There's no such thing as writer's block. That was invented by people in California who couldn't write. —Terry Pratchett
Beyond Due Dates (cont’d)

deeply and clearly.

Sequence formal assignments: When assigning a formal piece of writing that is a significant part of a class grade, be sure that it is not just an assignment and a due date on the syllabus. Instead, take the assignment apart. Think about the “thought process” students must do to complete the assignment, and then break down the due dates for each step of the process.

This “taking apart” is also known as scaffolding because it helps build the support structure that larger, more high-stakes writing needs.

Engaging students with the syllabus: No matter how strong your syllabus is, it won’t work if students don’t read it and use it. Go over the syllabus in class, explaining each section. We nearly always add more information verbally when we go over a syllabus or an assignment in class. This “additional info” may be just what students need to understand your syllabus. You can also have students sign an agreement saying that they have read and understood the syllabus, your class policies, assignments, etc. Students could also complete a syllabus quiz or homework assignment that requires them to carefully read through the course assignments and policies. Finally, you could have students work in groups developing “quiz questions” about the syllabus and then present those questions to each other aloud in class.

Whatever assignments you choose to use and however you design your syllabus, remember that this ubiquitous college document can be much more than a list of due dates and textbook titles. It can be a reference guide and tool for students to use in order to produce successful writing.

Happy Holidays!

May your 2013 end with peace and joy that carries over into your 2014!