

ENGL 0100/0101 - Basic English

ENGL 0100/0101 was one of the first courses I taught at AUM, and I have taught 8 sections since 2013; the number of sections assigned to me dropped slightly when AUM hired Mandy Kaufman and Donna Smith to be full-time ENGL 0100 instructors.

In 2013, when I first started teaching ENGL 0100/0101, the course was centered on creative nonfiction. We assigned three essays that focused on different areas of life, and students were asked to write about their experiences in creative ways. One of my favorite assignments was the life through music assignment. My students picked a song that reminded them of an important moment in their life and told the story, some included the lyrics to highlight pivotal points. I had never experienced anything quite like ENGL 0100. The students were brave, endearing, and the work they produced made me (and themselves) proud. That first year teaching the course was difficult because I was learning as I was teaching, but my CEFs were on par with the department numbers. As I became adept at the subject matter and the sequence of assignments, my CEF scores improved.

From Fall 2013 until Fall 2015 my CEFs scores increased steadily. My first semester teaching ENGL 0100 at AUM was my first semester here, and my lowest score was 4.0, but that was on par with the department and school, and it was higher than the university average for that semester. My highest score was 4.9, and I had more than one of those scores between Spring 2014 - Fall 2015; my CEFs were consistently on par with or higher than the department, school, and university for that time period as well.

When we switched to the 'zine sequence of assignments, I had to start over with the course. The 'zine is a semester-long sequence of assignments that lead up to the students producing a very small magazine on their chosen topic. My CEFs that first semester (Fall 2016) were lower than I was used to, but it humbled me. My students produced 'zines that had depth, heart, and they showed extraordinary growth, but I was uneasy teaching this 'zine. I also allowed some personal stress (my husband lost his job right after we closed on a house) to affect me, and that is clearly demonstrated in my CEFs. I only had 2 students in one section fill out the CEFS and only 8 in the other section. These affected the review of the course because I didn't have a lot to go on. What I can say about these two sections is that the students accomplished the goals of the course, and I was confident that they would all do well in ENGL 1010, and that's huge.

My CEF scores were on par with or higher than the department, the school, and the university. My lowest score was a 4.0, but my course notes from that semester are focused on discipline problems in the class, which could account for that score. My highest score from that period is a 5.0 (in that same section actually). The comments about my rewrite policy account for that score, as many students, especially my Bridge students, took the opportunity to meet me for extra conferences and go to the Learning Center to rewrite a paper they failed.

Changes and Improvements:

One of the main complaints from the older version of the class was McGraw-Hill's Connect program, a semester-long grammar workshop (with readings, practice, and quizzes). Students in ENGL 0100 and 1010 were using the program, and for those who took both courses it was a negative comment on CEFs because they had already completed the program in ENGL 0100. The majority of students disliked the program in both courses. Even

though some students liked it, we stopped using the program because there wasn't enough data to support keeping it, especially with rising costs.

The few comments I got on the recent CEFS were negative about the 'zine project overall because it didn't help "with writing." Part of that is true. Some students were more focused on the format of the 'zine rather than the writing that went into it. I am not doing the 'zine project this semester, and the students seem to like the new assignments that are not 'zine related. This new sequence of assignments is a pilot for the new curriculum I proposed for ENGL 0103: Introduction to Composition. I wanted to have data/feedback to share with Dr. Mina and the composition instructors about the proposed changes. So far so good.

Because of my emphasis on collaboration and critical thinking, I take into consideration what the students think about the assignments, the texts we read, and the general feedback about the course. These comments are not always easy to digest, but they are so important to me as a teacher. I try to change what needs to be changed based on the goals I have for the course.

Highlights from student comments:

"The interaction that the instructor had with the class" stood out as having helped learning.

"Ms. Kent is boss; she deserves a big raise!"

"Ms. Kent is a wonderful teacher. I love the way she teaches and how helpful she is when it comes down to looking over our work, seeing how we can make it better."

"When the instructor compared the lesson to something in everyday life" stood out as having helped learning.

ENGL 1010 - Composition I

ENGL 1010 is one of the classes I teach the most. This isn't unexpected since the lecturers in the department teach most of the comp courses. Since I started in August 2013 I have taught 18 sections of ENGL 1010, with a variety of changes throughout the years. With the exception of Summer 2017, when I taught ENGL 1010 online for the first time and was the victim of a violent crime, my CEF scores have been consistently high.

ENGL 1010 - Face-to-Face

Comp 1 has undergone some serious revision since I started working at AUM, and I was on the sub-committee for most of those changes. I often volunteer to run pilots for new materials and approaches because I'm a fan of data. I like to think of this as risk and reward; even if the pilot is a bust, I still learned something about teaching and how to tweak the materials to be better. The risk here is that when something goes awry or students have negative feelings towards a new technology or program, the CEFs reflect those feelings. Still, it's not only my job to try new things, it's part of who I am as a teacher. I want my courses to be beneficial to my students but also challenging enough to stretch their thinking. I also tend to change up my assignments because I don't want to get stuck doing the same thing over and over again. The sequence of assignments has stayed relatively the same, as decided by the program: narrative, analysis, evaluation, argument. What I decide to give them as specific prompts is what changes.

I also like to keep my assignments current and as interesting as I can so students will feel personally invested in the topics they choose. One of my favorite assignments was an argument paper where students had to nominate a famous person to be the president based on a specific set of criteria discussed as a class. This person couldn't be a politician (to prevent rants about political affiliations and to challenge them to think outside the box). Narratives are also challenging to my students, but they always rise to the occasion and often produce detailed, descriptive narratives filled with heartbreak, crowning achievements, and the spectrum of life experiences they come to class with. Watching my students evolve and grow as writers as they learn to take the lessons from one paper to the next is a great feeling, and some of my students have come back to see me after the semester to express gratitude. I put it back on them because they are the ones who produced the work. They are the ones who learned a great deal. I'm just there to help them. My CEFs have been averaging on par with the department, school, and university.

ENGL 1010 - Online

I was trained and certified to teach online in my first year, but I wasn't offered an online class for several years. In the interim I kept up my certification so I would be ready if it were ever an option. That first class was very difficult aside from the personal trauma I suffered. I was using Google Drive for the students so they could work in real time, and everyone could see comments made on drafts. I discussed this plan with Dr. Woodworth, and we agreed it would be a good idea to try it since it was working really well for our internal work. Everything went smoothly at first. I had video tutorials and detailed written instructions on how to submit work and use Google Drive/Docs. However, after a few weeks a student became disgruntled and didn't come to see me but went straight to the dean to complain about the course. Without a great deal of conversation, I altered the class to suit his wants and allowed assignments to be turned in on Blackboard or Google (since several students wanted to keep using Google). This, however, was a mistake. I should have kept everyone in one place, which I now know. Out of the class, only 4 students filled out the CEF, and I received very little feedback on them. I did, however, get an email from one student who was gleeful about submitting low scores. That's the first time a student was boastful about using CEFs against me. However, the student work produced that semester still met the outcomes I set for the semester, and I was confident that they would succeed in ENGL 1020, and I that I would succeed in making the online course much better.

Hosting everything in Blackboard the next time I taught ENGL 1010 was a good idea. I created a private Facebook group so we could communicate outside Blackboard, but since this was ungraded, it was only used by those who wanted to contact me that way. I held conferences on Facebook messenger, which was a great way for online students to contact me without giving them my phone number. The bounce-back is reflected in my CEF scores, which were not only much higher than the previous course but back to my usual high scores across the board. They were on par with or above the department, school, and university that semester.

Changes and Improvements:

Clearly, at least one online student did not enjoy the class, and while I tried to be accommodating, the damage was done. Changing to being in Blackboard only was the only alteration I made to the course, and the second round was much more successful in both content and feedback. The face-to-face classes have given me some valuable feedback, especially about readings they thought were helpful (and a few they didn't like). "Shitty First Drafts" and "Ten Ways to Think About Writing" continue to be very popular, and they have become foundational in our new approach to teaching composition with the emphasis on transfer. Students also had mixed feelings about some of the assignment options, but the ones that have been most popular I try to keep in rotation.

Highlights from student comments:

“Ms. Kent was very available for feedback and very helpful. Her videos explaining each section were a HUGE help.” [ENGL 1010 online]

“I am a much better writing now at the end of the class than I was before. She gave me really good feedback for my papers.”

“My professor is very involved with our assignments and it helps me have the chance to ask questions.”

“Before I enrolled in this class, writing essays were one of my weaknesses. Not only she teach me techniques that I didn’t know, but I was able to stretch my thinking to do so.”

“This class is very enjoyable yet challenging. It really does enhance your writing.”

ENGL 1020 - Composition II

I’ve always enjoyed teaching ENGL 1020. I spent a year as a research assistant after I got my MA at Auburn, and it was such a challenging but rewarding experience. It really helped me hone my research skills; that made me a better teacher overall but especially for a class like ENGL 1020 which asks students to go through the research writing process to produce one research paper after a sequence of assignments that lead up to it.

The assignments for ENGL 1020 have been pretty consistent since I started teaching at AUM. What has changed is the theme. I have taught this course with themes like Law & Order, Rage Against the Machine, Harry Potter, Monsters, Heroes & Villains, and Comedy. They seem wildly different, but they aren’t really. The theme is just a vehicle to get students thinking about topics. In Harry Potter, I had students argue that reading *Harry Potter* makes kids nicer and smarter. In Rage Against the Machine, I had a couple of students make very good arguments about music and its effects on listeners and society. The Law & Order section focused on a variety of legal and social issues like the insanity defense and police brutality. Heroes & Villains was a fun class where students started debating heroes and villains in class and ended up choosing topics like whether Dr. Phil’s show does more damage than anything else and challenging Oprah’s complicity in it. Monsters, my most recent theme, is challenging in that I ask student to think about their lives at all levels to decide what they think is monstrous. This semester I have students writing about the rise of openly racist (Neo-Nazis) people running for public office and the effects of colorism on the African American community.

ENGL 1020 - Face-to-Face

With the exception of one section, my CEFs have been on par or higher than the department, school, and university. That one class I remember vividly. As it sometimes happens, I was switched to that section at the last minute, bringing my theme with me. The students were vocal about their disappointment at not having the teacher/theme they chose. I got most of them to come around, but you can’t expect your students to always like you. When my CEFs were a little lower than my personal average I wasn’t really surprised. I asked them to use a technology they were not expecting to use as well - wikispaces. My other sections that semester didn’t like wikispaces that much either, but we all go through it.

ENGL 1020 - Online

Teaching ENGL 1020 online is more of a challenge than any other course, but that’s why I like doing it. The challenge is not just something I have in my teaching philosophy, it’s part of who I am as a learner and scholar. I see the push for online programs across the country, so I wanted to make my online course as good as it could

possibly be. That first class was great. My students were so diverse (full-time nurses, students traveling in Germany, and students who admitted they just wanted to do work in their pjs). My CEFs were only slightly lower than the department, school, and university, but I believe that part of that is trying something new. In fact, two of my students that summer reached out to me, and I have copied their emails to this document. My scores improved after that first section, and I still find new ways to improve my online (and face-to-face) classes.

Changes and Improvements:

“I would encourage Ms. Kent to explain the assignments better. I remember finding myself doing a paper or an assignment on wikispaces and I would think "I have no idea what I'm doing nor what she wants from me". Making her objectives for the assignments on wikispaces would be very helpful.”

As you can see from this comment, splitting information between Blackboard and Wikispaces was confusing for some students. I have since focused my attention on Blackboard only. While I like to challenge my students and give them skills they can use outside of the academy, Wikispaces was so unpopular I decided it wasn't worth it. I want my students to focus on writing rather than be worried about some technology. When the whole class hates something, it's time to rethink incorporating it into the class. My CEFs bounced back after I removed this technology from my course.

Highlights from student comments:

From: LBATTLE1

Sent: Thursday, July 27, 2017 3:57 PM

To: Elizabeth Kent <ekent@aum.edu>

Subject: Re: 201703 ENGL 1020: English Comp II - Monsters OC (E Kent): Final Grades

Thank you for your leadership. When I first started this class, I almost quit fearing the unknown. I'm glad that I didn't. Though I did not make the grade I originally hoped for, I'm proud of my accomplishment. In actuality I did get the grade I hoped for because I missed assignments, that was my own fault. Life sometimes dictates our deadlines and takes us completely off of path. Your teaching style is great. You are all around and not stuffy. I have already done the Curtis critique so there is no need to bore you with repetition. Continue being personal and I'm sure your next set of students will love your class just as I did. In case I forgot to mention this, the peer review is a helpful asset to the research paper. I hope that you are feeling better and thank you for your patience and helping me to conquer my fears.

From: CTURNE25

Sent: Thursday, July 27, 2017 3:13 PM

To: Elizabeth Kent <ekent@aum.edu>

Subject: English 1020

Ms. Kent

I would like to say that you are a wonderful instructor and you go above and beyond to ensure that your students understand. Thanks so much for your patience and guidance and I know that I am ready to my writing intensive classes. I was so nervous about taking this class because it has been over 20 years since I have been in a college setting. You made it so easy and I just want to say thank you.

Sincerely

Chonquinta Turner

“Her classroom my professor set up was an environment that i was able to think freely. I didn't feel as if My ideas on assignments were ever limited.”

“Instructor really does take the time to talk to you about problems you may be struggling with and she is more than happy to help you grow better.”

“This class helped me realize that I have to keep up with my deadlines and if I'm confused my professor is here to help.”

ENGL 3060 - Business and Professional Writing

Except for the one time I taught a literature course at AUM, ENGL 3060 is the class I've taught the least. Dr. Woodworth assigned me to teach these courses because I worked as a technical and professional writer for a recruiter while I was in college (the tail end of undergrad and during grad school). I took a collaborative and practical approach to teaching this course, which is in line with my teaching philosophy. I also expected my students to analyze and evaluate themselves from an employer's point of view, which stems from my experience as a professional writer and from my teaching philosophy. To accomplish these goals, I taught students how to develop a resume and cover letter (for a specific job of their choosing), complete a social media self-analysis (which I was tasked to do in my job), compose a set of instructions (of their choosing), and complete a group project. This project, which you can find in this folder, was an especially praised part of the course both during class and on my CEFs.

The first time I taught this course was Spring 2015, and my CEF scores were very good. My lowest score was 4.5 on the question about the teacher's effectiveness in teaching the subject matter. Looking at the feedback a couple of students wanted more peer review time and a different classroom (we had tech issues several times that semester), but the feedback was overwhelmingly good. I had 16 students complete the CEFs, and 15 wrote about how the course stretched their thinking. The social media analysis and group project were the favorite units according to the student responses, and almost all of the students wrote about learning valuable skills for the job market and how to use writing in a professional setting, a goal of the course.

When I taught this course again in Spring 2016, I kept the assignments the same as the previous section because the feedback and the student work was exceptional. What did change, however, was my confidence. I also added peer review to the course. Having taught this course with success, I was more confident in my approach the second time around, and my CEF scores reflect that. The question about teacher effectiveness in teaching the subject matter jumped from 4.5 to 4.8. 15 out of the 17 students who filled out the additional questions wrote about how their thinking was stretched during the course.

While I have not taught this course since, I am definitely open to it, especially now that the course has been revised in terms of focus. It's exciting to use a slightly different skill set in courses focused on technical and professional writing, and I am always looking forward to the challenge new courses present.

Changes and Improvements:

“Not having a peer review; I like to hear feedback.”

“Having to create a Prezi; I was more worried about losing the program than the content I was trying to convey.”

The comment about peer review was very valuable, and I added that into the course in 2016. The second comment about Prezi must have been a miscommunication with a student. When students are asked to create a presentation, they are always given options (PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Slides, etc). I would highlight this on the assignment sheet to ensure my instructions are clear.

Highlights from student comments:

“Professor Kent made it [ENGL 3060] a fun way to learn about these ‘boring adult’ things that will be helpful to us in the future.”

“It helped me learn a lot about the job force, as far as social media use.”

“This class was so interesting because it was so applicable to the real world. Everything we learned was useful and valuable.”

ENGL 2540 - Survey of English Literature II (online)

Fall 2017 was a hectic time for me; as mentioned in previous analyses, my husband was out of work and we were continuing to bleed money on a house that was falling apart. When Dr. Kaufman offered this class to me at the last minute, I jumped at the chance to teach it. While the extra money was certainly part of the incentive, I also wanted to spread my wings and teach a literature class again. I hadn’t taught a literature class since 2012 when I filled in last second for an ailing literature professor at the community college where I was teaching. There were two differences between the two courses for me. One was that the 2012 course was ready to go with texts, the first two weeks of lessons, and the LMS was set up. The other was that I taught 18th century British literature (I studied this period extensively in college). This time around I was starting from scratch. Luckily, I had some of my materials and the rest I developed with a literature professor friend of mine who was teaching the same course that semester. After a week of hard work and armed with my theory and pedagogy books, I charged forth into uncharted territory (for me). The text the students liked the most was also the one that had the most intense discussions for: *The Handmaid’s Tale*. I used discussions to challenge them and get them to engage with each other; wrestling with ideas and concepts in a collaborative way made the discussions productive (which is part of my teaching philosophy).

My CEF scores were on par with the department and higher than the school and university, and the comments were generally positive. A few students thought the reading responses were too long and didn’t like the group project. Looking back, I can certainly see their point about the group project. Group projects are hard enough, but having one in an online course was really difficult. Some students just didn’t respond to their group members, leaving them with resentment towards the whole project. Students responded very well to the texts I chose for them to read, and the discussion board was the most effective part of the course for most students. A couple of students noted that my organization and consistency helped make the course more enjoyable, and this is something I’m very proud of. Online courses are more difficult and take more time, but they are also very important to me. I hated the online course I took as an undergrad, and I made a vow back then that I wouldn’t do that to my students. I made a private Facebook group so we could keep in touch outside of Blackboard, and I reinforced my philosophy that there are no stupid questions. One student even noted in the CEF that I answered questions whenever they had them.

Changes and Improvements:

“I would tell her that the group project is very difficult to do with classmates that are not in a classroom setting because its hard to get people to reply!”

“To make the class not do group projects since it was an online course. It was a little difficult to try and get with four other students at the same time.”

As I mentioned above, I would significantly alter the group project. While there are challenges that come with online group projects, they can be done and done well. There are companies whose employees are entirely remote, so I’m sure I can find a way to make a class project work. One way to change this would be hosting the group work within Blackboard. Using the discussion board it would be easy to assign groups to separate threads. This way, they could work together and I could comments along the way.

Here are some highlights from the student comments:

“What helps me most is the consistency and organization Professor Kent shows through the course. Online courses can be hard but she keeps things consistent and organized and this makes it enjoyable.”

“Professor Kent is really a really cool professor. Although I have never met her, I take her online and she has created several methods for us to contact her, including how other students can reach her. She really knows her material and she is really smart.”

“The assignments I find most effective are the reading and discussions. It helps to talk to people in my class while taking an online class, so you don't feel so lost or alone.”

“I don't have any changes I would make. I've really enjoyed this course and everything runs perfectly. I've learned a lot and would take a course from Professor Kent again if possible.”

“The discussions were the most effective assignments because it helped my peers and I understand more about the poems and novels that were read.”