

Writing Instruction Across the Disciplines

Maintaining Work/Life Balance: Teaching Writing Across Disciplines, Professions, and Genders

This session provides effective strategies for writing instructors of all genders and positions to remain productive while maintaining firm boundaries around their personal time.

Balancing personal and professional commitments

- Keep an eye on the macro level—know what you value, reflect on why, and work towards those goals. Also make sure to revisit them on a regular basis to ensure they still matter to you.
- Say no, and don't feel guilty about it. This is a difficult task, particularly for women. However, saying no can be beneficial to your professional reputation—it signals that your time/energy is valuable and helps you focus on what's important—and it can also be beneficial to moving students toward independence. Just because you say no to reading that extra in-between draft doesn't prevent you from providing a student resources or other options for getting her work read.
- Plan time for individual tasks and time for yourself, and treat that time as you would any other commitment. This may mean setting aside time to grade papers without interruptions, or it may mean seeing a movie to let your brain rest. This time is important, and you can/should treat it that way.

Wearing a variety of personal and professional hats without feeling completely overwhelmed

- Externalize your to-do list, whether this means keeping a calendar or writing a list of tasks for tomorrow.
- Make time for things that don't directly connect to your work life. These not only support general happiness, but they also help keep your brain working interdisciplinarily.
- Let students glimpse non-work parts of your life (within reason). Modeling life balance is good for you *and* them. For example, if you're a working dad who does the bulk of the childcare, make that work apparent. This helps students conceive of ways of being that aren't always well represented to them in media.

Maintaining an effective workflow

- Be aware of your strengths and play to them when possible. Are you sharpest in the morning? Schedule student conferences then.
- Consider alternate course design approaches. When done thoughtfully, setting up a course that relies on students to participate in course design and assessment can free up time for you during the semester while also enhancing student learning.
- Be intentional in your feedback practices. Create or join a grading group to help stay on task and to ensure someone is available to bounce ideas off of as you do the hard work of assessing and responding to writing.

“Turning off” at the end of the work day

- Externalize your to-do list, whether this means keeping a calendar or writing a list of tasks for tomorrow
- Have separate spaces for work; this gives your brain a physical cue that the workday has ended.
- Create—and stick to—hard rules about connections between personal and work time. For example, don't look at your email between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m., or know that you'll read emails on your phone but you won't reply to them. Let others in your life know about these rules and help keep you honest.

Being a lifelong learner without trying to do everything

- Be reflective in your thinking about WAC instruction and work/life balance.
- Make space for non-traditional conversations in your classes.
- Maintain candid conversations with students and colleagues about the value of lifelong learning, work/life balance, and the bleed between personal and professional life.