Class: Revision

Lesson Plan 2, Class 7 (Essay 1 Progression)

Length: 80 minutes

Link to Previous Class:

In the class directly previous to this one, students learned about analysis -- analysis as an argument or claim about a single text, particularly as it relates to rhetorical choices (especially as it has to do with structure, I think). The text they are writing about for their first essay is Vannevar Bush’s “As We May Think.” They have also read “Linking Evidence and Claims” and Graff’s “Saying Why it Matters.” The main intention with this first essay assignment, too, is for students to arrive at an interpretive problem, or an intellectual question, that is guiding their reading, writing, and thinking about “As We May Think.”

In the previous few classes, students have been working on uses of evidence (quotation, paraphrase, and summary) based on close reading. As well, in the previous directly prior to this one, students looked at or worked on revision in a more specific way by looking at or working on (in class) versions of paragraphs -- either from a handout or from student writing (their own, or past examples). The idea is to zoom out, from paragraph to the whole, as they revise their first essay.

Note to instructor: This lesson is planned on the day that students have their first formal draft of essay 1 due. I planned on peer response to the second essay but not the first, but an instructor could have peer response here; a lesson plan on revision should happen on or before the first draft is due, I think, so students hopefully get a more expansive understanding of what revision might mean.

Learning Goals:

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

* Understand revision as a recursive and holistic process, and not as only having to do with “fixing” grammar or syntax on individual sentences.
* Consider revision as part of the writing process that includes re-reading.
* Use revision techniques to think about specific connections or relationships within their writing, including introductions, conclusions, and individual paragraphs.

Overview:

* Students freewrite in response to a prompt about revision.
* Review handout on revision.
* Workshop as a class introductions from samples of student writing.
* Workshop longer portions of student writing (introduction + paragraphs from body).
* Report back and diagram sample writing.

Materials:

* Handout on revision.
* Copies of samples of student writing, including samples that focus on introductions (only), samples that include an introduction with subsequent paragraphs or paragraphs taken from later in the essay, and possibly also a paragraph with an assignment prompt.

Note to instructor: This lesson is planned is planned between two classes, the one before and the one after, that focus on paragraphs. The intention is to show work on revision as happening between part to whole, whole to part, and part to whole -- as in, revision potentially happens in both directions, simultaneously perhaps. This is intended before they hand in their final draft revision of the first essay.

Also, I think it is useful, as well, to include at least one sample with an assignment prompt, perhaps one with a paragraph that is seemingly done well or moderately well but that does not actually addresses the specificity of the assignment or prompt. I think this is a useful skill that students should carry to other classes (papers or exams) -- good writing is relative to whether or not someone is actually engaging the specificity of a question. (I am thinking of thinking of times in the past when students actually bring writing from other classes -- either graded writing or writing in need or revision. They don’t understand what went so wrong and I can see, in part, that it’s an issue of not addressing the assignment question, which goes back to revision as re-reading and comprehension).

In exercises like this, I often prefer to use samples of writing from outside the class -- but writing that is still relatively on the same “level” of work that students will be doing for the first essay and, if possible, related to (even if slightly) the subject or area of focus for the first essay. Anonymous samples of student work from past courses is useful to use if available, but if not, other kinds of writing can work too, even if students are not familiar with the subject matter that the essay is about, as long as it’s accessible.

Activities:

* First, students freewrite in response to a prompt about revision (5 minutes).

After freewrite, students report back and instructor records some responses (8 minutes).

Instructor gives a short prompt on revision that students freewrite on, perhaps with

reference to a specific example from when they have revised in the past.

Questions might include: What does revision mean? What are some aspects of

revision -- what does revision include doing? What are some methods or strategies

for going about revision? What might revision consider or take into account?

* Second, review short handout on revision and relate or reinforce some of what students

said to the handout. Handout might also have an example of an introductory paragraph

or thesis sentence that has been revised. (7 minutes)

* Third, workshop as a class a couple or few sample introductory paragraphs (20 minutes). Give a prompt specifically as it relates to how, why, and where revisions might be helpful. It’s useful, I think, to give a few paragraphs to look at in relation to one aother that show a range of needs -- strong, but possibly with a thesis or single sentence that could use revision; a moderately good paragraph; and one that needs more extensive work or thinking.

Workshop also a paragraph or two with an assignment prompt to emphasize the

importance of revision in specific ways that relate to something more global or holistic.

Revision in this case is not necessarily about a specific sentence as much as it is about

re-reading (an assignment prompt, a paragraph or thesis, and possibly or probably a

need to re-read source material).

* Fourth, workshop as a class a longer writing sample (20 minutes)

In small groups, have students read and workshop a sample of student writing that is 3-4

paragraphs long -- either an introduction with subsequent paragraphs or an introduction

with paragraphs lifted from the body (even if missing transition points). The emphasis

here might be to try to think about the connections between assignment prompt

(possibly), introduction (claim or argument), and supporting paragraphs (the purpose or

function of that paragraph in relation to the introduction or even individual sentences

within the paragraph).

This can be guided in certain ways -- via directed questions about the revision process.

What, specifically, might be ways to work on this writing sample? Emphasize language

and specific methods related to revision practice.

* Fifth, each group reports back at least one or two things as instructor records (20 minutes). This can reinforce earlier classes on key words, repetition, writing as a demonstration of close reading (in specific ways), and making a claim.

The instructor might actually diagram or illustrate connections -- circle words, draw lines, or ways of making it visual -- and suggest, in short sentences or bullet points, ways that revision might be considered.

Note to instructor: If doing peer review, this obviously relates to forms of student response to each others drafts (that are more or less helpful and directed in certain ways -- as in, students are not fixing each grammar or syntax). Or, if doing peer review later, this can anticipate a later discussion or lesson about how to do peer review, even if it’s weeks away.

Also, instructor might refer back to readings “Linking Evidence and Claims” or “Saying Why It Matters.” Where are connections (or where are they missing) between claim and evidence? How does that relate to revision?

Homework: (30-45 minutes)

For homework, students will think about revision in two ways by thinking and responding to a sample paragraph or paragraphs given out with an introduction.

First, what specific way or ways do they think the paragraphs be revised? This can be done to an anonymous piece of sample writing from a past course or students can respond to drafts (peer review in groups). Have students write out a short response to another student their own 1-2 paragraphs for how they suggest the writing might be revised.

Second, in a more direct way perhaps, have students actually rewrite or make changes to specific sentences or a paragraph to show or put into practice revision as process (before and after).