

4 WRITING WITH YOUR PEERS

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OVERVIEW

This chapter advocates for student writers to collaborate and coauthor.* When opportunities to write together are offered—as part of in-class or outside-class writing assignments—students can benefit in a number of ways, including learning how audiences are addressed and how immediate feedback can become a dynamic element of writing together. In terms of the value of the experience, collaborative writing and coauthoring are technologically supported and often expected in many professional workplaces.

It was a good learning experience for me when my group members took their turns writing and ended up contributing things that I never would have thought of to the paper. All in all, I'd say that it was a positive experience, and a good assignment. Because writing in a group forces everyone to grow in some area that they are not good at. It's a different area for different people but everyone grows somehow.

—First-Year Composition Student

Perhaps you would describe your experiences with collaborative work differently than Noah does. When we ask college students about their encounters with teamwork, group work, collaboration, cooperative learning, coauthoring, or cowriting, many students tell us those experiences were not very positive, especially in high school. They complain that, for example, the bulk of the work usually fell on one person, that slackers got credit for work they didn't do, that one person dominated the group, that some group members did not communicate well with the rest

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of the group, that some members did not contribute much or did not contribute at all, that the finished product did not meet their standards. They may have felt their own grade was adversely affected by the grade their group's work received. Some of you are probably nodding your heads as you read this list, but we can say with confidence that most of the students in our classes report positive experiences with collaborative work, including writing together. We are three experienced writing teachers who believe collaboration sometimes goes sour because students are asked to work together without first understanding the value of such work, or because they have not yet learned how to work together productively. Some have collaborated successfully in a group yet have never actually written with another person. But we have seen that when students understand writing together can deepen their learning and help them become better writers, and when they are shown how coauthoring works, they are more willing to set aside their skepticism and engage with their peers. Our goal is to get you thinking about the benefits of collaborating, and, more specifically, the benefits of writing with your peers.

It might surprise you to know that even though you feel you write better in solitude, you seldom actually write alone; writers, students, and professionals rarely do. Even the student in the dorm room in the middle of the night has access to the knowledge and experience of other writers through Internet searches, library databases, writing center tutors, other students who are also up in the middle of the night trying to finish an essay, and their own experience of reading the work of many authors. Two graduate students acknowledged this when they wrote (together), "We find solace, support, and success when we look outside ourselves, borrow ideas, remix other texts, talk to others, and collaborate with their thoughts. The Lone Genius author doesn't exist. And it never did" (Edwards and Paz 66).

We three coauthors believe all writing is collaborative in some way. The difference in a classroom situation is that you have what two scholars and coauthors in the field of writing studies, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, call an "addressed audience," or an immediate, rather than imagined, audience. That means you instantly have other people to give you feedback along the way, to add information and perspectives, to correct your mistakes, to push you to think hard, and to remind you that someone other than you will need to understand what you write. Yes, writing with peers can be fun and you can make friends and enjoy the experience, but mainly, writing with your peers offers a whole new way to approach your assignments and allows your thinking to become shaped by additional voices.

OUR OWN EXPERIENCES WRITING WITH OTHERS AND IN OUR CLASSROOMS

We're not sure what comes to mind when you think of the term *cowriting* or *coauthoring*. You might think of it in a broad sense—writing together or writing collaboratively. Of course, that kind of collaboration might take any number of forms, but the form we're talking about here is in-person, in close proximity or online, real-time writing together—in other words, a scenario in which writers sit down together and create text together. We three are writing teachers who ask our students to do this kind of coauthoring every semester, but before they dive into that first coauthoring task, or perhaps test the waters tentatively, we spend some time sharing what we know about the value of coauthoring, including some stories about our own experience.

Neither Kami or Michele remembers coauthoring in high school or even as undergraduates, so their first coauthoring endeavors came in graduate school. The workload was heavy and the subject matter challenging, but the professors encouraged collaborative work, so they wrote with each other and with other graduate students. Working this way allowed them to divide up some of the research tasks; but while working side by side, they also found they could tackle complicated concepts and generate even more ideas than they would have writing alone. Because of all the talking they did while writing, they were constantly testing their understanding with another person, and that helped them learn better and faster. They quickly discovered that what they produce together is always better than what they can produce individually because they were able to combine knowledge, life experiences, writing styles, and vocabularies. One of them is skilled at creating vivid metaphors, one is adept at organization and transitions, one is spontaneous, one is a taskmaster, and for editing, they have double the assets to make sure grammar and usage is appropriate for their audience and for the task at hand.

Kami, an introvert, had always preferred to work alone, so she understands the misgivings some students might have about writing collaboratively. But because of her graduate school experience, she learned how her own work could be enriched by the ideas and perspectives of others, and she encourages any reluctant students to be open to the possible rewards of writing with their peers. Most of her students are willing to try, and most, like Noah, have a positive experience with coauthoring during the semester. They find themselves in what Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky calls the “zone of proximal development.” In that zone, peers learn from each

other, bringing together their individual knowledges and experiences to create a deep pool of ideas, expertise, and possibilities.

Raquel did write with others in her undergraduate years, but this writing was often outside the classroom with her sorority sisters. Some of it was personal, but often it was for sorority and organizational business purposes. During that time, it became natural for Raquel to cowrite with others. However, even in this context, she often took the lead or was particular about how the writing came to be. It wasn't until she went to graduate school and cowrote with others that it felt truly like a collaborative endeavor.

Now that she is a composition instructor, one of Raquel's goals in asking her students to coauthor is that her students learn to write as members of an ability-diverse team to experience community problem solving. She acknowledges that group writing tasks do not always turn out "successfully" if "successful writing" is defined as it has been traditionally. Her students' collaborative writing is often all over the place; sometimes one person takes over the writing while others contribute, or they really struggle with coming up with a cohesive written response. However, she keeps asking students to write together because she thinks the students' discussions as they share their different views are so important, and such discussion really helps build community. Students are also able to find others in the course they can be supported by or people they will choose to work with when they have to self-select for other group activities.

STUDENTS WRITING TOGETHER

Here, we offer a snapshot of what a face-to-face, in-person coauthoring interaction might look like and sound like. Imagine a scenario at a midwestern community college in which students are coauthoring. One group of four has chosen to write about a proposed change in the school's nondiscrimination policy, a revision that would add *sexual orientation* and *gender identity* to the policy. The group is diverse: one member is a straight, non-traditional student (a student who has come back to school at an age that is not typical for new students) whose age and experience have exposed her to many different views; one identifies as queer and has experienced harassment and discrimination on campus; one straight male identifies as a Christian with rather conservative views; one male identifies as straight and liberal. Their majors range from elementary education to business to English to chemistry, their writing abilities from fluent and confident to tentative and inexperienced, their ages from eighteen to thirty-five. Two

students identify as Black, one as white, and one as mixed race. It would be possible to fill several pages with all their differences. You can probably imagine the challenges this project would present, and because their views and perspectives differ, the group, after a great deal of discussion (coauthoring involves a lot of talk), decides to write an essay that explores these different views rather than takes one specific position. In this way, everyone's perspective is voiced but also challenged.

The following exchange captures part of the group's process; a few minutes of a final editing session might go like this:

Student 1: Okay, so the next section starts with "This change in the policy may cause trouble. There might be heated debates, demonstrations, and even violence."

Student 2: That doesn't sound right . . . kind of choppy. How about a colon after "trouble"?

Student 3: What's a colon supposed to do? I've never really understood that.

Student 2: Well . . . it usually comes before a list, but it can add more about the first part of the sentence too.

Student 4: What about one of those lines . . . a dash . . . after "trouble."

Student 2: Why?

Student 4: Well, a dash can be used like a colon but it sort of sets off . . . emphasizes something more than a colon does.

Student 1: Okay, so if we put in a dash it looks like this (typing) . . . "This change in the policy may cause trouble—there might be heated debates, demonstrations, and even violence."

Student 3: Yeah, I like that better, but what if we take out "there might be"?

Student 1: Okay, if we do that it looks like this (deleting) . . . "This change in the policy may cause trouble—heated debates, demonstrations, and even violence."

All four students: Yeah—that sounds good! (high fives all around)

You might be thinking "Oh, that wouldn't happen—too corny." But we have seen and heard many such exchanges, including in-person and virtual high fives.

These students are not working in an ideal coauthoring situation—no classroom ever is. Ideally, students who already know each other well would choose to write together, but in a classroom, even if you have gotten to know a few students, you usually do not know anyone very well and

you are often assigned to groups. So, how do you participate in a group to help everyone work successfully together? You might find yourself in a class where groups are assigned, or you might be told to put yourselves into groups with little preliminary preparation. We encourage you to take some time to get to know each other. Of course, you can introduce yourselves, but we also ask students in a new group to come up with a list of things they have in common beyond the obvious (we are all mammals, enrolled in the same class, etc.). What usually ensues is a lively conversation, a relaxing of tensions, and the beginnings of a productive group. Even if your instructor did not ask you to participate in such an exercise, you could do it on your own. Sometimes we make random pairs and have students interview each other with questions that get beyond where they are from. One question that works to move the conversation toward writing is: How would you describe your relationship to writing? The answers here are often metaphorical and revealing, such as: My relationship with writing is long distance!

Group writing can also help you gain experience as a facilitator and as someone who can take on different roles and responsibilities. Some groups assign roles like scribe (takes notes or types), shepherd (keeps the group on track), whiner (to get problems out in the open so the group can move on, or to take questions to the teacher), the spokesperson (if the group is asked to report), and so forth. The members of some groups just naturally fall into taking on roles as they need to (actually, this happens most of the time in our classes). Sometimes one voice is heard more than the others, but we have experienced very few problems with domineering students or students who say nothing. In many cases, highly verbal extroverted students seem to understand they are instrumental in drawing quieter or less confident students out, and students who would never say a word in a large class discussion are more willing to participate in a less threatening small group whose members they trust and feel somewhat comfortable with. Students have told us they learn more about themselves through the co-authoring experience; they realize their strengths and gain self-awareness of the ways they can contribute to collaborative work, sometimes as idea generators, sometimes as editors, sometimes as taskmasters, and sometimes as the person who keeps the group laughing.

Ideally, you will be given time in class to coauthor. But you might be required to do your coauthoring outside class. In either case, we recommend the role of scribe is rotated with each session—it can be a powerful position to hold the pen or control the keyboard. When we first had computers in our classrooms (1990s!), groups gathered around one monitor and the

scribe was on the keyboard. In current classrooms, it is more likely you will have your own device, laptop, or tablet, or there is a projection screen for the computer. The kinds of tools now available to share screens and documents (like Google Docs), whether students are in a classroom together or meeting virtually, allow the process of writing together to be more visible and accessible for all writers to participate (Hewett and Robidoux).

The questions below can be used in the group as icebreakers but we place them here to give you a chance to reflect on your thinking about co-authoring so far.

1. Would your friends characterize you as someone who works and plays well with others? Why or why not?
2. Write the recipe for your successful individual composing process. For example, does it include six cups of time and a teaspoon of inspiration? Then develop a recipe for a successful coauthoring process for a four-person group.
3. Describe how a piece of writing might be enriched by having more readers and writers involved. It might help your thinking process to imagine you are starting to write a research essay. What is the question you want to ask?

FINAL THOUGHTS: BEYOND CLASSROOM WRITING

Our purpose in writing this chapter was to help you feel more open and comfortable with the possibilities of writing with your peers. Writing together can impact your learning and engagement in a class but also prepare you for future opportunities, beyond your undergraduate experience, to write with others.

From the students in our classes over the years, we have heard just how much writing and coauthoring takes place outside of class, especially within clubs and organizations, student government, activist groups, and athletic events. All of our interactions with people, whether close friends or strangers in public life, require the ability to negotiate and compromise and *writing* with others can help you develop and practice ways of *listening* and *learning* with others. In some workplaces, team writing is the way all the work is done and there are many guides to doing team writing (an example is *Team Writing: A Guide to Working in Groups* by Joanna Wolfe, who researches collaborative writing in technical communication). Pattie Wojahn, Kristin Blicharz, and Stephanie Taylor, who write about virtual

collaboration, point out that because workplaces expect and support virtual collaborative writing, an understanding of the “care, coordination, and cooperation” that must go into coauthoring will be an asset (66). In addition, engaging with writers through writing projects has the potential to make the work more meaningful (Bleakney 2020).

To gain more experience, it might even be possible for you and a group of your peers to propose a coauthored project for this or another class, or to establish “interest groups” of students who are working on similar projects so you can share research, insights, and even do some blog writing or *Wikipedia* editing together (Lockett). We hope that by the time you enter the workplace, you will have had experiences working well and writing authentically with other people. Twenty-first century learners like you have access to amazing technologies, access to other writers around the world, and access to multiple literacies and modes of communication. All of these support collaboration and coauthoring—in school and beyond.

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TEACHER RESOURCES FOR WRITING WITH YOUR PEERS

This chapter is designed to encourage students to consider the benefits of collaborative writing and coauthoring. But it is important the instructor also have a positive disposition toward such work. At some point in your teaching career, you might have asked your students to coauthor, felt the experience was negative or not useful for your students and for you, and decided student coauthoring would not be part of your pedagogy. We hope this chapter will make you hopeful about trying again. There is plenty of research in writing studies about authorship and collaborative writing, but for a useful discussion of how to prepare students to write together and facilitating the process, we suggest the chapter “Learning from Coauthoring: Composing Texts Together in the Composition Classroom” (Eodice and Day) in the collection *Teaching with Student Texts*.

It also might be useful, as you form student writing groups, to think about what your own experiences with collaborative writing and coauthoring have been or whether you have always avoided that type of interaction or have never had the opportunity to try it. We also encourage you to try experimenting with low-stakes collaborative writing exercises in your classroom if you are not yet ready to dedicate a whole assignment in your course to this endeavor. We know sometimes as educators we need the opportunity to start small before fully committing to a new assignment.

The following prompts are designed for you to uncover your own disposition toward coauthoring. Your answers might uncover views of coauthoring that could impact the way you present collaborative activities and coauthoring in your course. We also think the prompts could be offered to students as well.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

4. Did you have a particular feeling or opinion about collaborative writing and coauthoring before reading the chapter? Has that feeling or opinion changed?
5. When you imagine yourself in a writing group, what role do you see yourself playing? What strength can you contribute?
6. What is your biggest concern about working with others on a co-authored paper?

7. Some writers and researchers view all writing as problem solving; how do you see yourself solving problems with others in the group?

SAMPLE WRITING TASKS

Below, we provide writing activities, assignments, and guidelines we use in our individual classes. You could ask students to experiment with the first set of collaborative low-stakes writing exercises prior to engaging in the longer assignment. However, you could also just experiment with one or two of these exercises to see how students respond to help you prepare for eventually implementing the essay assignment. After these writing exercises, we provide an essay assignment and guidelines students can use to help them manage conflict. Feel free to use any of these activities and templates and adapt them in any way that makes sense for your context. Finally, we include a list of touchstones that have guided our teaching and our students' interactions with each other.

NOTE ON GROUP FORMATION

Some instructors assign students to permanent groups about three weeks into a semester after the whole class has had a chance to become more comfortable with each other. In this way, students have had a few weeks' practice working with each other in small groups that change membership, and the teacher has had a chance to see which students are introverts or extroverts, who comes to class regularly, and so forth. Other instructors prefer to allow students to self-select, others form groups randomly, others ask the students to count off and form groups of all ones, all twos, etc. Each method has advantages, but what matters ultimately is creating a classroom in which students understand the value of collaborative learning, feel that the work they do is meaningful, and acknowledge their responsibility to each other.

LOW-STAKES COLLABORATIVE WRITING EXERCISES

Put students in small groups of three to four individuals. Provide them with a writing prompt to a reading they completed for homework (or one they read together in class). Ask them to respond in writing as an entire group. Usually, based on context, we provide students more step-by-step instructions on how this works so they understand the various steps this exercise requires of them. For instance, we have provided students the following order of instructions:

- Take some time together to verbally discuss your answers to the prompt.
- Make sure everyone has had a chance to share their thoughts.
- Afterwards, try to determine which ideas you may want to communicate in your written response. You may not be able to discuss everyone's ideas, so which one(s) is the larger group interested in?
- Then, begin the writing process.

If computers are available, encourage everyone to use Google Docs to start writing together, or if it is done by hand, encourage the group to come up with certain roles. Remember to make it clear to students that they are to work together to submit one written response. You should indicate how long you want that response to be and what kind of content you would like to receive (do you want them to present evidence or quotes from the reading?).

You can provide students a writing prompt based on an issue they may be acquainted with and have them argue or share a perspective on it. This could be a topic they choose amongst themselves, too. As mentioned above, you may want to break down the list of activities they must go through in order to create a fully formulated written response.

PROCESS GUIDELINES FOR AN ESSAY

ESSAY 1

Your group has had several opportunities this semester to coauthor, or create short pieces of writing together, and now it's time for the text you write as groups. Some of you might be groaning about this, but in the past, my students have found this to be a mostly positive experience. They learn from each other about the topic and about writing, they enjoy the support from each other, and sometimes they even have fun! I believe it's some of the most important work you do since it has so much to do with the relationships in the group and how you value each other and fulfill your responsibilities to your peers. So here are some guidelines to help you with this process.

Schedule: You'll write most of this text in class. If you like, you can exchange your drafts with another group for feedback and work on revisions. In addition to working together in class, you might

want to work on the document virtually in a shared-document platform like Google Docs.

Contents of the paper: Your essay can include some research, but that is not a requirement. Remember, coauthoring can be challenging since you might not all agree totally on the topic. That's okay—consensus on everything is not necessary. You'll need to find a way, though, to create a new voice from all your voices so the essay fits together smoothly and does not sound as though it is written by several different people. You may have to weave together different views, but no one's voice need be silenced. Cognitive conflict is a good thing, and we could all use more practice negotiating diverse views and respecting each other's positions.

In-class work: You'll have four full class periods to work on this project. If you have research to do, you *must* do it outside class time and bring it to class with you. Class time will be for writing. At the end of each writing period, I'll take up what you have written so it will be sure to make it to class the next time (or you'll send me an electronic copy if you're working on a computer). If you need to take a hard copy with you, I'll make copies for you. We'll decide as a class whether you want to spend some writing time in the computer lab.

The process: Remember the guidelines we came up with at the beginning of the semester for working together. Please take turns as you discuss your work, make room respectfully for all views, think of the value of hearing each other rather than making someone agree with you. *Just do what you've been doing already this semester!* Please take turns scribing, and *don't write the whole paper by writing individual sections and smooshing them together.* Most of the text should be written by the whole group—you've had practice doing this and you've done it well.

The product: This is one of the major projects of the semester, so please take it seriously—I do. It's a chance for you to review what you've learned and practiced this semester: writing together, invention strategies, unified paragraphing, sentence variety, perhaps integrating research sources, using MLA format, editing for nonessential words, spelling and punctuation, transitions, etc. The text should be *well edited*, and if you use any outside sources, it should include a *Works Cited* page. These essays are typically

not long—writing together is hard! —but they are rich in that they bring together so many styles and ideas. I will be circulating among your groups as you write and assisting if I need to, but I expect each group to develop its own process.

REFLECTIONS ON COAUTHORING

All the students are asked to write reflections on their required coauthoring experiences, but when students are given the choice to coauthor (as they are with their research projects), which means they will be working together outside of class, the students who choose coauthoring are asked to turn in reflections on that process. Below is the reflection assignment.

IF YOU COAUTHOR

In my experience, coauthors find the best way, without any help from me, to work together successfully. My main concerns are that you contribute equally to the project, that all your voices are heard in the text as a voice you create together, that you appreciate each other's strengths and learn from each other, and that you have a positive and productive experience. I'm as interested in your process as in the text you produce, so I'm going to ask you to write some individual (each person will write their own) reflections on that process. I hope you'll be honest about your experience and your roles, and that you'll describe your experience in detail.

Reflection guidelines: Choose from the prompts below to develop a reflection about your coauthoring experience.

1. Why did you decide to coauthor the essay?
2. How did you all do the research together?
3. How did you do the writing of the essay so far? (Did you each write sections and put them together? Did you sit down together and write each sentence together? Did you do a combination of the two or some other combination I have not thought of?)
4. What do you think you contributed to the essay? (your strengths)
5. What do you think your coauthors contributed? (their strengths)
6. How did you feel about any feedback you got from peers?
7. How did you make the revisions?

8. How do you feel about the quality of the essay?
9. How do you feel about the whole process?
10. What have you learned from the other coauthor(s) about writing, research, or anything else?
11. What have you learned in the coauthoring process about writing, working with another person?
12. Has anything about this whole experience surprised you?

CONFLICT

NAVIGATING CONFLICT

Writing with others is not just about stringing words together with a few people you hardly know. Sometimes the writing part is the easy part. Getting to know, respect, and value others is important—but conflicts will arise. Check your privilege and be sure you are listening to all voices. You might not agree with everyone, you might bring bias or impatience with others, but the goal is to learn and write as a member of an ability-diverse team to experience community problem solving.

In life as in the classroom, you should expect to encounter some conflict. This is inevitable as we work with others and especially when we have to write together. Writing is something many of us feel is personal and belongs to us. You have to acknowledge this is because you actually care! However, when we write with others, we must begin to break away from this idea. Your writing is a contribution to a group or a team, and it helps all of you meet a goal, but that does not mean it will not be questioned or bettered by others. This is what makes cowriting so rewarding (as we have said several times already).

But the reality is, you won't always find it so rewarding—you may encounter some difficulties in working with others. Some of these difficulties may include that you have a different idea or set of values surrounding the writing prompt and what it's asking you to do. Simply said, you may have a different answer to the prompt than your cowriter(s). You may find in your group that a few of you have different ideas about the kind of writing you want to

write or even the words used. Yes, it can be that small! Sometimes it can be as complex as not knowing how to move forward with so many different ideas or if the writing is sounding like a cohesive piece. You may also encounter a situation where you feel as though some people are not contributing or doing as much as others. We ask that you be patient with yourself, others, and the writing process. Working in groups is not easy even when writing is not required, so you can expect this process to be a challenge. However, we believe it is in the midst of these struggles that you will have the opportunity to learn more about yourself and the writing process. Although it may sound too simple to say “be patient,” the reality is, it has to be that simple. Being patient to us means the following:

- Stop after engaging for a while in a particularly difficult conversation about a difference in opinion or ideas or thoughts. So, yes, engage in some meaningful conversation with your writing partner(s) and then maybe take a day to think on what was exchanged or even just a few minutes before deciding how you’re all going to move forward. Maybe take a moment and process the conversation via some reflective writing or with a trusted friend or family member who you know can give you their perspective as well.
- Be open to others’ ideas and approach to writing. The beauty of working with others is that we have access to a wider range of language and knowledge—don’t take it for granted!
- Build a thick skin and do not take offense too much. Someone is in class just like you, trying to do the best they can, so take their suggestions to heart; see how they can help make your thinking and writing better, just as yours makes theirs better. Be able to accept feedback on your writing and do not be afraid to “touch” each other’s words and writing! This is where the true collaborative nature of writing together happens—when you work and meld your efforts on the page! Use the “suggesting” or “tracking” feature on Google/Word to make changes so everyone is aware of what is being recommended and get in there! Remember, the writing process is not linear—it’s messy!
- Finally, being patient also involves being willing to learn more about yourself and who you are as a writer and a person. Your professor may ask you at the end of your collaborative writing project to reflect on your experience working with others. We

encourage you to keep this in mind as you work with others. Who are you in a group? We mentioned briefly that there are usually roles in a group. So, which one do you usually take on? Are you the one who reminds the group of the amount of time left on the project? The requirements associated with the project? Do you usually try to motivate others? Do you take the lead and get the writing started? Or do you like to wait and see what others have contributed and then move into writing and help others develop what is on the page? The answers to these questions are really for you to get a better understanding of who you are as you continue to engage in groups and write or work collaboratively with others in the workforce or even in student organizations while you're still in college.

CREATING A CLASS ETHOS WITH TOUCHSTONES

It is important to define the space in which learning together will take place, and one way to do that is to introduce guidelines like the Touchstones below early in the semester (these are based on the work of Parker Palmer and are adapted from the list of Touchstones on the Center for Courage and Renewal's website, <http://www.couragerenewal.org/touchstones/>). The class can read this list together, and students too can be invited to choose a Touchstone that seems particularly challenging and share their thoughts with the class if they feel comfortable doing that (many do). Of course, it's important to revisit these Touchstones often during the semester.

CLASSROOM COMMUNITY TOUCHSTONES

IDEAS THAT INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF OUR WORKING TOGETHER PRODUCTIVELY

1. *Extend welcome and accept welcome.* We all learn most effectively in spaces that welcome us. Therefore, we have a responsibility to welcome each other to this place and the work of this course and to presume that we are being welcomed as well.
2. *Be here.* Be as present as possible. Set aside, as much as you can, the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow. Bring all of yourself to our class; allow yourself to "be here now."

3. *Listen.* Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feeling beneath the words. Listen to yourself as well as others. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting.
4. *Be open to share.* You will be invited to share in small groups and the large group. You will determine the extent to which you want to share or disclose information about yourself. There are levels of self-disclosure. Self-disclosure requires risk. You will decide how much you wish to reveal.
5. *Suspend judgment.* Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgements and reactions we can listen to each other, and to ourselves, more fully.
6. *Identify assumptions.* Our assumptions are usually transparent to us, yet they show our worldview. By identifying our assumptions, we can then set them aside and open our viewpoints to greater possibilities.
7. *Speak your truth.* You are invited to say what is in your mind and heart, trusting that your voice will be heard and your contribution respected. Your truth may be different from, even the opposite of, what another person in the class has said. Avoid introducing defensive feelings that distract from the dialogue; speaking your truth and arguing for what you believe is true (or to change someone else's truth) are two different things.
8. *Respect silence.* Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words. This applies to the speaker as well—be comfortable leaving your words to resound in the silence, without refining or elaborating on what you have just said. This process allows others time to fully listen before reflecting on their own reactions.
9. *Be generous and kind.* We are all learning and it's important that we are patient with each other.
10. *When things get difficult, turn to wonder.* If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, or shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: "I wonder what brought them to this place?" "I wonder what my reaction teaches me?" "I wonder what they're feeling right now?"