

Karen Kaiser Lee, Ph.D.

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Many students are resistant writers. Some have had negative experiences with academic writing; others see writing as a chore. My job as a writing instructor is to build students' comfort, confidence, and competence with writing by a variety of approaches including honest discussion and inclusive and engaging assignments and classroom practices.

I like to start the semester allowing some room for their resistance with class discussions in the first week or so about previous experiences with writing in school. Asking them to share what they have experienced can put them at ease. Through discussion, I am also able to help them see that they *are* writers when they text, post on social media, and compose with technology. I also disclose my own personal struggles with writing. I am not a resistant writer, but I do struggle with the task sometimes. Students are often surprised, but then comforted, to learn a writing instructor can also grapple with writing issues related to neurodiversity that include things they too struggle with – like procrastination.

I use smaller assignments like journals or literacy narrative writing assignments to allow them to further explore where their writing resistance may come from (or where their love of reading or writing originated – thankfully not all students are resistant writers).

Assignment topics can be a stumbling block for students if they don't feel an interest in the topic. One way I have countered this is to craft assignments with broad prompts that allow students to have a say in the topics we will write about. Another way to engage students is to ask them to identify an issue affecting their community and to research and write about that issue. Researching and writing about their community gives students the skills they need to be engaged citizens who understand how to solve problems where they live. This is also a great way to ground professional writing assignments like recommendation reports. I have also collaborated with my students and asked for student input when settling on assignment parameters that can be flexible, such as intermediate due dates for drafts. Being willing to listen and to adjust class plans when it is feasible also builds a team mentality.

Multimedia composition assignments are a great way to have students write in many different genres, like proposals, scripts, progress reports, workshop feedback, and final reflections. In this manner, students wind up doing more writing than they may have expected. I also like to use multimedia composition assignments as a way to get students to learn how to learn. I give them basic how-to instructions on technology use, but tend to step back and provide less direct help when students want to do something specific in programs and apps that may be less familiar to them. I want them to understand that these tools will change, and it's important for them to be able to teach themselves how to use these tools as the interfaces are always changing. This also prevents multimedia projects from becoming just about the tools we use to make them. These types of assignments are well-received by reluctant and enthusiastic writers, and they reflect the ways students will likely compose for their work and personal lives.

I am committed to having students write for situations similar to those they are likely to encounter outside the classroom. Some ways that I encourage students to write for different audiences include assigning students to create online writing portfolios in multimedia writing courses; assigning students to write recommendation reports in my professional writing courses to also identify the person who can address the problem students have identified for the report. I also spend time in advanced composition courses having students locate journals that specialize in publishing the work of undergraduate writers. We talk about how to evaluate our essays as potential fits for these publications.

Like most instructors, I keep notes throughout each semester on how well discussions and assignments go, where students struggled and succeeded, and update my syllabi based on these notes as well as student feedback, both formal and informal. I keep current on pedagogical theory and practice as well, and revise my teaching strategies as needed. I anticipate continuing this practice as I seek to help my students, resistant and otherwise, and my own writing practices.