

The Anti-Racist Writing Classroom

Teaching Translingual:

Lesson plans and suggested writing assignments for exploring code meshing and linguistic difference

**PART III: Stanley Fish's "What Should Colleges Teach?"
and Vershawn Ashanti Young's "Should Writers Use
They Own English?"**

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Stanley Fish's "What Should Colleges Teach?"

- Stanley Fish is a White American literary theorist and legal scholar. He is known for his work on interpretive communities--a framework that insists groups defined by shared cultural context interpret texts similarly.
- The three-part blog "What Should Colleges Teach?" was published in the "Opinionator" section of the *New York Times* in 2009. In this serialized essay, Fish advocates for standardized writing instruction.

You can find Part 1 here: "What Should Colleges Teach?" Opinionator: Exclusive Online Commentary from The Times. The New York Times, 24 Aug. 2009. <<http://fish.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/24/what-should-colleges-teach/>>.

Vershawn Ashanti Young's "Should Writers Use They Own English?"

- Vershawn Ashanti Young is a Black American scholar, educator, and performer. He has posited the idea of code meshing as an antidote to code switching. Young suggests that code meshing, which encourages students to develop their critical abilities within the Englishes they already speak and write, is crucial for developing an anti-racist writing pedagogy.
- This peer-reviewed article was written as a response to Stanley Fish's blog posts "What Should Colleges Teach?"

Young, Vershawn A. "Should Writers Use They Own English?." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 12 (2010): 110-117. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/2168-569X.1095>

Suggested Lesson

Before you begin:

- Ask students: When in your life were you aware that someone was teaching you how to write? What was it like? What did you learn? You may choose to write student contributions on the board.

Teacher tip: Writing student input on the board helps the group track ideas. *Do not re-word student input.* Doing so can alter the point the student was trying to make, and it can dissuade students from participating. Even if you disagree, write down what they said!

Preperatory writing:

- Ask students to write for five minutes about their own ideas about "college writing." Think:
 - What is "college writing?"
 - What do you expect to learn about writing in this class?
- When time is up, ask students to share with their neighbor for a brief (~3 minute) conversation.
- Students who are comfortable are invited to share with the class.

Reading the text: Because these texts are both long and dense (Fish's is geared more toward a popular audience while Young's is more scholarly), students will prepare these for homework. The following questions can help guide their independent reading:

- What does the writer believe defines "good college writing?"
- How and why does he think college-level writing should be taught?
- Whom does he cite? If, as a reader, you wanted to explore some of the arguments supporting or contradicting this writer's, where would you start?

Suggested Lesson cont'

Processing the text:

- Split students into groups of three or four. Assign half of the groups to do the following exercise for Stanley Fish, and the other half for Vershawn Ashanti Young.
- Ask students to spend ten minutes independently reviewing what they read for homework, and identifying one or two key passages, which they should underline. Ask students to write about why they chose those passages and what makes them important to the essay.
- When time is up, invite students to share their key passages with their group.
- Each group selects one passage to write on the board and present to the class. Each group should point to a passage and explain why it is important.

Suggested Minor Writing Assignment

For homework, ask students to write a brief but complete summary of the debate between Stanley Fish and Vershawn Ashanti Young.

Suggested requirements:

- 500–750 words
- Intro with thesis statement
- MLA citations and bibliography
- Address the following questions:
 - What are the main arguments posited by each writer?
 - How does each scholar make his point?
 - What is the source of their disagreement?
 - What is the importance of this disagreement? How does this disagreement impact writing teachers and/or students?)