

Investigating Communications and Transfer-Based Teaching in the Ontario College Context

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Our paper presents some challenges and successes of shifting from a literature-based writing course to a skills-transfer course in an Ontario college context over the span of three years. In September 2018, COM 101: Communicating Across Contexts became the compulsory communications course for students at Seneca College. The new course, which prioritizes the transfer of writing skills to new contexts, represented a paradigm shift from traditional literary analysis and essay-focused writing to a broader analysis of multi-modal communications and diverse writing assessments. We collected three data sets from COM101 professors and students across three years – 2018, 2019 and 2020 – using a mixed-methods surveys to investigate participants' perceptions and experiences of the course. Our data suggests that professors taught COM 101 in the spirit of skills transfer with increasing confidence, despite expressing some initial confusion and resistance, and a majority of students felt the course influenced their writing skills in other courses and outside of college. Furthermore, after the unanticipated shift to exclusively online schooling in 2020, participants' perceptions of the course remained largely positive despite the numerous challenges of schooling in the time of a global pandemic.

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