



Teaching Conference

February, 27, 2026

South Campus, SL 212



08:30—9:00

Breakfast

09:00—09:50

Session 1: Presentations

10:00—10:50

Session 2: Roundtables

11:00—11:50

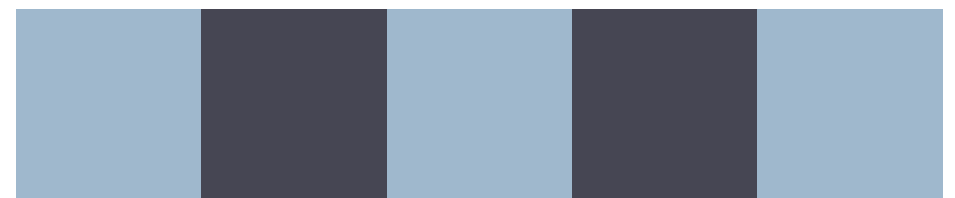
Session 3: Presentations

12:00—12:50

Lunch

1:00—1:50

Session 4: Presentations



Using Artificial Intelligence Intelligently in Blackboard**Louis Nenni, SL 212**

Artificial intelligence can feel like the Wild West and the final frontier all at once, but you don't have to explore it alone. In this hands-on seminar, we'll explore the learning management system's embedded AI tools and show how they can immediately enhance your teaching practice. We will explore practical strategies for holding students accountable for their reading, streamlining course organization, and aligning assignments with clear student learning objectives. We'll even build an AI-powered chat bot to help students move confidently through the always challenging first stages of topic selection. You'll leave with ready to use, built in resources that can be easily curated and integrated into your daily workflow.

Collaborative Reading and Social Annotations**Patrick Williams, SL 213/214**

Faculty often comment on how students do not read assigned materials or how collaborative assignments in online courses are saturated with generative AI text. This presentation aims to improve student engagement with materials in a more original and collaborative way by integrating Perusall, a social annotation tool, into courses. Participants will learn how to sync Perusall to their courses, add content to their library, create assignments, and integrate assignments into Blackboard Ultra. Participants will also see how Perusall can be used to help discourage AI use in collaborative assignments.

Teaching Neurodiverse Learners**Erin Wedehase, SL 215**

This presentation blends research from composition studies with what I have learned from working with self-disclosed neurodiverse learners to create more awareness about the needs of this population. Within the presentation, I will discuss how potentially negative former experiences in the education system make neurodiverse learners an especially vulnerable population in writing classrooms, and advocate for teachers to move from a deficit-based mindset to a strengths-based mindset when working with these learners.

Goals:

- Share insecurities neurodiverse students might bring into the classroom and discuss the benefits of a strengths-based mindset.
- Challenge myths teachers might hold about neurodiverse writers.
- Share some of the challenges ND students might face.
- Discuss ways writing teachers can make content more accessible for all learners, but especially neurodiverse students.
- Share resources faculty can consult to learn more about ND students.

By the end of the presentation, audience members should be able to:

- Recognize the benefit of practicing a strengths-based mindset with neurodiverse students and the many cognitive gifts ND students offer.
- Understand the dangers of stereotyping ND learners.
- Articulate why some common writing assignments might be more difficult for ND students.
- Name at least three strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to help ND learners.
- Name resources for students and recognize the importance of self-advocacy.

Follow the Leader: Leading the Classroom Using Lessons from Brene Brown's Strong Ground

Meredith Nourie-Manuele, SL 212

Using Brené Brown's most recent release, *Strong Ground*, as a guide, this session will focus on how to lead the classroom using "connection, discipline, and accountability." Participants are invited to read the book prior to the session, making this presentation a book-talk-style exploration of leadership in the classroom. While highlighting practical leadership strategies, the session will also address the role of AI as both a tool of disruption and a challenge to traditional leadership models. Participants will leave with strategies they can immediately implement in their classrooms, in any modality.

Beyond Courtesy: Teaching Empathy in the Community College English Classroom

Kimberly Burnett, SL 213/214

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of teaching empathy in the classroom as a method of promoting student success. This talk will explore the ways in which this research can be applied to English composition courses in the community college setting specifically. Additionally, this presentation will redefine and re-center empathy as more than a value, instead framing it as a critical and durable skill necessary for a student's academic and professional development. We will examine research on educational outcomes and the documented need for empathy in job descriptions across industries. Finally, the session will provide specific, measurable strategies for modeling and teaching empathy in the English composition classroom. Participants will leave with actionable techniques for integrating empathy into assignments, discussions, peer-review processes, and classroom culture.

Flipping the Literature Classroom to Increase Student Agency and Engagement

Neal Stidham, SL 215

Many Wake Tech students take ENG 231 for a variety of reasons; once in the course, they often find the material challenging if not daunting. As an experiment in several 231 seated and blended sections since 2019, I have developed several alterations to the traditional method of structuring and conducting the class, foremost of which involves rejecting the standard path of studying works chronologically in favor of student choice in both the readings and their order. This allows students a hand in constructing the syllabus for the class, in addition to connecting their choices to individual student expertise in the readings they elect to add to the curriculum (much as literature professionals are specialists focusing on a particular author). Each student leads discussion for their chosen author on the scheduled day, followed by instructor-led follow-up that bridges discussion to other covered authors and fills in gaps in the selections. Students report that this lends a feeling of discovery and exploration to the course that would not be present in a conventional survey course taught "on rails." By the end of this session, participants will have a general framework for introducing this approach in their own literature sections, with related assignments and practical advice from experience garnered through multiple prior implementations. Attendees will also be encouraged to embrace this flexible approach to refresh their own connection to material they have often covered to the point of rote memorization.

Roundtable: Balancing Kindness and Consequence**Gabrielle Volstad, SL 212**

In a time of expected lenience, what do we all do in our classrooms that balances kindness with consequences? How can instructors expect accountability and responsibility when students have not had to hold themselves to these standards prior? Let's discuss our concerns, current struggles, and how we can best teach with kindness while also maintaining consequences for lack of accountability.

Roundtable: Incorporating Current Events to Engage Students in the Writing Classroom**Phillip Bryant, SL 215**

This roundtable discussion will focus on engaging students through discussion and critical evaluation of current events. How can we include discussions of current events and controversies to spark student inquiry, balancing relevancy with fundamental instruction, while considering emerging threats to academic freedom? The expected outcome of this roundtable is both commiseration over these questions and a set of strategies for engaging students through current events.

Integrating AI Literacy in the English Classroom: Teaching Writing, Ethics, and Critical Thinking for the Digital Age**Katie Surber, SL 215**

This session explores how an English 111 course was intentionally designed to integrate AI literacy and ethics across the writing process. Students engaged with AI tools to support brainstorming, revision, and reflection, while also analyzing issues of authorship, bias, and academic integrity. By positioning AI as both a writing aid and a subject of critical inquiry, the course fostered digital literacy, ethical awareness, and critical thinking. Participants will learn practical ways to embed discussions of AI ethics and responsible use into writing courses, helping students become more thoughtful, informed, and adaptable writers in the age of artificial intelligence.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Examine a model for integrating AI literacy throughout a first-year composition course.
- Design writing assignments that use AI tools like Blackboard Conversations for formative feedback.
- Facilitate student discussions about authorship, originality, and digital ethics.
- Evaluate the impact of AI-supported activities on writing quality and student engagement.
- Apply ethical AI literacy concepts to strengthen critical and digital thinking outcomes in English courses

Best Practices for Teaching English 045**Melody Cooper & Rebecca O’Sullivan, SL 212**

We would like to present best practices for teaching English 045. Topics would include successfully aligning English 045 with the English 111 course, using engaging activities and assessments in the course curriculum, and teaching strategies for goal-making, time management, tackling procrastination, and note-taking. By the end of the session, we hope that instructors will have learned at least three new strategies they can implement in their English 045 course.

Forced Perspective: Increasing Peer Review Engagement in Asynchronous Classes**Shawna Jones, SL 213/214**

Today’s employers want candidates who can collaborate with their peers and who know how to give and receive constructive feedback. Most composition instructors understand the value that peer review can add to the first-year writing experience, but low student engagement and technical barriers can make peer review seem well nigh impossible in an asynchronous class. In this session, I will explain how I’ve refined the asynchronous peer review process over years of trial and error to increase engagement and improve student learning outcomes. I will share my nose-to-tail strategy for facilitating successful peer reviews in online classes: how to help students prepare for their role as peer reviewer beforehand, facilitate the digital nuts and bolts of the peer review process, and guide students to reflect on their experience and how it impacts the quality of their writing. Whether you are new to peer review or have been facilitating for years, what you’ll learn in this session will help your students get the most out of the peer review experience.

Roundtable The Trouble with Reading**Emily Morris & Liz Quirk, SL 213/214**

We’ve all experienced it: students are assigned to read texts in our classes but either don’t, won’t, or more tragically, can’t. In fact, a recent article from *The New York Times* entitled “Reading Skills of 12th Graders Hit a New Low” published in September 2025 reveals a staggering decline in students’ reading comprehension, with reading test scores now dropping to their lowest records since 1992. With myriad changes to education—including standardized testing, No Child Left Behind, a pedagogical shift away from teaching phonics, the switch to online teaching during the pandemic, the onslaught of social media’s bite-sized information delivered through 30-second videos shown in a continuous, endless stream, as well as the potential cognitive-offloading impact of AI—students’ critical thinking skills and attention spans are deteriorating, and with it, their ability to focus and comprehend longer written text. The objective of this roundtable is to have an informed and honest discussion about how reading (and reading comprehension) has declined for our students and brainstorm pedagogical approaches that can help bridge this gap. Literacy is a core skill necessary to be an engaged, informed citizen; ultimately, this issue is a societal one, and as English faculty on the front lines, it is our duty to seek solutions.