



The Teaching Center

# Improving Student Writing with Peer Review



Beth Fisher

Associate Director

The Teaching Center

[bfisher@wustl.edu](mailto:bfisher@wustl.edu)

Seth Graebner

Associate Professor of French  
Romance Languages & Literatures

# Improving Writing with Peer Review



1. Goals and Common Challenges
2. One Approach
3. Planning Peer Review
4. Organizing and Guiding a Peer-Review Session
5. Evaluating Peer Review

# Common Challenges: Student Responses

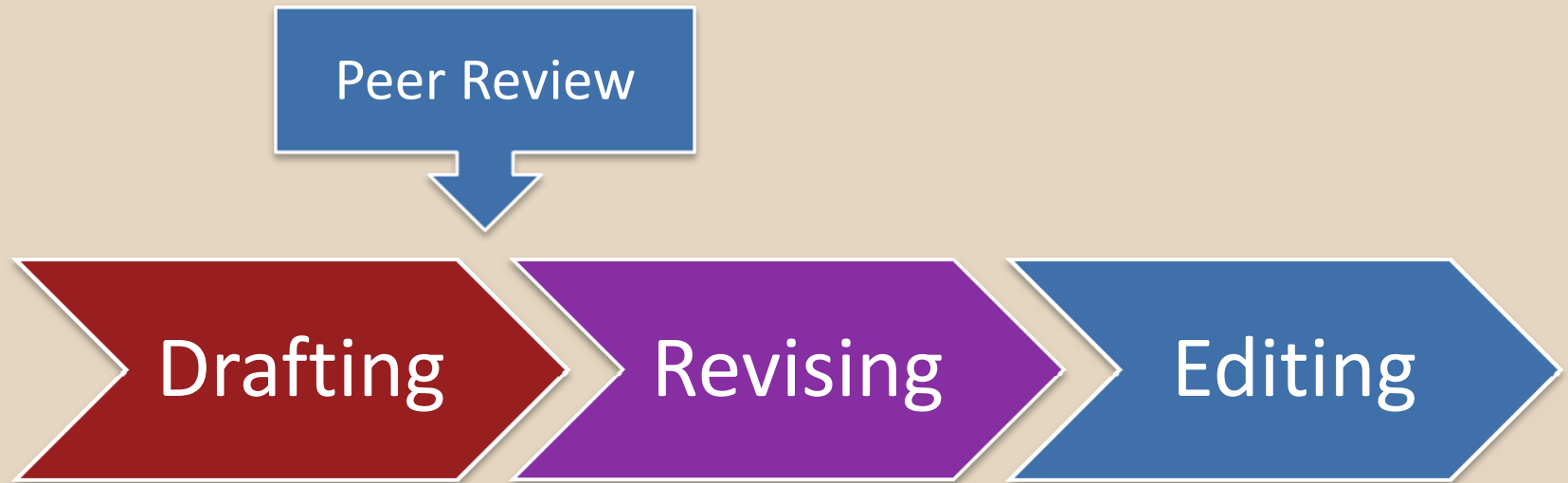


# One Approach



1. Teach the required skills
2. Teach peer review as an essential part of the writing process and a means of learning to write for readers
3. Define peer-reviewers as READERS, not graders

# Teach Peer Review as Part of the Writing Process



Plan: When and with what purposes?

```
graph TD; A[Plan: When and with what purposes?] --> B[Design Peer-Review Worksheets]; B --> C[Schedule Practice Session]; C --> D[Organize and Facilitate each Session]; D --> E[Evaluate and Refine];
```

Design Peer-Review Worksheets

Schedule Practice Session

Organize and Facilitate each Session

Evaluate and Refine

# Plan Peer Review



## 1. Decide before the semester starts

- How often; which assignments
- To grade or not to grade?
  - ✦ Plan to give feedback, whether grading or not

## 2. Allow time for a practice peer-review session with a sample student paper

- All students write comments, then discuss
  - ✦ What kind of comments are most helpful to writer?
  - ✦ How might writer respond?

# Design Peer-Review Worksheets



1. Include specific tasks and open-ended questions
2. Include space for writer to add notes/responses



# Organize each Session



1. Assign 2-3 students per group
  - Create diverse groups
2. Ask each student to bring 2 copies of paper
3. Distribute worksheets
4. Provide clear instructions and time limits, for example (for each 3-pg. paper):
  - 15-20 minutes reading
  - 5-10 minutes commenting
  - 5-10 minute discussing

# Observe and Facilitate



1. Encourage students
2. Help groups stay on task and on schedule
3. If a group does not know how to start discussing, suggest that they read written comments out loud

# Evaluate Peer Review



1. Ask each writer to turn in peer-review worksheets and reviewed draft with final draft
2. Gather feedback and suggestions from students on how peer-review sessions are going

# For Additional Ideas



Handouts will be posted on the ITeach Web site after the symposium.

Go to <http://teachingcenter.wustl.edu> to register for upcoming faculty workshop:

Teaching with Writing

Wed., Feb. 3 and 10

4:00-6:00 pm

Eads 217

Enrollment limited to 12

# Sample Writer's Responses or Notes



- I need to add more support for this point.
- How can I respond to a counter-argument here?
- My reviewers didn't understand the importance of my research question. I need to rewrite that section.
- My reviewers thought this paragraph was not important, but it is actually essential. How can I better connect it?
- One reviewer thought I should omit this example, but the other two liked it. I will keep it, but think about whether I need to clarify it.



# Preparing: Develop a Grading System



## One example, using points

As a writer, brought 2 copies of paper to class	5 pts.
As peer-reviewer, provided peers with specific, constructive written feedback	0-5 pts.
As peer-reviewer, participated actively in discussion	0-5 pts.
As a writer, wrote specific responses to peer feedback	0-5 pts.
Total points for peer review session	0-20 pts.

