

Peer Collaboration Report, Spring, 2017
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This semester Anna Waymack and I participated in the Knight Institute's Peer Collaboration program. Over the course of the semester we undertook the steps outlined in our proposal. We met on a regular basis – generally every other week – to discuss teaching and grading strategies. We each sat in on two lessons that the other taught. I sat in on a content lesson centered on the tale of the Green Knight, and on a writing lesson centered on the process of distilling an interesting question for a research paper. Anna visited my class for a content lesson on medieval maps and mapping, and for a writing lesson focused on issues of style and tone variance in blog writing. After each classroom visit we took the opportunity to sit down and discuss our immediate reactions to the class we had to each other's presentations and processes.

I found the semester's experience to be exceptionally fruitful. Our bi-weekly conversations were a space to talk about approaches to teaching both content and writing. On the content side, this was a great opportunity for me to broaden my base of knowledge; we are both medievalists, but we come from different disciplinary backgrounds and we bring different knowledge sets to the table. I benefitted from exposure to Anna's knowledge of medieval literature. On the writing side, these meetings provided a time to compare grading techniques and philosophies, and to hash out new approaches to connecting our content to lessons in writing more effectively.

My visits to Anna's classroom proved equally useful. Her teaching style is substantially different than my own; I tend to remain seated and have a conversation with my students, while Anna spent most of the time standing and walking around the room. She used to whiteboard effectively, which is something I often have trouble with – I have trouble balancing writing and talking to the class, so it was useful for me to watch someone do it well. The content class was especially generative for me. Anna led her students through a progression of thinking in order to get to an interesting and usable research question. Her lesson started broadly, asking for big topics and

then winnowing down through levels of interest and utility to arrive at the kind of question that might be suitable for a 10-12 page research paper. She broke her students into groups throughout the process, and at each step took one group's idea as the genesis for the next step. It was a great lesson. Later in the semester I used that same approach in my class, for the same lesson. My students found it successful and useful; they engaged eagerly in the discussions that the lesson generated, and had positive things to say about it in an after-action discussion that we had.