In the first couple of weeks of class, in English 6625 Teaching Composition: Theory and Practice my mind was and still is field with questions about the art of teaching composition. Yet, some of my questions have received answers.

One of the questions I had was, what are some of the methods used when it comes to teaching composition in the classroom? The answer I found was having students write, write, write which connects with the pedagogy the process theory of composition. The more the student writes, the better they get at writing. Another concept I found out about was having the students read, read, read. When we think about teaching rhetoric, we have to consider that we are teaching reading. In other words, composition teachers could be considered reading teachers as well. The more our students read, the better they get at reading and writing. We want critically literate students, so this means teaching critical reading and writing skills. When you have a critical literate student who is able to be reflective and thorough in the analysis of different texts and to provide interpretations that enhance the understanding of other written texts by other people who are not critically literate.

Secondly, I want to point out that in the first couple of weeks of this class I’ve learned about terms I had never heard of before such as freewriting. My understanding is that freewriting can be an effective tool to spur ideas, but I find that usually freewriting works best to generate observational descriptions or on subjects about which I already have considerable knowledge. Additionally, I learned about the Post Process Theory. In all of the graduate classes I have taken I never heard of this process before. When I think of Post Process Theory, I can describe as the "social turn" that composition studies took in the early 1990s. It has not been theorized well since however, and even less pedagogy has been developed around it, so this term remains difficult to define or apply. Generally, however, I think of post-process as the pedagogy that encourages students to tackle composition projects through an activist lens. The positionality of the author is central, but it should seldom be the focus of academic writing. Students are able to relate their experiences without fear of minding if what they write is right or wrong. The students develop arguments based on what they have experienced and as such are able to provide even increased understanding to the reader. The positionality of the target audience, however, is an essential consideration for academic writing. I think post anything suggests an opportunity to reflect and revise an approach, not that it's over.

Third, I found myself asking the following question in what ways does the writing pedagogy explain the teaching and learning of writing? I believe composition pedagogy should rely on principles of justice and critical engagement. Any written text purpose is to provoke some reaction or activity on the reader. As such, training students to write from an aspect of critical engagement may be critical in enlightening the readers to fight any form of fallacies that they may be exposed. I believe good writing attempts to achieve these principles because critical engagement alone shape a piece of writing, which would encompass everything from the classical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos, etc.) to format, diction, and appropriate citation. When it comes to critical engagement it allows students to develop as writers who can think and write at levels that may influence their societies. As such, they are able to question concepts, identify weaknesses in certain arguments made by previous writers and provide their assessments based on the knowledge they have acquired from different resources and texts.

Fourth, I found myself asking the question how is teaching the skill of writing aligns with the view of what’s important in education and the world? My best answer is you should teach all composition students how to form and convey a clear idea and write with a clear sense of purpose, sustaining that focus throughout the piece of writing in short-hand: thesis and topic sentences, write with global and local clarity. The approach aligns with the conventional or traditional approach to writing where a certain structure has to be followed. The focus here is having writing approaches that will help the writer develop ideas. I also believe English teachers should also teach how to write coherently and use paragraphs effectively, the ability to use paragraphs as units of thought, to produce strings of sentences and paragraphs the flow smoothly, where each idea naturally leads to the next and naturally follows from the one before it.

Finally, a question I was able to answer was when it comes to writing across other curriculums what are some methods that are used in helping students learn how to be better writers? To me, no matter what discipline you are studying you are force to write an essay. All teachers, no matter what discipline they are teaching when they sit down and analyze an essay for conventions, structure, style, citation method, and visual rhetoric. In doing this we continually talk about how writing is shaped by audience and disciplinary conventions. Another form I learned about because of Dr. Banks class’ English 7960 Methods of Teaching English in the Two-Year College is how media effects the way the way you can teach English. I know for more my future classes I will focus on media aspect of English I enjoy. I want my students to see the media as a research medium akin to the research paper. Once students make these connections, I will ask the students to rhetorically analyze the research strategies they found in effective media in their major, field, or profession. This helps students to recognize the power of media to inform and its role in shaping their academic and activist-based lives. Donald Murray states “Even the most productive writers are expert dawdlers.” Which implies that students need to ensure that even though at the start they may look as if they do not have focus, as they continue to write and develop ideas their focus increases.

All things considered, I realize that this is just the beginning of class, but I have so many questions that I think should be answer before I step in front of a class to teach writing. Questions for example, is having bad grammar a deal breaker for teaching English? How do you know when you are prepared to enter a classroom? How do you keep students interested in what you are saying? What areas should I really feel competent in? Am I still allowed to use the “I don’t know enough about this”, or I need to get help with this? The only thing I know for sure is I think the most important thing for students is having a voice, which hopefully you come out of composition.