**Case Study (assignment adapted from L. Micciche’s ENG 4089 course at the U of Cincinnati)**

**Purpose:** *Practice the primary research methods—observation, note-taking, interview, textual analysis—you’ll exercise everyday as a teacher. Practice using primary research as evidence to support claims/insights. Practice writing clearly and persuasively to an audience of fellow teachers.*

**Description**: A case study is a form of qualitative research that focuses on individuals or small groups. Case studies are largely descriptive as the researcher presents detailed information about the study participants and, from those details, draws a set of conclusions. **The methods involved in a case study simulate the on-the-ground research processes you’ll do as a teacher—you’ll identify questions or issues in your classroom, closely observe and gain information about those questions, and draw conclusions that will inform new classroom practices.**

**Focusing your Study:** A case study begins from a small set of focused questions you deem significant as discovered in a specific context. You can focus your study on a teacher, a classroom of students, a set of students, on a writer writing, in a tutoring center, etc.—any site and person(s) related to writing and the teaching of writing. If you have access to a classroom, you might focus on an activity or routine writing task the class performs, a specific lesson and its reception; you might closely observe students in independent reading and survey them. Or you could focus more on what the *teacher* does: how he/she builds in creative writing in a high-stakes testing environment (interviewing him/her about this and observing at least one example in action); how they respond to or assess student writing, how a teacher conferences with students, how they incorporate low-stakes writing activities, etc. If you aren’t observing a classroom, get creative—look to your own classrooms and teachers, roommates writing, or observe a few tutoring sessions in the writing center. The focus is essentially open; see the professor if you need assistance in focusing this project.

**Primary Research Methods:** You’ll use *primary* research methods to gather information for this study. Though there are more methods used in education research, you will use the most common ones: **observations**; **interviews**; **document analysis; surveys**. Case studies generally draw upon (to be most convincing and descriptive) more than one method, so for your case study, **at least two primary research methods are required.** We’ll read more about using these methods, but here are some expectations for the assignment:

* **Observations:** field notes are the record of keen observations. As such, if you use observations (most of you will), you’ll turn in your detailed, raw notes that include time/date/location. You should plan on observing at least twice.
* **Interviews:** Prepare questions for interviews, but also remember you’re having a conversation. If you conduct an interview, you’ll turn in your questions and at least partial transcript. I highly recommend you audio record your interview, so you only have to listen and record a set of pertinent quotes and ideas.
* **Surveys:** You might distribute surveys to a class you’re observing. Make sure your questions avoid yes/no answers, are sufficiently short, and are clear. If you choose to use a survey, submit with your project a copy of the survey and the responses.
* **Text Analysis:** this method involves examining a set of documents—writing prompts, assignment-related materials, or a set of written responses—to discover features or patterns. If you use this method, submit with your project the texts themselves (photocopy if needed).

You’ll also find and incorporate **at least ONE related published articles, or secondary research**, in order to establish some of what’s known already about your topic and how your local findings align with or contradict what others have found. If your case study and praxis report topic overlap, you’re welcome to reference any of those articles in your case study.

**Steps of the Case Study**

**1) THE PROPOSAL** Once you’ve thought through these criteria (you might also find it useful to preliminarily observe your site to help brainstorm your focus or you might wish to email the professor a couple of ideas) you’re ready to **propose** an initial case study plan for professor feedback and approval.

In under one-page, single-spaced answer the following questions:

1. What do you want to understand in this context and why? (Or what question do you want to explore?)
2. Who will be the subject(s) for your study and what methods will you use to collect data? Why did you select these subjects and methods?
3. What have others said about your area of inquiry? (***Briefly*** discuss one article you’ve found on the topic)
4. What do you hope to learn from this case study? Why might it be more broadly important to other teachers-in-training?

See Course Schedule for due date.

2) **CASE STUDY ESSAY with collected raw data:** After you’ve conducted your primary research, you’ll be ready to write the case study. You will describe the participant(s) and the data you gathered in order to provide a set of conclusions or implications based on the data you gathered. **A successful case study will balance description and analysis—it will show readers what the site you observed was like, and make and support claims based on that data.**

You’ll use a **typical** **organizational structure** for your case study write-up; we’ll work together to discover the **genre conventions** of the case study. For example, it’s a convention to use the first person.

**Format:** around 5+ double-spaced pages plus a Works Cited page (MLA format preferred, but you can do another citation style if you like), 1 inch margins and MLA formatting conventions.

Turn in a hard copy, including your proposal and complete research records (in an Appendix), on the date listed in the Course Schedule for professor feedback and evaluation.