CTE Roundtable Discussion ● Designing Effective Assignments
Tuesday, February 15, 2011
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Consider Multiple Writing Assignments
- Have students write a series of shorter papers (e.g., two five-page papers or five two-page papers) instead of one long paper
- Leave early papers ungraded or offer a "mock grade"
- Offer the opportunity to revise early papers after receiving feedback
- Adopt a portfolio approach (e.g., "choose your three best revised papers for grading")
- Consider purposeful variation in form for your assignments (e.g., meditations, thesis-driven essays, satirical pieces, creative non-fiction, hybrids, etc.)

Consider Staging Longer Assignments
- Have students submit paper proposals well in advance of the due date
- If the paper is research-based, have the students complete an annotated bibliography that establishes the relevance of sources to their thesis or purpose
- Build in draft deadlines for each section of the paper (e.g., introduction, literature review, methodology, etc.)

Build in Feedback Opportunities
- Allocate class time for brainstorming paper topics or sharing prospectuses
- Schedule time in the syllabus for **guided, structured** peer review of drafts
- Schedule time in the syllabus for workshops
- Schedule fifteen-minute conferences to discuss drafts; have students set the agenda by submitting a "process page"
- Respond to or grade each section of a longer paper; weigh the final product more heavily

Provide Clear, Detailed Assignment Sheets
- Offer a clear explanation of **purpose and goals** (including links to course objectives)
- Clarify the **rhetorical situation** – the writer's role and the intended audience (e.g., "Write a paper in which you try to convince voters to support a school bond referendum.")
- Outline the **technical requirements** – length, number of sources required (if applicable), documentation style, document format
- Outline the **grading criteria** (e.g., strength and originality of thesis, quality of evidence to support claims, integration of source material, overall coherence, etc.)
- Provide an **overview of the process** timeline (topic deadline, draft deadline, final due date) and requirements for each stage
- Distribute and discuss a sample paper, preferably one that has strengths but needs work