right with them. In any event, you should not schedule writing conferences for the seventh or last week of the semester.

What should I do on the first day?

In addition to the usual items of taking role and going over the syllabus, the most important thing you can do on the first day is begin the process of getting everyone in the class to know everyone else in the class. While we tend to think that the most important relationship is between the student and the instructor, in a discussion class studies have shown that it is equally important that students feel comfortable speaking in front of one

another. Not only do you have to learn everyone's name, you should make each student learn the names of the other students as well.--DK

How do I get students to read the material and prepare for class discussion?

You might want to consider informal writing assignments. I have had some success with journal writing. Unless you are willing to collect the journal everyday, however, most students will do the journal *after* the class discussion. Another technique is an in-class writing exercise at the beginning of the period.--DK

What are writing advisors?

The writing advisor is the key to the Dialogue writing program. A writing advisor is an undergraduate student who has taken a course in writing pedagogy and who works part-time for the writing center. The writing advisor reads the drafts of student papers, makes comments on the drafts and then holds a one-on-one conference with the student, making suggestions for improvement.—DK

How do I work with a writing advisor?

Writing advisors will be assigned to you by the Director of the Writing Center shortly before the draft of the first writing assignment is due. Once you have been assigned your writing advisors, it is good idea to meet with them. You should explain to them any peculiarities of your writing assignment and of approach to writing. If you are looking for something particular in the assignment based on what you have done in class, make sure the writing advisors know about this. Make sure your writing advisors know what day your student will turn in their drafts and make arrangements for when and how the WAs will pick up the drafts. You should also, if possible, arrange to have your writing advisors attend your section to introduce themselves.

Assign each person in your section to a writing advisor. It is simplest just to use alphabetical order. Each writing advisor will prepare a sign-up sheet listing the times he or she will be available for consultation. Please make sure that each WA has the appropriate number of conferees. That number is indicated on the sign-up sheet. Have each of your students make an appointment with the appropriate WA. Make sure each student notes the time and place of the appointment. Make of copy of all of the sign-up sheets and display them near your office so that students will be able to consult it if they happen to forget when their appointment was scheduled for.

Are there limits on what a Writing Advisor is expected to do?

Each writing advisor has agreed to comment on a certain number of papers. You should not expect a WA to read additional papers or to meet multiple times with their conferees.

Writing advisors are not required to hold conferences during the 7th week of class—when quad classes have their final exams—or during the last week of the semester because they will have heavy workloads of their own.

Writing advisors are not required to make up appointments students have missed. However, they will make one try to connect with absentees. If for some reason a WA needs to cancel an appointment, the WA is expected to contact the student and arrange a different meeting time. Faculty members should set their own sanctions for students who do not attend their writing conference. It is important that faculty announce and enforce their policy.

What if I am having problems with a writing advisor?

If you are having difficulties with your WA, you should contact either Carol Martin, the Director of the Writing Center [cmartin@northpark.edu] or Ron Dooley, the Director of the Dialogue Program [rdooley@northpark.edu]. Talk to Carol if the problem involves the WAs workload or the WAs quality of work. Talk to Ron if the WA has missed appointments, is late with returning work or for any other disciplinary matters.