

Response in Real Time:

Bringing Context to a Semester's
Responses to Student Writing

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Response in Real Time

- “The Question”
- Considerations
- Professional Literature
- Population and Situation
- The Material Context
- Comment Types
- Suggestions for Practice

“The Question”

**“How we spend our days
is, of course, how we
spend our lives.”**

--Annie Dillard

“The Question”

**“You turned the tap dance into
your crusade.**

**Now here you are with your faith
and your Peter Pan advice.**

**You have no scars on your face,
And you cannot handle pressure.”**

--Billy Joel, “Pressure”

“The Question”

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep.
And miles to go before I sleep.”

--Robert Frost

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

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Considerations

- It's About Me: Part 1
- So How About You?
- The Reality TV Effect
- The Impact of Time
- It's About Me: Part 2

Considerations

It's About Me: Part 1

- Study of my own practice.
- Observing my own habits (and quirks), writ large.
- Generalizable?

Considerations

So How About You?

- Do you teach?
- Are you a student?
- Do you teach writing?
- What do you expect?

Considerations

The Reality TV Effect

- How much does your behavior change when you know you're being observed?
- At what point do you become so busy that you hardly notice the observation?

Considerations

The Impact of Time

- Pilot Study: Spring 2006
- Data Collection: Fall 2006
- Major Drafts:
 - Spring 2008
 - Summer 2009
 - Summer 2010
 - November 2010
 - January 2011

Considerations

It's About Me: Part 2

- Reading my own words.
- Reading years later.
- Observing and interpreting.
- Not judging.
- What can we learn?

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Professional Literature

“The second finding from our study is that *most teachers’ comments are not text-specific and could be interchanged, rubber-stamped, from text to text.*”

Nancy Sommers (1982)

Professional Literature

“Teachers need to alter their traditional emphasis on a relationship between student texts and their own Ideal Text in favor of the relationship between what the writer meant to say and what the discourse actually manifests of that intention.”

-Lil Brannon and C.H. Knoblauch (1982)

Professional Literature

“What can always (with every paper we read) be addressed, however, is the reactions our students’ writing elicits in us, and what those reactions reveal about our most fervent beliefs as to what is possible and desirable for them to say. Having discovered this, we might decide if this knowledge is adequate or if there is some opening for a revision of our own interpretive processes. “

-Dawn Skorczewski (2000)

Professional Literature

“There is nothing wrong with this advice to be aware of your situation for response. But sound advice like Smith’s that we take context into account as we compose our end comments could be helpfully extended if some of our research designs began to examine more of the context in which we teachers comment.”

-Jane Matthison Fife and Peggy O’Neil (2001)

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Population and Situation

The Basic Design?

All the time and places
of all the responses
in one semester.

Population and Situation

Fall 2006 Courses

EN101: English Composition 1

CW100: Intro to Creative Writing

CW 350/EN335: Topics: Mythology

EN100: Effective Speaking

Population and Situation

REAL Fall 2006 Courses

EN101: English Composition 1

CW100: Intro to Creative Writing

CW 350/EN335: Topics: Mythology

EN100: Effective Speaking

EN101: English Composition 1 (11/13)

Population and Situation

Study Recruitment

- Opt-in release given to all students on first day of classes.
- Initial data collection.
- Second release given at end of semester.
- Could withdraw at any time.

Population and Situation

Overall Study Population

67 students* enrolled in classes

Initial Permission: 59 (88%)

Second Permission: 54 (81%)

Population and Situation

Who My Students Were

42 Women (63%)

37 Men (37%)

Population and Situation

Who My Students Were

46 Freshmen (69%)

7 Sophomores (10%)

9 Juniors (13%)

2 Seniors (3%)

3 "Other" (4%)

Population and Situation

Individual Class Sizes

EN101: English Composition 1 16

CW100: Intro to Creative Writing 19

CW 350/EN335: Topics: Mythology 16

EN100: Effective Speaking 16

Average Class Size: 17

Population and Situation

Further Connections

- 7 students enrolled in 2 classes.
- 27 students were in my classes in a previous semester (45%).
- 17 students were advisees (28%).

Population and Situation

Two Keys to Method

Phenomenology

Perceptions within experience.

Teacher research

Research informs further practice.

Response in Real Time

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- **The Material Context**
- Comment Types
- Suggestions for Practice

The Material Context

“Material” Disclaimer

- Embodied, physical presence.
- Discrete, countable phenomena.
- **Not** (necessarily) Materialist or Marxist.

The Material Context

Just How Much?

- 67 students
- 4 classes
 - 3 classes at 100-level
- 110 days of semester

The Material Context

How many papers?

Given those numbers,
how many papers
do **YOU** think I read?

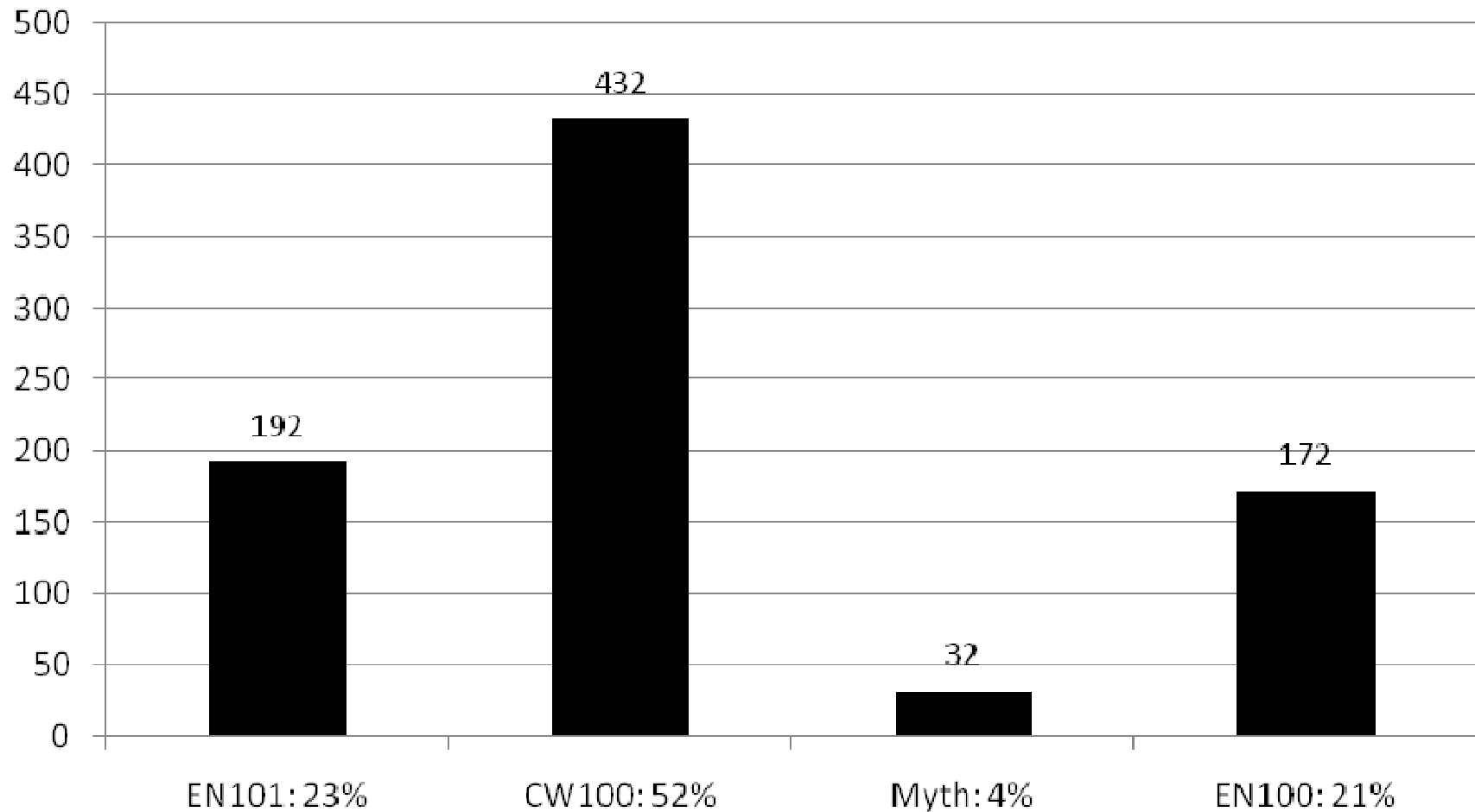
The Material Context

How many papers?

828 separate
papers.

The Material Context

Figure 3-1: Number of Assignments per Course



The Material Context

How many days?

Total Semester= 110 days

On how many do YOU
think that I read papers?

The Material Context

How many days?

Actual Number:

53 days

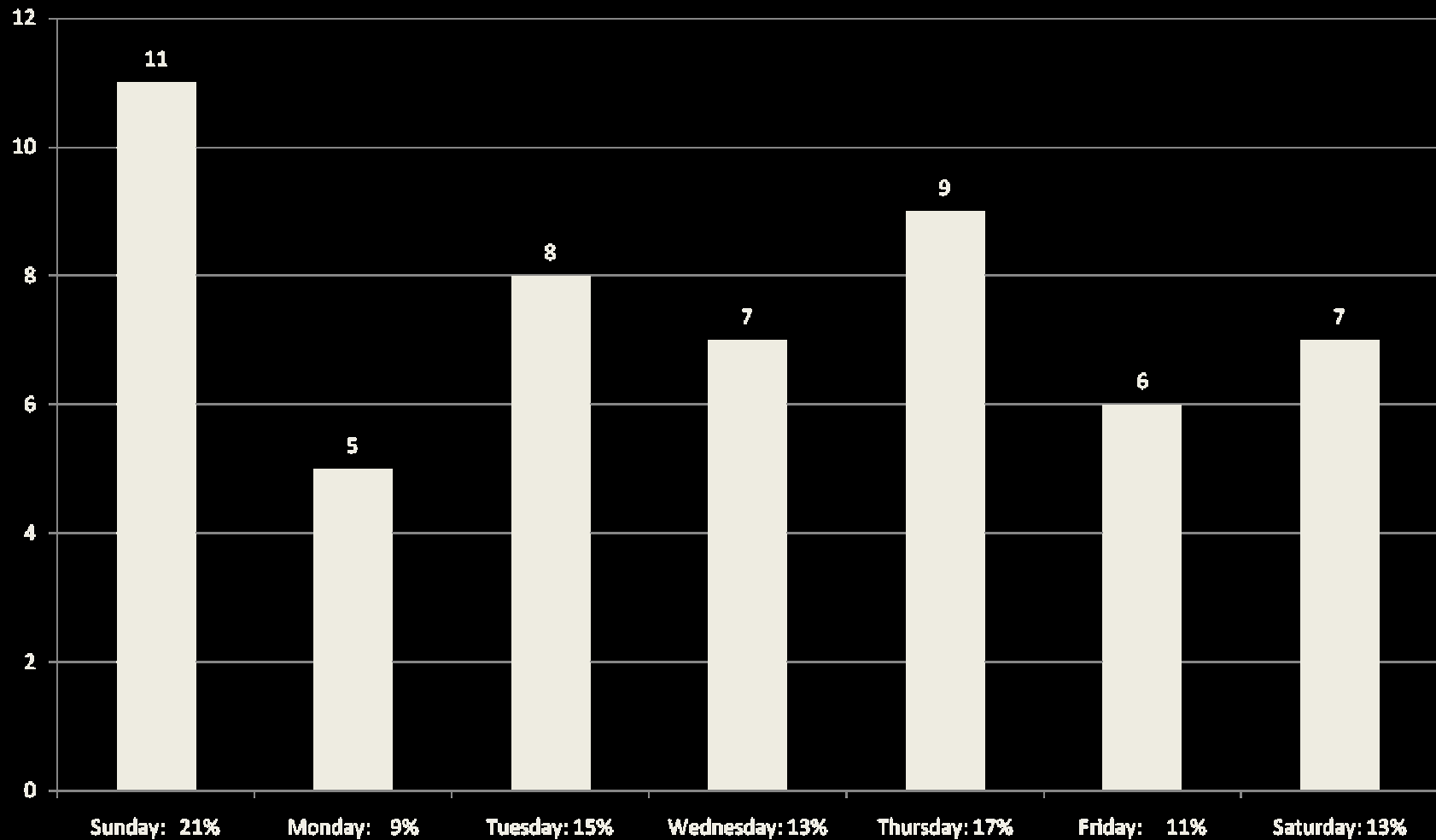
(48%)

The Material Context

	Aug 28	Aug 29	Aug 30	Aug 31	Sept 1	Sept 2
Sept 3	Sept 4	Sept 5	Sept 6	Sept 7	Sept 8	Sept 9
Sept 10	Sept 11	Sept 12	Sept 13	Sept 14	Sept 15	Sept 16
Sept 17	Sept 18	Sept 19	Sept 20	Sept 21	Sept 22	Sept 23
Sept 24	Sept 25	Sept 26	Sept 27	Sept 28	Sept 29	Sept 30
Oct 1	Oct 2	Oct 3	Oct 4	Oct 5	Oct 6	Oct 7
Oct 8	Oct 9	Oct 10	Oct 11	Oct 12	Oct 13	Oct 14
Oct 15	Oct 16	Oct 17	Oct 18	Oct 19	Oct 20	Oct 21
Oct 22	Oct 23	Oct 24	Oct 25	Oct 26	Oct 27	Oct 28
Oct 29	Oct 30	Oct 31	Nov 1	Nov 2	Nov 3	Nov 4
Nov 5	Nov 6	Nov 7	Nov 8	Nov 9	Nov 10	Nov 11
Nov 12	Nov 13	Nov 14	Nov 15	Nov 16	Nov 17	Nov 18
Nov 19	Nov 20	Nov 21	Nov 22	Nov 23	Nov 24	Nov 25
Nov 26	Nov 27	Nov 28	Nov 29	Nov 30	Dec 1	Dec 2
Dec 3	Dec 4	Dec 5	Dec 6	Dec 7	Dec 8	Dec 9
Dec 10	Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13	Dec 14	Dec 15	

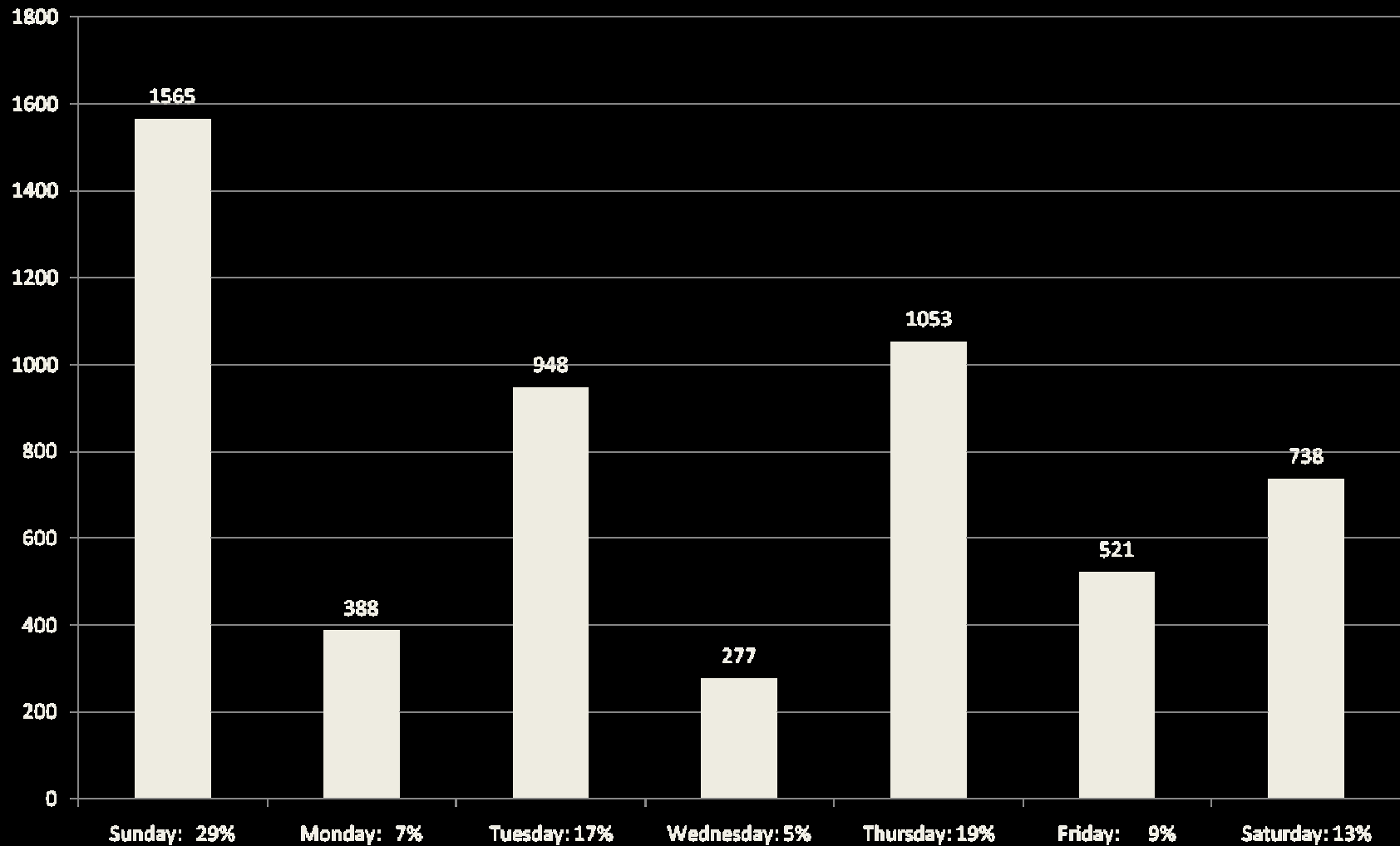
The Material Context

Figure 3-3: Number of Calendar Days Spent Responding



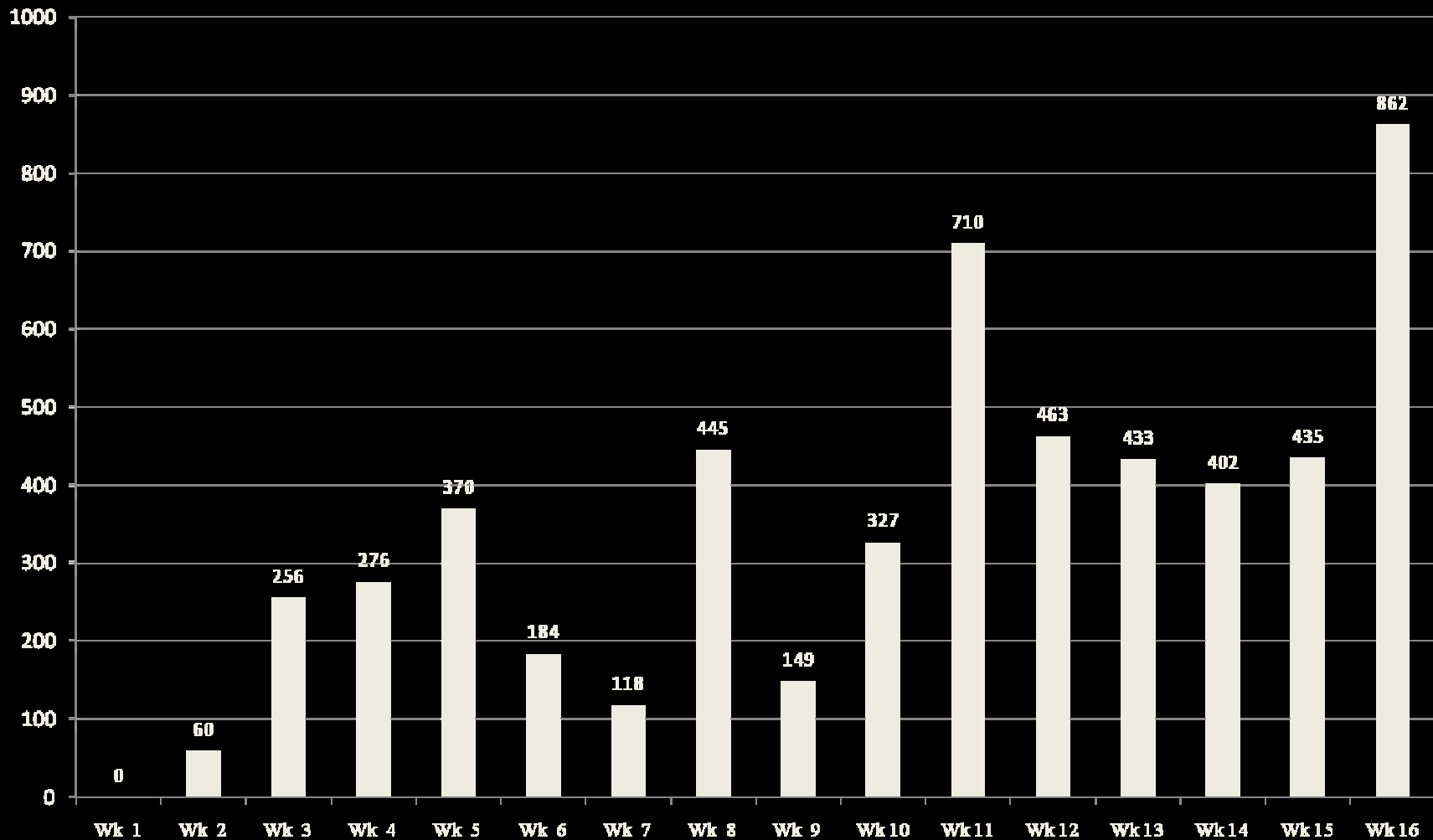
The Material Context

Figure 3-4: Number of Minutes Responding per Calendar Day



The Material Context

Figure 3-2: Minutes Responding by Week of the Semester



The Material Context

How much actual time?

I counted only minutes actually reading student papers or making actual comments (time on task).

The Material Context

How much actual time?

5,490 minutes on task

(or 91.5 hours)

(or 3.81 days)

The Material Context

How much actual time?

But what happens if I
factor back in all the
breaks and other time?

The Material Context

How much actual time?

7,959 minutes

(or 132.6 hours)

(or 5.53 days)

The Material Context

How many words?

Remember:

67 students

Lots of assignments

How many total words?

The Material Context

How many words?

55,386 words

(250 words per page)

222 typed pages

The Material Context

How many ACTUAL words?

69,251 words, est.

(250 words per page)

277 typed pages

The Material Context

Where I Worked: Occasions

Campus: 26 times (36%)

Various McDonald's: 25 times
(35%)

My home or Jill's: 5 times (7%)

The Material Context

Where I Worked: Time

Various McDonald's: 2,820
minutes (51%)

Campus: 1,385 minutes (25%)

My home or Jill's: 209 minutes
(7%)

The Material Context

Where I Worked

- 93% of all time away from home.
- 71% of all time away from home and campus both.
- 47 hours (on task) working at McDonald's.

The Material Context

Course	Average words per student in study	Average Minutes Responding per Student
Creative Writing 100	1,039	117 minutes/ student
English101	1,678	86 minutes/ student
Mythology	595	49 minutes/ student
English 100	768	36 minutes/ student
English 101#		27 minutes/ student

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- Suggestions for Practice

Comment Types

- Straub and Lunsford. Twelve Readers Reading (1995).
- Straub. The Practice of Response (2000).

Comment Types

FOCUS

What the comment is directed at

MODE

Tone and authority of responder

Comment Types

FOCUS

- Content
- Style
- Organization
- Correctness
- Context

Comment Types

MODE

- Corrections
- Criticism
- Qualified Criticism
- Praise
- Commands
- Advice
- Open Questions
- Closed Questions
- Reflective Statements

Comment Types

FOCUS

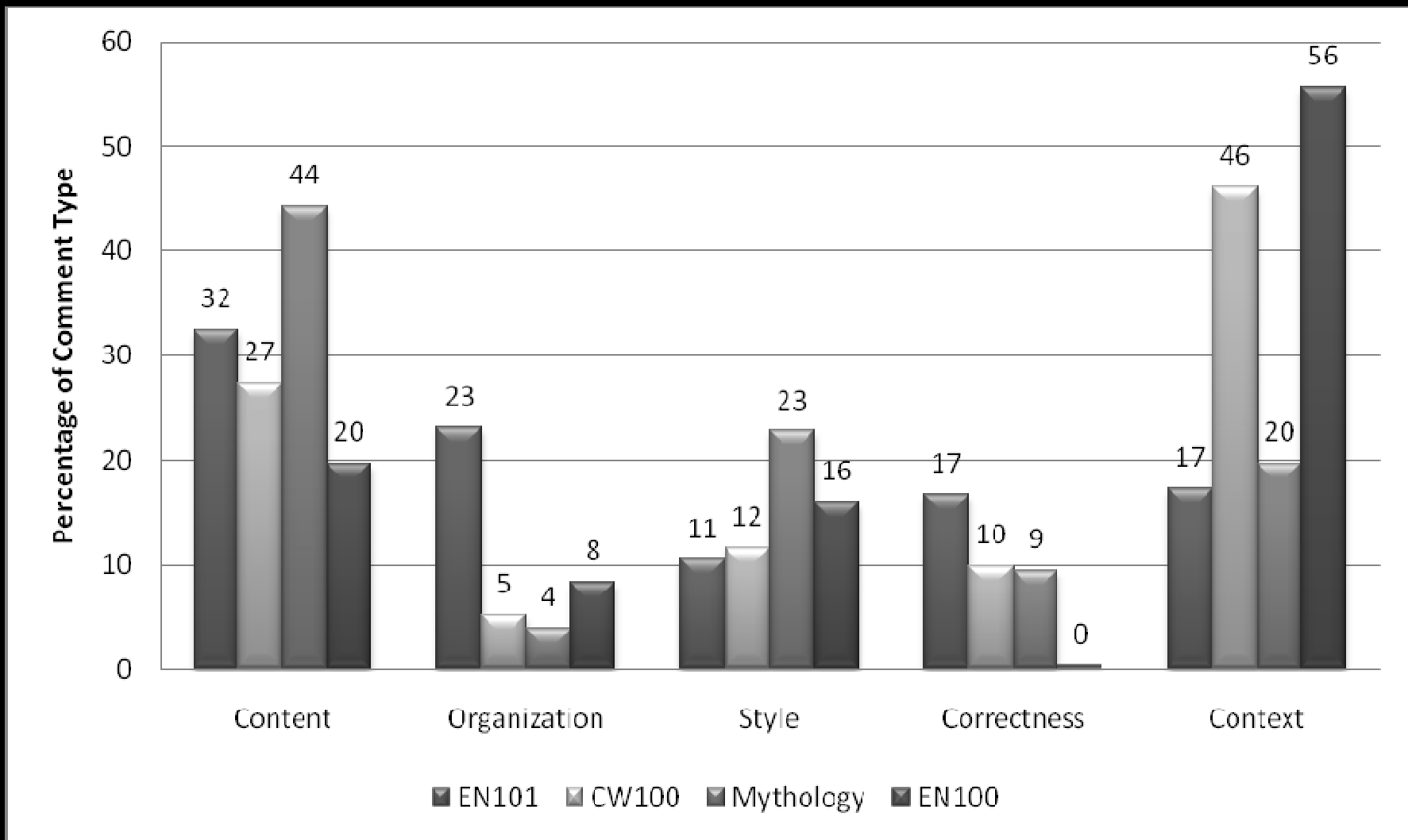
- Context 38%
- Content 29%
- Style 14%
- Organization 10%
- Correctness 10%

Comment Types

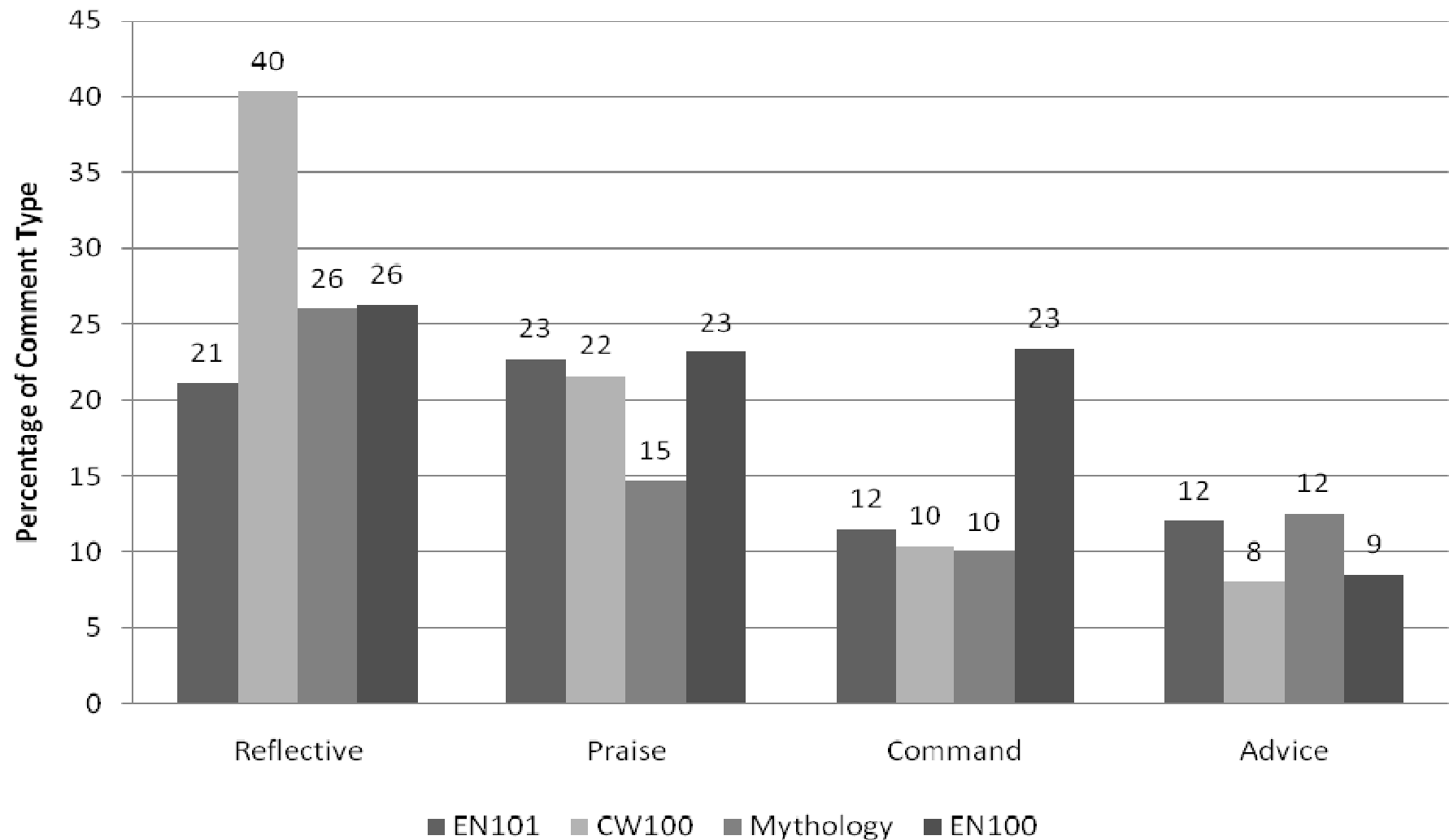
MODE

- Reflective Statements 31%
- Praise 21%
- Commands 13%
- Advice 10%
- Criticism 7%
- Qualified Criticism 7%
- Closed Questions 5%
- Open Questions 4%
- Corrections 1%

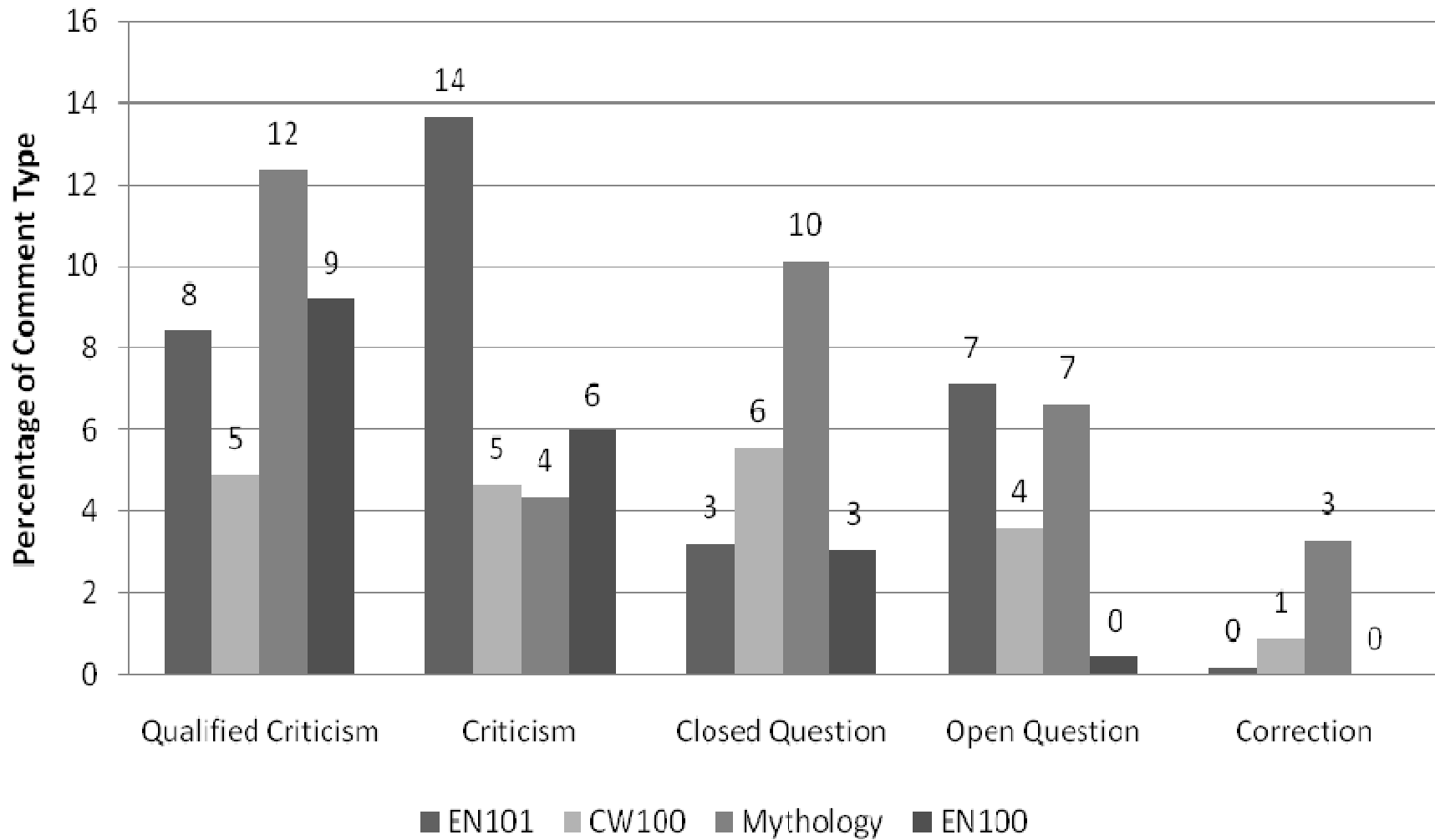
Comment Types



Comment Types



Comment Types



Comment Types

EN101: Composition

- Highest Organization focus.
 - Thinking about structure.
- High Correctness and Criticism.
- More Open Questions.
 - Leading to more content development.

Comment Types

CW100: Intro to Creative Writing

- Highest Reflective comments.
 - Looking Big Picture and at growth.
- Also very high Context.
 - Could do more with Content.
- Life of writing piece discussed beyond assignment.

Comment Types

Topics: Mythology

- Highest Content and Style.
 - What is written and how it's phrased.
- High Criticism and Closed Question
 - Texts as objects to be critiqued.
- Lower Context and Reflective.

Comment Types

EN100: Effective Speaking

- Highest Context comments.
 - Looking ahead and backward at once
- Highest Commands.
 - Strong advice for the next speech.
- Smallest Content comments.

Comment Types

Suggestions

- Praise specifically.
- Balance comments on this text and on the situation as a whole.
- How can this comment move the text and the writer forward?

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Suggestions for Practice

- Conditions matter.
- Response patterns can change.
- What students do in writing, teachers should do, too.
- Balancing expectations.
- Try easier.

Suggestions for Practice

Conditions matter

- Factors like time, place, sequence, mood.
- Not all comments are created equally.
- Conditions shape comments.

Suggestions for Practice

Response patterns can change.

- Inquiry into our teaching.
- Data samples we can analyze.
- Becoming aware of ourselves is a key first step.

Suggestions for Practice

What students do in writing,
teachers should do, too.

Part of a process, not a simple
product.

Social acts that invoke our particular
histories and values.

Both low stakes and higher stakes
for us.

Suggestions for Practice

What students do in writing,
teachers should do, too.

Need spaces in our responding
for revision and reflection.

Has peer dimension.

Can become part of public
sharing (in right place).

Suggestions for Practice

Balancing expectations.

- Expecting too much of ourselves can be bad for everyone.
- Seeing the whole picture.
- Wider perspective.

Suggestions for Practice

Balancing expectations.

- Managing our own stresses, anxieties, and procrastination.
- Taking long-term care of ourselves.
- A better sense of “enough.”

Suggestions for Practice

“What would sustainable teaching look like? Might it be possible to establish a practice that we can return to September after September with a sense of anticipation and even exuberance?”

-- Mary Rose O'Reilley (2005)

Suggestions for Practice

“When I started to look at grading papers as an aspect of spiritual practice, one of the first things that I noticed was how much unacknowledged physical tension I was bringing to the task. My body, if I bothered to scan it, was full of nervous clutching. I seemed to be in a ‘flight or fight’ stance. Maintaining a critical attitude has consequences for the nervous system.”

-- Mary Rose O'Reilley (1993)

Suggestions for Practice

“Try easier.”

-- Joe Maddon

Tampa Bay Rays

Works Cited

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