

Using Google Docs for Peer and Instructor Feedback in the Writing Classroom Reflection

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The project I chose to do for Teaching with New Media Series was implementing Google Docs into my writing classroom as a tool for instructor and peer review. I mainly wanted to do this project for four reasons: To cut down paper usage and to find a platform that would make drafts and comments easy to digitally upload to a digital portfolio, to find a visually friendlier platform to comment on student papers, to find an easy way for students to share documents with me and their peers that wouldn't interfere with the quality of feedback, and to become more comfortable using technology myself. To do this, I had students use Google Docs as their main feedback tool for two essays. Also, for my Teaching with New Media Project, I created my tip sheet as a Google Doc with links to sample student essays and resources that instructors who want to use Google Docs in their classroom for the first time will find helpful. This made sure that I would have to use Google Docs as an instructor and a student so I could learn more about this program myself.

Making this series available to faculty was *extremely* helpful for someone like me, who is not technologically savvy and has a tendency to avoid it at all costs. This is especially difficult because I am aware that my students use technology much more than I do, and not making it a part of my classroom makes my teaching boring and antiquated. I was very pleased to be encouraged as an instructor to try new things that could support my pedagogy. Participating in this series proved to be a very positive step in my classroom practices. Students were very happy to use Google Docs instead of handing in paper drafts all the time. They thought it was a more interesting, efficient, and educational tool overall.

I think the most appealing thing about the Teaching with New Media Series is the amount of expertise and support available to instructors. I always felt like I could ask if I needed help or clarification on something at any time, and that this series was successfully put together to improve the quality of teaching excellence and student engagement at UC Merced.

A Brief Assessment

In order to help assess the success of implementing Google Docs in my classroom, I started off the semester by through the essay process my old way (all paper drafts etc) twice, and then using Google Docs with the remaining two essay assignments. I then distributed a short survey to the class to see if they had a preference.

Google Docs was preferred to my handwritten comments and hard copy drafts by 75% of students. This was the same for using Google Docs in peer feedback workshops. Many students commented that they liked the real-time aspect and that it saved them printing, paper, and ink. They also found comments easier to read and understand, and didn't see a difference in the quality of comments from me. I have added up the totals of this survey and made them available here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Y_qA8FQtsz6WkqOQB5ZoZZMQkihGPPy8FCJ5KoCRdrU/edit.

The majority of students also found Google Docs easier to use when it came to putting together a digital portfolio at the end of the semester.