# Teaching Naked Before the Machine

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***Abstract***

*Author traces journey of evolving teaching strategies in response to COVID-19 Pandemic to teaching during the early days of the proliferation of generative AI. By returning to the tenets of Composition pedagogy, the author fashions a new strategy for the writing classroom of today, based on certain principles of the Composition as expressed since the 1980's. Guidance for current classroom includes emphasizing individual identity in a learning community, timely student feedback, journaling, conferencing, reflecting, evaluating curricula in real-time, and composing as much as possible in analog formats.*

***Keywords****: Pandemic, artificial intelligence, composition, community, journaling, conferencing, reflection*

**A**t first, I did not understand that I was teaching before the machine. I didn't even know I was teaching naked. I was simply teaching before the virus.

I am a career teacher of composition and have been in the writing classroom off and on since 1996. I also teach and research digital writing. My experiences with generative AI as a meaningful writing tool started in May 2022 when I watched a presentation at CHI on CoAuthor, a tool developed by Mina Lee, Percy Liang, and Qian Yang. This tool was the first instance where I could see how LLMs (GPT3, at that time) could function as a true co-author for human writers. The technology was shifting under my eyes as it moved from suggesting the completion of sentences to composing entire drafts. As a writing teacher, and a digital writing researcher, I knew that nothing would be the same.

But as I look back at 2022 and think about all the changes we have engaged in our writing classrooms, it is not the arrival of AI alone that presented the greatest challenge. It was the fact that AI was arriving at the same time we were exiting the COVID-19 Pandemic. At the very time when teachers and students were learning how to come back together into a physical classroom, so too was the greatest electronic literacy disrupter of our times arriving in our writing lives. This chapter explores the impact of this confluence, and the reality of how teaching in a world with AI is not only about responding to digital affordances, but also about reconditioning the spirit of the composition classroom as a space of individual creativity, exploration, research, and reflection, and how we can best channel the legacy of our composition teaching community to meet the current challenges.

In the fall of 2022, I was—like everyone—simply trying to "do the next right thing" and teach writing to first-year students in the wake of COVID. When the virus came for our research intensive, state university in the US South, like so many other teaching and learning communities, we taught "remotely." Remote teaching turned out to be a mass of many well-intentioned teachers with still more well-intentioned students desperately pretending to teach and learn online. Few teachers in our community knew how to teach online with skill, and fewer still would have chosen

to teach online. But when the virus first emerged in the spring of 2020, the choice was to teach remotely, or not at all. So we taught remotely.

Later, we would learn that we could teach in the classroom, but only if students and teachers agreed to social distance and wear masks. The campus functioned in a state of continual suspicion, as faculty feared that students would refuse masks or simply don them improperly. Our administration removed chairs and tables from classrooms, marked spots on the floors for new seating arrangements, constructed plexiglass shields between students and teachers, and even hired students to enforce classroom mask rules. Students who did not follow the mask requirements would be removed from class and face academic discipline. Faculty all agreed that teaching with masks was the worst of all possible worlds. Except for teaching remotely.

During the pandemic, in my administrative capacity, I tried to help improve teaching and learning. Our first efforts were around resilient teaching, or designing courses so that they could be conducted by way of any given mode of instruction. The thinking was that we faculty could develop the core lesson plan in a face-to-face format, but then also add options to facilitate zoom teaching, or remote teaching. With these designs in hand, we hoped to be prepared to teach during any condition that the virus would give us: if we could teach in the classroom with masks, we would, but if the virus numbers worsened, we could pivot to teaching in a distanced format.

Many teachers and students have memories of learning during COVID. With some separation I was fortunate enough to reflect on this period with colleagues and edit a volume capturing the voices of faculty (Johinke, et al., 2023). But while emergency teaching arrangements were realistic for teaching under the erratic and deadly demands of the virus, I simply failed to see the cumulative effect it was having on my students. This all changed for me in the fall of 2022—long after the virus had subsided—when I spoke with a composition student during the early days of the semester. He had asked a question, and was participating in classroom discussion, while wearing his ear buds. We were a small class of around twenty and he seemed to have no problem indicating to all of us that he might—or might not—be participating in discussion. Later in the semester, I asked the class to not use cell phones, and most students complied. But one writer refused to surrender her phone. She readily admitted that she was simply too addicted to give it up.

While these changes in classroom decorum might not seem substantial to some, they affected me deeply. I began to understand on a new level how my students had navigated their high school education through COVID. Of course they had little faith in institutions: in high school we had relegated them to their homes with laptops and asked them to learn without any advance training or notice, ensured them no appropriate learning environment, and denied them the intramural experiences that are essential to forming social bonds and identities. And we should never forget that the political bickering and uncertainty among the adults in their lives could only underscore the idea that we adults were not in control.

Coming out of the COVID experience, I felt that my students' ability to engage each other effectively in the classroom—their abilities to learn from and with each other—had atrophied. I saw clear signs that many students were reluctant to engage with each other to discuss ideas to understand other perspectives. In many ways, their personal technology devices were constantly engaged in the classroom, providing continuous distractions of information, text conversation, and music, that were uncommon before the pandemic. I knew also that these were generalizations, and did not speak to every aspect of every student's experience. These were not independent observations based on peer-reviewed measurements: these were the signs I saw in my own classrooms. I

knew, and know, that there are many potential flaws with extending my observations and conclusions to multiple learners. However, if I based my responses on tried and true composition methodologies, then I would be shifting my class emphasis from one evidence based set of practices to another. I chose to believe that my composition training could provide answers to help my class become more useful for our current students.

## Getting Started & Remembering Mentors

Prior to teaching composition in Fall 2024, I engaged in some reflective practices. In my writing and thinking, I noted the following:

- Post COVID, many students seemed more isolated.
- I am growing older, and the impact of the age gap between me and my students cannot be underestimated, but we can still teach and learn together.
- I had attempted to flatten the hierarchy of my classes in several ways over the years (writing our own textbook together) but almost nothing seemed to increase my students' sense of ownership in the class.
- Many of the digital tools we were using in the classroom (LMS, and course content developed to replace a rhetoric) felt more like obstacles to writing, rather than assets. This last point was very difficult for me to engage: I teach and I research digital writing. However, I also felt that the digital tools in our classroom – both those within and beyond my control – were creating a permanent, and alternate, reality of constant distraction that had, over time, severely diminished the quality of our face-to-face interactions.

As I reflected, I thought more about the mentors I had had in composition, and how their wisdom could be applied to this moment. These teaching mentors included people who taught me directly in the classroom, people who took the time to coach me, and people whom I never met but through their scholarship.

Patsy Hammontree (1979) worked me over like an undersized point guard in her undergraduate writing classes at the University of Tennessee. She did not write about writing: she just lived it. She taught me that none of my writing choices were above reconsideration. But because she was always, always, responding to my writing—rapidly, thoroughly, and with intensity—I knew that she believed in my work. I also knew that I had to match her writing intensity if I were to meet her expectations. Her actions told me that nothing was more important than our time together, trying to get the message right.

As a fresh Master's student at the University of Mississippi, Ben McClelland (Donovan and McClellland,1980), taught me long ago that journaling was necessary to maintain fluency and literacy in the composition classroom. I have always resisted teaching composition with journaling because it felt ancillary to the main project where I wanted writers to spend most of their time. However, I was starting to understand that my students, on the whole, had very little writing experience on a daily basis and that if they did not exercise that writing muscle before approaching a structured classroom writing, they were losing the opportunity to express themselves in a writing environment with very few drawbacks.

The scholarship of Donald Murray (1979) was one of the first voices in composition wherein I was able to identify my own practices. Student teacher conferencing was a natural environment for me in teaching writing, and although I have never taken the practice to the lengths he did, I knew that the connections I could help writers make in these conferences were essential to the writing class. Additionally, I also knew that the project of increasing student autonomy could be furthered by student-teacher conferences. At first this notion seems odd, since the power imbalance between teacher and student are laid bare in a one-on-one meeting, but if we can repeat conferences, we can help students to create their own agenda for the conferences and rebalance power dynamics toward themselves.

Christy Desmet insisted that I ruthlessly discard anything that is not working in the classroom (Finlay, W., et al., 2004). I could hear her saying "If you're not sure why something is in your class, rip it out. Now." She insisted that I continually evaluate each aspect of the class: where are students energized? What gets them writing? How does each activity further *your* writing development? Because if it is not interesting to you, it certainly won't be interesting to them.

Nancy Sommers (1982) taught me to give everyone a chance to write about something important to them. Start with writing prompts that allow each person to explore topics that are naturally appealing and appropriate and then layer ways to build on that. Further, when you are responding to writing, choose a lesson. If you approach responding as if you are grading a test, and feeling required to mark every "error" you may discover, you will overwhelm the writers, and yourself.

Although Peter Elbow was not directly my mentor, he was a source of continuing inspiration. While my partner taught in the Composition program with Elbow and Pat Belanoff at UMass, I was teaching at another program in New Hampshire. The program trainings and handouts she brought home were pure gold for me as I developed my own writing pedagogy. Elbow's creator/editor framing has stayed with me for years, and helped me to encourage my writers to respect and explore their creativity before jumping to edit their writing. His looping exercises have always been in my back pocket as a tool kit for helping writers explore their unconscious thoughts. In preparing this course, I looked specifically to his textbook *A Community of Writers* (Elbow and Belanoff, 2000).

Kathi Yancey—reflect (1998; 2016). All of our work in writing is about building the muscle to reflect on our actions in a systematic, probing, and curious manner. Allowing students to build a habit of reflection not only instills curiosity about their internal processes, but it also helps them build a sense of ownership in writing as it is attached to a continuous voice.

After reflecting on where I saw my students, and listening to the mentors in my head, I started to lay down some new principles for my new composition classroom that would enable my drive to build community in the classroom. I saw this drive for community as essential in a time where generative AI was at every turn. To combat these effects I—like many writing teachers—was turning more and more to in-class writing. But as we spent more time writing together in class, rather than outside of class, it felt less like we were "running away" from AI and more that we were returning to the foundations of composition.

## Adjusting My Methods

The most important principle was that each and every activity in the classroom had to further our writing skills. Therefore, the classroom time would be built around writing. Secondly, we would learn with and from each other by engaging each other directly in our classroom. We would

respond to the work of fellow writers at all levels: exploratory drafts, mid-process drafts, and final revisions. We would be asked to speak about our projects and reflect on how we felt about them.

I also wished to continue flattening the hierarchy and turning over more and more of class control to my writers. This can be a challenge in a classroom dominated by first-semester, first-year students. When I had tried this previously, some students felt that I was evading my responsibilities as the "expert": they did not want their fellow students to read their writing but instead wished to rely on me alone. How could I build community among these writers and teach them to value the input of others?

With these notions and questions in mind, I set down these principles, and put them in the course description for my first-semester composition course, a traditional introduction to college writing:

> This course is organized around several principles.
>
> 1. Community is paramount. We can learn alone, but, writing is best learned in community. This is why when we are together for class we emphasize presence of others to focus on writing, learning from each other by reading, listening, speaking, writing, and practicing mindfulness.
> 2. This is a learning community. This concept means that students and instructor partner to make the rules for how the class will operate, in keeping with the UM Creed.
> 3. You get what you give. If you come to each class prepared to listen, think, speak, write, and respond, you will leave this semester with tremendous growth in your literacy skills.

In reviewing these principles today, I can see that several aspects were aspirational: first-semester freshmen were not really prepared to make rules for the class (not without more substantial investment from me) and I did not spend much time on practicing mindfulness. However, the ideas of community and sharing energy were evident in the workshop concepts embedded in this course structure. Students knew that they were entering a classroom where they were going to share their ideas in writing as well as share and receive feedback on those ideas.

And to enact these principles, I created the following practices for our course, laid out in our syllabus:

> 1. Because this is a learning community, you will have a role in determining how the class will operate from day to day. As instructor, I will use my best judgement to select assignments and classroom exercises to help you reach the course learning goals, but we will spend the first part of the semester learning about each other and determining the rules for how we will interact.

This was my effort to establish a learning community, and to ask students to more clearly control their role in the course. To create a learning community, our first project centered on learning about our classmates and then also introducing them to others. The strengths of this approach included the introduction of face-to-face communication in making knowledge, as well as centering other learners as subjects. Students were asked to talk about their home communities and their motivation for attending the University, which meant that they were immediate experts on the topics of this first paper. By switching roles from interviewer to interviewee, students also learned what content was needed to make for an effective paper topic. Plus, students genuinely enjoyed learning more about each other.

The shortcomings of this approach included a lack of clear guidance from me on the roles that they would assume in a learning community. I envisioned a class where they would play a role in determining our writing subjects. I did ask students to envision how they would work together as a learning community, and to explicitly report on this in their first project. However, I failed to put these necessary scaffolding in place for such a major shift away from the traditional learning environment. Plus, having just met one another, and having almost no experience working together, writers struggled to find their footing. In the end, the major accomplishment was starting the course by learning more about each other.

2. This course will emphasize face-to-face interactions. Each class will function as a workshop, where you will prepare writing and review the writing of your classmates. Because we emphasize our classroom interactions, we will minimize distractions. *This will mean no cellphones, no ear buds, no air pods, no iPods, no laptops, and no personal electronic devices will be allowed in class.*

As mentioned earlier, prioritizing our classroom interactions was to be a core tenet in the class. I wanted writers to envision the classroom time together as carved out from the stream of our otherwise electronic lives, dominated by screens in our hand and plugs in our ear canals. The first step to creating this place was to separate ourselves from the agenda of our electronic devices. Of course, I also adhered to these rules. I knew that removing our electronic devices would be a necessary, but not sufficient condition, to establish a writing community. Later in the semester I would realize that I had more work to do in order to build an effective sense of community among writers.

3. In each class, we will write short assignments that will feed into your larger projects. Also in (most) classes, you will respond to the writing of others. You will also write in-class reflections on a daily basis. *This means that for each class, you will want to have pen and paper.*

This remained the starting point for our class sessions. This first semester writing course asked students to engage four major projects and a reflective portfolio: (1) Introducing my writing community, (2) Where I am from, (3) Where I am going, and (4) What I believe. Each of these projects were further divided into introductions, conclusions, and at least three subparts. For instance, in the project "Where I'm from," class sessions focused on culling childhood sensory memories of their homes and neighborhoods, writing personal reflections that conveyed the unique characteristics of their hometown, and quantitative data that described the population, industry, geography, and culture of the place. During a class session, students would be given prompts to start addressing one of these topics that would work their way into the larger project. Writing in teams and discussion groups, the in-class work alternated between conversation and sparking thoughts on the topics, followed by time to write down first responses and start forming exploratory ideas. If the topic required outside research – such as independent data about the hometown – then students would gather some of the research before coming to class, or start their writing on the topic and integrate the outside information once they took the classroom drafts home.

4. All writing in class will be composed on paper. On most days, you will take your handwritten paper home with you and produce a word-processed document. Sometimes the

word-processed document will be verbatim of what you wrote in class, but most times you will expand on the classroom document when you are at your desk outside of class.

One issue about this aspect of the class arose quickly: how would I provide accommodations for students who were unable to write by hand? Students can have legitimate concerns about performing handwriting in the classrooms. Recognized conditions include dysgraphia, where their handwriting, and/or their ability to produce writing quickly, are impaired (Medwell, 2007). In addition, students who have been diagnosed with dyslexia can also struggle to produce legible handwriting in timed circumstances (Berninger, et al., 2008 ). Some researchers have gone as far as to argue that proper handwriting instruction can improve other literacy education outcomes (Young, et al., 2015). But the condition of dysgraphia and dyslexia—and many others—are protected disabilities that could require accommodations. The most common accommodation for handwriting issues in the classroom can be assistive technologies, including speech recognition software (Nelson & Reynolds, 2015). But since insisting on handwriting in the classroom was also augmented by follow up writing outside of the classroom, I relied on students to supplement their classroom efforts with external follow up. I also relied on students to self-identify. As a teacher, I realize that if a student has a learning difference, building the class on an activity that incorporates additional challenges for them only increases pressure on them needlessly. In future versions of the class I will increase outreach to help students identify if they have handwriting struggles. To date, no students have spoken to me about handwriting difficulties. Reliance on handwriting in my classroom was not originally conceived as an AI avoidance strategy, though many faculty are now adopting that approach (Alonso, 2025).

5. You will bring both the original paper and the word-processed document back to the following class. I will then collect your writing and respond to it. You will receive credit for attending the previous class when you submit your work. This also means that you will need the ability to regularly print out your work on paper.

This aspect of the new class was the biggest burden for my students. Printing out documents regularly, sometimes three times a week, was time consuming and costly. In our current learning environment, students are accustomed to submitting documents electronically via the LMS. This cost almost nothing and also offered the additional flexibility of allowing drafting right up until the deadline. Indeed, this was exactly how my class operated previously.

Shifting to a requirement for printing documents created both additional cost and inconvenience for students. As to the cost, I was very aware that if students had the means to bring a printer to their residence hall on campus, they would suffer very little cost increase. And conversely my writers without those means would face an additional cost for my decision to require printed documents. Here I was clearly adding to the income inequality burden of attending college. But during this first iteration of the course, I required no textbooks. Therefore, I told myself (and my students) that they were saving at least $90 (including the cost of printing documents) since none of the texts required for most first-year composition would be needed in my course.

In addition, my requirement to bring printed drafts to class also created a time and labor burden. It is admittedly more inconvenient to print out a document and carry it to class than to simply upload an electronic version of the same document into our LMS. Additionally, my late night writers would be unable to submit the document until they arrived in class. For these writers, it might be necessary to print out the documents in the writing center, which opened at 07:30 AM

just down the hall from our classroom. In sum, the requirement to print documents introduced a new workflow that was out of step with most other classes which allowed for digital uploads.

Many colleagues have asked how would I ensure that once a draft was taken home, students would not replace their text with AI-generated text? While there is no absolute insurance policy to prohibit writers from substituting generative AI sludge for their own prose, this course gave me at least two comforts: the genre of our writing topics and the drafting format. As noted previously, most of the focus in the writing topics involved students exploring their classmate interactions, their past experiences, their current study plans, and their personal beliefs. Writers would start the topics with handwritten thoughts in the classroom and then revise them on a word processor before printing them out. It is indeed possible that students would use generative AI during the editing process, especially if they were looking for outside sources to bolster their personal memories or beliefs. But since students submitted both handwritten and revised, printed documents, I was able to read their in-class work and their out-of-class work, and compare the two versions. This allowed me to see if outside voices were dominating or radically shifting the inertia of their thinking.

6. You cannot submit work for credit from a class that you did not attend. You can certainly complete that writing assignment as part of reaching the goal of completing the larger project, but, it will not count toward your participation grade.

Attendance and participation have long been a principle in my composition courses. In this version of the course, participation was defined as arriving at class with your work completed. If the course was to function as a workshop, or a space where writers actively viewed and responded to the work of other writers, then it was essential that writers show up with that work. But participation grading in college courses is a practice that is fraught with opportunities for bias and subjectivity. As John Bean and Dean Peterson write "most professors determine participation grades impressionistically using class participation largely as a fudge factor in computing final course grades" (p. 33). Further, they quote Jacobs and Chase (1992) to categorize the most frequent problems with participation grading:

> [P]rofessors generally don't provide instruction on how to improve participation; interpretation of student behavior is difficult and subjective; participation often depends on a student's personality thus disadvantaging shy or introverted students; record-keeping is problematic: participation scores for a given individual are hard to justify if challenged. (p. 195)

Given my awareness of these problems, based not only on the literature but also years of experience with grade appeals and teaching conferences, I was indeed hesitant to include any form of participation grading in my course.

But I wanted to emphasize the importance of participating in a writing workshop, and arriving for each class prepared to share your writing and to read the writing of others. If students do not arrive at class with their writing, then it is simply impossible to operate a writing workshop in a composition classroom.

The writing workshop model is borrowed from our colleague in teaching creative writing, where it remains a staple in their pedagogy—though not without substantial debate. In his chapter "Its fine, I gess': Problems with the Workshop Model in College Composition Courses" writer Colin Irvine works through many of the benefits and disadvantages of importing this practice to

the composition class. Irvine (2010) notes that the most common failures of the workshop model include:

> passive but important gestures and comments as coming to class without a draft on the day set aside for peer review, arriving with an incomplete or insufficient essay, leading into activity by distancing one's self from the work ('Here's my paper. It's terrible […]'.) providing platitudes and empty comments in place of constructive feedback ("This is a good paper . . .' 'Maybe add some sources . . .'), focusing on surface level issues rather than holistic ones [. . .] and, in the end, turning to the teacher after the peer review feedback for "real" feedback. (p. 131)

Although Irvine includes many reasons to support the workshop model in the composition class, I think it is important to address how our class avoided many of these potential setbacks.

First, note that the writing workshop Irvine describes is circa 2010. At this point in the development of personal technology, smart phones were available, but not quite as common as they are today: roughly 14% of the US population had smartphones in 2010, though college students might have had a higher percentage (PR Newswire, 2010). So if a teacher wanted to teach a workshop model in 2010 with less technology, texting on flip phones might have been the main distraction, whereas in 2025 the number of electronic distractions had multiplied greatly due to convenient internet usage on a cell phone.

While my class did suffer from students arriving without completed work, it was not a major issue. In fact, since a student who arrived in class without a draft could not receive participation credit, I took it as a sign of engagement that a number of students arrived at 08:00 AM without a draft, knowing that they would receive no credit, and did so anyway. Our workshops did suffer from poor quality in-class comments, however, they were not predominant for several reasons. First, students modeled effective feedback early in the class through specific in-class sessions. When I asked students to comment on the work of a peer, they were also given specific questions for use in evaluating that writing. These questions reinforced the purpose of the assignment, and in each class they also served as a basis for expressing a writer's own challenges in drafting the assignment, providing a natural transition to a follow-on discussion. However, I will agree that last problem identified by Irvine—being too reliant on my feedback as the teacher of the classroom—remained a persistent problem. Encouraging first semester freshmen to find and exercise autonomy remains a persistent challenge.

7. The overall structure of the course is that we work each day on smaller writing tasks that each writer can assemble into a larger project. If you participate on a daily basis, you should never be in a place where you will be trying to write 1,000 words the night before the project is due.

For writing teachers, there is nothing new here. While this articulation is little more than a repurposing of process writing theory (Flower and Hayes 1981; Perl, ed., 1994; Foster 2007; Faigley 1986). However, as we will see in the student comments below, even though I believed that all of our in-class activities were focused on contributing to our final drafts, not all students agreed.

8. Because I will also not be using technology during our class meetings, this class will not use Blackboard (Bb requires 2FA, which would require me to use my phone to log in). Therefore, all of our communications outside of class will be over email. *It is imperative that you check your email daily.*

Here, too, I did not foresee the most mentioned impact of removing the LMS from the class: students uniformly wanted to be able to access their grades on the LMS. I knew that my students had been likely using some form of LMS since middle school. I knew also that they were accustomed to seeing grade information almost instantly. My plan to accommodate grade viewing was to make sure that at the end of each project (five times during the semester) students would receive their current course grade along with their project grade. I will admit, however, that I did not always hit that mark, and at least twice I did not include the current course grade with the project grade (though students could calculate their course grade by using the syllabus and their returned projects). In the next iteration of the course, I will ensure that I return completed projects with both their project grades and their current course grades.

9. There are no required textbooks for this class. There will be handouts, and I will distribute most readings during class. Again, you will need to routinely print documents, and to staple them. (Printing is offered in the library and the writing centers.) So bring a stapler!

I do believe that students were able to save money under this configuration. However, I struggled without a rhetoric, and found using online sites a poor comparison to a true handbook, e.g., *A Writer's Reference.*

10. Last, please know that you don't have to be an extrovert to do well in this class. Introverts can do just fine. There will be times when you need to speak, but they are not excessive. Also, I will respect all learning differences, so if you have an accommodation request, please let me know and I will work with you to make sure that you can succeed in our class.

While the class was based on a lot of speaking and listening, it was not always before the entire class. Students spent much of their time writing alone, working in pairs, and working in small groups, before reporting back as a class. And although I did not encounter any reported issues with handwriting, it is always possible that students did struggle and did not consult me about these challenges.

## Results

My fall 2024 section of our first-semester, first-year course (Writing 101) designed to prepare students for a range of higher education writing contexts had 20 enrolled students. That semester, our Department of Writing and Rhetoric taught 2,983 students Writing 101 across 67 sections in both face-to-face and online formats. The targeted cap on these sections is 21 students. In practice, during fall semester 2024 those 67 sections of writing 101 contained a maximum of 21 students, a median of 19 students, and a mode 20 students.

The most direct measure I have of the success or failure of the approach described above is the student evaluations of teaching. While ethical considerations prevent me from describing recorded student opinions of the class that would reveal identities, I can describe in a general way the themes identified in the student evaluation report.

Our student evaluation of teaching questionnaire asks 11 multiple choice questions and four open-response questions (there is a set of rotating special interest questions I exclude from consideration here). The first ten multiple choice questions are generic and used in most classes at the university, regardless of subject or class size. These questions address student impressions of:

- Overall amount of learning
- Effort put forth by students
- The effectiveness of course activities for learning
- Change in appreciation of subject matter
- Accuracy of assessments in measuring learning
- Usefulness of faculty feedback for student learning
- Faculty responsiveness
- Faculty availability beyond classroom
- Usefulness of course materials
- Challenge of this course, when compared to other courses of the same level.

Unfortunately, because the institution had revised our student teaching of evaluation in fall 2024, I cannot compare scores on these 10 questions to prior versions of Writing 101 taught by me. I can state that the average score was above 4.0 in each category (on a five-point scale) and therefore there is not a significant opportunity for investigation in this inquiry.

The eleventh multiple choice question is "How would you rate the instructor's overall effectiveness in this course?" and within our system is considered the best overall marker of how students feel about an instructor's performance. Unlike our other multiple-choice questions, this question had been carried over from prior versions of the student evaluation of teaching form, making it possible to compare the fall 2024 section results to prior Writing 101 courses I had taught. For the modified section of Writing 101 I taught in fall 2024, I received the lowest score I had received for Writing 101 since 2012, down roughly a tenth of a point on a five-point scale. Although the score was not significantly lower than other scores I had received for Writing 101, the downward trend—after placing so much effort into revising the course and providing timely feedback, definitely got my attention.

So I turned my focus to our four open response questions to learn more about student reactions to the course. The four open response questions in fall 2024 were:

- What are some positive characteristics or strengths of the course and/or instructor?
- What are some negative characteristics or weaknesses of the course and/or instructor?
- What do you want your instructor to know about your experience in this class?
- What do you want other students to know about your experience in this class?

In summary, here is what I can offer about student comments to this revised version of the class. In terms of positive characteristics, students mentioned that the instructor was positive, gave valuable feedback, and that working on paper allowed them to spend time away from computers.

Students also mentioned that they enjoyed working in groups, and that they felt that their writing skills improved.

Negative characteristics included having to print documents, not being able to see grades in the LMS, and a feeling that in-class activities were not always helpful for the overall project. Several students also mentioned the need for "work days."

In terms of what students wanted the instructor to know about the course, many mentioned that they learned a lot and felt that the class had made writing "easy." Here too students mentioned a desire for "work days" in class where they could use their laptops. Additionally, these writers wanted other students to know that the class was well-structured, positive, helpful for your writing process, and straight to the point. And—worth noting—our class met at 08:00 AM, which was not popular!

Overall, student evaluations indicated that the class was useful and beneficial for developing writing skills. Students did not spend much, if any time, commenting on the hallmarks of this class—the fact that the technology for the course was moved out of the classroom and that while in the classroom no personal technology was used and student interaction was emphasized.

## Relevant Literature

At some point near the middle of the semester, a fellow faculty member reached out to me at a department meeting and said, "I heard you were teaching naked; tell me about your class!" I must confess, I had not then read *Teaching Naked* by José Antonio Bowen (2012). I wish I had. Although Bowen's subtitle is "How moving technology out of your classroom will improve student learning," Bowen does not argue to remove all technology from classrooms; instead he intends this phrase in the literal sense. He wishes for faculty to make the physical classroom a zone free from technology and then to actively use technology outside of the classroom to reinforce learning and build community.

Bowen (2012) is up front about his thesis when he writes in his preface:

> technology can be harnessed to enhance the widely desired goals of increased student engagement and faculty-student interaction but it is most powerfully used outside of the classroom as a way to increase naked, non-technological interaction with students inside of the classroom. (p. x)

Bowen is writing in 2012, so at that point he is not addressing generative AI (he does this later with C. Edward Watson in 2024). But although I was ignorant of his work, my classroom redesign was in keeping with his premises. Bowen's later chapters articulate more ideas about an active learning classroom. While focusing mainly on content courses, the composition course I redesigned was in keeping with Bowen's articulation of active learning: "Students learn by doing…Students learn from each other" (pp. 192-3). Bowen's use of classroom-expelled technology in 2012 was largely to support and reinforce classroom learning by way of justifying assignments, and explaining to student the value of the work. Bowen's advice is never too far from the imagined student asking "Why do we need to do this?" In fact, in *Teaching with AI*, he and Watson provide a chart of implied student motivational questions and strategies for addressing them (pp. 187-188).

But when a composition classroom is redesigned for a world with generative AI, and use of technology has been removed from the classroom, then we have also placed students' engagement with AI outside of the classroom. And here we encounter the other side of the balanced

scales, or the dipping of the see-saw. Students in this revised composition class start smaller writing project in class by answering directed writing prompts with shorter questions, and then discussing formative ideas with other students. Then they take these kernels of thought home with them to expand them and produce them on the printed page. Will they use generative AI when they are revising this work outside of the classroom? Most certainly. Therefore, it is incumbent on the composition teacher to engage the best practices of generative AI usage during the classroom time. Doing so will subtract from direct classroom writing, but, if we fail to articulate how we wish for students to use and cite generative AI, then we leave them to make up the rules themselves.

If we have banished technology from the classroom, how do we model the best usage of AI? How do we show students the potential pitfalls of generative AI usage, including relying on "hallucinations," plagiarism, losing their voices, bias, and more? For my class, I addressed this by using the DEER framework (Cummings, et al., 2024). In this approach our class discusses how we might use generative AI in an assignment, and for what purposes we would rely on the technology—pre-writing, drafting, finding counter arguments, identifying additional sources, etc. Once we have decided on the specific purpose of the AI tool , we then evaluate what AI tools we might want to use: what are the relative strengths and weaknesses of these tools? Then, we hopefully arrive at a consensus on both the writing purpose for introducing an AI tool as well as the tool we will use. We review the methods for citing the tool (in general, we use the latest guidance from APA). Last, we also reflect on the use of that tool during unit-level reflective assignments. If students wish to deviate from this plan and use tools they have identified themselves, they are able to do so, as long as they are providing appropriate references.

Has this approach been perfect? And can I apply it with absolutely no technology in the classroom? No. There are always writers who seek to have AI do their thinking for them. And there is not a meaningful way to introduce an AI tool without using audiovisual technology in the classroom. However, by examining the potential generative AI tools together as a class, these tools remain a technique and not a strategy (Bowen 2012, xiv). Also, the students are introduced to the necessity of identifying and evaluating AI tools before deploying them. Last, we can learn and practice the methods for citation with generative AI tools—still a very imprecise art.

In sum, while I think that teaching naked before the machine means that we need to think very carefully about how teachers of composition utilize classroom time, I believe that the reflection demanded by teaching in a time of AI is consistent with the approach intentional engagement with classroom technology (Bruff, 2019).

## Conclusion

What happens with too much nakedness? My cousins lived in Portland, Oregon, where a "naked bike ride" is held on an annual basis (Plante 2025). Perhaps a prude, I asked in a phone call over my barely stifled laughter if they had planned on participating. I could not understand why grown adults would want to ride around naked on bicycles. (I later learned that the event was conceived as a way to protest our reliance on carbon emissions.) My cousin's husband, who was initially enthusiastic about the idea, ultimately conceded that as a prominent academic physician in the community (and a man in his early sixties) none of his students or patients wished to see him pushing pedals in the nude.

It amazed me to think of where ego could take otherwise sober and wise people. And yet, when thinking back on this class, I must admit that my own ego played a key role in undermining my goal of helping students find their own voices. I was disappointed that writers in this class did

not exercise greater autonomy. I specifically structured the assignments of this course so that students could explore their own histories, their biographies, their hopes and values, and their goals, while placing those discussions in context with other voices.

But, with the best of intentions, I also responded to student writing like never before in my teaching career. I read and responded to every jot and tittle my students wrote in this class. Before students submitted a final draft, they composed three to four partial essays, and two complete essays to which I responded. On most every evening of the semester, I was reading student writing that I returned to students in 24–48 hours. For this one class over the length of the semester I read and responded to roughly 320 drafts and 100 final documents. Additionally, I held 21 student-teacher conferences. It was some of the most intense and timely responding that I have offered in my teaching career.

Why did I respond so much, and so often? I have long believed that a truth in writing programs is that writers need frequent and caring feedback. The feedback needs to be frequent so that the advice is received by the writer before too much time passes from the event of composing. The origins of responding methodology in composition studies are long and deep, but Steven Schreiner got it right for me when he framed it this way: "[t]he students I began teaching were to be treated as writers, entitled to self-expression, capable of inspiring and being inspired, and interested in writing about themselves for an audience larger than their teacher" (p.86). Simply put, as I writer, I want my feedback to be fast and accurate. I need it to be fast so that I can apply the advice while I can still recall the writerly choices I was facing at the moment of composing; writing feedback has a very short shelf life.

When we are talking about "nakedness" in the classroom, it is, of course, our own nakedness we are discussing. Even though we are discussing nakedness as an analogy for making intentional decisions about the use of technology in the writing classroom and reducing the use of technology generally, the analogy remains focused on the teacher. I will not argue for mutual nakedness, but I must acknowledge that our students have very informed and considered decisions about their use and (over)reliance on technology. Starting next semester, I hope to bring them into the conversation about how we build our mutual course writing practices, shaped by their own understandings of the proper role on technology in the classroom.

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