

Fresno Pacific University
Center for Professional Development

Course: *Teaching Grammar in Context*

Course Number: LEN 901 (Online)

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Number of units: 3 semester units/45 hours per unit
(accredited through Fresno Pacific University)

Grade Level: 4-12

Course Description

Teaching Grammar in Context is an online, standards-based course that helps teachers learn how to provide grammar and mechanics instruction within the context of student writing. By focusing on literature and writer's craft, teachers in all disciplines can reinforce the rules of language in a way that brings meaning and importance to written communication. Students of this online course will respond critically to academic texts and will engage their students with innovative teaching strategies and lesson plans. The course's text, *Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop* by Jeff Anderson, and the required assignments are aligned with the NCTE standards. Instructor/student discussion and interaction will be encouraged throughout the course.

Learning Objectives / Outcomes

The following list highlights the primary goals established by this course. Please note the national standards addressed through each objective (the number refers to the standard as described in the following section).

Students of this course will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the “rules” of grammar and how they affect written communication (3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12)
- Identify, analyze and address the patterns of error in their students' writing (4, 5, 6)
- Implement visual and “hands-on” teaching strategies to reinforce key concepts of language usage (3, 4, 5, 6, 12)
- Use mentor texts to model effective grammar and mechanics, as well as to stimulate student writing (3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12)
- Integrate grammar and mechanics instruction with student writing activities (3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12)
- Identify current issues concerning grammar instruction

- Develop innovative lessons to help students recognize how using correct grammar and mechanics can create powerful written text (3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12)
- Identify the ways that grammar instruction in the classroom meets state and national standards for the teaching of English

National Standards

This course specifically addresses the following standards established by the National Council of Teachers of English:

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Course Materials

- Anderson, Jeff. *Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop*. Portland: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.
This text will be sent to students by mail.
- *English Journal*. "Contexts for Teaching Grammar." Volume 95, Number 5. NCTE: Urbana, May 2006.
An electronic version of this text is available on the Moodle site.

Students of this course will receive information about Fresno Pacific University and the Center for Professional Development, as well as information on course policies and procedures.

Course Requirements

Students of this course will be expected to write reflective responses to their reading assignments and teaching experiences. They will develop and teach lesson plans that integrate the grammatical and pedagogical concepts modeled in the text. Students will be expected to connect their academic work with state standards and to research current issues surrounding the teaching of grammar. Student/instructor interaction is invited; the website offers forums and provides links for e-mail communication.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Complete the following assignments. The questions require that you demonstrate evidence of your reading as you incorporate the concepts and strategies into your lesson designs and responses. Please take advantage of this opportunity to try new ideas and material, rather than “recycling” lessons you already have been teaching.

Please note:

- Word count guidelines for written responses are approximate; they are provided to give you a general sense of the length expectation for each assignment.
- The instructor is available via e-mail at any point during the course to answer questions, provide feedback, or clarify assignments.

Assignments

1. Teaching Grammar in Your Classroom:

Reflect on your own experience teaching grammar and mechanics. How have you tried to help your students to improve their use of language? Have you found particular strategies that work well? Where have you had frustrations? Have you tried to incorporate grammar "rules" into your teaching? With success? What do you hope to gain from this course?

Read Chapter One of this course's text, Jeff Anderson's *Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style into Writer's Workshop*. Do Anderson's comments spark your own reflections? Have you had similar or different experiences? How do you respond to the ideas presented in Chapter One?

Consider the prompts above as you share your reflections in a short written response. (300 words)

2. Identifying Patterns of Error:

One of the first steps in preparing to teach grammar and mechanics is to identify where your students struggle. In Chapter One, Anderson includes a list compiled by Connors and Lunsford titled, “20 Most Common Errors in Order of Frequency” (Figure 1.1).

Examine your students’ writing. What are the 20 most common errors that you see your students make? Generate a list that reflects your observations. You may organize your list according to frequency, as modeled by Connors and Lunsford, or by groups, as Anderson demonstrates in Figure 1.2.

3. Mentoring Through Text:

A good example can go a long way. One of the best ways to encourage good behavior is to model good behavior. The same concept works when teaching grammar and language usage. The more frequently a student reads well-crafted sentences and paragraphs, the more likely it is that the student will model his or her writing on these examples.

Read Chapter Two of *Mechanically Inclined*. In this chapter, Anderson introduces the concept of using strong literary works and student writing to model effective and correct use of language. He refers to these examples as “Mentor Texts.” According to Anderson, a mentor text is “any text that can teach a writer about any aspect of writer’s craft” (16).

Collect your mentor texts!

Assignment A: Find Five(5) Mentor Texts

Find five mentor texts that would be appropriate for use in your classroom. Your texts could be paragraphs, essays, articles, short stories, etc. Consider using texts from a variety of fields and disciplines, especially if you teach in a school that encourages a cross-disciplinary approach.

The mentor texts that you choose should model a range of concepts. Consider the list that you created in the previous assignment. Where are your students’ needs and how do your mentor texts address these patterns of error?

When you submit this portion of the assignment, please identify each text (you do not need to include the text itself) and explain what you would like your students to notice and integrate into their own writing.

Assignment B: Become a “Sentence Stalker”

Collect 10 sentences that would be excellent mentor texts (indicate sources). Briefly note the concept you want your students to recognize and grasp from the sentence. See

Anderson's examples for guidance. You also may want to visit his linked "Sentence Stalker" website for inspiration.

4. Writing on the Walls:

Read Chapters 3 and 4 of *Mechanically Inclined*.

In Chapters 3 and 4, Anderson offers a plethora of resources and ideas for creating a writing and word-rich learning environment. Choose three ideas that you found interesting and write a response to each.

Consider the following prompts as you respond: What is interesting about his idea? How could you see it work in your classroom? How could it help students become more confident with their use of language? How could you adapt an idea to meet your particular teaching situation? For example, could students with access to technology create PowerPoint presentations rather than wall charts? (500 words)

5. Building Scaffolds:

Read Part II of *Mechanically Inclined*.

In Part II, Anderson presents lesson plans that he has created to address many common errors in student writing. Choose five lessons that you find to be effective and engaging. Write a brief assessment of each lesson. You may discuss a new strategy that it presents, an aspect that you like about the plan, why you think it would work well, or what you would add to make it even more effective. (600 words)

6. Making the Rules Come Alive:

Develop and teach three lessons to help your students better understand the power that strong grammar and mechanics can bring to language. Model your lessons on Anderson's examples. The lessons should embody the concepts presented in the text, particularly the inherent connection that grammar and mechanics have with writer's craft. You may want to refer to the list you created in Assignment #2 for topic ideas.

Your lesson plan does not need to be longer than one or two pages. Use a format and structure that is comfortable and practical for you, whether that means point form, outline, or short paragraphs.

Your lesson plans should include:

- a. Lesson's objective
- b. State standard(s) met through the lesson
- c. Classroom context (where the lesson fits within your curriculum)
- d. Process you will follow to meet the lesson's objective
- e. Assessment of the lesson's strengths and weaknesses (after you have taught the lesson)

If you are unable to teach and assess these lessons in your regular classroom, please present your lessons to a substitute group. In your assessment, identify your "makeshift classroom" and describe any adjustments you have had to make. Feel free to recruit friends, relatives, etc., for your "sample class." The students do not need to be the same age/ability level as the students in your regular classroom.

7. Exploring the Contexts of Grammar:

The May 2006 issue of *English Journal* focuses on the "Contexts for Teaching Grammar." An electronic copy of the issue is included for you here. Please note that this is copyrighted material and is for use in this course only.

Choose three articles in this issue to read and critique. Look through the table of contents and skim articles to find ones that interest you and apply to your teaching situation. You may note that "Zooming In and Zooming Out: Putting Grammar in Context into Context" is written by Jeff Anderson, author of *Mechanically Inclined*.

After reading each article, please write a critical response. What did you find interesting in the article? How do the ideas connect with what you have read in *Mechanically Inclined*? How could you apply the concepts to your own teaching situation? What additional questions does the article raise? (200 words per response)

8. Where Are the Resources?

There are a variety of resources available to teachers of grammar and mechanics. You may begin by exploring some of the resources associated with this course's text. Follow the links below to reach Jeff Anderson's website, Stenhouse Publishers, or an instructional webcast between Anderson and several teachers.

Look for additional resources that address teaching grammar and mechanics. You may explore books, articles, academic journals, online sources, and websites with instructional videos (teachertube.com, schooltube.com, etc).

Click on the forum link below to post three of the most helpful and creative sources/ideas that you discover. Please write a brief annotation for each.

Be sure to check the forum regularly for new resources!

Submitting Completed Work

Students should complete the course within one year of the date of registration, but not less than three weeks after registering.

Completed assignments should be uploaded to the course's site on Moodle. Detailed instructions for uploading assignments are provided online. Each assignment will receive a grade; this grade is confirmation that the work has been received.

Please save a copy of all assignments on your computer. Submitted work will not be returned and may not remain on the Moodle site long-term. If you are unable to submit your work through Moodle, please contact the instructor for alternatives.

Grade Form

The grade form is available for you to download on the course's site. When you have finished the course, please complete the form and fax it directly to the instructor at 514-784-0216. Please *do not* send this form to Fresno Pacific University.

Evidence of Learning

- Student provided evidence of his/her understanding of the course's objectives and the text's principles through his/her reflective writing.
(Assignment #1, #4, #5, #7)
- Student demonstrated an ability to think critically, conduct independent research, and integrate findings into his/her teaching.
(Assignment #3, #5, #6, #7, and #8)
- Student read a teaching text and responded to its ideas critically.
(Assignment #1, #4, #5, and #7)
- Student identified ways through which teaching grammar, usage, and style reinforced objectives established by his/her state's teaching standards.
(Assignment #6)
- Student developed lesson plans that demonstrated an understanding of the assignment and its purpose. Each lesson plan included an objective that was clear and attainable, an explanation of the process through which this objective would be met, and an assessment (when appropriate) of the lesson's strengths and areas for improvement.
(Assignment #3, #6)
- Student demonstrated an understanding of how the teaching of grammar and mechanics is linked with writer's craft. This understanding was shown through the strategies used in his/her lesson designs, the mentor texts chosen for use in the classroom, and the text responses written.
(Assignment #3, #4, #5, #6, #7)

Grading Policies and Rubrics

Evaluation:

- Written Responses (7): 70%
- Lesson Plans (3): 30%

Students who take the course for credit/no credit must earn 80% or above to earn credit. Students who enroll in the course for a letter grade must achieve a grade of “A” (100%-90%) or “B” (89%-80%). Coursework that earns below a “B” mark will not receive credit; this applies to both the credit/no credit and the letter grade option.

Please note: The online grade book is available for you to monitor assignments submitted. Numerical scores will be given for each assignment, whether you are taking the course credit/no credit or for a letter grade. Please note that your "current percentage" will not be accurate until all assignments have been submitted; the online grading system considers all assignments in its grade configuration, even those that have not been completed.

(see next page for grading rubric)

Grading Rubric for *Teaching Grammar in Context*

	A	B	No Credit
Written Responses 70% (7 assignments/ 10 points each)	<p>The response is insightful and critical. It demonstrates a close reading of the text and an understanding of its ideas. The response makes specific reference to the text’s principles and connects these ideas in practical ways to the classroom.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">70-63 points</p>	<p>The response reflects concepts illustrated in the text, but it does not show evidence of careful, critical analysis. The response does what is expected to “meet the requirement” and “answer the question” without much creativity or insightful reflection.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">62-56 points</p>	<p>There is little evidence of effort or reflection. The response does not demonstrate attentive reading of the text or appropriate application of its ideas. Assignments are far from meeting the suggested word length.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">55-0 points</p>
Lesson Plans 30% (3 lessons/ 10 points each)	<p>The lesson plan is modeled on Anderson’s teaching strategies and reflects a clear understanding of the text’s premise. The plan is the original work of the student. It includes all required elements and is organized logically and clearly. The lesson is a creative, yet realistic plan that would help young students strengthen their writing skills.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">30-27 points</p>	<p>The lesson plan reflects a limited understanding of Anderson’s teaching strategies. It is the original work of the student. It includes most of the required elements, but does not provide much development of the ideas. The lesson plan follows the guidelines, but lacks an enthusiasm and creativity that could motivate young writers.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">26-24 points</p>	<p>The lesson plan is not the original work of the student. It is not modeled on nor does it demonstrate an understanding of Anderson’s teaching strategies. The plan is not realistic for use in the classroom and does not include the required elements. It lacks a cohesive structure and its ideas are not communicated clearly.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">23-0 points</p>

References

- Anderson, Jeff. *Everyday Editing: Inviting Students to Develop Skill and Craft in Writer's Workshop*. Stenhouse Publishers: Portland, 2007.
- Atwell, Nancie. *In the Middle: New Understandings about Reading, Writing, and Learning*. Heinemann: Portsmouth, 1998.
- Benjamin, Amy and Tom Oliva. *Engaging Grammar: Practical Advice for Real Classrooms*. National Council of Teachers of English: Urbana, 2007.
- Claggett, Fran. *Teaching Writing: Craft, Art, Genre*. NCTE: Urbana, 2005.
- English Journal*. "Contexts for Teaching Grammar." Volume 95, Number 5. NCTE: Urbana, May 2006.
- English Journal*. "Revitalizing Grammar." Volume 92, Number 3. NCTE: Urbana, January 2003.
- Fletcher, Ralph. *A Writer's Notebook: Unlocking the Writer Within You*. Avon Books: New York, 1996.
- Haussamen, Brock, Amy Benjamin, Martha Kolin, and Rebecca S. Wheeler. *Grammar Alive! A Guide for Teachers*. NCTE: Urbana, 2003.
- Polette, Keith. *Teaching Grammar Through Writing: Activities to Develop Writer's Craft in ALL Students Grades 4-12*. Allyn and Bacon: Boston, 2007.
- Weaver, Constance. *Teaching Grammar in Context*. Boynton/Cook: Portsmouth, 1996.
- Weaver, Constance. *The Grammar Plan Book: A Guide to Smart Teaching*. Heinemann: Portsmouth, 2006.
- Weaver, Constance and Jonathan Bush. *Grammar to Enrich and Enhance Writing*. Heinemann: Portsmouth, 2008.
- Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well, 25th Anniversary Edition*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

Internet Resources

http://www.englishjournal.colostate.edu/Links/linksforissue_may06.htm
(Links to resources discussed in the May 2006 issue of *English Journal*)

<http://greatsentences.blogspot.com/>
(Notable Sentences for Writer's Workshop)

<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content4/grammer.morph.html>
(Grammar myths and teaching resources)

<http://www.stenhouse.com>
(Jeff Anderson resources and video clips)

<http://www.stenhouse.com/html/andersonwebcast.htm>
(Webcast with Jeff Anderson, author of *Mechanically Inclined*)

<http://www.writeguy.net/>
(Jeff Anderson's website)

National and State Standards

<http://www.nbpts.org/>

www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks

www.education-world.com/standards

www.sps3000.net/etpdp/background/standards.htm

<http://www.academicbenchmarks.com/search/>

<http://www.didaxinc.com/standards.html>

Policy on Plagiarism

“All people participating in the educational process at Fresno Pacific University are expected to pursue honesty and integrity in all aspects of their academic work. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be handled according to the procedures set forth in the Fresno Pacific University Catalogue.”

University Information

Graduate level course work reflects Fresno Pacific University's Desired Student Learning Outcomes as it applies to professional development to demonstrate the following:

- Oral and written communication in individual and group settings
- Content knowledge, and application of such knowledge in the student's area of interest to affect change
- Reflection for personal and professional growth
- Critical thinking
- Cultural and global perspectives to understand complex systems
- Computational/methodological skills to understand and expand disciplines, including an understanding of technological systems