



The New Composition: The Fusion of Rhetoric and Technological Literacy in First-Year Writing

Christie L. Daniels¹
Michigan State University, USA

Abstract: Awareness of power structures, ideology, and their practices need to form the basis of an integrated, complex system of literacies that I will term *social multimodal literacy*. This type of literacy is not limited to technology, or the techne-related aspects of various rhetorical processes, or social awareness and engagement, but rather as sufficient mastery of the network of all of these individual literacies combined. The idea of a postsecondary education is built upon the idea of producing, at the very least, a literate citizenry. However, if these fundamental literacies are not addressed by current curricula, postsecondary education is incomplete at best. In short, literacy issues need to find their way into university general curricula. The First Year Composition classroom is an appropriate and necessary place for these concepts to be discussed and explored. The benefits of such a curricular focus are two-fold: first, the inclusion of rhetoric's disciplinary content as well as multimodal material serves as a solidifying agent in terms of RWS disciplinary identity and second, students develop the necessary abilities to be truly literate in an increasingly multimodal world.

Keywords: Rhetoric, Writing Studies, Literacies, Technology, Multimodal, Multimedia, Writing

¹ Christie L. Daniels, Ph. D. is an assistant professor in Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University. E-mail: cdaniels@msu.edu

Introduction

The hegemonic uses of concepts and language for the control and marginalization of members and/or groups in society is by no means a new concept. Moreover, the ideologies supported and propagated by such uses persist. But it is critical that explorations of ideologies not be limited to esoteric theoretical discussions found only between the pages of academic journals and within the walls hosting annual academic conferences and meetings. The rhetorical nature of societal inequity is so critical to and embedded in daily life that it needs to be the subject of public discussion and knowledge. In short, awareness of power structures, ideology, and their practices need to form the basis of an integrated, complex system of literacies that I will term *social multimodal literacy*. I envision this type of literacy as not limited to technology, or the techne-related aspects of various rhetorical processes, or social awareness and engagement, but rather as sufficient mastery of the network of all of these individual literacies combined.

When one speaks of literacies, a wide array of competing and, at times, discordant definitions come to mind. For the sake of clarity, I will define “literacy” as minimal ability required to be considered a competent and accepted member of society. Inherent in this definition are two sets of concepts. The first set is power and authority. That is, the notion of literacy itself represents a judging of whether people have met or failed to meet a given standard. This standard is established by operations of power and usually entails stakes of some sort. In other words, people with some form or version of authority have decided upon what they agree is the standard, impose that standard upon others, and attach some sort of consequences for those who fail to meet the standard. The second set, which I would argue is equally important, is the notion of adaptability. This concept of literacy does not specify media or modes of communication because adaptability is the never-ending mutability of technology. To limit the definition of literacy to just writing or just writing in a specific, rigid genre ignores new literacies and the new media that construct them. The metaphor of shooting at a moving target is particularly apropos here. As society progresses, so do ideas of literacy and competency.

As a field, the discipline of Rhetoric and Writing Studies grapples with these multi-layered issues within our intellectual and research endeavors. Yet, that important and vital inquiry-based activity is not enough. Many of the issues that I examine build upon areas of research by other rhetorical scholars. Yet it can easily be said that most college graduates never confront these issues. The idea of a postsecondary education is built upon the idea of producing, at the very least, a literate citizenry. However, if these fundamental literacies are not addressed by current curricula, postsecondary education is incomplete at best. In short, literacy issues need to find their way into university general curricula. The First Year

Composition classroom is an appropriate and necessary place for these concepts to be discussed and explored. The benefits of such a curricular focus are two-fold: first, the inclusion of rhetoric's disciplinary content as well as multimodal material serves as a solidifying agent in terms of RWS disciplinary identity and second, students develop the necessary abilities to be truly literate in an increasingly multimodal world.

In this chapter, I assert that the notion of literacy in today's world is a multi-faceted concept consisting of three main dimensions: cultural literacy, visual literacy, and digital literacy. First, I posit that cultural literacy is not merely an academic endeavor. Educated individuals understand the inner workings of society and are able to successfully navigate within that structure. Moreover, they understand communication as a function of this societal structure. Likewise, visual literacy deals with the ability of an individual to understand messages and cues sent through a visual medium. Finally, digital literacy deals with the means of production in a computer-driven world. It is no longer enough to be merely linguistically literate, but rather understanding how digital technology works and how it may be employed is a necessary, functional society skill. Ultimately, I will argue that the literate citizen masters all of these abilities and employs them in an integrated and simultaneous fashion. That is, he or she is aware of the cultural implications as they navigate a social networking site, such as Facebook. Or they understand how a popular film embeds its notions of societal ideology in a subtle and visual means. These are the complex skills that a literate citizen in today's world must possess and master to successfully take their place in society.

Cultural Literacy

One of the sets of issues that the discipline of Rhetoric and Writing Studies is most concerned with is that of cultural awareness. Specifically, rhetoricians consider and examine the many forms of power in society and its various mechanisms and functions. From a theoretical standpoint, Mikhail Bakhtin (2001) serves as an appropriate starting point as he primarily explores and emphasizes the relationship between the sign and ideology in his work, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Specifically, he argues that "Everything ideological possesses meaning: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a sign. Without signs, there is no ideology" (p. 1210). He continues by asserting that the domain of ideology and the domain of signs are one and the same and that meaning making is not something that is static is done in isolation, but rather is the product of the interaction between multiple signs and individuals. It is important to note that signs and ideology are imbricated with the concepts of hegemony and

power because they establish discourse as being situated within an ideological framework, a framework that more often than not is hegemonic in nature.

It is critical to point out that the social creation of meaning is central to Bakhtin (2001). In discussing meaning as socially constructed, he notes that individuals have a worldview, which they assume their audience share. Bakhtin (2001) explains that a cultured person is one that is able to approximate the expectations of his or her audience. Bakhtin (2001) further states that the resultant discourse is bound by social situation and that that discourse, termed “the utterance” is constrained or shaped by that situation (p. 1215). These ideas introduced by Bakhtin (2001), with their social emphasis, lay the foundation and open the door for examinations of the effects of society upon the meanings and interactions, which occur within it. That is, the ideology (and the societal hierarchy that defines it) shapes the discourse occurring within that society. However natural they might seem, societal mores defining evil are rhetorically and ideologically derived and driven.

Also important to a discussion of ideology is the work of Louis Althusser. He introduces two key notions: The “Ideological State Apparatus” and interpellation. The first of these is the institutions that he asserts impart and enforce ideology. He terms these “Ideological State Apparatuses” or “ISAs” and some notable institutions that he includes are religion, the educational system, the political system, communications, and the cultural ISA, which includes literature and the arts (Althusser, 1994, pp. 110-111). He argues that that ISAs use ideology to operate whereas the state simply relies on violence. Despite this, he asserts that the ISAs are crucial for the maintenance of state power as they formed by the ideology of the ruling class, but they are seemingly independent from each other and the state (p. 114).

Althusser (1994) characterizes ideology as not simply an imagined construct, but one, which has real effects and consequences. He notes the materiality of ideology and the ways in which it defines who, what, and how people should be. He concludes the essay with a discussion of “The duplicate mirror-structure of ideology” (p. 135). Here Althusser (1994) asserts that individuals are defined or “interpellated” by ideology, that ideology defines hierarchy and that members of society accept that hierarchy and their role within it (p. 135). It is this mention of interpellation, which on one hand illustrates the ability of rhetoric to create reality. In terms of morality, concepts, such as good and evil (particularly their oppositional characterization by western society) define the options available to individuals in society. And, as Althusser (1994) notes through his discussion of the materiality of ideology, there are benefits and consequences to the option taken (either good or evil in this case) by the individual.

Michel Foucault examines many of these same issues of power and ideology in his work, *Discipline and Punish*. In fact he notes that disciplinary power becomes

an “apparatus of production” (p. 153). Foucault (1995) goes so far as to state the individuals are merely elements that may be manipulated or used by others. His major illustration of this idea is the notion of the Panopticon, the ideal disciplinary power structure designed to “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (p. 201). In this model, power is both obvious and invisible at the same time. Foucault argues that the effect of this upon the individual is that it “inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjugation” (p. 202-203). Ultimately, this notion of power being invisible and individuals accepting and consenting to it, is reminiscent of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony.

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci elucidates his notion of hegemony, which necessarily involves the coercion and consent of less powerful individuals and groups in a hierarchy. Jacques Texier (1979) explains that Gramsci’s notion of the superstructure represents the historical context or frame and its interrelationship with the structure. Texier (1979) states that, “material forces are the content and ideologies the form and content has purely ‘didactic’ value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces” (p. 58). Chantal Mouffe (1979) expands on this notion by examining the interrelationship between hegemony and ideology. She defines a hegemonic class as “a class which has been able to articulate the interests of other social groups to its own by means of ideological struggle” (p. 181). She explains that this class can have two goals in mind: to mollify or resist the non-hegemonic or resolve the differences between the two classes (p. 183).

Proceeding from Gramsci, Webb et al. (2002) describe Bourdieu’s three major contributions to a discussion of power and agency. They argue that, in practice, people reenact the ideology around them in terms of both artifacts and acts, that language shapes people’s reality, and that concepts and ideas only obtain meaning through other concepts and ideas. They go on to examine Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, which concerns itself with how a culture’s ideology becomes embedded and perpetuated in the everyday experience of individuals. In particular, they note that while habitus does allow for some individual agency in a given situation, it also determines a large portion of how individuals act and how they perceive and thus shapes even the exercise of agency in a given context (Webb et al., 2002, pp. 36-37). The authors introduce many important ideas regarding Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, such as its central role in the creation of knowledge and its effect on worldview, which essentially impacts a majority of the human experience. Finally, and perhaps most importantly they note how habitus always involves the unconscious in some respect (p. 38).

Bourdieu's work is particularly salient in a discussion of evil from a rhetorical vantage point in a couple of ways. The first of these is how structure and agency are embedded through habitus. That is, the little mundane actions, activities, and endeavors, such as the books we read, the films we watch, and the games we play on a daily basis that reinscribe the hierarchical structure and the distribution of power within that structure. In terms of evil, this is illustrated by the various cultural artifacts and activities that dictate what is good and what is evil and casts good as accepted and desirable.

In "Poststructuralism, Cultural Studies, and the Composition Classroom," James Berlin (1992) summarizes postmodern theory and cultural studies theory with regard to discourse. He first echoes Bourdieu and others when he states that individuals are shaped by discourse. However he extends and complicates discourse when he asserts that:

These signifying practices then are languages that tell us who we are and how we should behave in terms of such categories as gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, and the like. The result is that each of us is heterogeneously made up of various competing discourses, conflicted and contradictory scripts, that make our consciousness anything but unified, coherent, and autonomous. (Berlin, 1992, p. 18).

In asserting this perspective, he debunks the notion that language is simply a tool used to convey knowledge and argues instead that language and knowledge are ultimately inseparable.

In particular, Berlin (1992) notes the imbrication between of ideology, discourse, and the subject. For instance, Berlin (1992) states:

the unique place of each of us in the network of intersecting discourses assures differences among us as well as possibilities for originalities and political agency. This does not mean, however, that anyone can totally escape the discursive regimes, the power/knowledge formations, of the historical moment. Political agency but never complete autonomy is the guiding formation here. (p. 21)

In particular, it is the incomplete alignment of various cultural codes that allows the individual some measure of agency, however limited. Berlin's perspective of agency builds upon Althusser's notion that "Ideology addresses or interpellates human beings. It provides language to define the subject, other subjects, the material and social, and the relation of all things to each other. Ideology addresses three questions: what exists, what is good, what is possible?" (Berlin, 1992, p. 23).

Ultimately, ideologies are replicated in everyday society, which is congruent with Bourdieu's notion of habitus, and this everyday use acts to "support the hegemony of dominant groups" (Berlin, 1992, p. 24).

In *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*, Berlin argues for the influence of ideology upon culture. He observes that "Humans create the conditions of their experience as much as they are created by them" (Berlin, 2003, p. xix). In fact, he invokes his notion of difference in which those voices that are silenced or omitted from the dominant discourse are recovered, which results in subjectivity that is diverse, complex, and multilayered (p. 75). He utilizes Althusser's notion of ideology as interpellation of the subject and, particularly, determining "what exists, what is good, and what is possible" (p. 84). Furthermore, echoing Althusser, he explains that ideology is always reinforced socially and culturally, and that ideas and notions that seem natural and ordinary are, in fact, ideologically based (p. 84).

All of the theoretical work done by scholars with respect to culture and power contribute to what I would call social and/or cultural literacy. Concepts, such as these are not merely fodder for limited academic venues and discussions. Rather, the understanding of the ways in which power operates in our society is a fundamental part of what it means to be an educated individual in society. Being educated is not merely knowing a set of facts or isolated theories, but more importantly, understanding how society functions in general. Writing and communication practices are situated within the power structure of the culture at large and cannot be divorced from it. As a result, it is difficult to teach students rules and standards of good writing in a way that ignored the spatial reality of the writing process. Hence, it is essential that foundational writing instruction contain some of idea, concepts, and theories related to the functioning of power in society.

Visual Literacy

Another aspect of cultural practices that are essential is an awareness and understanding of the visual in society. The everyday practices and artifacts analyzed by theorists like Bourdieu and others are rarely solely textual. Images are often dismissed as lacking the ability to critically engage and articulate arguments. As such, the ideologies they convey can often be accepted without much interrogation and analysis. Of critical importance to this project is how images and visuals are created and how they carry ideological messages and notions. Mary Hocks and Michelle Kendrick (2003) explain that "The relationships among word and image, verbal texts and visual texts, 'visual culture' and 'print culture' are interpenetrating, dialogic relationships. The contradictions, overlaps, and paradoxes inherent in the rhetorical use and interpretation of words and images have been with us since the earliest verbal and visual communication systems" (pp. 1-2). As a

result, it is of critical importance to analyze and interrogate both the characteristics and the qualities of visuals as well as the texts we encounter on a daily basis.

In his piece "Rhetoric of the Image," Roland Barthes discusses many of the issues introduced by the rhetorical consideration of the image. He begins by articulating the main criticisms of the ability of the image to convey meaning. In particular, he states that the image is criticized for being both "rudimentary" and rich at the same time (Barthes, 2004, p. 152). One of the more intriguing points raised by Barthes is his assessment of the photograph. He claims that the photograph, while able to manipulate some characteristics, lacks the true transformation necessary for coding and results in "message without a code" (Barthes, p. 154). He identifies three messages being delivered: "a linguistic message, a coded iconic message, and a non-coded iconic message" which he terms "the linguistic message, the denoted image, and the connoted image" (Barthes, 2004, pp. 154-155). Barthes notes that these messages interact with one another. One example of this is his conception of anchoring where the linguistic (verbal) message narrows the scope and meaning of an image (Barthes, 2004, p. 156). One use of this that Barthes notes is the speed and apparent ease of the image as related to verbal content (p. 157).

Yet Barthes (2004) focuses his discussion on the photograph and its variations from other images. Specifically, he is particularly interested in the photograph's inability to accomplish the transformational tasks of coding. The result of this is that the viewer is presented with what Barthes (2004) terms as a "literal message" (p. 157). Herein, while clearly adjusted from the actuality from a dimensional perspective (i.e. taking three dimensional objects and translating them to a two dimensional form), what is within the viewfinder of the camera is reproduced without the ability to edit and order the contents. To differentiate this, he juxtaposes this with a drawing by stating that "the operation of the drawing (the coding) immediately necessitates a certain division between the significant and the insignificant: the drawing does not reproduce everything (often it reproduces very little)" (Barthes, 2004, p. 158). More importantly, Barthes notes that there are rules that guide the creating of a drawing with regard to coding.

As such, Barthes (2004) argues that the photograph is an act of "recording" and not "transformation" and the impact of this is particularly seen in the objective nature that photographs are often felt to possess (Barthes, 2004, 158). Overall Barthes (2004) argues that "The image, in its connotation, is thus constituted by an architecture of signs drawn from a variable depth of lexicons (of idiolects); each lexicon, no matter how 'deep,' still being coded, if, as is thought today, the psyche itself is articulated like a language" (Barthes, 2004, p. 160). He is particularly concerned with connotation as this where the meaning of the image is found. He also notes the role of ideology in connotation and ideology's centrality in the process

of connotation that despite the abundance and variety of symbols/signifiers (Barthes, 2004, p. 161). In terms of this study, Barthes is essential because he firmly establishes the visual artifact as an object of study. Furthermore, his articulation of the means by which images signify is necessary to any study focusing on visuals and argumentation.

In "Medium as 'Message,'" Kenneth Burke weighs in on the discussion of visuals and media as he responds to Marshall McLuhan. In this response, Burke (1966) is especially concerned with the mode of communication replacing the actual content of the message. He attacks the overstatement inherent in McLuhan's catchy turn of phrase celebrating the importance of media. Burke admits that media does matter, it does not supplant what is being said (p. 413). Burke punctuates this when he says, "The medium is the message. Hence, down with content analysis. We should at least pause en route to note that the formula lends itself regularly to caricature" (Burke, 1966, p. 413). In likening the work of McLuhan to caricature, he essentially argues that while media is important, it cannot and does not replace content. To further this point, he creates a scenario where what is being said does not matter, rather all that is significant is the mode of transmission (Burke, 1966, p. 414). One of the most salient points that Burke makes is in relation to McLuhan's treatment of point of view. Burke argues that the new media can obscure individual subjectivities or points of view, but

tactics of that sort 'subliminally' conceal from us the strictly terministic fact that any particular nomenclature (such as the one used in McLuhan's book) functions as a 'perspective,' or 'point of view'; and to idealize a problem in its particular terms is to consider the problem from that special angle of approach. (Burke, 1966, p. 415)

Instead he offers a more muted acknowledgement of media's influence on message, when he states that content should take advantage of the benefits and strengths of a specific medium. Overall Burke supports the notion that content is subject to and molded by the contextual restraints imposed by the medium as opposed to content being completely irrelevant as it would be under McLuhan (Burke, 1966, p. 416). This smaller work by Burke is particularly salient in that it introduces the idea of the medium both as important due to its shaping of the message. This idea that the medium used shapes or affects a narrative message is one of the key issues under consideration.

J. Anthony Blair argues for visuals as argument in his essay entitled "The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments." He begins with a general examination of the fundamental rhetorical concepts of argument and persuasion and then turns his attention to visuals as argument (Blair, 2004, p. 41). One of the foundational

concepts that he utilizes is the Aristotelian concept of the enthymeme and its deliberate omission of one premise of an argument with the aim of requiring audience participation in the making of meaning (Blair, 2004, p. 41). In terms of visuals, one topic of particular interest to Blair (2004) is the ability of specific colors to inspire certain emotional reactions. Blair (2004) explains that "Certain blues are cool, certain greens are relaxing, certain reds are warm and comforting" (p. 43). While he is not sure whether this rises to the level of persuasion, Blair (2004) clearly argues for the examination of that possibility (p. 43). In continuing his defense for visual argument, Blair (2004) cites the common claim that images are vague and he rebuts this by maintaining that verbal arguments are likewise vague and ambiguous (p. 46). Additionally he notes that visual arguments are rarely presented absent of verbal input and this verbal inclusion often removes any ambiguity that may be present (Blair, 2004, p. 47). In particular, Blair (2004) believes that images and films excel at narratives and in this way they are well suited to make arguments of this nature (p. 56).

Moreover, he explains that "argument in the traditional sense consists of supplying grounds for beliefs, attitudes or actions, and we saw that pictures can equally be the medium for such communication. Argument, in the traditional sense, can readily be visual" (Blair, 2004, p. 59). In the end, Blair (2004) comes to the conclusion that visuals can and do argue effectively for those arguments suited to their use. Visual and verbal arguments are not interchangeable and each is very useful for making arguments suited to each type. That is, there are, to be sure, things that a visual argument cannot accomplish, but so too are there things that its verbal counterpart cannot do as well. Blair's ultimate point however is that there are also many things that visuals can accomplish and one of those is argument (Blair, 2004, p. 59). Blair (2004) is significant because he reinforces the notion of visuals as argumentation. In fact, he reiterates many of Burke's arguments about media shaping discourse by positing media as a contextualizing and constraining force. This position is salient because it essentially justifies the study of various media due to a medium's ability to shape a given message and its reception.

David Birdsell and Leo Groarke in "Toward a Theory of Visual Argument" also call for the ability of images to argue. The first claim that they address with regard to this issue is the assumption that images are too ambiguous in comparison to verbal symbols. Their position is two-fold: a) images can sufficiently carry meaning and b) words have their limitations (Birdsell and Groarke, 2004, p. 310). The authors of course acknowledge that images do possess ambiguity, but they explain that this potential for vagueness is a feature of language itself and not solely a property of images (Birdsell and Groarke, 2004, p. 310). Additionally, they note that visual and verbal meanings are not equivalent and that meaning is contingent on a variety of factors (Birdsell and Groarke, 2004, pp. 313-314). Birdsell and Groarke identify "At

least three kinds of contexts are important in the evaluation of visual arguments” and the ones they identify are the “immediate visual context, immediate verbal context, and visual culture” (pp. 314-315). In particular they note that film particularly illustrates the visual context wherein individual images are part of a larger overall argument (Birdsell and Groarke, 2004, pp. 314-315).

In terms of immediate visual contexts, the authors note that more than just the images themselves are necessary for interpreting images. As such the scene and situation that images find themselves in also contribute to making meaning from images. Also, the authors note that images are seldom seen devoid of verbal content. Regarding this the authors comment, “It does not follow that the role of the image in a verbal-visual equation is unimportant, or secondary. Words can establish a context of meaning into which images can enter with a high degree of specificity while achieving a different meaning from the words alone” (Birdsell and Groarke, 2004, p. 315). However, one of the most significant issues that Birdsell and Groarke (2004) introduces is that of resemblance (and representation). In their brief exploration of resemblance and representation, they identify three key elements needing examination, which are “the disjunction between resemblance and representation, the consequent conventionalization of representation, and the susceptibility of resemblance to visual and verbal challenge” (Birdsell and Groarke, 2004, p. 317). While they do not dwell significantly on the topic, their inclusion of it points to its importance in exploring visual argument. Birdsell and Groarke (2004)’s contribution to this study is their fervent defense of the visual as a means of argument as well as the reiteration of media’s role as context and constraint. More importantly, in terms of this project, they introduce the concepts of resemblance and representation, which are key issues to be addressed in the analysis of visual argumentation. Ultimately, knowledge of the principles of visual rhetoric represents another foundational literacy in our society. Educated individuals should have the ability to analyze and understand the rhetorical motivations behind messages whose content is primarily and/or exclusively visual. As a result, visual literacy should likewise be integrated into comprehensive writing instruction.

Digital Literacy

Another literacy essential to the writing process is technological literacy. In “Delivering College Composition: A Vocabulary for Discussion,” Kathleen Blake Yancey examines the increasingly multimodal world in which today’s students find themselves. She points out that the multimodal, multilayered communication being called for in composition is not a concept that needs to be taught to students, but rather something that students are already doing. To illustrate this phenomenon, she points to a “new digital divide,” which can be described as “the gulf between the

so-called digital ‘natives’ and their digital ‘immigrant’ parents” (Yancey, 2006a, p. 3). With the use of the immigrant versus native metaphor, Yancey illustrates how the generation currently in our classes has grown up with technology that their parents either are not savvy with or have had to learn. She explains that the communications that take place within these newer technologies often fail to be endorsed and promoted by the academy. Yancey (2006a) continues by explaining that

By contrast, composition instruction seems fairly staid, even if on campus it does occur across a wide variety of sites—in classrooms, still, and augmented and expanded in various other sites: writing and learning centers, writing-across-the-curriculum programs, informal individual tutorials, within first-year experience programs and learning communities. (p. 3)

She points out that it is this stagnant characteristic of composition instruction that will be its undoing. Composition instruction, she argues, must be adaptable to rapidly changing technologies and the world that embraces them. In fact, she asserts that the term writing must be extended and re-envisioned as composing, which she defines as “composing as work with various materials to create diverse kinds of communications for various purposes and audiences, a composing that may move us from print to screen, from poster to person—and back again” (p. 12). It is only in this new and adaptable form that composition instruction can survive as well as thrive.

One implementation of composition in this new world is described by Irwin Weiser in “Faculties, Students, Sites, Technologies: Multiple Deliveries of Composition at a Research University.” Weiser (2006) articulates the ways that Purdue University has implemented technology into its composition curriculum. Weiser (2006) states:

While I know that we are neither unique nor among the first adopters of computer technology in composition, we have from the start of our use of computers in writing recognized that new technology, new teaching environments, and new media mean that composition instruction changes. In particular, we have been aware that the mere availability of technology does not mean that it will be used—or used in ways consistent with the goals of the composition course. Continuing professional development opportunities for instructors who want to teach in computer classrooms have enabled us to deliver technology-enriched composition courses that are compatible with our program goals. (p. 35)

He also refers to the many challenges of administering, such as a multi-faceted program, in particular collaboration and learning communities with other disciplines. He defines six principles that must be adhered to when engaging in such cross-disciplinary collaborative efforts. These principles are concerned primarily with the status of the writing instructor in the collaboration as well as the integrity of the writing program and/or course (p. 34). The principles that Weiser (2006) identifies are:

1. The goals of the writing program and the writing course must be maintained.
2. Composition course content and assignments should be determined by the composition instructor, though in collaboration with other instructors in the program.
3. Composition instructors must be involved as equal participants in the program.
4. Composition instructors should have appropriate support from both the writing program and the cross-disciplinary program.
5. Instructors' participation must be voluntary.
6. Initial participation by the writing program does not constitute a permanent commitment.

These principles are vital because they ensure that the composition instructor and/or course will not be relegated to merely a service function and they protect the goals of the composition program from being undermined by external influences.

Todd Taylor, in his article, "Design, Delivery and Narcolepsy," examines the design of composition courses, literally from the perspective of a designer. He notes that composition instructors are not necessarily adept at speaking of curriculum from a design vantage point, and explains that "a good design must provide users with (1) an effective conceptual model, (2) reliable feedback, (3) limited pitfalls, and (4) positive affordances" (Taylor, 2006, p. 131). In particular he explains that one of the design failures is determined by what works or does not work for the user. He extends this metaphor to the composition classroom by arguing, in effect, that if "the student can't use the course effectively, the design must change. The conceptual model for the writing-workshop class is contained and apparent within the design itself: students will become better writers by practicing writing, not by talking about writing in abstraction" (Taylor, 2006, p. 133). Taylor argues that a teacher-centered model doesn't work because it fails to allow students to actively learn. That is, students learn how to write by actually writing rather than listening to someone tell them how to write. He continues by saying that the workshop model adheres to a model that would provide for active rather than passive learning, and he ends by discussing how writing (or, to use Yancey's preferred term, composing) will and

should morph into multimedia production, which he argues students are already quite adept at outside of the composition classroom (p. 139).

Marvin Diogenes and Andrea A. Lunsford also seek to redefine writing in their piece "Toward Delivering New Definitions of Writing." Diogenes and Lunsford (2006) argue that composition has a tendency to be assessed and defined by those outside of the discipline, and that those external forces often fail to understand the complexity of writing and its instruction (Diogenes and Lunsford, 2006, p. 146). To this end, they have delineated course goals for the courses, which make up the first-year composition sequence at Stanford. The second semester course, they explain, is the course that is most-centered on delivery and multimedia. The course goals for the Professional Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) 2 course, as stated by Diogenes and Lunsford, are:

- To build on the analytical and research-based argument strategies developed in PWR 1 through more extensive work with oral, visual, and multimedia rhetoric.
- To identify, evaluate, and synthesize materials across a range of media and to explore how to present these materials effectively in support of the student's own arguments.
- To analyze the rhetoric of oral, visual, and multimedia documents with attention to how purpose, audience, and context help decisions about format, structure, and persuasive appeals.
- To conduct research (including field and experimental research) appropriate to the specific documents being created.
- To reflect systematically on oral, visual, and multimedia rhetoric and writing. (p. 147).

This curriculum and its requirements enables students to assess, analyze, and actually use the media around them. In short, students are not made to use a specific media, but rather are encouraged to find the media that best communicates the message they wish to convey. Students are thus given experience in both the rigorous intellectual work of invention and analysis as well as rhetorical decision-making. Consequently, students leave with the intellectual and rhetorical acumen to thrive in a world characterized by rapid technological development and innovation.

Yancey reiterates this call for a technologically savvy version of college composition in her piece entitled, "Delivering College Composition into the Future." She acknowledges the multitude of media in which current students can and do compose. Yet she admits that there are challenges to this new character of the field of composition, which has traditionally been taught by practitioners lacking adequate training and/or disciplinary background. She explains that "there is also some

evidence that composition is increasingly defined as a discipline, which shift could have the potential to change all composition courses precisely because the faculty agent is *expert*" (Yancey, 2006b, p. 205). Yancey argues there is a shift in disciplinary vocabulary where the technological demands placed upon us also allow us to integrate more disciplinary content, such as visual rhetoric for instance, into the composition classroom (p. 206). Yancey (2006b) concludes by arguing that "the compositionist brings experience that can be delivered to students, that can be used to support and guide them in their composings, and that can research the effects of this kind of practice, one located in expertise" (pp. 207-208). It is this emphasis on expertise that will allow both composition and the large field of Rhetoric and Writing Studies to thrive and blossom.

However, in order for these changes to take place, curriculum design is not the sole concern. One of the more pressing concerns for the future of composition deals how it should be assessed, which Diane Penrod examines in her book, *Composition in Convergence*. She asserts that the question of assessment is complicated by the widely divergent media and technology. Yet she explains that, "writing instructors realize that technology, assessment, and literacy are not separate from social conditions; rather, all are directly influenced by the swiftness of societal development and the pressures various social and political institutions" (Penrod, 2005, p. xxii). She argues that the process of technological change is multi-layered and this development impacts composition assessment. She continues:

the first decade generates excitement and bewilderment toward a technological product, but not many users. In the second decade, the technology creates societal flux, as standards ebb and flow to conform to the increased use of technology in mainstream culture. The second decade is the most chaotic, as the technological object undergoes a period that decides which forms or versions of technology will succeed or fail in society. With the third decade comes a 'so what?' response to the technology, because it has been fully assimilated, virtually ubiquitous, in society. By the 30-year mark, people are very familiar with the technology; some use it extensively, and others have moved on to new ideas or technologies. (p. xxiii)

Within this process of development lies composition and its assessment. The act of convergence that she speaks of deals with the changing technologies and necessarily changing notions of composition assessment. She explains that composition must adapt to changing technologies or risk becoming obsolete. Similarly, assessment must be developed to ensure that changing forms of composition are recognized and valued in the university setting.

From these larger issues of disciplinary survival and flourishing, Penrod (2005) moves to the ways in which composition can be assessed in the classroom. She notes the collaborative and/or social nature of networked writing and the ways in which the instructor's comments/responses are deemphasized. She notes that writing in an online context becomes more real and/or authentic than writing merely done solely for the purposes of a university course (p. 3). Moreover, she states that "Productivity no longer refers to a set number of words or pages to be churned out; rather, productivity connects to how effectively writers communicate in a given context" (p. 5). She goes on to say that students value what they are writing in a networked setting more and are more engaged in the writing process (p. 6).

Additionally, she asserts that the issue of networked writing in the composition classroom really becomes one of survival for composition specialists. She explicates, "For computers not to kill the composition teacher, it is increasingly more important for writing instructors to be well trained technologically and assessment-savvy—ready to teach in whatever configurations for Composition and its specialists to speak authoritatively about writing in a digital age and to move out of the literal and figurative academic basement it has dwelled in for more than a century" (p. 27). Necessarily, Penrod (2005) argues, definitions of writers and "texts" must adapt to changing technological contexts. The foundation that students need, in Penrod (2005)'s opinion, is one based in rhetorical concepts and theories, which enable students to accommodate whatever media they encounter or need to utilize (p. 31). The foundation of which Penrod (2005) speaks, of course, requires students to have access to various forms of technology and media as well as experience utilizing these for rhetorical purposes.

Putting It All Together

The ever-changing societal landscape requires an equally adaptable and well-equipped citizenry. Today's youth, the so-called *digital natives*, have spent much of their lives creating, crafting, and sharing. They use a wide variety of social media sites, such as Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, and SnapChat to share their teenage worlds with one another. Our challenge is to use the field of Rhetoric and Writing Studies to turn this volume of rhetorical digital activity from merely social, banal into world-altering social engagement and activism.

First-Year Writing is often seen as a foundational course, but it needs substantial and meaningful reforms to adequately satisfy its assumed goals. First and foremost, it needs to evolve from its beginnings as mere techniques for writing. One of the most significant changes is the inclusion of RWS disciplinary content. Rhetorical scholars have examined many aspects of culture and its relevance to communication and the knowledge established by the field should be disseminated

to the masses rather than remaining on the pages not infrequently read journals or in the ether of academic conferences. Additionally, writing courses should expose students to rhetorical principles regarding visuals and provide students with the ability to analyze such artifacts in a knowledgeable way. Finally, writing courses, should, of course, reflect the digital nature of our society and give students skills and practice using a variety of media to effectively and deliberately to communicate to a wide range of audiences and situations.

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