Organizing and Humanizing the Teaching Track
in Rhetoric and Composition Programs

### 1. Title: Organizing and Humanizing the Teaching Track in Rhetoric and Composition Programs

**Abstract:** The presence of the teaching-track position within the field of Writing Studies has sharply increased. However, the supply of teaching-focused jobs currently outweighs the available resources for ethical hiring and retention practices, networks of support and care, and the potential to organize across institutional contexts to argue for better working conditions, pay equity, and more. Our project brings together full-time faculty in instructional titles (Lecturers, Instructors, Professors of Practice, Teaching Professors, etc.) and allies to create resources that resist common deficit narratives around teaching-focused jobs (Willard-Traub, 2012) while informing this audience of the realities of the current differences between these positions and positions on the tenure track. We welcome people who are already in teaching-track jobs, job seekers, and research-track faculty who work with graduate students on the market.

### 2. Facilitator information:

* Name: Lindsey Albracht
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Bio statement/background (What expertise do you bring to this project?): Lindsey Albracht works as a Lecturer and the co-director of First-Year Writing in the English department at Queens College in the City University of New York system. She teaches undergraduate classes on writing, and previously worked in interdisciplinary faculty education, instructional technology, and in the field of TESOL. She is also a proud member of the Professional Staff Council union at CUNY.

* Name: Dev K. Bose
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Bio statement/background (What expertise do you bring to this project?) Dev K. Bose is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Writing Program at University of California, Santa Cruz. Having taught in and directed various university writing programs across the United States, Dev is interested in universal design for learning (UDL), with an emphasis on rhetorical privilege and access pertaining to technology and neurodiversity. He currently co-chairs the CCCC Committee on Disability Issues.

* Name: Megan Callow
* Pronouns: she/her
* Affiliation: University of Washington, Seattle
* Email address: mcallow@uw.edu

Bio statement/background (What expertise do you bring to this project?) Megan Callow is an Associate Teaching Professor, WPA, and WAC director at the University of Washington, Seattle. She teaches science writing and writing pedagogy courses, and her intellectual interests center on those topics as well as faculty development, faculty governance, WPA issues, and WID/WAC Studies. She is currently co-writing a chapter on emergency, flexibility, and faculty contingency in writing programs.

* Name: Laila ElSerty
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Bio statement/background: Laila ElSerty is an Instructor at the Department of Rhetoric and Composition, the Academy of Liberal Arts, the American University in Cairo (AUC).  ElSerty graduated in 2011 from AUC’s MATESOL program. Currently she is working on her PhD dissertation in corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis.  For over 20 years, ElSerty has been teaching a variety of courses to both undergraduate and graduate students. These include English for academic purposes, linguistics, business writing, and research writing courses. Her academic interests include Rhetoric and composition, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Meta-cognition, Curriculum Design, Global Learning, and Technology-Assisted Language Learning.

* Name: Al Harahap
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Bio statement/background: Al Harahap is Lecturer in Queens College, CUNY’s Dept. of English. His administration, research, service, teaching intersect in institutional writing ecologies, including but not limited to Writing Across the Curriculum, Writing Centers, and Writing Programs. He has published on the politics of professionalization in *WPA Journal* and chapters in collected editions on Writing Across the Curriculum, is Co-Editor of *Literacy in Composition Studies,* and serves on boards of the CWPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators) and WAC Clearinghouse.

* Name: Clare Russell
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Bio statement/background (What expertise do you bring to this project?) Clare Russell is a Teaching Assistant Professor in the English Department at the University of Pittsburgh. She researches writing pedagogy education, specifically how our field invents future college writing instructors through the curricular design of teaching practicum courses. Clare is also interested in theories and pedagogies that benefit a diversity of undergraduate students. Contract grading, genre awareness, and writing about writing pedagogies have enriched both her teaching and her relationships with students. She is a proud member of Pitt Faculty Union.

### 3. Primary Contact: Lindsey Albracht, lindsey.albracht@qc.cuny.edu

### 4. Description (please include a Works Cited):

Over the past five years, the presence of the teaching-track position within the field of Writing Studies has sharply increased. According to [data gathered from RhetMap.org,](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sYRWPtK0lcB4OEOwzWYXD_jd1lytk5f0EHiRFoUCR0U/edit#gid=0) about 20% of available job listings advertised for full-time positions where the majority of the job focuses on teaching in the 2018-2019 academic year; by 2022-2023, the total number of jobs decreased by 13, but the total jobs for teaching-focused roles significantly doubled to 40%. According to a report from the Coalition of the Academic Workforce, over 75% of the instructional workforce in the US is contingent, including part-time, non-tenure track faculty (NTTF), and graduate student instructors (2012).

Previously framed as a way to offer increased stability to long-term contingent faculty who were not necessarily part of the field of Writing Studies (McBeth and McCormack, 2017), teaching track roles are increasingly professionalized, and consequently are attracting faculty with PhDs in the field. This shift is also attributable to permanent austerity and entrenched neoliberal models of higher education, which drive down the supply of research-track faculty lines (Schell, 2020). According to the American Association of University Women, women constitute only 44% of tenured and tenure-track roles and make up the majority of full-time non-tenure track roles across institutions. Furthermore, across the university, “faculty members of color make up 19% of the non-tenure-track workforce” (qtd. in Rideau and Robbins, 2020) while white faculty continue to dominate tenure-track and tenured positions. This is particularly problematic because of the disparity in pay equity. As one example, a recent AAUP State of the Faculty report from the University of Washington showed just how starkly different the salary averages are for teaching-track and tenure-track faculty: the average associate professor salary is $118,055 and the average associate teaching professor salary is $86,413.

These numbers reinforce a broader trend in the reliance on contingent faculty, which we define here as positions without the professional and financial securities of the research tenure-track. For the purposes of this proposal, we will focus on the growing category of faculty who hold full-time, teaching-oriented positions on and off the tenure track, but who do not experience the same levels of security and recognition as their colleagues on the research tenure-track.

The supply of teaching-focused jobs within the field of Writing Studies currently outweighs the available resources for ethical hiring and retention practices, networks of support and care, and the potential to organize across institutional contexts in order to argue for improved working conditions, pay equity, and more. This project brings together full-time faculty in instructional titles (Lecturers, Instructors, Professors of Practice, Teaching Professors, etc.) across a variety of institutional contexts to begin the creation of resources that will be democratically decided by the participants and might include: a Wiki for people who are already in teaching-track jobs and for graduate students and other job market candidates who are considering work on the teaching track that reframes and resists common deficit narratives around teaching-focused jobs (Willard-Traub, 2012) while informing this audience of the realities of the current differences between these positions and positions on the tenure track. Part of this guide could allow viewers to compare working conditions, salaries relative to our cost of living, experiences with working with university unions (or attempting to unionize), teaching loads, opportunities for professional development, and other opportunities on our campuses across institutional contexts to better equip ourselves to understand the differences between teaching-track jobs and to advocate for ourselves.

We might also create a collaborator-designed Slack workspace to facilitate ongoing collaboration and information sharing across institutional contexts after the conclusion of the conference. Part of our deliverable outcomes could be a welcome email to colleagues on the teaching track to inform them about and invite them to the workspace, a survey about teaching-track working conditions, and a list of community guidelines for joining and working in that workspace.

Works Cited

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### 5. Annotated schedule:

*What will you do when you are together? Please consult the* [*schedule*](#_ki6kpi377q9r) *for the number of hours per day you have together. Zoom-only facilitators, make sure to build in lots of screen breaks. (Note that Zoom-only groups meet for slightly fewer hours than in-person groups because of the additional intensity of meeting on screen.)*

#### **Day 1: Wednesday, February 28, 2023**

12:00 noon-12:30 p.m. EST: Conference welcome
12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m. EST: Keynote/workshop on a theme related to collaboration
3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. EST: Work session (includes breaks)

* Arrive and orient ourselves to key issues (3:00-4:15): Brief intros. In advance of the first session, we will invite participants to (optionally) draft a short narrative about how they came to their position as teaching faculty.
* Break (4:15-4:45)
* Brainstorm potential deliverables (4:45-6:00): After introductions, following from our narratives, we will define and prioritize some of the key issues related to teaching-track positions (e.g. experiences and struggles of the teaching track; union organizing on campus; how to create advocacy spaces on our campus; compensation issues; resources for teaching-track focused job market materials) and decide on potential deliverables. These can include but are not limited to a Wiki on teaching-faculty issues and resources, and/or a Slack workspace where teaching faculty can network, build community, share information, etc. As part of this discussion, identify potential working group categories.

8:00 p.m. EST: Optional online social activity, like an online pub-style quiz. (Sign up with a team or let us assign you to one). Open to all conference participants, both Zoom and in-person.

#### **Day 2: Thursday, February 29, 2023**

Much of Day 2’s priorities will be determined by the whole group during Day 1’s introductions. However, facilitators will meet in advance of Day 2’s official work schedule to shape recommended working groups.

12:00 noon-5:00 p.m. EST (includes breaks):

* Arrive and finalize working groups (12pm - 12:30pm)
* Working Group #1 session (12:30pm - 1:30pm)
* Break (1:30pm - 2:00pm)
* Reading discussion about the introductions to book chapter (2:00pm - 3:00pm) with a social annotation option
* Break (3:00pm - 3:30pm)
* Working Group #2 session (3:30pm - 4:30pm). This work session will have a non-Zoom option (e.g. collaborate on a Google Doc at the same time; use Slack and Google Docs).
* Present what we’ve done so far to the group (4:30pm - 5:00pm)

Texts proposed for discussion:

CCCC Statement on Working Conditions for Non-Tenure-Track Writing Faculty (2016): <https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/working-conditions-ntt>

Kahn, S., Lalicker, W.B., & Lynch-Biniek, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Contingency, Exploitation, and Solidarity: Labor and Action in English Composition*. The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado. <https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2017.0858>

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8:00 p.m. EST: Optional online social activity. Open to all conference participants, both Zoom and in-person.

#### **Day 3: Friday, March 1, 2023**

12:00 noon-3:00 p.m. EST: Work session (includes breaks)

* Working Group #3 session (12pm - 1:30pm). This work session will have an asynchronous option.
* Break (1:30pm - 2:00pm)
* Final deliverable discussion and planning for the showcase  (2:00pm - 3:30pm)

3:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m. EST: Showcase of deliverables; debriefing on the collaborative process and conference. (Note: In-person participants will give asynchronous feedback via Slack on the deliverables of their Zoom "project buddies." In-person participants are also welcome to attend the Zoom showcase.)

### 6. Modality:

Please indicate one preference.

1. Zoom (Feb 28-Mar 1)

### 7. Number of participants:

*Please estimate the minimum and maximum numbers of participants that would make sense for your group. (For budgeting purposes, we are estimating 20 people per group for a total of around 240 participants, but your project might require more or fewer people, which is perfectly fine.)*

There are 6 facilitators, so if there are an estimated 20 people per group, we could collaborate with 14. However, we’re open to more than that if there’s more interest.

### 8. Participant background:

*Are you looking for participants with certain kinds of skills (e.g., language, artistic, technical skills), roles, backgrounds, interests, or identities?*

Ideally, most participants would be people who are already in teaching-track jobs since a part of the resource creation would focus on sharing information across institutional contexts. However, we would be open to participation from adjuncts, graduate students, tenure-track allies, and people who are in a position to mentor graduate students looking for and potentially applying to teaching-track jobs.

### 9. Preparation:

*Would participants need to read, do, and/or bring anything in advance? (As the* [*Timeline for Facilitators*](#_ucjgu6b0q58q) *indicates, they would be informed of their group a little over a month in advance of the conference’s start.)*

Participants will be asked to write a short narrative about their journey through academia and how they arrived at their current teaching-focused job position/title. Examples will be provided by the moderators to inspire this writing activity.

We will also ask participants to read the introduction to [Contingency, Exploitation, and Solidarity: Labor and Action in English Composition](https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/contingency/) before our first work session. Ideally, participants will arrive at the first work session having reflected upon their experiences with labor in academia, and identified potential  working group categories via the reading.

Additionally, participants will be asked to read the WPA-L Participation Guidelines and Moderation Board Guidelines and to bring any other examples of online moderation guidelines for digital communities where they are participants to prepare for the creation of our own participation guidelines and the discussion of our moderation process.

### 10. Final-day deliverable:

*What deliverable would your group share with the whole conference on the last day? It can be very rough—we recognize that these collaborations are only just beginning—but there should be at least something that your group could present.*

The start of a Wiki and/or a Slack workspace with participation guidelines and a moderation process, an invitational email and a survey about working conditions designed to reach teaching-focused faculty. The online workspaces and survey will build an international dialogue and provide data that can inspire future scholarship and best practice on labor and working conditions for teaching-focused positions in academia.

### 11. How will participants get credit?

*Will participants be coauthors who could list a publication on their CV? Will they be credited in some other way? Please explain their role in the project and how credit will work.*

Participants in this working group will be listed as the original co-authors, and co-founders of any deliverables produced during our time together.

### 12. What happens after the conference?

*How will the project develop after the conference? What opportunities for further collaboration will participants have?*

This working group will continue to collaborate on the guide, facilitate, and solicit contributions to the Wiki and/or Slack workspaces from the larger Writing Studies community. We also plan to grow membership of and interest in these resources through ongoing promotional work and networking. As the online spaces grow, we may decide to open participation to teaching faculty in other disciplines.

### 13. Working and learning environment:

*What strategies might you use to foster an inclusive, accessible, “post-White” (Croom, 2022) environment founded in collective accountability and radical care (Johnston et al., 2022)? Feel free to make use of the* [*2021 Watson Conference Commitments*](https://louisville.edu/conference/watson/history-and-conference-archive/conference-archive/past-conferences/2021-watson-conference/2021-watson-conference-commitments) *in your planning. (We will revise them slightly for 2024.)*

Teaching-focused positions vary significantly, yet the conditions of our jobs and the kinds of needs that we have remain less visible in academic discourse. We hope to cultivate relationships and connections between our participants that allow for a less anonymous, more connected sense of sharing and solidarity that outlasts the conference. While we have imagined some concrete deliverables, we hope that our introductory activities and the reading discussion allow this to be a space for learning, growth, play, and connection rather than being entirely focused on production (“2021 Watson Conference Commitments'').

Co-building collaborative online workspaces and documents will allow for synchronous and asynchronous participation while allowing for continual, collaborative updating as more equitable labor practice. During the conference, we will give participants the option to participate in a synchronous Zoom conversation about the reading, or to use a social annotation platform to annotate the reading together while taking a Zoom break. We will also lead working groups in brainstorming ways to include participants who may experience technical difficulties or who need to attend to other things during work group time (Johnson et al. 2022).

Building on [the WPA-L Reimagining Working Group’s Moderation Board and redesigned Participation Guidelines](https://sites.google.com/view/wpa-l-change-work/moderation-board-guidelines?authuser=0), we also aim to create a Slack workspace and a process for collaborative development of guidelines for participation, which will be designed to foster both collective accountability and radical care because of the way that the guidelines will allow us to “attend to power dynamics in participation – and…name and interrupt these dynamics as needed” (“2021 Watson Conference Commitments”). We want to proactively anticipate the ways that we will collectively deal with posts within the workspace that cause harm and that exacerbate structural inequality. Additionally, we are selecting the remote participation option to account for colleagues on the teaching track who commonly receive less conference funding than our research track colleagues.

Overall, we hope that the act of sharing information about our own working conditions that is currently difficult can, itself, make exploitative conditions more transparent and easier to define, examine, and combat. Further,we hope that this session– its topics and its intentionally designed format– will speak back to what Tricia Hersey calls “grind culture,” a “collaboration between white supremacy and capitalism... [that] views our divine bodies as machines” (2022, p. 12). Because “[o]ur worth is not connected to how much we produce” (p. 12), we seek to foster an environment that prioritizes connection and cultivation over productivity and scholarship. Our hope is that the labor of participating in this session will be worth it for participants because it supports a more sustainable career (and life-work balance) in the long run.