Preparing Graduate Students to Teach Online: Theoretical and Pedagogical Practices

Tiffany Bourelle

ABSTRACT

This article argues for online teacher professional development for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and offers specific training practices. Through a discussion of eComp, a fully online writing program at the University of New Mexico, I highlight training practices such as a graduate seminar, one-on-one and group mentoring, team-teaching opportunities, and technology workshops. As illustrated in this article, the eComp program establishes professional development opportunities for GTAs while simultaneously offering a pedagogically sound curriculum for distance-education composition students. The article provides a roadmap for administrators when creating professional development opportunities for first-year writing teachers, offering WPAs various ways to prepare GTAs to help them succeed as writing teachers in twenty-first century academe.

On a broad scale, technology continues to impact changes within academia, with online education outpacing f2f enrollment. Although Paul Fain posits that online education has peaked with a 2.3 percent decline in spring 2014, Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman report that more than 7.1 million students took at least one online course in 2014. According to Amber Smith et al., these numbers should increase, with the global recession prompting more nontraditional students to return to college to develop job-related skills (37). Furthermore, John Watson suggests that

> in an age when information and communications technology skills
> are so critical, and so much collaboration, resource sharing, content
> development and learning are done digitally, asynchronously, and at

a distance, it is unlikely that student learning will continue to be based solely on print textbooks and face-to-face classes conducted in 50-minute increments. (4)

With the rise of online learning in all forms, academia must continue to change with societal demands and student needs. Nonetheless, for the most part, the composition field's approach to teacher training has not evolved to include the pedagogies of online education, particularly that of teaching writing—regardless of genre—online.

Rhetoric and Composition needs to train GTAs to teach such composing—indeed, all writing—in online settings, including blended, hybrid, and fully online. Without such grounding, GTAs will not be well prepared for the exigencies of twenty-first century teaching. Hewett and Warnock posit that good OWI practices should move the entire field of composition forward; therefore, training teachers to understand the complexities of online teaching should help not only those instructors teaching in the online environment, but also those who are teaching f2f using various technologies for instruction (560). However, many instructors may remain hesitant about the online environment as a space for teaching and learning. Scholarship in online education posits that, specifically, it is the lack of training opportunities that leaves many instructors feeling uneasy about current online teaching and learning practices (Breuch 355; Baran and Correia 97; Hewett et al. 7; Hewett and DePew 12; Rice 395). As the OWI survey results discussed in "The State of the Art of OWI" quantitatively identify, training for the online environment at institutions across the country is relatively low; Hewett et al. note in this report that few online writing instructors are required to attend training sessions before teaching. Of 158 respondents who were teaching fully online courses, only "48% indicated that they had some kind of mandatory training and 58% indicated that the training was optional" (12). According to the OWI survey, instructors expressed dissatisfaction with the levels of support they receive regarding technology, training, and professional development support relative to OWI (7). The survey notes that "such dissatisfaction can lead to poor teaching, low expectations for students and for an online course, and insufficient retention of experienced instructors at a time when OWI continues to grow" (12). In terms of poor teaching and its effect, research suggests that students are more successful when teachers have prepared a well-designed course and are actively involved in the course, working to form a community of peers (Bowers and Kumar 27). It is clear that both teachers and students can benefit from online teacher training.

Hewett and Warnock claim that "the OWI principles can be applied broadly to the motivations and the exigencies for composition writ large"

(547); based on their argument, administrators and practica instructors should add online writing pedagogy to their current training, as this type of training can be beneficial for all modes of teaching. In *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction*, the rationale for OWI Principle 7 stresses that OWI teachers need to be able to 1) teach writing, 2) "teach writing specifically in a digital environment," 3) and "teach writing in a course in which text is the primary communicative mode" (18), each of which is a distinct yet connected skill set (also see Hewett and Warnock 550–51). To learn these skill sets, focused professional development training and longitudinal opportunities to gain specific pedagogical experience are necessary (see Hewett *The Online Writing Conference* and *Reading to Learn*). Yet, as Hewett and Ehmann note, a pedagogical approach alone is insufficient. Instructors need to learn to teach their pedagogy using the specific technology in which they will teach (Hewett and Ehmann xiii; also see OWI Principle 7, *A Position Statement*); to migrate and adapt appropriate theory and practice from the traditional classroom to the online environment (OWI Principle 4); and to participate in active learning exercises and mentoring experiences where they can learn from trainees (Schneckenberg 110; Starr, Stacey, and Grace 96). In addition to restructuring practicum courses or when it is not possible to add online training to existing practicum classes, administrators should search for additional ways to prepare GTAs to teach online. They can do this work within the structure of graduate seminars, one-on-one and group mentoring, team-teaching opportunities, and technology workshops; these training practices can be implemented systematically using the five educational principles of investigation, immersion, individualization, association, and reflection (Hewett and Ehmann). This article provides a case example of how to structure and conduct such online writing-focused GTA training.

Background/Context of eComp

At the University of New Mexico, Dr. Andrew Bourelle and I developed and oversee eComp, an online first-year writing program. The eComp program works in conjunction with the university's Core Writing Program, using the same course outcomes, the UNM Outcomes for First-Year Writing (see Appendix A), and textbook, *Writing Today* (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine), for all of our first-year online courses. Like most programs across the country, the Core Writing Program focuses on training GTAs in effective practices for teaching in a traditional f2f environment, offering a typical teaching assistant practicum. The eComp program is an arm of the Core Writing Program that addresses the online first-year writing courses.

Before teaching in eComp, a GTA must have passed the teaching assistant practicum and taught successfully for at least one semester in the f2f classroom, in accordance with OWI Principle 7. This f2f classroom experience is important because we want the GTAs to become familiar with the complexities of teaching while simultaneously discovering and developing their teaching philosophies and practices before teaching in the online realm. The practical experience also helps to ensure GTAs gain confidence in their teaching abilities before entering the eComp program, which in turn, helps maintain a quality online program. The GTAs are required to take the online pedagogy course offered through eComp. They can take this class concurrently with the traditional practicum course, and a GTA can start teaching in eComp within her second semester. Our GTAs are both MA and PhD students, so the number of classes they teach while enrolled in graduate school varies.

The courses that fall under the eComp umbrella are ENGL 110 and ENGL 120, the first-year writing sequence at the University of New Mexico, and all undergraduate students must take this sequence unless they test out with high enough ACT scores. Students in these courses produce three major writing assignments and an eportfolio. Assignments in the courses often prompt students to develop texts that exceed the alphabetic and can include sound, images, text, animation, and video (Takayoshi and Selfe 1). The instructor provides students with a rhetorical situation for writing, and the students choose their medium according to their intended audience and purpose for communicating, writing reflections about their choices per Jody Shipka (113) and Claire Lauer's (173) advice regarding multimodal projects.[1] Following Ed White's suggestions for reflections (583), students also reflect on their work throughout the semester, writing in-depth persuasive pieces that indicate what they learned within each course outcome area (i.e., students respond to the University of New Mexico's outcomes for first-year writing). They must use evidence to support their learning, pulling quotes from their process work, discussion board interactions with peers, and other course activities.

The program also heavily emphasizes process, with students producing three drafts for each project. During each project's writing cycle, students participate in three rounds of review: peer review, instructional assistant review, and instructor review. Online instructional assistants (IAs)—embedded tutors—are undergraduate English majors who work online with eComp students and are provided by the university's writing center, the Center for Academic Program Support (CAPS). Specifically, the embedded tutors provide feedback to students during their writing processes (Bourelle et al. "Assessing"; Corbett 48; DeLoach et al. 9; Pagnac et al. 40; Parmiter

and Morgan 66). eComp administrators work closely with CAPS personnel to train the online IAs, offering orientations at the beginning of the semester to familiarize them with the online course structure and the typical assignments often found in our first-year classes. These orientation sessions also allow them to meet with the instructor of record with whom they will be working. In sum, our eComp classes are intended to help distance students acquire multimodal literacies through a curriculum that will help them enter the twenty-first century as effective communicators.

Training GTAs for Teaching Within eComp

We strive to train GTAs to develop their online personas and pedagogies through extensive training practices and professional development opportunities. These training elements align with Hewett and Ehmann's five educational principles and the OWI Principles (see table 1).

In the following sections, I discuss the training elements offered by eComp, and I highlight how each aligns with Hewett and Ehmann's five educational principles. I also include reflections from the GTAs to support including each principle in the training process.[2]

Table 1
Hewett and Ehmann's Principles of OWI Training

Principles for Online Training	Corresponding Training Practices	OWI Principles
Investigation	Conducting ongoing research on programmatic praxis	4 and 15
Immersion	Training in the online teaching environment	7 and 14
Individualization	Addressing each GTA's needs discretely	5
Association	Creating opportunities for satisfying interaction among trainees	7
Reflection	Encouraging metacognitive practice	15

Promoting the Training Course

Adhering to Hewett and Ehmann's first principle of Investigation and OWI Principles 4 and 15, which encourage ongoing research, I visited graduate student pre-semester orientations to gauge interest in online teaching, as

well as to promote eComp and the program's practices. I followed up the orientation by using the Core Writing Program's listserv to request that interested teaching assistants meet to talk about eComp; I also held group meetings to explain eComp's approaches and practices. The purpose for the group and one-on-one meetings was to gauge the GTAs' levels of experience in online teaching, and many indicated they had little to no experience with teaching in the online environment. Following Hewett and Ehmann's second principle of Immersion and OWI Principles 7 and 14, which note the need for ongoing training, I designed and implemented a graduate seminar that would immerse the students within the theories and effective practices of online teaching. This class was taught as a blended class with students meeting face-to-face and participating in discussions and peer review online.

In the online pedagogy seminar, GTAs learn theories grounding OWI, which they apply through the creation and development of assignments they can use in their own online courses. In the most recent iteration of the course, students read Scott Warnock's *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why* to give them insight into the daily practices of online teaching. They also read the new *Foundational Practices for Online Writing Instruction*, co-edited by Beth L. Hewett and Kevin Eric DePew, which offers both theory and practical application behind creating online classes for a variety of students, including multilingual, disabled, and nontraditional. After reading the chapters and books, the GTAs apply what they have learned to low-stakes and major writing assignments. Reading Susan Miller-Cochran's chapter "Multilingual Students and OWI," an important essay for our Hispanic-Serving Institution, helped the GTAs learn to offer spaces in which students can converse with one another using the language in which they feel most comfortable (e.g., certain discussion boards or live chats). Reading Kristine Blair's "Teaching Multimodal Assignments in OWI Contexts" showed the GTAs how to set up peer-to-peer assessment of such multimodal texts, prompting thoughtful, critical review from the students. These are just a few examples of exercises GTAs generate based on the readings in the course (see Appendix B for the course syllabus).

All of the GTAs in the pedagogy course complete course assignments, including composing a scholarly digital article like those found in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, based on an online pedagogical issue or practice of their choosing. This assignment encourages them to not only develop a multimodal text for a specific audience, much like they ask of their first-year students, but also to enter the conversation of online teaching and learn that they have ideas to contribute that may aid other instructors when designing online courses. Other assignments in the course

include a teaching portfolio that houses assignments they develop for their online courses and a teaching philosophy specific to online education; an online course shell that is complete with all elements of the course (discussion boards, syllabus, calendar, major and low-stakes assignments); and a project that asks them to complete one of their peers' first-year assignments. In the latter assignment, the GTAs complete one of the eComp projects designed by their classmates, and offer suggestions to improve the assignment based on issues they faced as they worked on the assignment. This task is in line with Hewett's suggestion that online teachers experience "the OWI course from the student seat in order to learn the LMS, how long an assignment takes to complete, and the temptations of multitasking from the student view" (*Foundational Practices* 68). By completing the assignment, GTAs see how long it will take students to complete a draft, participate in peer review, and make changes accordingly (see also Hewett's *Reading to Learn*). During peer review, GTAs are required to give peer feedback using screencapture software, which is intended to encourage them to create helpful, time-saving responses to their future writing students' projects (*Foundational Practices* 68).

In addition to these major assignments, the GTAs must participate in and moderate online weekly discussions. The GTA who is the moderator develops questions based on the readings (established by the professor in the syllabus) to prompt critical thinking. During the week, the moderator facilitates the discussion and offers feedback regarding peers' responses. The moderator leads the discussion, keeps the conversation rolling, and asks follow-up questions to her peers' responses. The weekly discussions are helpful because the GTAs are not required to have taken online classes before teaching in eComp; this exercise approximates the online learning environment their first-year writing students will experience. Additionally, Hewett and Ehmann suggest that the training for online teaching be done in an online environment where instructors can experience firsthand what it is like to be an online student. Asking students to moderate and participate in online discussions approximates this type of training by asking them to be the teacher and the student of an asynchronous environment.

The GTAs also have the opportunity to reflect on their learning, which engages Hewett and Ehmann's fifth educational principle, Reflection, as well as OWI Principle 15, which stresses the need for ongoing research. Such metacognitive reflection should occur not only at the end of training but throughout the lifespan of GTAs' online teaching practices. I also reflect on what the GTAs have learned and adjust the curricula in response to their reflections according to their stated needs. I encourage reflection through surveys and end-of-the semester memos that ask GTAs to con-

sider how the assignments have prepared them to teach online. During the semester in which the instructors are teaching, I send out a questionnaire asking them to think about their practices, to consider what they are doing well, and to articulate what they could improve upon the next time they teach online. In the reflection memos, GTAs respond to questions that ask them to think critically about how they have met the course goals. I then work to incorporate their feedback into course changes.

When asked what the administrators can do to make the pedagogy course more effective, many of the instructors have suggested they wanted to start creating and designing their online course shells much earlier in the semester. One instructor claimed,

> What would help make this course more effective is to have a shell (any generic shell) open from Week 1, and utilizing some class time each week for setting up basic elements, learning navigation, learning the tools and apps, and, most importantly, aligning hands-on experience in the shell with the readings and studies on theory. There should also be, and would be with work early on in the shells, and [sic] emphasis on creating the course so that at the end of the semester [. . .] the course is essentially complete (from rubrics to lesson plans to prompts).

On the last day of the seminar, the GTAs and I talk about their concerns with moving forward and teaching an online course: this discussion often helps to alleviate their fears with teaching in the online environment. Many of them talk about their lack of confidence moving forward and teaching online for the first time; even though they have read much of the theory that informs online teaching, they are often nervous about shifting to the actual practice. They use this final discussion to ask for advice, and some GTAs want to know the biggest challenges instructors face in online classes and how to approach them successfully. Other GTAs come up with hypothetical situations, and a discussion ensues where everyone suggests how he or she would approach the issue. It is important to remind new online GTAs that they will learn by doing—much of their stress will be alleviated when they actually enter the online course and work through the semester. Lastly, I remind them that the eComp program offers one-on-one mentoring opportunities in case they feel lost or have questions while teaching.

One-on-One and Group Mentorship

Our mentoring practices are often in the form of Hewett and Ehmann's "investigation in practice" and include one-on-one meetings based on the

GTAs needs and/or their performance as teachers in their first-year classes (6). As the administrator of eComp, I have access to all online courses, and I can see whether an instructor is struggling with the demands of the online curriculum. Indeed, in the past, I have learned that some GTAs were overwhelmed with the online learning environment, and I use this knowledge when I meet with them for one-on-one support. Struggling GTAs have suggested that part of the reason for their difficulties was that they did not understand the day-to-day requirements for online instructors, and I have added more literature to the seminar, another aspect of Investigation, to help them learn the daily interactions before they experience them first-hand. This type of research-based mentoring is in keeping with the OWI Principle 7, which indicates that an administrator of an online program should be trained in the theory of online teaching (17). In addition, Hewett and Ehmann suggest that for the principle of Individualization, administrators should look for ways to tailor the training to each trainee, which typically involves some level of one-on-one mentoring such as the aforementioned. For example, Warnock's approach to teaching writing online suggests that an instructor should expect to spend as much time participating in discussion boards as she would in a f2f class. If a f2f class is worth three credits, the instructor and students meet three hours a week; Warnock indicates that online classes should function similarly regarding credits per hour ("Committee for Effective Practices"). Therefore, if a GTA is struggling with the amount of time to put into a course, Warnock's research can be recommended as a useful source.

Other mentoring practices include the opportunity to meet with different members of the eComp team, including other GTAs and the IAs (or embedded tutors). This practice is in line with Hewett and Ehmann's principle of Association and OWI Principle 7, which indicates that novice teachers should be assigned experienced mentors. The principle of Association is crucial to OWI because online teaching can be a lonely endeavor, making it imperative that online instructors know they can turn to other peers and their administrator (Baran and Correia 99). To start a collaborative mentoring process, we offer orientations at the beginning of the semester where instructors meet the instructional assistants they will be working with. The GTAs are then required to have norming sessions throughout the semester to offer feedback to the IAs regarding their own online feedback to students' projects. The administrator often attends these norming sessions, not to check up on the instructors but to facilitate forming a mentoring relationship with each IA and instructor. Of course, issues can sometimes arise in these meetings that the administrator can resolve, but the main purpose of including her is to support the instructors and the IAs. One

instructor commented on the mentoring aspect of these sessions, saying, "the support from the eComp team, as we test our understanding and progress with our practicum, created and [sic] extended learning opportunity." Another noted the benefits of such mentoring, stating that the eComp administrators offered "moral support [and help with] answering the bulk of low-level questions and technical problems. [The meetings] helped me in the sense that I had someone to look to [help] find out what was expected."

To form stronger and more useful associations among instructors and administrators, we also made changes to our mentoring practices based on the instructors' reflection of the training experience. For instance, one graduate student commented,

> [A] cohort-like set-up would be fun; we had a great community in the pedagogy course, and I think it would have been nice to have a few meetings throughout the semester as an entire group to do things like troubleshoot, etc.

Based on this suggestion, the eComp team implemented informal meetings throughout the semester where instructors can talk about what is and is not working in their courses, allowing them to receive advice and support from the cohort. Upon conclusion of the meeting, the group typically migrates to a restaurant to continue connecting with each other. These meetings foster collaborative learning and help combat the potential loneliness of online teaching.

Team-Teaching Opportunities

Regardless of whether a GTA has experience teaching online, she must take the graduate seminar in online theories and pedagogies. However, if she has online teaching experience outside the eComp program, she has the added opportunity to teach in eComp within in a predesigned course as a secondary instructor, which quickly immerses the GTA into the university's online teaching program. In this training opportunity, a secondary instructor is paired with a veteran eComp instructor who will lead her through the process, mentoring and answering questions. The veteran, or lead instructor, takes the lead in designing the course curriculum, seeking input from the secondary instructor on assignments and discussion prompts. The lead instructor helps the secondary instructor facilitate the course by responding to undergraduate student questions she cannot answer, and the lead and secondary teachers meet during the semester to discuss student issues that may arise. In this training practice, an eComp course is team-taught by two instructors who work to develop curriculum before the course begins and then teach the class together, with the veteran taking the lead in answer-

ing student questions and mentoring the novice instructor throughout the semester. This team-teaching practice helps the immersed secondary teacher in many ways. One instructor claimed,

> The chance to work under a lead teacher was the most helpful part of my experience. I'd mostly advise continuing with that whenever possible. For trainees who don't have the opportunity to work under a lead teacher, perhaps observing another instructor's online class and doing write-ups on it would be the second best option. I've always found a focus on observation of this sort to be exponentially more helpful than a focus on reading about it.

The secondary teaching experience this GTA describes connects the educational principle of Immersion with that of Individualization; the practice of observing combined with immersive teaching allows the novice eComp teacher to become familiar with the program while also receiving peer support beyond the eComp administrators. This is a practice that Hewett notes is preferable to "putting novice teachers in OWCs [online writing classes] and expecting a strong outcome for the teachers or the students" ("Grounding" 67). The co-teaching experience informs the novice eComp instructor of effective OWI practices firsthand, which can aid developing her own course shell within the rigors of the graduate seminar.

Technology Workshops

Throughout the seminar and in subsequent semesters, the administrator of eComp holds technology workshops that lead the GTAs through the creation of multimodal instructional tools such as videos, graphics, podcasts, and other media used to engage students in the learning process (Rankins-Robertson et al. "Multimodal Instruction") and address issues of access for students with varied learning styles, per OWI Principle 1, Effective Practice 1.10 (*A Position Statement* 10). In the seminar, the GTAs read Richard Mayer and Roxanna Moreno's cognitive theory of multimodal learning in the article "Nine Ways to Reduce Cognitive Load in Multimedia Learning," which indicates how students learn from the combination of different modes (e.g., text, graphics), as well as how long an average video should be to discourage cognitive overload (43), and GTAs apply these theories to the development of their courses, creating videos based on these principles. They learn to integrate these tools into the course, incorporating them into scaffolding exercises for each assignment. For instance, they are encouraged to offer a supplemental video for each assignment that walks the first-year students through the process of choosing a topic, writing a first draft, and choosing their medium for communication. These multimodal instruc-

tional tools also can be used in discussion boards, and many instructors ask students to listen to a podcast or video they created before answering questions and discussing the media's content with their peers. The use of multimodal tools serves to immerse GTAs in the multimodal composing process, a goal of our particular eComp program. In turn, this skill set is transferable to understanding how to teach students to do such composing of their own. Creating multimodal tools that will be used in the online setting is yet another layer of immersion key to teaching students through online media to use, read, and write such media.

We offer ongoing technology workshops throughout the semester because instructors often need more individualized assistance using technology to create these tools, adhering to Hewett and Ehmann's principle of Individualization. The authors note the importance of giving technological workshops in context, allowing trainees to spend time working on their materials relevant to their own courses; therefore, we provide technology workshops before the semester begins, offering guidance on using the LMS and screencapture software to give GTAs a supervised opportunity to develop course videos. We also meet with instructors one-on-one throughout the semester to help guide them in using technology. This individualization extends the mentoring that co-teachers receive and ensures that all instructors understand they have someone they can ask for help in developing course tools. Throughout the semester, the administrator leads several hands-on technology workshops, including how to use such software as Jing for video feedback and Camtasia for creating supplemental course videos. One GTA suggested even more hands-on workshops, stating, "[I would like] more mini-lessons on software (Audacity, Soundcloud, etc.) and the chance to really practice more."

During these workshops, we stress that the instructors should use technology to advance their pedagogies. As Kevin Eric DePew posits in "Preparing for the Rhetoricity of OWI," it is important that instructors consider when to use digital tools, choosing the "best available means of persuasion (to draw upon the Aristotelian definition)," learning "how to use their affordances" (439; parentheses original). One GTA incorporates what she calls "technology labs." She stated,

> The labs independently warm-up their technology skills in low-stakes assignments. The labs each focus on one kind of software or medium (like Exposure, Jing, photo journal, Podcast). The lessons consist in watching How-To videos on YouTube or on the site they are investigating, exploring these sites with very brief guided questions, and most importantly, *test-driving the technology*. For example,

once students have watched a 5–6 minute video on making a Prezi presentation, they are prompted to make one with 3–4 slides on a topic of their choosing. (emphasis original)

At the end of the weekly labs in this GTA's particular course, the students write reflections of their learning, commenting on the rhetorical considerations behind creating the low-stakes assignment, including reflecting on the intended audience and purpose for the text they have developed. They also critically consider the technology they used and how the software impacted the production and meaning of the overall text. In our own technology training sessions, we strongly encourage GTAs to require such reflections of students' rhetorical considerations to keep the focus on the rhetoricity of the project, not the bells and whistles of the design. Using technology labs such as the one this GTA describes also helps keep the focus on the rhetoricity of design, not the use of technology. In addition, these labs remove the focus from "teaching technology," as stressed in OWI Principle 2, which states that the focus of an online course should be on writing and not on asking students to learn new software.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Just like the GTAs, I also reflect on my practices as an administrator. Based on the GTA's responses and my own metacognitive musings, I recognized the need for more mini-lessons on using various software, including Audacity, iMovie, and Screencast-O-Matic, within the pedagogy course. I also plan to ask New Media and Extended Learning, our university's distance learning resource, to visit the class more frequently to offer assistance with the LMS, assisting with any design issues students may have. Other ideas include planning more specific discussions of day-to-day activities, teaching how to evaluate multimodal projects in the online classroom, and adding more scholarship regarding the day-to-day practices of online teaching—all decisions made from mentoring former GTAs. For example, one GTA said, "I felt like I needed more explicit instruction about what I should actually be doing as an online instructor—how to manage time and grading, how to create relationships and community in an online environment." While seminar students read theory about these concepts, the GTAs' feedback made it clear that practice grading and norming sessions, similar to those asked of the IAs, would be beneficial.

Finally, as the body of scholarship surrounding online education continues to grow, the instructor of the practicum can introduce newer articles into the required reading list no matter what pedagogies their online program encourages. For instance, there has been much written about using

screencapture to give feedback on student texts in the online classroom (Brick and Holmes; Vincelette 107), and there has been more scholarship regarding multimodal assessment (Ball 393; Barton and Hieman 46; Blair 482; Murray et al.). Such articles can be interwoven into the practicum curriculum and then combined with mini-lessons and discussions regarding using screencapture software and assessing sample student projects.

My colleagues and I also made changes to our training practices. We initially thought that the secondary teaching experiences were too difficult to keep as an approach to teacher training. To start, the lead teacher must be a veteran in our program, and he or she must be willing to mentor and coach a secondary teacher. This mentorship can be time-consuming. In addition, the secondary teacher can be lost when asked to first teach in a course that has been designed by another teacher. However, because of the responses to the secondary teaching endeavors on the part of novice online instructors, we have decided to keep this element, making changes to our approach. For example, one secondary instructor commented on her experience, saying, "The lead instructor I worked under designed a highly effective class, which minimizes instructional redundancies by making class expectations clear from the outset. This model has served as a foundation for the online courses I've designed since then." The eComp program has grown over the past three years, and we now have more veteran teachers who have previously served as successful secondary teachers; many of these former secondary instructors have noted that they would be willing to serve in the lead teacher role to continue this valuable experience. To make it easier on the lead teachers, we are implementing meetings where the novice and lead teachers can first collaborate on curriculum, then divide the workload for designing the course. This should take some of the burden off the lead teachers and make the secondary teachers feel more invested in and comfortable with the curriculum they will be teaching.

Another improvement includes asking veteran online teachers to attend eComp orientations to offer suggestions for effective practices based on what they have learned through teaching online. More recently, in keeping with OWI Principle 10, veterans were able to meet with novice teachers during the seminar class to help them structure new ideas (i.e., using social media), and these workshops have helped make the eComp courses more interactive beyond the traditional linear format of the Blackboard discussion board format. Throughout the semester, we hold focus groups and workshops where instructors can meet with their IA to talk about tutoring best practices in the online environment. Regardless of the format or the focus of these workshops, we have found it beneficial to our practices

to ask veteran instructors and instructional assistants to lead workshops or orientation presentations and talk through best practices with the novices.

Conclusion

Hewett and Ehmann's educational principles, as they pertain to the OWI Principles regarding training practices, were written to guide administrators in training online educators, and this training is important for graduate students, as they often teach the bulk of first-year writing courses. The professional development offered through eComp ensures that instructors are adequately prepared to teach in various teaching environments, as they learn by reading theory, implementing pedagogy, and participating in active learning exercises similar to the ones they will incorporate within their online writing courses. In fact, many of the graduate students have reflected on what they have learned through the eComp training program and how it will help and has helped them in future teaching endeavors. For instance, a graduate student who continued on to a PhD elsewhere reflected on her eComp training:

> Learning to use asynchronous discussion effectively in an online class has helped me use the Blackboard discussion boards in a way that fosters the creation of a community in my f2f classes [. . .] Online pedagogy instruction has also helped me think more critically about the assignments I create. (Bourelle et al., "Reflections" para. 11)

A student also in a doctoral program at another institution reflected,

> As I develop my doctoral research around the question of how writing knowledge transfers between extracurricular and academic learning environments, my expertise in online pedagogy has added an entirely new dimension to my research questions that I would not have encountered in my new institution, where there are no online composition courses. (Bourelle et al., "Reflections" para. 13)

As these types of reflections show, the training opportunities extend beyond the walls of eComp and the University of New Mexico and continue to inform the work of our former graduate students (for more information on graduate student benefits and their reflections, see Bourelle et al. "Reflections"). The online practices these graduate students developed based on their professional development also helped them improve their existing f2f practices, just as Hewett and Warnock suggested of good OWI teaching (560).

Consciously using Hewett and Ehmann's five educational principles to establish a separate pedagogy seminar or expand the curriculum within

existing practica can be a productive way to lead GTAs through the clarification of online theory and the development of pedagogically sound online courses, thus easing the transition to online teaching. Such a principle-centered pedagogy course also can open opportunities to establish mentoring relationships with the GTAs. As the administrator of eComp, I also teach the pedagogy course, and this duality helps me get to know instructors on a personal level, allowing them to feel comfortable coming to me for advice and help. Although I advocate that administrators of online programs consider teaching their own graduate practica regarding online teaching, I recognize that some institutions may not have the resources or room to expand course offerings. In the case where a seminar cannot be taught, I encourage writing program administrators to offer pedagogy workshops on the departmental level. The OWI survey outlined in *The State of the Art of OWI* suggests that online instructors need help structuring writing assignments that attend to audience, purpose, and occasion, as well as designing a course that encourages students to develop their writing process (Hewett et al. 9). Helping GTAs to develop such assignments during graduate-student orientation and subsequent workshops can move GTAs toward structuring their assignments and exercises for blended classes that use an LMS to support f2f instruction. These types of exercises can prepare GTAs to begin thinking about online teaching and teaching with technology in ways that further their pedagogy. Finally, to take some of the burden off the administrator, veteran instructors can facilitate workshops regarding such concerns as assignment design, how to effectively promote successful peer review in the online environment, and the uses of new technologies that can enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Regardless of what types of training an administrator offers, the educational community must actively seek ways to encourage GTAs to successfully use technologies and existing pedagogies to enhance their online classes (Hewett and Ehmann 161). The GTA training practices I have described can provide administrators with various ways to prepare graduate students to help them succeed as writing teachers in twenty-first century academe. Incorporating the training practices outlined herein may generate departmental conversations regarding effective practices in professional development for online teaching. The eComp program, insofar as it attends to Hewett and Ehmann's principles for online teacher training, serves as a model for administrators who wish to continue to support and enhance student learning regardless of the environment, medium, or format in which that learning occurs.

Notes

1. Although many contemporary writing courses do not engage multimodal projects as yet, the ones described in this article do so as part and parcel of the University of New Mexico's first-year writing course. Naturally, such inclusion changes the specifics of OWI-focused GTA training, but it does not change the need for training or benefits of using a principle-centered approach.

2. All reflections were obtained within the University of New Mexico's IRB requirements for human-subject approval.

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Appendix A

The University of New Mexico's Outcomes for First-Year Writing

Rhetorical Situation and Genre

A. analyze, compose, and reflect on arguments in a variety of genres, considering the strategies, claims, evidence, and various mediums and technologies that are appropriate to the rhetorical situation

Writing as a Social Act

B. describe the social nature of composing, particularly the role of discourse communities at the local, national, and international level

Writing as a Process

C. use multiple approaches for planning, researching, prewriting, composing, assessing, revising, editing, proofreading, collaborating, and incorporating feedback in order to make your compositions stronger in various mediums and using multiple technologies

Grammar and Usage

D. improve your fluency in the dialect of Standardized Written American English at the level of the sentence, paragraph, and document

E. analyze and describe the value of incorporating various languages, dialects, and registers in your own and others' texts

Reflection

F. evaluate your development as a writer over the course of the semester and describe how composing in multiple genres and mediums using various technologies can be applied in other contexts to advance your goals

Research

G. use writing and research as a means of discovery to examine your personal beliefs in the context of multiple perspectives and to explore focused research questions through various mediums and technologies

H. integrate others' positions and perspectives into your writing ethically, appropriately, and effectively in various mediums and technologies

I. compose a research-based academic argument in one of various mediums and technologies by identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing sources, which must include secondary sources

J. analyze and describe the writing and research conventions of an academic field in order to understand the different ways of creating and communicating knowledge

Appendix B: Syllabus for Online Pedagogy Course

Dr. Tiffany Bourelle
Email: tbourell@unm.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4 or by appointment, Humanities 265
ENGL 540: Topics in Online Pedagogies

COURSE DESCRPITION

Beth L. Hewett and Christa Ehmann (2004) indicate that teachers are often concerned about teaching online for the first time; however, they suggest that this worry is caused by a lack of proper training. This course will prepare you to teach your online course, helping you understand the best practices of designing a course, facilitating course discussions, holding online conferences, and providing feedback. In addition, the class will also be practical, as you will develop your own course shell to teach in the subsequent semester. The class you'll teach will be part of our online program, eComp, which is based on a multimodal pedagogy, where students are asked to choose their medium in response to the needs of their audience and the purpose of the document. As such, this class will teach you the theory and practice of online teaching and learning, helping you create materials such as assignments and multimodal instructional tools that mimic the texts your students develop.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

- To learn the theories that inform online teaching
- To learn to create multimodal and text-based assignments for the online classroom
- To develop an online course shell that utilizes multimodal instruction
- To craft a teaching portfolio for the job market
- To write a digital scholarly text for publication

REQUIRED TEXTS

Hewett, B, and DePew, K. (2015). *Foundational Practices of Online Writing Instruction*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press. FREE DOWNLOAD: http://wac.colostate.edu/books/owi/

Selfe, C. (Ed.). (2007). *Multimodal Composition: Resources for Teachers*. Creskill: Hampton Press.

Warnock, S. (2009). *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.

*I've placed all other readings on Blackboard

ASSIGNMENTS

The major assignments within this course include the following:

1. **Creating a Peer's Assignment**. I'm a believer that we should be creating the same types of documents that our students create to see where they might stumble and how we might improve the topic or context. You and a partner will swap one project, complete it, then create a short Jing video, giving feedback to your partner and making suggestions for improvement.

2. **Teaching Portfolio.** You will create a teaching portfolio that consists of three online assignments (multimodal and text-based), an electronic portfolio assignment, and the corresponding rubrics for each. You must also have a teaching philosophy, which up can develop from your digital literacy narrative, as well as an updated CV that highlights your online teaching experience.

3. **Digital Scholarship.** You will draft a digital response to an article in the Praxis section of *Kairos* regarding some type of pedagogical issue that you could see adapting to an online course. You will create an argument for using this pedagogy in an online class, submitting the final draft to the Disputatio section of the journal.

4. **Online Course Shell Development**. The latter part of the class will be devoted to teaching you how to develop your own course in Blackboard, using such software as Camtasia and Jing to develop multimodal instructional tools.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Student-led Discussions. At some point during the semester, you and a partner will choose a reading and present it to the class. On this day, you will lead a productive discussion for your peers. You must also have a visual (I'd like you to think beyond the traditional PowerPoint presentation).

Online Discussions. Each week, one of you will post a question for your peers to respond to via Blackboard. This activity will help you learn how to phrase questions for an online forum and how to keep the ball rolling with active responses.

Participation. We will spend much of our class time in discussions and workshops. Regardless of the class format, you are expected to be prepared for class, to listen, to contribute, and to participate in an appropriate fashion (**this means you must participate in the discussion by talking and presenting challenging ideas**).

POINTS BREAKDOWN

Digital Narrative	150
Multimodal Assignment	150
Teaching Portfolio	200
Online Shell Development	300
Student-led Discussion	100
Online Discussion Forum and Participation	100
Total	1000 points

GRADE SCALE
Letter grade value ranges are as follows:

A+ 97-100+%	**B+** 87-89.9%	**C+** 77-79.9%	**D+** 67-69.9%	**F** 0-59.9%
A 93-96.9%	**B** 84-86.9%	**C** 74-76.9%	**D** 64.66.9%	
A- 90-92.9%	**B-** 80-83.9%	**C-** 70-73.9%	**D-** 60-63.9%	

POLICIES

Cell Phones and Other Technology. Turn your cell phones off or to vibrate if you need to have access for emergencies. When it comes to bringing your laptop, it goes without saying that I want you to be focused on what we are doing in class.

Attendance. Please don't be late for class. If you are late more than three times, I may deduct points from your final grade. You are allowed only two absences in this class; after that, you may fail the class.

Late Work. I will not accept late work unless you arrange an alternate due date BEFORE the stated due date. This policy means that if you turn in a paper late, I may give you an F on the assignment. If I deem that there were extenuating circumstances, I will deduct points for lateness as I see fit.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of theft. It is grounds for failing the course. Plagiarism occurs when a writer uses someone else's phrasing, sentences, or distinctive insights without giving proper credit. Be sure to acknowledge your sources! In this age of downloadable papers, remember that turning in work that, in whole or in part, is not your own is also plagiarism. When in doubt about quotation, citation, or acknowledgment of sources, see me for help.

Students with Disabilities. If you have a disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange for accommodations.

Tiffany Bourelle is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of New Mexico, a four-year research-intensive university. She currently directs eComp and teaches technical communication and first-year writing in both face-to-face and online environments. Her research focuses on the pedagogical practices behind teaching multimodal composition in the online classroom. She has published in Computers and Composition, Kairos*, and* Technical Communication Quarterly.