Advice on Setting Up and Working with a Writing Group

By Jee Hwang

I. At the First Meeting or by Email Prior to the First Meeting

- Send out writing inventory and personal goals questionnaire to get each group member thinking about his/her writing needs and goals for the group.

II. First Meeting: Getting Organized

- *Ice Breakers for getting to know each other (if you don’t already know each other)*:
  - Break up into pairs and interview each other. Introduce the person you interviewed to the group.
  - Tell the group what your favorite piece of writing is and why.
  - Tell the group the kind of writing you are most comfortable doing and why.
  - List 10 adjectives that describe you as a writer; share them with your group.
  - What metaphor best describes you as a writer?

- *Setting up goals for the group*
  - What do you want to get out of your writing group? (Refer to your personal goals/writing inventory. See next sheet.)
  - Decide on a set of goals for the semester and have one member of the group type up the list to distribute to the whole group.

- *Logistics*
  - How often will the group meet?
  - Where will the group meet?
  - How long will each meeting be?
  - How will the group communicate between meetings (email, phone)?
  - How will work be circulated for review (email, handed out at previous meeting)?
  - Who will submit pieces when? In order to get the full benefit from peer writing group, it works best if you focus on one project/paper/chapter at a time. Set aside at least an hour to workshop each person’s piece of writing. If the work is read prior to the meeting, the group may be able to respond to two pieces of writing per meeting. The time it takes may also fluctuate depending on the length and difficulty of the work and how “finished” it is.
  - Since many of you are working on longer projects involving various stages and styles of research, your group should decide what stage of the project the group is willing to discuss. Will you find it helpful to submit research ideas, charts, graphs, lists, outlines, etc. to the group, or would you rather discuss a more complete draft of a chapter or an article?