"Implementing the Student-Centered Creative Writing Workshop Model in Remote Learning Classroom Environments"

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ABSTRACT

This presentation shares my experiences as an instructor implementing student-centered creative writing workshop practices in a face-to-face nonfiction workshop that turned into a remote learning class in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on my previous presentation at the CWSO Mini Conference in San Antonio, "On Inclusive Creative Writing Workshop Practices: The Student-Centered Model," I have developed additional pedagogical strategies for facilitating the student-centered model in online and remote classroom settings. These methods account for the novel and timely concerns of students in the age of the coronavirus—such as privacy, accessibility, personal anxiety/upheaval, etc.—in order to help instructors best serve both the needs of individual students and the classroom community as a whole in this new era of teaching and learning.

The ethos of the student-centered workshop is based upon teacherless peer-review methods in composition studies wherein students shape the conversation during a workshop session (Elbow). The student-centered approach to the creative writing workshop is a collaborative process between instructor and student-writers that includes: critique of existing workshop practices, engagement in whole class discussion, designing a new workshop model, and ample opportunities for feedback from students. In a remote learning environment, the student-centered workshop model shares commonalities with user-centered design pedagogies, which consider a given course's relationship to accessibility, interface, individual student accommodation, among other concerns (Borgman).

Many existing online creative writing workshops replicate the conditions and experience of traditional face-to-face workshops, often basing classroom pedagogy on the much-derided "Iowa" workshop model (Myers). The student-centered model, by contrast, serves as an actionable solution to the systemic and immediate problems inherent to the traditional workshop model by affording student-writers the opportunity to collaborate with the instructor on a new model specific to both the needs of individual students and the classroom community as a whole. Working from my experiences moving a face-to-face workshop course to an online format, I examine existing remote learning workshop

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pedagogies and argue for the viability of the student-centered workshop model in online environments. The efficacy of this model is supported with examples and student feedback from the workshop I led at Ohio University in the Spring 2020 semester (IRB 20-E-36).