

Online Class Challenges Students Beyond the Book

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ONLINE CLASS CHALLENGES STUDENTS BEYOND THE BOOK

In a world where content is increasingly digital, an adjunct professor helps her students learn how to write for life.

As an adjunct professor, Rose Postma has taught Core 120: English Composition to a few hundred Dordt students. Since moving to Pennsylvania, Postma hasn't let distance stop her from introducing students to the power of the written word.

Working with Joe Bakker, director of online education, Postma has developed a unique Core 120, which she taught last fall and this spring. The course is intended primarily for dual-enrollment high school students, but Postma wants participants to be deeply engaged in college-level work.

"This online class allows us to have more direct control over the content than the typical dual-credit program," Postma says.

This appealed to Anna Rediger, a homeschooled high school senior from Marion, Iowa, who chose the class over local community college options.

"I wanted to take a really rigorous class," she explains. "I'm planning to go into chemistry. If I go to graduate school, I will probably go into research, so I need a strong foundation for writing."

Pulling examples from a variety of online publications and platforms, Postma teaches her students both to consume and create writing that is adaptable and timely.

In an assignment titled "Writing in the Wild," Postma posted two Christian authors' differing reviews of Beyoncé's *Lemonade* album. Postma challenged students to examine not just whose point of view they agreed with, but how effective those writers were at articulating their ideas.

"I want to push them to think about writing and also how to use it to engage in the world," Postma says.



JAMIN VERVELDE ('99)

"My focus is on helping students become better writers, as opposed to becoming better paper writers," says Rose Postma.

Recognizing that this online course needed different strategies to engage students and build relationships, Postma sought to use what couldn't fit well in print form.

"They had to post examples of writing

they found memorable to a discussion board—a sign, a menu board, a Facebook post, a poster," Postma says. "I thoroughly enjoyed their posts. It would be awkward and time-consuming to do this face-to-face, but it works great online to keep people connected."

Tyson Dahlgrin, a senior engineering major, chose the online option because of its flexibility. Dahlgrin valued the emphasis on real-world writing and being an effective writer.

"If you want to learn to write in a modern environment, this is the class for you," Dahlgrin says. "I had never thought about reading just to learn how to write. After Professor Postma introduced it, I started to pay closer attention to how people write."

Rediger found the class's capstone assignment, a six-week-long process of developing a research paper, helped her not only prepare for college level writing, but also affirm that Dordt was the right fit for her.

"I hadn't had much experience with research, and I hadn't had a teacher follow up and make sure what I was doing was correct," Rediger says. "Part of the reason I decided on the class was because Dordt was one of my top choices, and I wanted to get a taste for what the class level was like."

Postma hopes this online Core 120, like its fellow on-campus Core classes, truly prepares students who value a rigorous academic environment.

"My goal is that students leave this class and can complete any writing assignment with satisfaction," Postma says. "I feel confident that I've created something that is different, but that is equipping students for what they need to do."

KIRBEE NYKAMP ('08)

DUAL CREDIT COURSES HAVE ONLINE OPTIONS

This summer, high school students will take a variety of online dual credit courses, including Introduction to the Arts; Health, Sport, and the Body; Introductory Statistics; and Communication Foundations.

In the fall Dordt will also add dual credit courses in Communication Foundations, Calculus I, and Introductory Statistics.