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A Pedagogical Approach to Learning

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A Pedagogical Approach to Learning: Final Master's Portfolio

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English
with a specialization in
English Teaching

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Dr. Cheryl Hoy, First Reader
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As It Is: An Analytic Narrative

In December of 2010 I finished my undergrad degree in English in California. By February of the next year I was living in an efficiency in Miami, and then eight months after that we were planning our wedding. In August of 2012 I began my first year of teaching and my wife began a program that would eventually earn her a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction. After her experience in graduate work she began to encourage me to also pursue a master's degree, an idea that simultaneously appealed to me and intimidated me. However, once the idea settled in and no longer seemed so farfetched, I set about finding a program, which ended up taking much longer than I had ever anticipated. My goal was to find a program that both satisfy my interest in English and my desire to improve my professional acumen as a teacher. In early 2018, I found a list of Graduate programs that fit my desired criteria, and from that list I applied to only one school because the program being offered seemed tailor-made for my academic and professional development goals. By fall term of 2018 I was enrolled in two classes at BGSU and very excited about what the next two years would hold. As I progressed through that first year the BGSU graduate program, I found myself enjoying grad school even more than I thought I would. Although I often missed the traditional college experience, I was still forging some wonderful relationships with colleagues and instructors alike via the online format.

I entered this program with the rather simple goal to improve the breadth and depth of what I know about being an effective English teacher, and throughout the course of this program that goal has remained virtually unchanged. The plan has always been to obtain a Master's degree so that my versatility as a teacher would expand as my expertise in the field grew. Whether that expertise would lead me to a career as a professor, to remain a high school teacher,

or to pursue a doctoral degree has been the question lingering in my mind since I began the program, and has proved to be the most elusive question to answer.

But without idealistically gazing off into the future, in terms of my current pedagogical approach as a teacher, this program has been a tremendous benefit to my professional development. Not only does achieving a Master's degree allow me to further pursue my professional aspirations, but it also has given me insights and inspiration to make my current classroom even more effective. Over the last eighteen months, I have already implemented several ideas gained from the courses I have taken and have seen my content mastery improve and be supplemented by a deeper understanding of what it means to be an English teacher.

What I will remember most about my time at BGSU is how often I felt challenged by my coursework and how graciously unrelenting my professors were in pushing me to excel in my studies. I was growing academically and professionally with each course and quickly noticed the positive influence my studies were having not only my personal development, but in the development of the programs being implemented at my school. As I opened up the requirements for this portfolio on the first day of ENG 6910, I immediately knew that my first challenge would be to decide which of my essays would have to stay behind as I could only select four. Ultimately, I chose the four essays that best represent my growth and development as both a scholar and an educator, instead of selecting the four that simply represent my development as a writer. As a result, I believe this portfolio is both diverse and robust in how it presents my development as a scholar during my time at BGSU.

I selected my final essay, "The Role of Technical Communication in the Development and Implementation of Digital Learning Spaces as Pedagogical Tools," from Dr. Heba's course, ENG 6410: Research and Resources in Technical Writing, for project #1 for a couple of reasons. First, because it was the project that came to mind as the most obvious choice to fulfill the significant research requirement; and second, as the project that is farthest out of my comfort zone as a writer, it represents the breadth of the writing and research I completed for this program. It also was the project that required the most significant revisions of the entire portfolio, so it also embodies the greater sense of accomplishment I have at the conclusion of this program.

The second project I selected for my portfolio is "Syllabus and Unit Lesson Plan for an Introductory Literature Course," which was written and developed for ENG 6090: The Teaching of Literature with Dr. Coates. Although originally two separate projects, I have fused them together to form my major pedagogical project because they together represent the synthesis of the course content and the means by which it is intended to be applied in the classroom. I chose to combine the two projects because each one seemed to tell only half the story of what I learned about developing an effective and interesting Literature class.

Having two projects that fulfill the graduate portfolio technical requirements, the third project selected for this portfolio is "On the Modal Intersections of Graphic Novels," which was written for Dr. Begum's ENG 6800: Comics: Art or Agenda? I selected this essay primarily because it was one of my favorite essays to have written during my time at BGSU; however, it also represents, to a large degree, a high point in my development as an academic writer, in which I utilized much of what I had learned about rhetoric and discourse in previous courses.

The fourth and final project I selected for my portfolio is “Pedagogy is Personal: A Critical Reflection,” written for Dr. Hoy’s ENG 6200: Teaching of Writing. Like the previous project, it is an essay selected for the way it demonstrates my development as an academic writer, and because it exemplifies what I believe to be my greatest strength as a writer: writing with a distinctive narrative voice.

The revisions I undertook for each paper followed a three-part strategy. First, I made some minor revisions myself to the original draft according to the closing comments left by instructors as well as some ideas I had after the paper had been submitted for grading. Second, I submitted that modified draft for peer review, making some more minor and moderate revisions in response to the feedback I received. Third, I submitted the modified draft for instructor review. The rationale for this strategy was that my peer reviewers would be excellent for feedback on the content of the essays while the instructor for 6910, being the one most familiar with the immediate needs and technical requirements of the graduate portfolio, would provide valuable feedback regarding the revisions needed to make each project portfolio-ready. As anticipated, my colleagues provided insightful feedback for each essay and many important changes and revisions resulted from each round. The instructor feedback was equally helpful and precisely what I had expected it to be.

Each of the four projects originated as the major final project for that course, so, as I mentioned earlier, they represent the culmination of my learning in the respective courses for which they were written. The content and objective of each paper itself was an organic development that arose from the elements of course content that most resonated with me, so

they are, in a very real sense, what was most memorable and impactful from each class. In another sense, they more directly reflect how I believe the material content from each course has been most relevant to my own professional and academic development.

At the outset of curating this portfolio I was certain that each selected essay was a good example of my cumulative knowledge in each class, but as the revision process progressed, I was less certain how individual success would translate into the context of becoming a collective part of a portfolio. So far, the process of reading and revising has been quite exhilarating as each change and revision brings me one step closer to achieving the academic and professional goals I set for myself at the outset of my journey. Academically speaking, each suggestion and review comment has been a revelation of sorts, keeping me grounded in the reality that scholars must mind the details of grammar and syntax, and that writing, real writing, occurs when the author and the reader agree on what the text says.

I am not sure I can point to any one theory or method that has so stood out to me as the most impactful. It would be more accurate to say that there was more of a cumulative effect on me as I learned an array of theories and methods. Technical Writing stands out to me as the most challenging and difficult subject I encountered in the program because the thought process it requires is so different than any other type of writing that I have had to do in my entire academic career. However, given the extent to which academic writing will make demands of my time in the near future if I choose to pursue a terminal degree, Technical Writing also appears to be one of the most relevant and immediately useful scholarly approaches I learned at BGSU. The

challenge now lies in identifying relevant and immediately practical applications for this method in my current pedagogical context as a high school English teacher at a small private school.

Another memorable concept I learned was the relationship between rhetoric and discourse. Gleaned from multiple courses taken early in the MA program, exploring and studying this concept was where I recognized the first meaningful connection between what I was learning and what I was teaching. Through what I learned of rhetoric and discourse I quickly developed frameworks and categories by which I could organize my own pedagogical approaches. In what could almost be called a revelation of sorts, understanding rhetoric, discourse, and discursive contexts even provided valuable insights into why some of my students think the way they do and how those thought processes get transcribed into their written work. More introspectively, understanding rhetoric and discourse also helped me be more mindful of the way I presented course material to students and how I set my expectations for their work. Intrinsically, I think everyone recognizes that there are significant differences between a college student excelling in their American Literature Survey course and a high school freshman struggling to grasp the dynamics of conflict in *Lord of the Flies*, and, at least for me, understanding discourse and discursive context not only helps explain what these differences are but also provides a context in which I can adapt my pedagogical approach to match the dynamic needs of my students.

The one theory that I could say stands slightly higher in regards to the impact it had on me would be Process Pedagogy. As the name suggests, it is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes the process by which information is learned instead of the product of that learning. It was a well-timed course, ENG 6200: The Teaching of Writing, taught by Dr. Hoy, that aligned nicely with a writing skills seminar I teach to sophomores, so it was the one theory that I could

immediately apply directly to what I was teaching and the effect on student performance and outcomes was instantaneous and overwhelmingly positive. Students who were dreading the looming essay at the conclusion of the unit were delighted to hear that no such essay would be required of them. Instead, their efforts would be directed at learning the facets and elements of good academic writing with the objective that they would be able to spend the next two years implementing what they learned into the essays they would write. In the time that has elapsed since implementing that change and now, I have had had several students return after graduating to tell me that the writing skills seminar we did in their sophomore year was one of the most useful things they did in all of high school to prepare them for college.

Ironically, Process Pedagogy (PP), the theory that has been most useful in my professional development, has been the theory least applied to the study and work produced during my time in this program. I suspect this is due largely to the fact that I found PP to be most immediately applicable to what I was already doing as a teacher and not as influential to the research I was conducting as a graduate student. Of course, there is the likelihood that were I not already a teacher I would have found ways to apply what I had learned of PP to what I was learning in subsequent courses in this program, but I can only speculate what those applications might have been.

In contrast, I found that the principles and practices I learned in my studies of both rhetorical discourse and technical writing to be much more helpful throughout the MA program. Each of these theories contributed to the academic framework I relied on in several of the courses following the courses in which I learned about discourse and technical writing. Rhetorical discourse was instrumental in categorizing and organizing much of the information I was

gathering in these courses, as well as providing the means by which I could construct a sort of circumspensive metanarrative around the different texts, authors, and theories I later encountered. Technical Writing (TW), on the other hand, provided valuable insight into the way that academics and scholars use language and how they approach meaning in their work, as well as influenced how I approached my own academic writing. Admittedly, technical writing was the most difficult concept I encountered in this program, but it ultimately proved to be the most useful in helping me read, write, and understand scholarly material as a scholar and not just as a student.

In terms of defining how the works included in this portfolio reflect how these theories and principles have been incorporated into my studies, there are essentially two ways in which this can be determined. First, by recognizing that the concepts and methods of these theories became integral to my metacognitive processes as I read, analyzed, and wrote about the course content material, and second, by recognizing that the work here was intentionally selected to demonstrate my understanding of these theories. For example, the syllabus and unit lesson at the heart of Project 2 were created by highlighting a lesson I was already teaching and to which I applied Process Pedagogy in an effort to upgrade and enhance its academic rigor and improve the standards by which expected academic outcomes are measured. Likewise, the Technical Writing essay included as Project 1 is the direct result of my efforts to learn and adapt my writing style to the unfamiliar demands of Technical Writing. The result, though not as polished as it would be were it written by someone who has more experience with Technical Writing, is a portrait of both my development as a technical writer and my understanding of how Technical Writing can be effectively applied to my field of expertise. In other words, this essay was my

attempt to reconcile what was most familiar to me with what was most alien, and I believe this attempt was successful.

Identifying a common thread that ties all four projects together is difficult since they were not holistically researched or written with any cognitive intention of incorporating them into a portfolio as a unified academic narrative. If anything, the idea of discourse is most prevalent throughout the works selected for this portfolio because for each individual project there was a sincere effort made to not only understand what each author or text was saying, but also to understand the context in which these texts were written and for what purpose. In other words, prevalent throughout the pages of each project are traces of my cognitive awareness of the metanarrative present in each research topic and the sources included in that research.

One of my favorite things to do as I have gotten closer to the end of this program is think about what professional opportunities and options that will be available to me once I have that MA in hand. It is quite an exciting thought, and yet remains a somewhat bittersweet prospect. While browsing the job market has opened my eyes to many exciting opportunities to fulfill my goal of becoming a college professor, many of the positions for which I qualify are as an adjunct. The relative instability and uncertainty characteristic of those types of positions sharply tempers their appeal to someone who must consider the responsibilities that come with having a family. But that is not to say that the reality of the accomplishment of finally being able to meet the application requirements of a job I have long desired is in any way diminished. In fact, meeting that professional and academic milestone is perhaps the single most exciting part about finishing the MA program. The question is, however, what to do next. Do I continue on in my studies and

obtain a terminal degree or do I remain content with my MA? And if the road of scholarly study ends here at BGSU, do I pursue a career as an adjunct faculty member or do I further entrench myself in the esteemed ranks of high school English teachers? As I reflect on my time in the BGSU MA program, it is with great pride that I say that earning a Master's Degree has been the most transformative experience of my life as both professional and an academic. On whichever path I choose, what I have learned in this program in order to earn this degree will be fundamentally essential to whoever I end up being.

Project 1

The Role of Technical Communication in the Development and Implementation of Digital Learning Spaces

Introduction: The Prelude and Context of Digital Learning Platforms

To say that a lot has changed since I was a senior in high school in terms how we use technology in the classroom is an obvious understatement. From waiting for websites to load on the family computer connected to the internet through a 56.6K modem and the college professor who used an overhead projector, to taking and teaching classes in a completely virtual setting, the way we see technology today as an educational tool is virtually unrecognizable from those earlier days. To an extent, we all share this nostalgic connection to the traditional uses of classroom technology in our own educational experience. Not only because we have seen firsthand the way that technology has transformed the classroom experience for students in the last twenty years, but also because we have seen how it has transformed pedagogical approaches for teachers, particularly in regards to how essential computers have become as a tool in the learning environment.

In 2005, researcher J K Liang and his co-authors prophetically wrote that “educational computing has drawn much attention because learning devices are becoming so inexpensive that ultimately all students will own their own personal devices. This implies that eventually, digital technology will spread into every classroom, transforming everyday educational activities” (Liang, et. al. 181). The advent of seemingly ubiquitous classroom technology has been as fascinating as it has been dynamic and technology will continue to play a significant role not only

in how teachers teach but also even in how the field of education develops in the future. Yet, even in the midst of these exciting technological developments, the conversation among teachers about classroom technology often seems to be dominated by concerns for content usability in pedagogical applications, while comparatively little thought is given to the technical mechanisms that make these programs and spaces possible in the first place. But it is hard to blame classroom teachers for having a perspective focused on applying technology in their classrooms and integrating it into their curriculum. Certainly, from where they stand, it would be more productive from a purely pedagogical standpoint to discuss how changes in our teaching environment have essentially forced new technology to be incorporated into school curricula as digital learning spaces.

However, from the technical writers' perspective of the same pedagogical content, a more specific technical focus would orient the discussion to the context surrounding the development of digital learning spaces and the online platforms that support them. In an article on constructing learning spaces using online platforms, Donnie Johnson Sackey, et. al., summarize the main questions driving their research: "What are the conditions that are necessary for learning to occur in online spaces, and...what are the best practices associated with effective learning these environments?" (Sackey, Nguyen, and Grabill 122). While stating an obvious truth that learning must occur, they also note that "questions such as these are among many important questions to ask given the current dynamics in educational technologies" (122). Questions like these do not necessarily invite a natural inquiry into the role of technical writing in the development of digital learning spaces, but through the right lens that role begins to emerge within the context of a rapidly changing technological paradigm. Technical writing will

play a critical role in future development of digital learning spaces by providing resources for technical literacy, frameworks for rhetorical construction, and technical research for content optimization.

The Research Problem

How exactly does technical communication fit into the narrative of schools, teachers, and students achieving their goals of technical and technological literacy? What do rhetorical frameworks look like for digital learning spaces? And what modes and methods of technical research are best suited for pedagogical applications? The approach to answering these questions will help clarify the context that propels Education into the sphere of professional industries with a shared demand for technical communication. Through this approach we can gain better insight of technical writing from the perspective of both the pedagogue and the technical communicator.

For many of these pedagogical applications, technical literacy is an increasingly valuable student skill set whereby the end-user learns how to work within the dynamics of user experience, particularly in how it can be assimilated into the various levels of expected educational outcomes. Understanding how to develop and nurture these skills in students is of growing importance to the field of education and there is a growing body of research that addresses the importance of the use of technology in the development of communication skills. Andrew Hinton, though writing mostly about verbalized speech, as opposed to written communication, in his book *Understanding Context*, addresses the context of language and communication, both being components of technical literacy, by stating that “without

environmental context and interior structure of language grammar, spoken words are just sounds if they are without significance” and that the “meaning of language depends on context and convention” (Hinton). In other words, context and structure are twin pillars that make language meaningful. By inference we can also deduce that the importance of context and structure remains constant whether describing the discourse of traditional literacy or the discourse of technical literacy. But, much like traditional literacies, the discourse of technical literacy does not spontaneously generate itself. Rather, it is cultivated in large part by technical communicators who formulate, organize, and publish the data that is then directly translated into the final usability experience.

This leads to a very important question: If technical literacy discourses are the manifestations of the use of language in technical writing, what are the rhetorical frameworks upon which they hang and how is this written rhetoric transformed into the visual information used in digital learning platforms? Tiffany Portewig’s article on visual rhetorical invention, which appears in *Qualitative Research in Technical Communication* by James Conklin and George F. Hayhoe (145-161), is helpful in shedding some light on the complexities involved in the development of visually rich products, including the diversifying role of technical communicators. One aspect of these developmental complexities, Portewig notes, is that “visual rhetorical invention is not delegated to one phase of the documentation process” (154), meaning that there is no concrete systematization for how or when visual components, for both internal documentation and documents ready for publication, are created. Put another way, no established process or procedure exists to govern when in the development of a project technical writers begin to create visual references for the data they produce, analyze, or report. Portewig

also observes that, unsurprisingly, the majority of technical writers consider themselves to be “word people,” further complicating the push to broaden the role of technical writers in a cultural context that is becoming increasingly visually-oriented. She then further challenges these same technical writers to meet the new demands of their new roles in the field of education by stating that “if technical communicators are going to expand their role, they need to be trained as true communicators, of both text and visual,” and that “the rhetorical expertise of technical communicators is crucial to effective visual communication” (160). Portewig’s observations suggest that the field of technical communication, by intersecting with the field of education, is clearly and inevitably making a push to incorporate aspects of visual literacy into existing rhetorical frameworks at a time when it is also being introduced to an emerging technological industry that often relies heavily on visual literacy and structured rhetorical contexts.

Since visual literacy and rhetorical frameworks are becoming increasingly relevant to developing the foundations for digital learning platforms, then certainly technical research within the field will become the bricks that build the walls of the house. In this regard, many of the same research methodologies employed by technical writers to optimize the flow of information and to expand the knowledge base in other industries can be used to have the same affect to collect the same kinds of data in the field of education. Michael A. Hughes and George F. Hayhoe, in their book *A Research Primer for Technical Communication*, identify six goals and five methods of technical research (6-11) that can be applied in various combinations to collect a wide array of desired data (See Table 1). Even a cursory evaluation of these goals and methods reveals that any of these can be easily adapted and applied to collecting data that would allow educators and

administrators to develop and improve digital learning platforms the same way executives would collect data to develop and improve digital apps or platforms to optimize their businesses.

Table 1 Summary reproduction of table produced by Hughes and Hayhoe (11).

<i>Method</i>	<i>Summary Description</i>
<i>Quantitative</i>	Primarily involves the collection of data expressed in numbers and their analysis using inferential statistics.
<i>Qualitative</i>	Primarily involves the collection of qualitative data and its analysis using ethnographic approaches
<i>Critical Theory</i>	Relies on the deconstruction of texts and the technologies that deliver, looking for social or political agendas or motivations
<i>Literature Review</i>	Primarily involves the review and reporting on the research of others
<i>Mixed Methods</i>	Research approaches that use a combination of methods, though usually quantitative and qualitative.

One example of this kind of relevant technical research is J. K. Liang, et. al., who discuss a program called EduCart in their research. They write that “the objective of EduCart is to provide an ‘all-in-one’ and ‘plug-and-play’ solution that can be used to set up a 1:1 educational computing environment more easily” (Liang, et. al. 188). Their study employs an array of immersive quantitative evaluative research that examines the data behind what makes EduCart an effective digital learning platform. Similarly, Sackey, Nguyen, and Grabill, referring to digital learning spaces in a study titled “*Constructing Learning Spaces: What We Can Learn from Studies of Informal Learning Online*,” use similar quantitative research methods to arrive at a conclusion that “distinct facilitation moves were not the only factors in constructing these learning environments” (120). From the perspective of how this kind of technical research impacts the end-user experience, Hinton concludes his research by establishing that “visual information is especially good at borrowing from the objects of the physical environment to create explanations, metaphors, and spatial arrangements for conveying meaning” (Hinton). Not only does Hinton’s work here align with what Portewig has already established about the importance

of visual rhetoric invention, but it also neatly summarizes the synthesis of visual literacy, rhetorical construction, and technical research as the question of the roles these aspects of technical communication have in the development of digital learning platforms. At the same time, the studies of Liang (et. al) and Sackey (et. al.) explore what that development looks like when applied to usable digital learning platforms.

Literature Review – The Paradigm Shift from Physical to Digital Learning Environments

Much of the research and many of the studies on this topic echoed a common theme—that the field of technical writing is itself still finding its voice and forming its own identity. Various search combinations of “technical writing” and “pedagogy” returned no shortage of results about the different theories and approaches to teaching technical writing itself. In one such article, Andrew Bourelle and his coauthors, in discussing multimodality as a pedagogical approach when teaching technical writing, argue that “because of the inextricable link between rhetoric and multimodal literacy...we suggest that instructors incorporating a multimodal pedagogy... [and] adopt an approach based on the foundations of rhetoric—specifically the rhetorical canons” (Bourelle, et. al. 307). However, Bourelle advocates teaching the very form of technical writing that Portewig argued is in danger of being outmoded, specifically that technical writers think of themselves almost exclusively as “word people” in an increasingly visual world. In this context and with this caveat, Bourelle tacitly connects us to Portewig’s concepts of rhetorical construction and visual literacy as a means by which the increased emphasis on technical communication in pedagogical applications can be more fully appreciated, and that such emphasis should be present in the technical writing classroom.

Also advocating for changes in how technical writing is taught to students entering the workforce as technical writers, David Hailey, in an article for Utah State University on the topic of composition teachers making the transition from traditional classrooms to digital platforms, recommends that “teachers who are trying to teach writing for the documents of the future...reexamine [their] understanding of the fundamentals” because, as he puts it, “the old rules of excellent writing we taught our students ten years ago no longer apply” (19). Both Bourelle and Hailey are coming at the same issue of teaching technical writing from different angles, but their message is clear: how technical writing is taught must change and must keep changing to meet the changing demands of what writers need to know and be able to do, as Hailey quite literally argues that technical writing instructors “should adjust our teaching practices in the face of growing demands from Industry” (Hailey 13). This advocacy by researchers like Bourelle, Hailey, and Portewig for changes in how technical writers are taught ultimately reflects the evolving demands of productivity and the responsibilities technical writers face in the modern workforce.

In the field of Education, one of the most pressing issues contributing to a demand for technical communication is the explosive growth of distance learning and the digital learning spaces they require. According to Angela Eaton, in her article “Students in the Online Technical Communication Classroom: The Next Decade,” which appears in the book *Online Education 2.0: Evolving, Adapting, and Reinventing Online Technical Communication* by Kelli Cargile Cook and Keith Grant-David, this increased demand is a direct result of the increased availability and accessibility made possible by these platforms. Because, as she says, “the flexibility and inclusion that we hoped for seems to be coming to fruition as more respondents are incorporating distance

learning with face-to-face classes, earning more types of degrees, and are enrolling from more age groups” (Eaton 158). Though teachers and school administrators develop the curricula to be used on these platforms, it is the technical communicators who do the heavy lifting regarding the rhetorical constructions that frame the digital infrastructure and, more importantly, the technical research that produces the data analytics that make these platforms into effective digital learning spaces, research such as that by Liang, Sackey, their associates, and a rapidly expanding list of names.

It should be pointed out that much of the research discussed so far points to institutions of higher learning; however, in this increasingly digital world, high school teachers and administrators are finding it more necessary to synthesize their various resources into an effective, multimodal technical curriculum to meet the demands of what their students are expected to know when they enter college or the modern workplace. Eaton, speaking of this increased demand for digital learning spaces, observes that “competition in online technical communication programs has increased dramatically,” reporting that the number of schools participating in distance learning had doubled from 2002 to 2010 (157). What Eaton does not include in her report is the interesting and relevant fact that the number of academic institutions that are operating exclusively as virtual learning platforms has also increased, though this is likely a demographic development that has emerged since she concluded her study. Christine Greenhow and her coauthors studied these changing pedagogical dynamics and how they correspond to the advent of digital learning spaces in 2009, identifying the catalyst for such fundamental change as “changes in the nature of the Web, in technological competencies and values...and in our conceptualization of ‘classrooms’ as learning takes place across physical and

cyber spaces” (255). But they also caution that “amid the hype and speculation, education researchers need to keep educational aims in the foreground” (Greenhow, Robella, and Hughes 256). Educational goals, academic outcomes, and student achievement must always remain the priorities regardless of the technology used to deliver course content.

This educational research was once the realm and responsibility of the scholars and academics in the field in their quest to improve curriculum and pedagogical approaches, but that role recently has been expanding to include technical writers who conduct technical research to help develop and improve digital learning spaces, and in doing so exercise the versatility Portewig said would become necessary. One such way that technical writers contribute to this research is known as information architecture. Uddin and Janecek wrote a study on this, focusing on web information architecture. They conclude that “the structural properties of website domains determine much of the success in developing friendly interfaces especially when the information seeker’s knowledge is incomplete about the domain” (231). Like information architecture, the constructivist theory, at least as it is applied to the development of digital learning platforms, offers another possible contribution of technical writers and their research. Siu Cheung King and Yanjie Song argue in their article “A Principle-Based Pedagogical Design Framework for Developing Constructivist Learning in a Seamless Learning Environment: A Teacher Development Model for Learning and Teaching in Digital Classrooms,” published by the British Journal of Educational Technology, that “the creation of digital classrooms and the implementation of a constructivist learning approach have placed new demands on teachers to transform their pedagogical practices” (E209). They define constructivist learning as “learning concerned with how meaning and knowledge are made and built, respectively, within the individual mind, and

with how a shared meaning is developed within a social grouping such as a classroom” (King and Song E209). Though designing and building a website is technically the job of a web developer, providing the research data for what that particular website needs to do and what content it needs to present to students is the job of the technical writer. Information architecture and constructivism are only two means by which technical information is used to create websites with effective and meaningful user experiences.

This imperative need for the development of effective and efficient digital learning spaces can be further understood by considering the full scope of student users. Yes, traditional students are participating in digital learning spaces in unprecedented numbers, but nontraditional students are also participating in greater numbers as well. Catherine Quick documents this trend in her article “From the Workplace to Academia: Non-Traditional Students and the Relevance of Workplace Experience in Technical Writing Pedagogy,” noting that “many U.S. campuses are seeing an influx of students returning to college after significant full-time experience in the workforce” (230). Technology, it seems, has not only fundamentally changed the way we think about pedagogy, but also the way we think about learning and the transfer of knowledge, especially in regards to who has access to new knowledge and why they are seeking this access. Technology has greatly expanded access to information, innovated the modes and means by which that information is shared, and accelerated the speed at which we are expected to learn and use that information. Technical writers entering the realm of education and pedagogy have their work cut out for them as they enter a field badly needing a rhetorical frame and infrastructure upon which to hang its burgeoning reliance on technology, yet they do so at the

juncture of two fields of study which are themselves each in the midst of a paradigm shift regarding what their primary objectives are and how those objectives are to be accomplished.

The Physical Learning Space

Logically, to speak of a paradigm shift is to suppose an existing paradigm. Therefore, a brief overview of the physical learning space as the existing paradigm is necessary to give a more robust context from which digital pedagogies have developed and from which digital learning spaces emerge. One of the most important questions being asked in recent years about the physical learning space is regarding its ability to adapt to and provide for the changing needs of the students who sit in the chairs. Holly Hassel and Joanne Baird Gioradano address one aspect of this issue in a study they conducted regarding remediation and student readiness, looking at how traditional learning in the traditional learning space is leading to a broadening literacy gap between what graduating high school students know and what they need to know upon entering college. Looking specifically at the deficiencies in the assessment process by which students are placed in college writing courses, they conclude that “without measures beyond standardized testing, institutions are doing tremendous disservice to multiple constituencies” as students are often overwhelmed by what work they must do to “bridge the gap between their learning experiences and expectations of the college” (Hassel and Gioradano 76). However, rather than look at this as an indictment of the quality of education high school students receive, or of the quality of the teachers teaching them, it is more conducive to look at this as evidence that the traditional learning that takes place in the traditional learning space is increasingly insufficient to provide the necessary technical skills and proficiencies these students need upon entering

college, especially in terms of the means and methods of assessments used to measure their learning.

This tension between learning experiences and expected outcomes is explained in part by Jereon J. G. van Merriëboer, et. al., in *Aligning Pedagogy with Physical Learning Spaces*, in which he and his coauthors argue that the “quality of education suffers when pedagogies are not aligned with physical learning spaces” (253), and conclude that “It is of utmost important to launch a discussion with teachers and students on the pedagogies they see as important for reaching the final attainment levels of their educational programme. It is only in the development of a shared pedagogical vision” (266). Since the pedagogical vision incumbent upon the current system of education is shifting in ways that make it difficult for physical spaces to accommodate the changes from traditional to digital learning experiences, the inference we can make is that the physical learning environment as we know it is becoming outdated, outmoded, and needs to make significant adaptations in order to avoid becoming altogether obsolete. Thus, the urgent need of schools to develop effective and efficient digital learning platforms meets the research and analysis that can be best provided by technical writers and researchers.

The Digital Learning Space

Inasmuch as the physical learning space is effectively becoming synonymous with what appear to be the increasing inefficiencies of an institution committed to an antiquated approach to learning, the digital learning space is still, for the most part, in its nascent stages and still tied to the physical space by the necessities of student access, educational resources, and instructor intervention. There are myriad options for digital learning platforms and programs, and nearly as

many ways to use them. One such platform is the “wiki.” Christopher Manion and Richard Selfe published a study in 2012 on the use of Wikis as a collaborative writing platform, specifically in the area of technical writing, in which they observe that “Wikis have generated a lot of excitement in the technical writing community because they seem to embody much of what composition theorists have long valued for writing instruction: collaboration” (25). In another study on the use of Wikis as collaborative tools, Alessandra Barrera conducted a three-year study in her classroom and reports that the results “demonstrate that the majority of the students view the wiki as the most useful course resource” when compared to other common, and more conventional, multimedia resources (424). The key to understanding the success of her study lays in her conclusion that the “use of the wiki provided a platform for students to collaborate on an asynchronous, virtual study guide that supported and reinforced course content” (425). Both of these studies emphasize the utility of Wikis as collaborative learning tools in an educational setting, but also imply their use as collaborative writing tools in a professional setting. Using a platform as a pedagogical tool that could also become a professional tool would be a tremendous benefit to helping students make the transition out of high school and into college or the workforce.

This concept of collaborative learning and the platforms used to teach them was also at the center of Jessica Behles’ study regarding the use of other online collaborative writing tools (OCWTs). Through the lens of comparing how their use translates from college students transitioning to working professionals, Behles posits that there exists a “reflective relationship between the field’s industry and pedagogy” (30), drawing her reader’s attention to the idea that the transition gap from college student to working professional is just as wide as that of a high

school student entering college. Her data reflects that, although students find collaborative programs to be effective learning tools, they still tend to undervalue their utility, but this may be due in part to their instructors not adequately preparing them for workforce collaboration. “An expanded study,” she suggests, “...may reveal whether educators are aware that OCWTs are widely used in industry—and, if whether they are capitalizing on that knowledge” (Behles 41). One possible interpretation of her research data is that professional users of collaborative platforms use them more effectively and achieve higher levels of productivity. Whether in reference to simple collaborative tools, or to other more immersive learning platforms, there can be no doubt that digital learning spaces will continue to dominate pedagogical approaches within the field of education, so the only question is how teachers and instructional institutions will fully utilize them as they adapt to the changing pedagogical paradigm.

However, the pedagogical paradigm may be changing more quickly than many people had anticipated. Once it became clear in the first few months of 2020 that COVID-19 was being considered a serious enough threat to warrant closing schools and sending students home to engage in home learning, the need for effective and efficient digital learning platforms reached a critical mass in a matter of days, not to mention the rapid development of the pedagogies with which teachers utilized these platforms. Programs such as Edmodo, Remind, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom became household brand names and essential digital learning platforms overnight. Teachers found themselves facing a completely digital classroom, most of them for the first time in their career. Digital collaborative tools replaced collaborative groups, discussion boards replaced class discussions, and group video feeds became the new face of direct instruction. Through this dynamic transition to digital learning, the future of education has been thrust into

our present lives. And with many industries stretching the limits of how many employees can work from home, the field of education is suddenly much closer to closing the gap between high school and industry.

Where this transition to online education formats most significantly intersects with Behles imperative to close the knowledge gap between the educational and professional worlds is in the realm of secondary education. Robert Ubell, writing for IEEE Spectrum, observes that “by the time U.S. campuses closed their gates on or about 30 March, nearly all undergraduate

and graduate courses had switched to online. Nothing in the history of higher education prepared our academic institutions to act with such uncanny speed” (Ubell). As a student already

enrolled in an online

program, I did not feel the effects of this dramatic switch, which is detailed by the graph (Figure 1) that highlighted the core of Ubell’s article. One thing that Ubell observes is that, in addition to the digital literacy already possessed by many of these students and instructors, “two key technologies really made a difference—a learning management system (LMS) and video conferencing” (Ubell). In other words, the technology that was vital to the success of online learning already existed in these institutions and COVID-19 was the catalyst by which administrators and teachers were forced to see just what this technology was capable of doing.

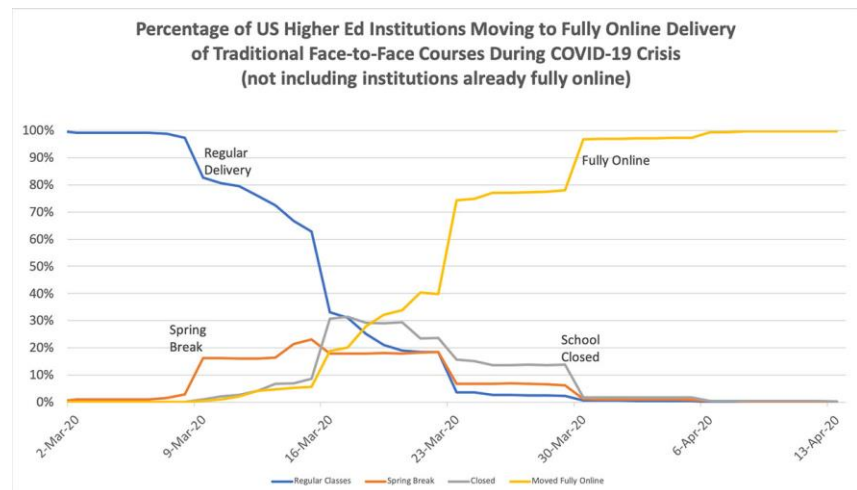


Fig. 1 – The switch to Online Learning (Ubell)

Figures 2 and 3 show how I applied some of Ubell’s metrics to my own school, showing how the COVID-19 shut down affected the course content delivery method (Fig.2) and the use of technology to deliver that content (Fig. 3). Unsurprisingly, the sudden shutdown in March of 2020 compelled 100% participation in distance learning and, equally unsurprising, a proportionate

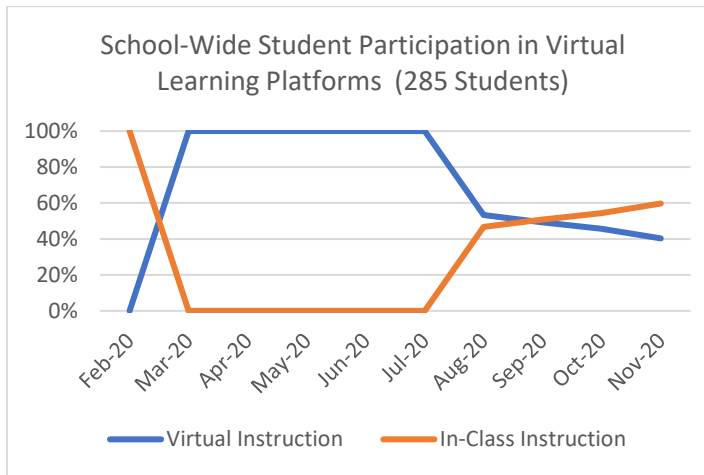


Fig. 2 – CCS school-wide participation levels

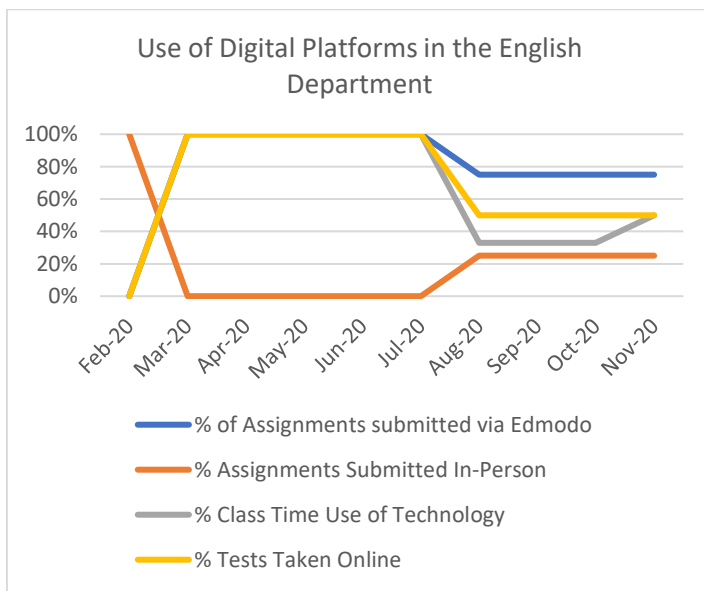


Fig. 3 – Use of Digital Platforms in the CCS English Department

100% increase in the use of digital learning platforms. What is interesting about this data is the portrait it presents of the school population with the new school year beginning in August of 2020. Immediately noticeable is that the percentage of the student participation in distance learning has not returned to pre-COVID numbers, which is due to the school-wide implementation of a staggered on-campus registration policy that capped on-campus population to accommodate social distancing

recommendations, which ultimately meant we began the school year at 47% capacity, which reflects the overall school population and not an average of class capacity. As the requirements

have been reduced, the percentage of on-campus students has increased accordingly as more students are allowed on campus.

What is most interesting about Figure 3 is that it shows, reflecting the participation in the English Department at my school, that the use of digital learning platforms and classroom technology in the new school year did not return to the pre-COVID levels in correlation to the number of students who returned to campus for the new school year, indicating a significantly increased reliance on these platforms as pedagogical tools. The digital learning platforms simply proved themselves to be valuable and effective pedagogical and curriculum tools that quickly supplanted the traditional means and methods of content delivery.

For further context and insight into Ubell's observation about this existing technology, Figure 4, created using data gathered in 2019 by Andrej Bastrikin for educationdata.org, shows that educators were using, or rather underutilizing, the existing digital platform technology primarily as tools for student communication and optimizing the time they spent performing various administrative tasks. Though Bastrikin's research focused on college-level instructors, this data could accurately describe how digital platforms were

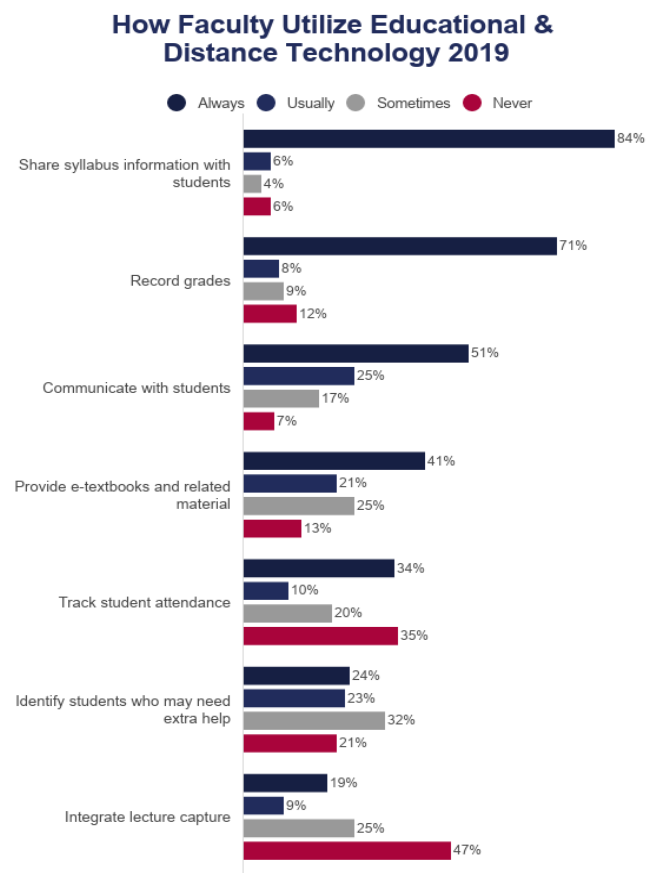


Fig. 4 (Bastrikin)

being utilized at my school, although I would say that we even more rarely used our available technology for the more advanced tasks such as to capture lectures. During the pre-COVID era, according to data from 2017, student enrollment in undergrad programs ranged from 13.3% enrolled part-time to 19.5% enrolled full-time in online courses. Graduate programs had a wider range of 9.1% enrolled part-time to 28.9% enrolled full-time in online courses. But by June of 2020, 97% of college students were enrolled in online learning, either part-time or full-time (Bastrikin). A companion graph showing the same data from post-COVID survey would be helpful to visualize these changes; unfortunately, such a graph has not yet been compiled or published by the data source. Nevertheless, instructors clearly had to quickly adapt the existing technology into a platform that would allow them to conduct their courses more holistically instead of utilizing the technology simply in the supplementary roles of student communication or administrative tasks.

Building a Better Digital Learning Space

Given these developments in the field of education in the months following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is a rather foregone conclusion schools will continue to adopt and use digital learning spaces on a much larger scale than ever before. The only real questions are the extent to which digital learning spaces will be utilized by schools and how can those spaces be improved, and what will be the role of technical literacy, rhetorical construction, and technical research in developing these spaces? Katherine Wenger surmises in the conclusion of her article, "Overview of Learning Theory, Instructional Design, Development, Implementation, and Assessment of an Introduction to Web Development Course Incorporating 21st Century Technology," that a "presentation of learning theory, instructional design development,

implementation, and assessment has been given...to illustrate how students learn using technology in the 21st century” (18). A rather obvious statement now, but one that reveals just how pervasive technology already has been in pedagogical applications. Throughout her research Wenger leans heavily on cognitive load theory, which John Sweller, along with co-researchers Ou hao Chen and Geoff Woolcott, defines as a concept “embedded in our knowledge of human cognitive architecture and evolutionary educational psychology,” and is “ideally paced to provide instructional design principles for all forms of computer-based learning” (Sweller, Chen, and Woolcott 293). Essentially, cognitive load theory suggests that digital learning spaces need to be developed as independent platforms and not just programs adapted from existing pedagogical approaches. That is to say, today’s researchers must not only consider existing pedagogical studies, but also anticipate and study the changing dynamics of how technology will impact and influence the future of education.

From this perspective, one role of technical research is to collect new data on how information travels across educational channels and how those patterns can be translated into data usable in constructing novel technology. As Sweller, Chen, and Woolcott argue, cognitive load theory “provides an integrated instructional design theory leading from our understanding of human cognitive architecture” (302). They then conclude that “Computer-based learning modules based on cognitive load theory principle should be very different to most systems currently available. We expect such cognitive load theory-based systems to be superior to systems do not use the recommendations of the theory” (303). In this way, technical researchers, alongside cognitive researchers and pedagogical researchers, have one possible framework in

which their data can be arranged to make sense to the people responsible for setting the goals and objectives for these new learning spaces.

Here again, Uddin and Janecek's work shines light on the issue, this time for their research of facet classification. According to their research, facet classification provides a context in which the digital information architectural systems are developed to improve the way websites organize information, and how users access that information. This system "focuses on semantic web technology, especially ontologies," and applies the "facet classification system to provide a dynamic structure for navigating over the content of a website" (231). In a practical sense, this suggests that facet classification and cognitive load theory both contribute to a systematic paradigm from which technical research can obtain objective goals, and in which rhetorical construction can find a blueprint.

Yet even in this paradigm there must be some flexibility due to the fact that the same digital learning platform, in order to be an effective learning tool, must be usable on multiple types of devices. Cathy Burnett's concept of classroom-ness, which she explains in her article "Investigating Pupils' Interactions Around Digital Texts: A Spatial Perspective on the 'Classroom-ness' of Digital Literacy Practices in Schools" does not entirely disappear in the digital context, "includes recognizing how spaces constantly shift" and is also "increasingly important as we move towards greater integration of mobile technologies" (207). Dominik Petko echoes this sentiment in his article "Teacher's Pedagogical Beliefs and Their Use of Digital Media in Classrooms: Sharpening the Focus of the 'Will, Skill, Tool' Model and Integrating Teachers' Constructivist Orientations," but adds a sense of urgency by reminding his readers that pedagogies dedicated to the physical learning space is increasingly less effective in preparing students for college or the

workplace, which again echoes the point made by Behles. He argues that “Regardless of the intensity of well-intentioned efforts at other levels...remedial measures will ultimately prove futile unless teachers have a fundamentally positive attitude toward the potential benefits of ICT (information and communication technologies)” (Petko 1352). Both Burnett and Petko draw our attention to the need of digital learning spaces to be built and constructed well if they are to be effective learning spaces, to the point where effectiveness can be measured by how well they prepare a student to participate in the workforce.

In an example of how necessary this type of preparation is in the real world, Michael Clayton and Matt Hettche conducted a study on information architecture and website usability and how undergrad marketing students use them to gain “real-world” experience. In their study they recognized the connection between the real-world and the classroom, ultimately suggesting that “advances in the classroom can be spawned by combining new and emerging topics from industry with well-established marketing theory” (Clayton and Hettche 31). The subtle implication made by this fusion of marketing theory and pedagogical application alludes to another point made earlier in this article that technical writers will fulfill roles in Education that they fulfill for other industries, not because technical writing is becoming more pedagogical, but rather because pedagogy is beginning to recognize its need for technical writing. But what does fitting these pieces together to build a better digital learning space look like? In one respect, specifically regarding technical writing, Lisa Meloncon and her coauthors argue, that the “reflective and reflexive work of field-wide metasyntesis is important to provide the field with a critical benchmark for the field’s pedagogical and programmic research” (Meloncon, et. al. 113). This means that many of the building blocks used for building and developing new pedagogical

approaches within the field of technical communication itself are quite naturally suited to build and develop the digital learning spaces in the field of Education.

Conclusions

When my school decided on incorporating a digital learning platform for the English department, we did so with the intention that it would eventually be incorporated as one of the primary learning tools in our curriculum. The discussions we had about what makes an effective digital learning space extended beyond the pedagogical utilization of any single program because they also represented our commitment to the shifting paradigm in the field of education. For my school, incorporating these digital learning platforms also represented a significant commitment to the sustainable future of our school by laying the new foundation upon which we will build our pedagogical approach in the new paradigm for the foreseeable future. As the technology and functionality of learning tools changes, the discourse we use to describe and define pedagogy must also change, which in turn requires an evolving understanding of technical literacy, rhetorical construction, and technical research.

Technical literacy impacts how we in the field of Education understand how information is presented and converted into new knowledge. Rhetorical construction impacts how we organize and frame information. Technical research impacts how we collect and analyze data about how digital learning spaces are utilized, optimized, and canonized. Because of their ability to professionally perform these three essential functions from different theoretical approaches, technical writers and pedagogical researchers are becoming critical components of curriculum content creation in a realm that was once the sovereign domain of scholars and academics who are all experts in their field. Change is pervasively inevitable in the field of Education. It is an

unstoppable force with no immovable object in its path. How we understand the concept and theory of learning has always been challenged and changed by new technologies, but never before has technology so dramatically altered the most fundamental nature of pedagogical approaches. Nevertheless, we must embrace these changes as Education is thrust into the digital age and, as we did with the physical classroom, we become masters of the digital learning space.

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Project 2

Syllabus and Unit Lesson Plan for an Introductory Literature Course

Introduction and Personal Reflection

This unit is both inspired by a similar unit I currently teach to my 10th-grade class and a vision of what I would ultimately like that unit to be. Although I initially had some concerns that the pacing may be a little intensive for students in an introductory course, especially one that is supposed to be designed for non-English majors, the course is flexible enough that any issues with pacing can be easily remedied by adding to or omitting from the number of short stories students are responsible to read in the unit. Even considering the type of students who would be most likely to take this course, those who are more predisposed to reading or drawn by the fact that this is an English class with only one short novel that they have probably already read, I believe this course to offer a significant and distinguished contribution to the academic breadth required by so many different major programs. As an English major myself, I was never required to take non-English classes that were truncated versions of the courses taken by students in that particular field, so I see no reason why this English class should be any less rigorous than any other taken by the most enthusiastic English major.

In terms of planning this unit I found myself encountering several challenges. The first challenge was that I had to develop my own parameters, scope and sequence, and expected academic outcomes without the boundaries typically established by a set curriculum. The second challenge was that of time. I spent much more time developing this unit than I had initially expected to spend, and I felt more rushed than I ever have when planning my high school units. This is because I can plan my classes weekly, and adjust them as needed in reaction to the

immediate needs of my students as I assess their comprehension and observe their daily activity. What planning this unit has taught me is that planning on this scale requires thoughtful anticipation as much as it does realistic expectations of what can and cannot be accomplished in the time allowed. Because planning this unit occurs long before I encounter any students who will engage its content in the classroom, I must rely on the pedagogical techniques and strategies that I have learned from experienced colleagues and from books such as Elaine Showalter's *Teaching Literature*. While resources such as books and knowledgeable colleagues would be helpful in teaching this course, I think what has been helpful in developing this course has been my experience as a teacher, knowing that students have responded well to the short stories I already teach.

What I hope is evident in this plan is a sincere desire to push students to accomplish something they may not have ever thought was possible to accomplish before they took this course. Additionally, I hope that it is equally evident that there is a concerted effort to use both familiar and unfamiliar texts and readings to teach students that universal literary elements dig deep into the human experience. In some ways I think that a literature course like this could be a little overwhelming for some students because there are several hard transitions from one genre to another. However, on the other hand, it could very well be the opposite. Some non-English Major students may appreciate the variety offered by a literary genre survey course because they are not academically committed to focusing on any one genre. If anything, I would say that this variety would be an aspect of this course that is both a strength and a weakness. A more easily identified weakness would be the relatively short time available for each unit, which could compress the information intended for students to absorb more organically. However, a

definite strength of this course is that a distinctive routine emerges that would help students systematize their effort and studies during the semester. Overall, I believe this to be a strong and challenging course that is certainly packed to the brim, but leaves room for students to learn new things about stories they perhaps thought they knew. This course also does a good job at breaking down preconceptions that an English class is all about reading some great big imposing novel and then writing a great big prodigious paper about it. As an instructor, I would want for my students to leave my class with the sense that getting an "A" is a true accomplishment.

Classroom Methodology, Assessment Methodology, and Pedagogical Philosophy

The most effective teachers I have ever had myself have never been the ones that stand behind a podium and recite all the course content, regardless of how much or how useful that information was. Instead, they have been active and engaging, energetic and dynamic, making each class session an event rather than an appointment. My own methods seek to imitate these models as closely as possible. However, I recognize that being such a teacher does not mean I am simply more entertaining than my colleagues, but rather that I can make learning exciting. This can be accomplished in many ways, but the easiest is to manage and organize various forms of media in conjunction with a relatively high level of student participation. Some of the most productive class sessions I have taught have been those where I do little more than circulate among groups of working students, occasionally answering a technical question or contributing my two cents on an interesting point I overhear in a conversation. Conversely, some of the least productive have been those in which have been the dominant or exclusive speaker.

Overall I think my methodology and pedagogical approach for this unit could be best described as balanced and interesting. Although I would be hard-pressed to find a fascinating video or dynamic piece of interactive media for every story we read, I do believe that we can tap into what makes stories like this so captivating to our existential human experience by connecting them to what fundamentally makes the writers, and by extension ourselves, human. One way of accomplishing this is to draw upon the overlaps and similarities between the social contexts of the writers and our own, making intentional appeals to pathos in the assignments, discussions, and readings for the unit content.

Expected Learning Outcomes

Although it not expected that students enter this class completely ignorant of these writers, their work, or the greater American cultural context in which they were writing, it is within reason to anticipate that few students will have the depth of exposure to the full breadth of the writers they will encounter in this unit. What is perhaps a little more anticipated is that many students may lack the exposure to short stories as an important literary genre. The expected outcomes upon the completion of this unit is that students have moved from the cursory understanding they possessed before we began the unit to a more comprehensive academic and theoretical knowledge of both the context and content of the short stories we read and studied. Students will be able to learn and apply close reading skills as well as practice critical analysis techniques. At the conclusion of this unit, students will not only be more familiar with the writers taught in this unit, but will also be more familiar with the historical and cultural significance surrounding their work.

In terms of assessment, students will read the stories throughout the unit, posting responses on CANVAS discussion boards posts and responding to other students. Students will be graded for the quality of the content they contribute to these online discussion boards, as well as participation in classroom discussions. At the conclusion of the unit, students will compose a brief response essay synthesizing some of the major ideas discussed during the unit.

Course Content

ENG 1500. Response to Literature (Literature and Genre) (3). Fall, Spring. A general education course emphasizing discussion of humanistic themes based on student responses to readings in fiction, drama, poetry and nonfiction. Not accepted toward English major or minor. Prerequisite: enrollment in or completion of GSW 1110. Applicable to the BG Perspective (general education) humanities and arts requirement.

SYLLABUS PROJECT

Syllabus for ENG 1500: Intro to Literary Genres

Instructor

Jonathan Davis

Email

jondav@bgsu.edu

Office Location & Hours

Room B8 / M Tu Th / 3:30p –
4:30p

General Information

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the varieties of literary genres, including the short story, poetry, and drama, and is intended to teach students how to recognize and analyze the more familiar literary elements in works that are more unfamiliar than the traditional novel. In addition to traditional literary analysis, the full scope of this course incorporates the study of the unique characteristics of the different genres and their significance to the cultural contexts of the authors who wrote these works and the readers who read them today.

Expectations and Goals

Students are expected and encouraged to make genuine and meaningful contributions to the class discussions, to be attentive and courteous during lectures and presentations, and to submit assignments on time that are both thorough and thoughtful.

By the end of this course, students will be able to...

- 1) Recognize and identify the distinctive formal characteristics and features of multiple genres of literature
- 2) Identify the fundamental literary elements in multiple literary genres
- 3) Independently and proficiently apply literary analysis techniques to multiple literary genres
- 4) Understand and critique the relationship between a text and its context.

Course Materials

Required Materials

The following materials are required in order to participate in several class activities and assignments

- Laptop or tablet computer
 - Student laptops may **ONLY** be used during lectures or other class activities to work on or complete coursework. No other personal electronic devices may be used in class during class time.
- Active CANVAS account

Required Texts

- Rostand, Edmond. *Cyrano De Bergerac*. Translated by Louis Untermeyer, Dover Publications, 2000. [ISBN 9780486411194]
- Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*
- ENG 1500 Short Story Collection (Bound copy)
- Various other Reading materials and online resources will be made available throughout the course (Poetry Set 1, 2, and 3; Articles 1-4)

Course Schedule

Week	Lesson Schedule	In-Class Activities	Assignment
1 Unit 1: Intro to Literature and Genre	Day 1: Course Intro & Syllabus Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Syllabus overview - Discuss student expectations and experiences - Lecture/Discussion: What is Literature? 	1) Read: Article #1 (TBA) 2) Discussion Board Post #1
	Day 2: Introduction to Literature and Genre (Cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: What is Genre? - Discovery Activity #1 – What do we know about Literature and Genre? 	
2 Unit 1: Intro to Literature and Genre	Day 3: Elements of Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: Essential Elements of Literature - Discuss: What do we analyze when we analyze literature? 	1) Read: Article #2 (Prose) 2) Discussion Board Post #2
	Day 4: Fundamentals of Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: Fundamentals of Genre - Discovery Activity #2 – What are unique characteristics about the short story genre? 	
3 Unit 2: Short Fiction	Day 5: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction Part 1 (Poe/Melville)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce Unit 2 – Short Story - Lecture/Discussion: Context for SSC 1 (Poe/Melville) - Overview of Literary Movements 	1) Read Short Story Collection (SSC) Part 1 (Poe/Melville) 2) Discussion Board Post #3
	Day 6: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction Part 1 (Poe/Melville)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss literary elements and characteristics of Short Stories - 	
4 Unit 2: Short Fiction	Day 7: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction Part 2 (Twain/Bierce/Crane)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review SSC Part 1 - Reactions - Lecture/Discussion: Context for SSC Part 2 	1) Read: SSC Part 2 (Twain/Bierce/Crane) 2) Discussion Board Post #4
	Day 8: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction Part 2 (Twain/Bierce/Crane)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss literary elements and characteristics of context - Close Reading SSC Part 2 	
5 Unit 2: Short Fiction	Day 9: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction Part 3 (Hemingway/Faulkner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review SSC Part 2 - Reactions - Lecture/Discussion: Context for SSC Part 3 	1) Read: SSC Part 3 (Hemingway/Faulkner) 2) Discussion Board Post #5
	Day 10: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction Part 3 (Hemingway/Faulkner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss literary elements and characteristics of Modernism - Discovery Activity #3 – Does literature reflect culture? 	
6	Day 11: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction Part 4 (Chopin/Gilman/Mansfield)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: Context for SSC Part 4 	1) Read: SSC Part 4 (Chopin/Gilman/Mansfield)

Unit 2: Short Fiction	Day 12: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction Part 4 (Chopin/Gilman/Mansfield)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss literary elements and characteristics of The Feminine Voice - Discovery Activity #4 – Student Cooperative Groups for Unit 2 Response Essay 	2) Begin Unit 2 Response Essay 3) Review Drafts posted online for Peer Reviews
7 Unit 3: Drama	Day 13: Literature and Genre: Drama (Comedy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: Context for Rostand & CdB - Discuss: Comedy & Satire 	1) Unit 2 Response Essay DUE 2) Read: <i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i>
	Day 14: Literature and Genre: Drama (Comedy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close Readings & Discussion – CdB Act 1-3 - 	
8 Unit 3: Drama	Day 15: Literature and Genre: Drama (Comedy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close Readings & Discussion – CdB Act 4-5 	1) Read: <i>Cyrano de Bergerac</i> 2) Discussion Board Post #6
	Day 16: Literature and Genre: Drama (Comedy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch & compare selected clips from different productions - Discovery Activity #5 – How does staging & production affect our interpretation of the play? 	
9 Unit 3: Drama	Day 17: Literature and Genre: Drama (Tragedy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: Context for Shakespeare and R&J - Discuss Tragedy & Tone - Discuss: How do our preconceptions affect our reading of the play? 	1) Read: <i>Romeo & Juliet</i> 2) Discussion Board Post #7
	Day 18: Literature and Genre: Drama (Tragedy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close Reading & Discussion – R&J Act 1-3 - 	
10 Unit 3: Drama	Day 19: Literature and Genre: Drama (Tragedy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close Reading & Discussion – R&J Act 4-5 - 	1) Read: <i>Romeo & Juliet</i> 2) QUIZ: Unit 3 3) Read Poetry Set #1 (Sonnets, Whitman, Cummings)
	Day 20: Literature and Genre: Drama (Tragedy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion & Discovery Activity #6 – What are similarities/differences between the two couples (C&R/R&J)? - Unit 3 concluding thoughts 	
11 Unit 4: Poetry	Day 21: Literature and Genre: Poetry (Form & Structure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: Poetic Form & Purpose - Review/Discuss Poetry Set #1 	1) Read Article #3 2) Discussion Board Post #8
	Day 22: Literature and Genre: Poetry (Form & Structure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close Reading Poetry Set #1 (Student Selection) - 	
12 Unit 4: Poetry	Day 23: Literature and Genre: Poetry (Metaphor & Symbol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: Metaphor, Symbolism, and Meaning - Discovery Activity #7 – How does context affect Metaphor, Symbolism, and Meaning? 	1) Read: Poetry Set #2 (War poets, Collins, Harlem Poets) 2) Discussion Board Post #9

	Day 24: Literature and Genre: Poetry (Metaphor & Symbol)	- Review/Discuss Poetry Set #2 - Close Reading Poetry Set #2 (Student Selection)	
13 Unit 4: Poetry	Day 25: Literature and Genre: Poetry (The Poet and The Reader)	- Lecture/Discussion: Who is the Poet & What is a Poem? - Discovery Activity #8 – Poetry, Rhetoric, and Language	1) Read: Poetry Set #3 (Williams, Sampson, Neruda) 2) Begin Unit 4 Project (Writing Poetry)
	Day 26: Literature and Genre: Poetry (The Poet and The Reader)	- Review/Discuss Poetry Set #3 - Close Reading Poetry Set #3 (Student Selection)	
14 Unit 4: Poetry	Day 27: Literature and Genre: Poetry (Writing & Application)	- Lecture/Discussion: Who is the Poet & What is a Poem? (Part 2) - Review/Overview Unit 4	1) Discussion Board Post #10
	Day 28: Literature and Genre: Poetry (Writing & Application)	- Student Poems Workshop - Unit 4 concluding Thoughts	
15 Unit 5: Reflection and Synthesis	Day 29: Literature and Genre: Genre Analysis (Novel)	- Lecture/Discussion: Elements of Literature & the Novel -	1) Unit 4 Project (Writing Poetry) DUE 2) Read: <i>Lord of the Flies</i> 3) Discussion Board Post #11
	Day 30: Literature and Genre: Genre Analysis (Novel)	- Discovery Activity #9 – Student Group novel discussions	
16 Unit 5: Reflection and Synthesis	Day 31: Literature and Genre: Genre Synthesis	- Lecture/Discussion: Elements of Literature Across multiple genres - Review/Discuss Novel <i>Lord of the Flies</i> - Discovery Activity #10 – Literature and Genre	1) Read Article #4 2) Discussion Board Post #12 3) QUIZ #2 (Final Exam)
	Day 32: Literature and Genre: Genre Synthesis	- Unit 5 concluding thoughts	

Additional Information and Resources

Academic Integrity

The university and the course instructor assume that every assignment submitted by any student is submitted in accordance with university guidelines regarding academic integrity and is the original work of that student submitted in good faith to be without plagiarized content. Any assignment submitted that has been determined to contain deliberately plagiarized content will receive a score of “0” and that student will be immediately removed from the course and be given a failing grade for the course. That student will then be subject to the rules and regulations of the university governing student conduct and academic dishonesty.

Attendance Policy

Because many assignments and class discussions will rely heavily on student contributions and peer feedback, student attendance is mandatory unless there is a medical or personal emergency that prevents the students from attending class. However, in order to accommodate the

unpredictability of life events, a student may miss ONE class during the semester without penalty. Any student who misses three consecutive class meetings will be dropped from the course and subject to the university's policies regarding courses dropped during the semester term. A student arriving more than 15 minutes after the beginning of class will not be admitted to class for that day and will receive an absence even if the student elects to remain in class.

Technology in the Classroom

Students may use laptops or other tablet type computer devices in class for the purpose of taking notes or to work on and complete assignments for this course. The use of other personal electronic devices, except for those devices used to assist a student with an impairment or disability, is not permitted during class time. Technology in the classroom is to be considered a tool used to help foster technological literacy and proficiency in completing assignments.

Student Participation

Students should actively and consistently participate in classroom activities, including general class discussions and Discovery Activities. This interaction is a critical element of students being able to more thoroughly and precisely express their thoughts and ideas about the topics and assignments in the class. Positive and effective student participation will contribute to an efficient and productive academic environment, which will further encourage students to stretch and expand their understanding of the course subject material.

Here are some suggestions on how to be a positive contributor to the class:

- Be considerate of your classmates when speaking and listening
- Avoid making personal attacks in your comments in class discussions or during peer reviews
- Be prepared to articulate your thoughts as informed opinions by reading and understanding the assigned texts
- Remember that everyone here is on the same team and we're all here for the same reason!
- Maintain professional communication with your classmates and your instructor outside of class
- Look at the class as a cooperative community instead of a competition of personal achievement

Revisions and Extra Credit

Any student who is unsatisfied with a grade received on a project submitted on or before the posted due date can exercise an option to revise that assignment. Revisions must exhibit a significant improvement in one or more areas of the original assignment and do not have to be limited to the suggestions made by the instructor or by peer reviewers. Extra Credit Revisions must be completed and the assignment resubmitted three days after receiving instructor approval. The updated score given to this assignment is the average of the original score and the score received on the revised draft.

Additional Extra credit can be awarded at the conclusion of the term to students who have consistently exceeded requirements and expectations on both major assignments throughout the course.

Late Work

Students are expected to submit each assignment on time and with obvious consideration given to its academic presentation and content. However, life events can be unpredictable and sometimes they are completely unavoidable. In the event that an assignment is not submitted by the posted deadline due to unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances, each student can miss one Discussion Board post without penalty and is allowed a “Mulligan” for either major assignments for the course. This “Mulligan” allows a student to submit an assignment the next class period after the original due date before penalties are applied. Assignments which are submitted late for any other reason are accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

Assignment Summaries

- 1) **Reading the Text** – Every student is expected to read the assigned reading material thoroughly and to have a comprehensive understanding of the subjects and topics of each assignment. This reading will provide the foundation for understanding the lectures and for being an active and positive contributor during class discussions.
- 2) **Notes** – Students are encouraged to take notes during lectures, when reading the assigned texts, and while participating in group discussions. Lecture notes can be used as reference material for Quizzes. Composition notes for written assignments are required to be submitted with the final draft of that assignment.
- 3) **Class Discussions & Discovery Activities** – Following a lecture, students will participate in a group discussion or group Discovery Activity regarding the principles, practices, or concepts they have learned. As part of these discussion groups, each student will have opportunities to collaborate on group tasks or offer peer support on individual tasks. Discussion groups will also facilitate cooperation in annotating the assigned reading.
- 4) **CANVAS Discussion Board Posts** – Short essay assignments in which the student practices the application of new skills and responds to course material being studied by participating in a CANVAS Discussion Board. These assignments follow a prompt provided by the instructor and must be 450-600 words of original written content. **STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO CONTRIBUTE A MINIMUM OF ONE ORIGINAL POST & RESPOND TO THREE CLASSMATE POSTS.**
- 5) **Major Projects** – Students are to complete and submit four major projects. These projects each have prompts, due dates, requirements, and objectives outlined in detail on each individual assignment sheets provided by the instructor.
- 6) **Quizzes** – Quizzes are short, cumulative assessments of student retention and comprehension of course material.

Class Communication Protocols and Etiquette

By participating in this course, both the students and the instructor are committing to communicating in a professional and courteous manner at all times. Both the Instructor and the Students will provide constructive criticism whenever appropriate and will make their contributions to group discussions respectfully, and will be considerate and polite while listening to or reading the contributions of others in the class.

What is considered appropriate behavior and conduct in class is also considered appropriate behavior for any electronic communication between students or between students and the instructor. Students who wish to contact the instructor via email may do so at any time, to which the instructor will reply at the earliest convenience and with consideration to the urgency of the student's communication. Students who wish to visit the instructor in person must do so by visiting the instructor during posted office hours. Appointments are not required to meet with the Instructor during office hours, but it is recommended.

Grading and Assessment

- 1) **Participation:** Class Participation is informally assessed by how frequently and to what degree students are actively engaged in class discussions. Participation in Discovery Activities receives a grade and is measured by each student's active participation and positive contributions to the student group. This is worth 12% of the overall course grade.
- 2) **Written Responses (CANVAS):** Assessments of student participation in CANVAS Discussion Boards are based on completion of technical requirements, academic integrity of the student's posts and responses, and quality of the student's engagement and interaction with other posts. Participation in CANVAS discussion boards is required and the quality of contributed posts and comments is the primary criteria of assessment. Discussion board posts and responses are cumulatively worth 38% of the overall course grade.
- 3) **Written Responses (Projects):** Assessments of a student's development and application of the writing skills taught in this course. Written responses are graded on a 50-point scale according to the rubric provided for that assignment. Together, these four projects are worth 40% of the overall class grade. **All Projects must be submitted in order to pass this course.**
- 4) **Quizzes:** Students receive a Pass/Fail grade based on their active participation and constructive contributions in Peer Reviews. This is worth 20% of the overall course grade. **All Quizzes must be completed in order to pass this course.**

Assignment/Project	Points	Quantity	Total
CANVAS Board Posts	25	12	300
Discovery Activities	10	10	100
Project #1 (Unit 2 Response Essay)	200	1	200
Project #2	200	1	200

(Unit 4 Poem & Poetry)			
QUIZ #1	100	1	100
QUIZ #2	100	1	100
		TOTAL	1000

Additional Course Resources (Dr. Hoy)

Learning Commons Services: Writing Center

The Learning Commons' Writing Center is a valuable resource that provides students with individual assistance with writing their papers – free of charge. Contact information: 140 Jerome Library / (419) 372-2823 / tlc@bgsu.edu. The Learning Commons' Writing Center offers a variety of services, including online consultations which can be accessed through their website: <http://www.bgsu.edu/learning-commons/writing.html> . While the tutors at the Writing Center can be very helpful, you will need to plan ahead. An email response may take up to 72-hours, and staff may not always be available on weekends to give immediate feedback.

Online Assistance with BGSU's Library Resources

The Welcome New Students LibGuide explains the ins and outs of using the Jerome Library. You should use this site for basic information regarding the library, including how to check out materials and how to renew materials online. This URL will take you there:

<http://libguides.bgsu.edu/content.php?pid=94029&sid=702141>

GSW 1100/1110 LibGuide

To help familiarize yourself with an academic library, review the online LibGuide site that has been assembled for GSW 1100 and 1110 by the staff of the Jerome Library: <http://libguides.bgsu.edu/gsw1100-1110> This LibGuide is also available by going to the main library web page and clicking on "LibGuides." As you will see, the GSW 1100/1110 LibGuide provides significant assistance with search strategies, the use of the Library's databases, integration of sources into papers, academic honesty, and more. The site also contains an IM Chat Box which will allow you to ask a question which will be responded to immediately by a BGSU librarian.

The Collab Lab

The Collab Lab, located in the library, is a resource for faculty and students who need assistance with different types of technology. The Collab Lab offers software tutorials, a variety of workshops, and digital equipment borrowing, including a laptop loan program. Students and faculty may walk-in or schedule an appointment for one-to-one or for small group assistance. Please see the website for more information: <http://www.bgsu.edu/library/collab-lab.html>

Final Thoughts

This course is intended to be highly active and interactive and depends heavily on student contributions in online and in-person discussions to make this a successful academic experience. If at any point you find yourself not fully understanding a concept, idea, or if you are stuck on an assignment and need a little nudge in the right direction, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or to any of your classmates who are willing to help you with your questions or concerns. We

are all in this together and it's much easier to get to where we need to be if we all row the boat in the same direction.

Thank you for being here and let's all have a wonderful semester!

UNIT LESSON PLAN

ENG 1500. Response to Literature (Literature and Genre) (3). Fall, Spring. A general education course emphasizing discussion of humanistic themes based on student responses to readings in fiction, drama, poetry and nonfiction. Not accepted toward English major or minor. Prerequisite: enrollment in or completion of GSW 1110. Applicable to the BG Perspective (general education) humanities and arts requirement.

Unit Title

Unit 2: Literature and Genre: Short Fiction

Previous Unit

Unit 1: Intro to Literature and Genre

Following Unit

Unit 3: Drama

Academic Level

Freshman, Introductory-level Literary Genre Survey Course

Expected Time Line

Four Weeks

Course Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to...

- 1) Identify the distinctive characteristics of a short story
- 2) Articulate and analyze various elements of literature used in short stories
- 3) Distinguish the unique styles utilized by different Short story writers
- 4) Understand the cultural and social contexts in which various short story authors lived and wrote the works we study in this unit

Guiding Questions

Some have argued that the short story is a distinctively American Literary genre. Whether or not this is true, what can be sure is that many of these writers were composing and publishing their works during a dynamic and exciting period of American history in which significant characteristics of the American identity was being hewn and cultivated. Our studies in this unit will emphasize the following topics and issues (These questions will serve as prompts for Discussion Board Posts):

- What are some of the distinctive ways that short stories use, or don't use, language?
- How do the characteristics and contexts of these writers and their work help us understand the development of the "American identity"?
- What features of each of the different authors distinguish them from the other writers?

- Why do you think the short story emerged as such a prominent genre of literature?

Technological Needs

- Computer with projector (or some other means) for digital presentations
- Internet access to show videos and other online resources

Materials Needed

- Introductory PowerPoint presentation
- Academic Articles: "What Makes a Short Story?" (Francine Prose)
- Short Story Collection: (Poe) "Masque of the Red Death," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Pit and the Pendulum;" (Melville) "The Bell Tower," "Bartleby, the Scrivener;" (Mark Twain) "Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County", "Eve's Diary", and "A Dog's Tale"; (Bierce) "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge", "A Providential Intimation"; (Crane) "The Open Boat," "The Duel that Was Not Fought;" (Hemingway) "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," "The Capitol of the World," "Hills Like White Elephants," "The End of Something;" (Faulkner) "Two Soldiers," "Dry September," "A Rose for Emily;" (Chopin) "The Story of an Hour;" (Gilman) "The Yellow Wallpaper;" (Mansfield) "The Fly"; (Baldwin) "Sonny' Blues," "The Rockpile"

Lesson Unit Overview

<u>Week</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>In-Class Activity</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce Unit 2 – Short Story (Read Prose’ “What Makes a Short Story”) - Lecture/Discussion: Context for SSC Part1 (Poe/Melville) - Overview of Literary Movements 	3) Read Prose’ “What Makes a Short Story” – Answer 3 Questions 4) Read: Short Story Collection (SSC) Part 1 (Poe/Melville)
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss literary elements and characteristics of Short Stories 	1) Online Discussion Board Post #3
2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review SSC Part 1 - Reactions - Lecture/Discussion: Context for SSC Part 2 	1) Read: SSC Part 2 (Twain/Bierce/Crane)
	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss literary elements and characteristics of context - Close Reading SSC Part 2 	1) Online Discussion Board Post #4
3	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review SSC Part 2 - Reactions - Lecture/Discussion: Context for SSC Part 3 	1) Read: SSC Part 3 (Hemingway/Faulkner/Baldwin)
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss literary elements and characteristics of Modernism - Discovery Activity #3 – Does literature reflect culture, or does culture reflect literature? 	1) Online Discussion Board Post #5
4	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecture/Discussion: Context for SSC Part 4 - Individual Prewriting for Unit 2 Response Essay 	1) Read: SSC Part 4 (Chopin/Gilman/Mansfield) 2) Begin Unit 2 Response Essay
	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss literary elements and characteristics of The Feminine Voice - Discovery Activity #4 – Student Cooperative Groups for Unit 2 Response Essay 	1) Continue working on Unit 2 Response Essay

Major Assignment

Unit 2 Response Essay

Introduction:

We have studied multiple authors that were major contributors to defining the genre of the American Short Story and whose work characterized the dominant features of American Literature during the times in which they were writing, and we made careful observations of the features that distinguish this as an important genre in American Literature.

Assignment:

Although each of these authors made their own significant contributions to the American Literature, we can also study how they each also move in concert to help define the short story genre. Your assignment is to compose a brief synthesis of the literary characteristics and standards that three of the authors we studied contribute to our understanding of how to define and understand a short story. Include at least one quote from the work of each author you have chosen.

Technical Requirements:

Please follow the technical requirements for this essay.

- 1) Use MLA format and style for citations, essay structure, and assignment heading
 - a. Default document setting are preferred
 - b. Font size: 12
 - c. Minimum citations required: 3
- 2) Essay must have a minimum of 1000 words
- 3) Submit a Review Draft to CANVAS Discussion Board by _____ [Date TBA] _____
 - a. Review Draft is reviewed on CANVAS during Peer Reviews in lieu of Discussion Board Posts
 - b. Participation in Peer Reviews is a graded portion of this project
- 4) Submit FINAL Draft to CANVAS Assignment Board by _____ [Date TBA] _____
 - a. FINAL Draft to be submitted digitally
 - b. Submit all Prewriting and Peer Review documentation on due date with FINAL Draft

Project 3

On the Synergistic Modal Intersections of Graphic Novels

Introduction

Graphic novels have never really been any significant part of my life, nor can I say that I ever knew very many people who were into comics. Over the course of my entire life, my entire comic book collection has consisted of two comics, and each was given to me as a gift. Many of the comics that come to mind when we think of “comic books” are technically more accurately categorized as graphic novels because they contain so many of the characteristics of a novel, the only formal difference being that a graphic novel is illustrated and a written novel is not. The history of graphic novels, at least in terms of how we have come to regard them as a serious genre of literature, could be described as a constant struggle against the stigma of being a counter-cultural medium, and therefore to be mistrusted. Graphic novels were an emerging art form in the mid-twentieth century, but their ascent into the acceptable academic canons of literature was met by the pushback of growing public concern that comics were dangerous and subversive, ultimately culminating in Frederic Wertham’s book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, published in 1954. This book was enormously influential, largely due to the fact that Wertham was a well-known and well-respected psychiatrist at the time of its publication. On the influence of this book, Daniel Clark and Krystal Howard, in their article “The American Comic Book,” make the somewhat ominous statement that “[Wertham’s] campaign and many fearful media reports preceded the United States State Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency’s hearings” (11), drawing us to the obvious conclusion that the concerns over the effects of reading comics had created enough

controversy that the subject made its way before a Senate Subcommittee, which is no small task. But the controversy did not stop there. As Clark and Howard continue, they write that “the resulting furor of the hearings led to the forming of the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA), which was granted wide censoring authority over the comic book industry” (12).

Needless to say, the cultural zeitgeist of the same decade that made McCarthyism a reality and viewed the advent of rock and roll as the “devil’s music” would not be very welcoming to the idea of granting graphic novels the status of a legitimate literary genre. The decisions of the CMAA largely reflected public sentiment against comics, heavily censoring the amount and types of violence that could be depicted and illustrated on the pages of comic books. However, Clark and Howard dedicate only a section of their article to the history of public sentiment and government censorship of comic books, and instead focus most of their efforts to describing how the genre evolved over time, from the late-19th century political cartoons to the modern graphic novels of Art Spiegelman and Gene Yang. Yet, in covering the scope of the history of how comics developed as culturally relevant and socially acceptable art form, they do not really touch on graphic novels as a narrative form. In fact, much of the controversy surrounding comics over the last six decades has been by far about the content of comics, not their narratives. It was the violent and sometimes sexual content that lead to the public outcry at the center of Wertham’s work and, subsequently, of the creation of the CMAA.

But graphic novels are far more complex than a simple series of images. According to Lina Sun, graphic novels “accommodate nuances, ambiguities, and differing viewpoints *through a dynamic synergy of verbal and visual representations* (emphasis added).” She adds, in terms of their value as cultural and social artifacts, that “graphic novels may in fact offer the best avenue

to contemplate the realities of war or revolution” (24). On one hand, Sun offers a dramatic argument in favor of accepting graphic novels as a serious and legitimate literary genre; on the other hand, her more subversive rhetoric seems to justify the indictments in Wertham’s book against the social influence of comics. The true power of Sun’s article rests in her connection of the “dynamic synergy” of graphic novels to student literacy. “The lineage of graphic novels...defines their viability as a resource,” she writes, “Yet the unique attributes that link the genre to comic books—the interplay between images and text—are exactly what make graphic novels an engaging narrative form for students to explore sophisticated sociopolitical issues” (23). This interplay between image and text will be the focus of this essay, specifically in the sense that graphic novels present a unique and versatile modal intersection of visual art and rhetorical text. This modality can especially be seen through the narratives created by the images and text, which utilizes multiples rhetorical vehicles to influence the audience’s understanding and interpretation of social and cultural contexts. This essay will be analyzing this concept using several modern graphic novels, namely *Sabrina* by Nick Drnaso, *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui, *Rolling Blackouts* by Sarah Glidden, and *A Child in Palestine* by Naji al-Ali.

Graphic Novels as Narrative Vehicles

The focus of Wertham’s book, his campaign against comics, and the public opinion against the viability of comics in the 1950s was virtually exclusively on the content on graphic novels. At first glance this may not seem to be a problematic approach to understanding comics since the singular most defining characteristic of graphic novels is that they are primarily a visual medium. However, when approached with a wider perspective, a more objective position can be taken

when we look at the term “graphic novel” itself. The word “novel” is familiar enough, particularly in the realm of literature. Whether it is *Don Quixote* or the latest novel whose pages are still warm from the presses, the distinctive characteristics and features of what we call the novel are easily recognized. Scholars may debate what makes for a good novel, or what it means to push the boundaries of what defines a novel, but in terms of the general population the novel is a relatively simple concept to grasp. The word “graphic” simply means something appealing to our visual sense, most commonly with words like “photograph” and “polygraph,” essentially referring to some sort of visual representation of some aspect of the world around us.

The stigma surrounding graphic novels in public discourse is understandable given that they are generally seen, from the perspective of a cursory pedestrian understanding, merely as a form of consumable visual entertainment full of geeky superheroes. Consider, for instance, how comic books fans are portrayed in other forms of media, most notably in the stereotypical character in the show *The Simpsons* known as “Comic Book Guy” (see Figure 1). This public aversion is somewhat understandable in the context of the cultural



Figure 1

Comic Book Man: Morbidly obese, cynical, and cruelly condescending to everyone he encounters. Sense of superiority based entirely on his vast knowledge of comics.

discourse Wertham established around comics, but it is perplexing to see the literary world just as reluctant to embrace graphic novels because of the elephant in the room, which is, regardless of its presentation, a graphic novel tells a story. The fact that the story, or the narrative, is told with a combination of text and images should increase its appeal as a narrative form, and this shift has begun to occur in recent years.

Skeptical objections to the idea that graphic novels are narrative vehicles usually gravitate towards some form of the argument that graphic novels are simply too stylistically different from traditional novels, but this kind of skepticism is usually founded on the position that written novels are works of literature while comics, if granted any artistic merit at all, are novelty works of visual art. That is, they essentially share the same distinction made between a painting and a poem. Another skeptical perspective may not argue whether graphic novels are narrative vehicles, but rather whether they are *effective* narrative vehicles. Traditional novels leave the visual imagery conjured up by the text to the realm of the reader's imagination, whereas graphic novels very literally provide the illustrations. But something interesting happens when we engage with such vividly visual narratives: we are able to read and visualize the narrative simultaneously, seeing both the text and the image the text creates together, instead of sequentially, seeing the text and then using the text to create an image in our mind. Courtney Donovan and Ebru Ustundag write of this in their article titled *Graphic Narratives, Trauma, and Social Justice*, arguing that "by intertwining written text and visual imagery, graphic narrative effectively accommodates the nuances of traumatic experiences that written testimony alone cannot fully capture." Adding that "graphic narratives, which incorporate multiple modes of communication, provide more robust platforms for articulating these experiential complexities" (223). Donovan and Ustundag specifically refer to human trauma, but because they link graphic narrative to human experience, the word "trauma" can simply be replaced by any word descriptive of human experience and the principle remains true.

Yet trauma, or any other equally powerful human experience, is not in and of itself a narrative. It cannot be a mere stationary phenomenon or emotional singularity. There has to be

movement from one point to another. Narrative is the story that movement tells. In Thi Bui's graphic novel, the trauma is the tragic, gripping story she tells of how her parents came to America from Vietnam. It quite literally moves from one place to another, eventually ameliorating into the hope that her own child will never know such traumatic experiences. Nick Drnaso's *Sabrina* takes a different angle on trauma, instead making it an internal movement within the characters. Sarah Glidden's approach in *Rolling Blackouts* incorporated elements of both internal and external movements in her novel's multiple complex, intertwined narratives.

What all three artists have in common is that each relies on the illustrations of their graphic novels to not only present the narrative, but also to propel it forward. Glidden, in several different

video interviews, noted that she included background details in many of her illustrations that reflect the culture specific to the people they visit on their journalism expedition, giving the novel an intimacy that would be difficult to convey with words. Drnaso uses empty space, sparse drawings and dark tones to communicate the despair and hopelessness of his characters in a way that it simply lingers throughout the narrative, page after page (See Figure 2). Inescapably present

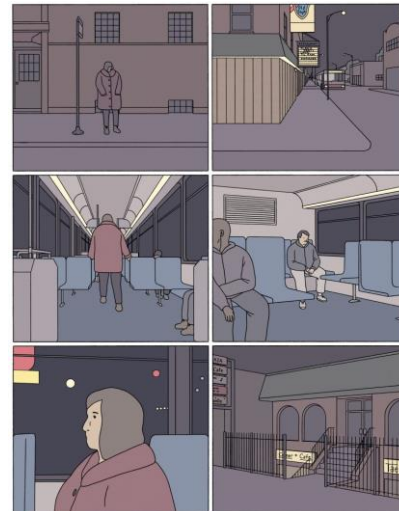


Figure 2
Sabrina. Nick Drnaso

throughout Drnaso's work in *Sabrina* is McCloud's theory of "masking," which "points to the visually abstracted drawings of faces typically used in comics can act like masks that readers project themselves onto, allowing them to feel as if they are entering the world of the comic through the eyes and emotions of the characters" (Humphrey 461). This is comparatively easy to accomplish with comics. For a written text to achieve a similar effect the author would need to

constantly remind the reader of this ominous mood with every other sentence, which would be far less effective.

A narrative, in one sense, is a series of events that coalesce into, or at least towards, a singular meaning. In a novel this means the constant cycle of conflict, tension, and resolution that builds upon itself with every page turned. Traditional novels excel at this when they capture the reader's attention, blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction as the reader constructs in his mind an entire universe to contain the narrative of the text. However, where traditional novels excel at cultivating a narrative, graphic novels are perhaps even more proficient. The sometimes nebulous, perhaps vague images a reader creates while reading a text are much more richly presented in sharp, intentional detail in a comic. The admonition of creative writing teachers everywhere to "show, don't tell" is nowhere more literally or more effectively demonstrated than in a well-illustrated graphic novel.

Shaun Tan, a graphic novelist who won an Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film in 2011 for an adaptation of his own graphic novel *The Lost Thing*, commented on the relationship between artist and reader in an interview with Chris Wood for the South Chin Post Magazine. "As an author," Tan says, "there's nothing more rewarding than not just having somebody read your work but having the themes and ideas that inspired the book revived in the minds and imagination of readers and debated as part of a community discussion" (Wood). To some extent, Tan probably speaks for every graphic novelist, in the sense that the narratives they create were made with the purpose of being read and understood by the reader. Although Tan is most well-known for his work in film, it is his work as a graphic novelist that has a more meaningful impact on the "community discussion." His 2006 graphic novel, *The Arrival*, like several other graphic

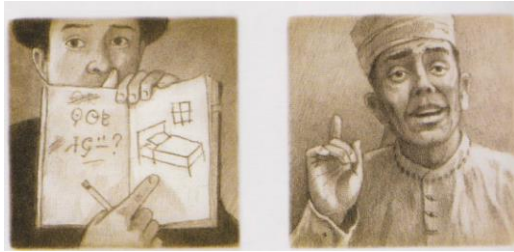


Figure 3
The Arrival. Shaun Tan

novels already covered in this essay, documents the experiences and struggles of a refugee family trying to make sense of their new life. What most noticeably makes Tan's work unique here is that it is completely wordless, relying on the graphic imagery, which is much more stylistically surreal than any of the other graphic novels, to tell the narrative and it is tremendously effective at connecting to his audience through images (See Figure 3).

While Tan personifies this quality well, we cannot forget that film is yet another compelling narrative medium which relies heavily on visual graphic to tell its story. The very idea of moving pictures to tell a story has quite an obvious place in any discussion on the use of visual media to tell a narrative. So what connection is there between comics and films? In his TEDx presentation from 2011 entitled 'How to Read a Comic Book,' Michael Chaney points out that there are a surprising number of movies that are based on comic books, prompting the question "why are so many movies these days based on comics?" (1:43). He gives several answers related to the psychology of identification, recognition, and masking that take place, arguing that film mobilizes these processes, which can give depth to the imagery. What ultimately binds film and comics together is the distinctive characteristic of using visual media to tell a narrative, the only difference being one image is fixed on a page and one image is moving on a screen. What is most interesting about Chaney's talk is that he argues that comics actually do a better job of presenting a visual narrative than films. As a film audience, we are "passive spectators" to the narrative (9:59), unable to exercise any control over the pace with which we ingest the story. As comic readers, on the other hand, we control every moment of the pace with which we read and

determine for ourselves how much we want to concentrate on every panel. Not only are comics effective narrative vehicles, but there is also a deeper immediacy to the narrative they tell.

Graphic Novels as Political Vehicles

One inescapable aspect of narratives is that they are not neutral. Narratives are stories told from a particular perspective, one that is imbued by the discursive context of the narrator. In other words, a narrative is the manifestation in artistic media of the worldview held by their originators on a given topic. In a generic sense this means that narratives simply reflect the way someone sees and interprets the world, or any other reality in which they want to set their narrative. In a more specific sense this means that narratives can be crafted and shaped to carry a particular meaning, or to influence the rhetoric and discourse of their audience. Yet the rhetorical influence that a written text can have is limited by the imaginations of its readers, meaning that there is no guarantee that



Figure 4 – Uncle Sam

the writer's intended meaning will be communicated. This pressing need to ensure that an intended meaning was effectively communicated was easily remedied by switching from a textual medium to a visual medium. Human history is replete with propaganda posters that have powerful images and very little text. One of the most well-known examples of such propaganda is the Uncle Sam "I Want YOU!" poster used to recruit young men into the armed services during

World War 2 (See Figure 4). With robust patriotic colors, a stern facial expression, and the context of national threat, it was the imposing visual of Uncle Sam that gave the text its power.

Although such political causes did not have an exclusive claim on the use propaganda, there was certainly a symbiosis between needing to create a powerful narrative quickly and as efficiently as possible, and there are rarely such occasions for such a sense of urgency in peacetime. But that in no way means that aggressive, or even militant, politics and political narratives do not exist in peacetime. There are many occasions in which political narratives are fiercely divisive and powerfully communicated. In a rudimentary sense, comic books could be seen as simply a series of political cartoons or propaganda posters bound together in a single book. This obtusely cynical approach not only sounds like a statement from Wertham's CMAA, but is also altogether unhelpful in understanding the interplay between the images of a graphic novel and the narrative it creates. Daniel Worden's article, "The Politics of Comics: Popular Modernism, Abstraction, and Experimentation," explores the sociopolitical components of graphic novels. After explaining multiple approaches to understanding and legitimizing comics as an appropriate forum for political discourse, Worden writes that "these are important threads in comics scholarship, and both [approaches] produce accounts of comics as political works, whether they be populist or nationalist allegories or aesthetic works that question the coherence of self, society, and historical time" (60). Worden not only makes the claim that graphic novels are a legitimate forum for "political works," but also, echoing what was said at the beginning of this section, that these narratives themselves, here referring to the narratives of graphic novels, are inherently political regardless of the meaning they intend to communicate.

In Bui's graphic novel, *The Best We Could Do*, the political narrative is centered around her parents and their personal experiences as Vietnamese refugees. For Bui herself it was an introspective search for stability and acceptance and the hope that her own son would never have to endure similar experiences. It was not a diatribe against injustice, but rather an epistle of resilience, with a concerted effort to use the visual medium of a graphic novel to humanize the often-dehumanized refugee. Similarly, albeit much more violently, Naji al-Ali uses his comics as a platform to visually cultivate political rhetoric and discourse as he illustrates the plight of Palestinian refugees. His book entitled simply *A Child in Palestine* is not a linear narrative in the same sense that Bui's novel tells a sequence of events and follows a structure, instead, it is a collection of non-sequential one-panel cartoons that form a narrative by providing a venue for the real-world political context of his experience. Where al-Ali's work differs most from Bui's is that he is obviously trying to persuade his audience to legitimize the worldview shared by his people. Bui is not necessarily trying to influence the political discourse of her audience as much as she is trying to influence their political rhetoric regarding Vietnamese refugees.

Sarah Glidden takes a slightly different approach with her graphic novel, *Rolling Blackouts*, than either Bui or al-Ali did in their presentation of political rhetoric. Although the novel is a narrative based on her personal experiences, it is a narrative of her observing conflict rather than



Figure 5
Rolling Blackouts. Sarah Glidden

experiencing it firsthand (See Figure 5). We see the world through her eyes, and in this case that means we see her encounter with the Iraqi refugee crisis that followed the final stages of intense American involvement in the country. Glidden accompanied a

contemplative, nostalgic memoir and instead challenges the reader to examine his own preconceptions about the nature of racism then and now.

What all four of these graphic narratives have in common is that they tell the story of the artist's personal experience with the rhetoric and context of a political narrative and how that experience changed the paradigm of their sociopolitical worldview. Had they written a text instead, we would share their thoughts about their experience. With a graphic novel we get to share their experience itself, as seen through their eyes. "If comics are valuable because they provide a venue for self-expression and the representation of individual desires, memories, and lives," writes Daniel Worden on the influence of comics on reader's ability to recognize and interpret contexts, "then the medium's specificity and history recedes from view. Instead, comics become a predominantly ethical medium, comprised of personal relations between artist and reader" (Warden 69). This connection between artist and reader is made strong when they share a mutual interest, but it is made even stronger when they share a mutual ideology, creating an empathy rooted in shared beliefs. These comics excel as political vehicles not because they resonate with a large audience, but because their resonate tone is the pursuit of justice and peace, and the visual medium amplifies the pathos of the text literally more than words can say.

Graphic Novels as Pedagogical Vehicles

Having explored how graphic novels function as narrative vehicles that develop the experiences of the narrator in the direction of a resolution or conclusion, and also as political vehicles in which those narratives can be used to communicate sociopolitical platforms and ideologies, the next logical step will be to look at how these functions of graphic novels can be

used to teach readers. To revisit Tan's sentiment, the most rewarding thing for an artist, in this case a graphic novelist, is not that someone reads his or her work, but adds that work to their own discourse and debate as part of their "community discussion" on social issues. Earlier, that comment was framed as the role of graphic novels as narrative vehicles, but we can unpack a deeper meaning to help us understand how graphic novels are also pedagogical vehicles. It goes without saying that an artist does not create work in a vacuum. In other words, the objective purpose of art is to be appreciated by an audience. The visual medium of graphic novels undoubtedly helps facilitate this aesthetic appreciation; however, true art is not only created to be aesthetically appreciated, but also to convey a narrative that is meaningful and intentional. An artist will not, or some would say cannot, create art that says nothing. Where the pedagogical distinction is made is when that intended meaning is designed to illuminate the reader's understanding of the world around them. John Lewis' *March: Book One* has an undeniably heavy-handed political narrative, yet its truest intended purpose is to educate readers to the dangers of systemic racism. The political narrative thread of Drnaso's *Sabrina* is far more inconspicuous to the reader, but its truest purpose is to enlighten readers to how a paranoid and digitalized society copes with grief and hopelessness. In very different ways, both graphic novels set out to accomplish the common goal of asking their readers to introspectively examine their awareness of social issues.

In this pedagogical sense, the implicit notion is that the interplay between visual and textual mediums appeals to more than one literacy skill for the reader. Lina Sun puts into the perspective of how this impacts student learning, observing that "a pedagogy of multiliteracies using graphic novels can enhance reading engagement and achievement, reinforcing student's



Figure 7
Graphic Novels in the Classroom. Gene Yang

senses of their identities as readers who are learners and thinkers” (22). Gene Yang makes several important points in his TEDx Talk, entitled “Why Comics Belong in the Classroom,” to how students react to his use of comics in the classroom as a teaching tool. According to Yang, he began drawing comic versions of his lessons out of desperation (see Figure 7), but learned quickly that they resonated so deeply with his students that they requested comics even when he was present to give the

lectures in person (4:24). More significantly, Yang notes that “unlike math textbooks, these comic lectures taught visually” (4:50), meaning that comics, and their cousins the graphic novels, stimulate multiple modes of learning in which the text and the illustrations constantly reinforce each other. Additionally, Yang echoes the same idea Michael Chaney explains in his TEDx Talk regarding the audience being a “passive spectator” when watching film, but here Yang speaks of the other side of the coin. “Comics are what I call permanent,” Yang states, “in a comic past, present, and future all sit side by side on the same page. This means that the rate of information flow is firmly in the hands of the reader” (5:13). This amount of control given to the student is tremendously effective in giving them autonomy in their learning.

The pedigree of graphic novels as pedagogical vehicles can be traced back the illustrated books used in education at the elementary level. The younger the intended audience, the fewer words that appear on each page as the book makes a stronger appeal to the child’s visual literacy. As the textual literacy of students increases over the years, the number and complexity of visuals

in a text proportionately decreases as “literacy” takes on the singular meaning of “being able to read text.” Yet as Yang and Sun point out, the visual literacy required to read a comic greatly enhances a student’s ability to understand and interpret what they read. This means that if the narratives of graphic novels develop in complexity in conjunction with a student’s cognitive ability to understand them, then graphic novels can be utilized to communicate important information on social or political issues, existential ponderables, or myriad other questions regarding the human condition. Essentially, graphic novels and the narratives they convey are works of literature as much as they are works of art.

In a practical sense, graphic novels are at the forefront of our society’s growing dependence on visual media, a dependence that always seems to be increasing exponentially. For more insight we again turn to Lina Sun, for whom this relationship between text and image was the key to the pedagogy of student literacy, and her observation that the “interplay between the text and images has become increasingly a part of modern media; thus, graphic novels offer students opportunities to develop multiple literacies by engaging with narratives about social topics” (Sun 23). Her acknowledgment of this increasing need for students to master multiple literacies affirms the corresponding growing need for students, teachers, and our culture at large to shake off the shackles of Werthamian suppression and reeducate ourselves to the truth that graphic novels are invaluable narrative, political, and pedagogical vehicles.

Conclusion

In terms of how to apply the principles and concepts of narrative, politics, and pedagogy in graphic novels to enable students to have a functional understanding and awareness of their

own sociopolitical context, one must understand that all three of these vehicle modes operate synergistically. John Lewis' *March: Book One* does not necessarily distinguish itself because it challenges our preconceptions about what a comic *looks* like. In fact, of all the graphic novels discussed in this essay, Lewis' is virtually alone in checking off all the expectations of what a standard comic book is supposed to look like. But when it is read through the synergistic lenses of narrative, political rhetoric, and pedagogy, it takes on the much more significantly pragmatic role of teaching his readers about the dangers, struggles, and violence of systemic racism and how, because of the continued presence of racism in our modern world, that threat transcends the context of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s to remain a blight on our cultural landscape against which the virtuous must still fight. Similarly, al-Ali's work, although not a continuous linear narrative, presents a provocatively violent and volatile political narrative through the cumulative narrative of his collection of single-panel cartoons (see Figure 8). While the sociopolitical context surrounding his work is one of the most complex and violent in the world, al-Ali's work works to humanize the pain and sense of hopelessness by appealing to the universal virtue of empathy. Like Tan's graphic novel, *The Arrival*, most of al-Ali's work is wordless, instead relying on the images to speak. Knowing the context in which al-Ali creates his work is eminently helpful in understanding the intended meaning behind them, but the key to reaching that understanding rests in knowing that he is creating something for a purpose. Every ink blot is intentional and meaningful to the narrative he is building and cultivating with each image.



Figure 8
A Child in Palestine
 Naji al-Ali

But what are we supposed to learn from Lewis and al-Ali? Without a comprehensive understanding of how the vehicle modes of graphic novels are interdependent, not only is this a question without an answer, it is a question that no one knows they are being asked. If graphic novels are not important narrative artifacts of our social and cultural context, then words like “rhetoric” and “discourse” begin to lose their meaning in the cultural conversations of civil and social justice because they become merely self-referential instead of being part of a dialogue. As I said at the beginning of this essay, “graphic novels present a unique and versatile modal intersection of visual art and rhetorical text,” and it is in this intersection that we find the means to enable this dialogue. An essay written in English, a textbook written in German, or a manifesto written in Urdu can only be read and understood by a comparably small and exclusive segment of the population, and thus the power of those documents, and the narratives they contain, can only be felt by those who know those languages. On the other hand, a poster with a sad child, an illustration of a laughing woman, or a photograph of an angry man can all be “read” and understood by anyone who knows how to feel those emotions. This is the intrinsically greater value of graphic novels to convey a narrative when compared to any other medium, especially written text.

Graphic novels guide readers towards an expected resolution in their narrative by their nature as storytelling devices. They utilize the narrative framework to communicate the political and social ideologies, and in being created for the purpose of being a meaningful rhetorical contribution to the cultural discourse, they intend to teach and inform readers about the cultural context around them. A written text can do these things, too, but can really only tell us *about* the world around us. Only a graphic novel can *show* us what that world looks like.

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Project 4

Pedagogy is Personal: A Critical Reflection

“A good poem is never finished” is how one of my undergrad professors introduced his poetry course. Poignant and yet subversive to any naïve preconceptions of what poetry is supposed to be, he then went on to explain that a good poet is never done revising, or, in his more poetic way, nurturing, tending, and cultivating the garden of verse. Throughout my experience in Dr. Hoy’s ENG 6200: The Teaching of Writing, I came to realize that as I began the pursuit of a graduate degree that I am the unfinished poem, both as a student and as a teacher. The focus of Dr. Hoy’s course was to illuminate some of the different composition pedagogies, and in that regard, it was an effective survey covering a wide breadth of diverse pedagogical approaches to teaching composition. The focus of this paper, however, is not to summarize the cumulative new knowledge I have gained from this survey course, but rather to highlight how these pedagogies can not only be synthesized with my literacy narrative, but also how they affect my teaching philosophy and influence the development of my curriculum.

This paper is divided into three sections, with each dedicated to expressing different key elements of the assignment. Each section also has a corresponding appendix to supplement the information presented in the essay itself. As part of a summative assignment, each section also has drawn from previous research done for this course on relevant pedagogical approaches. The Literacy Narrative analysis section focuses on how these composition pedagogies have been infused into my identity as a literate person and follows the changes in my narrative during my transition from student to teacher. The Teaching Philosophy analysis section explores how these

composition pedagogies have influenced not only my own pedagogical approach as a teacher, but also my epistemological approach as a steward of knowledge and information. The Curriculum section is a brief collection of assignment samples that demonstrate how these pedagogical approaches influence and affect course material I develop for and use in my classroom instruction.

Literacy Narrative Analysis

A literacy narrative is an introspective and self-reflective exploration of one's own experience in developing their appreciation and understanding of reading and writing. In the early stages of development this can simply be observed as acquiring the skills of reading and writing, while in the later years the definitions of literacy become more complex as they begin to identify more complex behaviors and more advanced knowledge. Even into the college years a literacy narrative can still be defined as the acquisition of new literacy skills. However, when I became an English teacher the very concept of a literacy narrative shifted. No longer was it defined only as the acquisition of new literacy skills, but now that definition also expanded to include the process of systematizing these skills and then retransmitting them to my students. My personal literacy narrative had now incorporated pedagogical approaches to manage the way in which these skills were transmitted to my students. The list of pedagogical approaches is long and crowded and growing with every new development in technology or literary theory, some of which are very complimentary while others are mutually exclusive. The interplay and complex relationships among these pedagogies can at first appear difficult to navigate, yet it is actually a relatively simple process once one establishes the ethics and values of their personal and

professional identity because the way a person teaches is directly related to how they perceive, analyze, and interpret information before they transmit it to their students.

That being said, I am not making the claim that there is necessarily any direct correlation between how a person learns their literacy skills and how that knowledge is converted into their professional teaching methods or personal philosophies. Even in my own pedagogical development it would be difficult to pinpoint any such correlations, though there may be some connections. My literacy narrative includes several moments of what seems, at least in retrospect, a sort of punctuated growth (see Appendix A), beginning with the delight of reading simple stories as a small child, to reading entire books in a single afternoon as fourth grade student, to exposures to and experiences with different genres in high school and college, particularly poetry. As a writer I developed comparatively advanced skills at a young age, both in academic writing and in writing poetry. As I begin to consider how composition pedagogies in general are infused into this personal history, I find it somewhat unlikely, if not ironic, that Process Pedagogy would become my primary pedagogical approach. I say unlikely and ironic because Process Pedagogy emphasizes learning the individual aspects of composition, identifying as its primary objectives the comprehensive learning of the process with less attention given to the product of writing. Chris Anson, in his chapter on Process Pedagogy in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, argues this same sentiment, writing that “perhaps the most common defining characteristic of the new paradigm was a shift from a focus of the *product* of writing to its *process*” (215). The shifting paradigm he mentions is that of a movement away from the more traditional approach that focused almost entirely on the product of a student’s written efforts and towards an approach that seeks to teach students mastery of the steps of the process by

which a finished product is produced. Anson also summarizes the work of Peter Elbow, one of the “big three” in the pedigree of Process Pedagogy, along with Donald Murray and Ken Macrorie, writing that “conventional teaching led to dull, uninspired academic writing...while process teaching focused on creativity, imagination, and the development of an authentic voice.” And, according to Anson, Macrorie “bitterly critiqued the conventional composition classroom for its academic ‘enslavement’” (Anson 217). To take all of this into consideration, one could very easily conclude that Process Pedagogy is designed to cultivate in students a sense of academic autonomy and break them from the molds that force them to be academic automatons. The salient point of Process Pedagogy is reflected in this quip by Stephen North, noted by Anson: “Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing,”

Much of what I write here of Process Pedagogy comes directly from my own research. I write this part of my narrative to provide context for the idea that how I teach literacy is more directly influenced by my current personal convictions and professional philosophies than it is by the experiences of my own literacy narrative. In fact, even though it was not until very recently that I was able to define Process Pedagogy, I was quickly able to recognize that it has always been the pedagogical approach most consistent with the natural approach I have taken in teaching literacy skills to my students. One argument for my affinity for this pedagogical approach is that I simply have always had an innate desire to understand the technical and practical aspects of what I had always been naturally good at, and to which I had never really needed to take the time to give much thought. As a result of this self-reflective pedagogical development, I discovered that I had some discernable weaknesses in addition to my notable strengths as a writer. For example, while my skill and ability to read and analyze a single text were advanced, my ability to

incorporate and synthesize secondary texts was underdeveloped in comparison. It was not with the rhetoric of a particular discourse that I struggled, but rather with the research source material that helped form and construct the context of that discourse. This leads me to discuss what is my secondary, or perhaps a supplementary, pedagogical approach that is often infused into several components of my approach with Process Pedagogy, most specifically and significantly in how I teach research and synthesis to my students. This secondary pedagogy is identified in the book *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies as Researched Writing*.

The chapter on Researched Writing Pedagogy in this book devotes a lot of time to exploring and explaining the poor research methods often employed by students. The writers, Rebecca Moore Howard and Sandra Jamieson, reiterate several times that perhaps the time has come to rethink the more institutional approach to and purpose for assigning the traditional research paper, even offering several alternatives to the traditional research essay. It is in this way that Researched Writing also ties in well with my utilization of Process Pedagogy because both approaches encourage an emphasis on the individual aspects of the writing and research process. Howard and Jamieson argue that “the alternative is not to cease teaching research but to teach it differently,” noting that, although they do not specifically mention Process Pedagogy, “writing instructors need to focus students’ attention of the purposes of research more than on its mechanics” (235). In other words, the shift that needs to happen in the classroom is one that moves away from teaching students *how* to research and towards teaching them *why* we research. As was the case with Process Pedagogy, much of what I write on Researched Writing Pedagogy comes from my own research, and I find that this approach is also consistent with what I was already attempting to do with my classroom instruction.

Admittedly, the thread of my literacy narrative was difficult to follow as I wrote of these two approaches that so heavily influence my professional pedagogy. Nevertheless, at the risk of being a desultory deviation, I think it was a necessary path to take because it illuminates the impression that the discovery and study of pedagogy has had on me as a teacher who is helping students cultivate their own literacy narratives. As I mentioned earlier in this section, there was a shift that occurred in my literacy narrative when I became a teacher, one that marked my transition from student to teacher, and the implication of that shift is that my literacy narrative as a student is less relevant to my students than my literacy narrative as a teacher. My student literacy narrative provides anecdotal evidence of what I learned and even how I learned what I know, but my teacher narrative provides practical methods of transferring what I know to my students. But this does not mean that my student narrative is entirely irrelevant. I routinely draw on my experiences as a young learner to provide a reference point for setting the standards of what to expect from my high-achieving students and how to scale down the expectations for the lower-achieving students. For example, I do not expect my students to read an entire book in a single afternoon like I did with *My Teacher is an Alien* in fourth grade, but it does help me to set a reasonable expectation for how long it would likely take the median student to read a given text. Neither do I expect all of my students to become amateur poets when they graduate high school, but I do frequently use poetry to teach students how to recognize and then use fundamental elements of literary analysis, such as rhetoric, syntax, and symbolic language.

A literacy narrative is indeed an introspective and self-reflective exploration of one's own experience in developing their appreciation and understanding of reading and writing. It is an exploration of what fascinates us and what captures our attention. It is a chronicle of how we

have spent our time and how we cultivated our imagination. And as some people make the transition from student to teacher, it becomes the social action by which we transmit what we know to a new generation of learners. Yet, one of my favorite aspects of a literacy narrative is that it is never complete because we are always reading and learning and teaching. In my full narrative (See Appendix A), I mention several signposts that define significant moments in my life as a student learner, and I think a new signpost has been placed firmly in the pages of the book *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. It marks a unique place in my literacy narrative, an intersection between my student narrative and my professional narrative. As much as I can in retrospect appreciate the journey I have had from student to teacher, I look forward to the next shift in my literacy narrative, one that marks my transition from a teacher who presents and teaches information to a writer who creates and provides it.

Teaching Philosophy Analysis

When considering the relationship between teaching philosophy and pedagogy, the first important distinction to be made is between the ideological and the actual application of teaching pedagogies in classroom instruction. Young teachers with little experience tend to be more idealistic in their pedagogical approach, relying more heavily on theory to answer questions and overcome challenges they encounter as teachers. As teachers gain experience, their experience supplants theory as the primary means by which these questions are answered and challenges are overcome. Theory remains foundational to how these teachers employ their pedagogies, but as their practical experience grows, the true usefulness of theory shifts from the textbooks and articles to the activity and culture in their classrooms. As the discursive context of

their teaching theory shifts, the teaching philosophy informed by those theories and that forms their pedagogical approach also shifts. In my personal experience, this distinction can be characterized by how in my idealized vision of teaching I was more like Robin Williams' Mr. Keating in *Dead Poet's Society*, when reality more closely resembled a scene from *Kindergarten Cop*. (See Appendix B)

My pedagogical philosophy is centered on the idea that teaching is a decidedly social activity because it requires both the teacher and the student to actively contribute to the rhetoric and discourse of an environment in which new knowledge is transmitted and received. Neal Lerner, in his chapter on Writing Centers in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, writes that "learning to write is a social process" (Lerner 305). In the same book, Chris Anson's chapter on Process Pedagogy, which I referenced in the Literacy Narrative section, implies the same social dynamic as he describes how students and teachers work together closely to accomplish learning objectives. Like Lerner and Anson, I firmly believe that the act of teaching is more than mere instruction, and even more than merely demonstrating content mastery. Instead, teaching is better described as inspiring students to achieve what they never thought was possible. Teaching is cultivating within students the sense that their value as intelligent and individual human beings is not only determined by their positive contributions to the collective human experience, but also in how they gain and then exercise their functional self-sufficiency. Yet, because teaching is a social activity and process, little of this would be possible without our enthusiasm for what we teach. Helen Vendler, in her article "What We Have Loved, Others Will Love," writes that what we do as scholars, and by extension as teachers, is "teach at a more complicated level," and that in expressing our enthusiasm for our field of study, "we are engaged in teaching others—our

more advanced students—how to love what we love in the discipline of scholarship” (34). She quickly adds to this by saying that “it remains...mysteriously true that students can develop enthusiasm even for arcane materials mediated by a teacher of sufficient talent” (Vendler 35).

The second important distinction to make is that, especially when considering teaching as a social activity, students are people, and they have personalities, experiences, emotions, and their own sense of identity, all of which influences how they obtain, process, and analyze new knowledge. My job as a teacher is not to shape them into what I believe they should be, but rather to show them how to utilize the tools they receive to shape a successful future for themselves. Nevertheless, as Gerald Graff points out in his article “Disliking Books at an Early Age,” students are not necessarily the ideal participants in this social activity, noting specifically the conflict between what a student thinks and what a student says. “The problem,” he argues, “is that what students are able to say about a text depends not just on the text but on their relation to a critical community of readers” (Graff 47). The implication, again, is that learning is a social activity, with one that exists among students as important as the one that exists between a student and the teacher. Although there are many pedagogical approaches that can be utilized by teachers in the contexts of these social actions to present new knowledge to their students, my personal and professional preferences gravitate towards Process Pedagogy and Researched Writing because I find that those approaches not only align most directly with my own philosophy about the purpose and objectives of education, but also most clearly provide an effective framework with which to provide meaningful instruction.

The appeal of Process Pedagogy in facilitating an effective student/teacher dynamic lies in its emphasis on the teacher’s direct involvement with the students to learn, specifically

speaking, the steps of composing an academic essay. Anson writes that, in terms of pedagogical approach, this method of involvement “resulted in a shift from the teacher as giver of knowledge to the student as an active participant in the creation of knowledge” (Anson 218). More broadly applied, Process Pedagogy facilitates a cognitive interaction between student and teacher that can have positive effects on a student’s writing abilities across their interdisciplinary academics. In my own interpretation of this pedagogical approach, insofar as having the expected academic outcome of students achieving a metacognitive understanding of their new knowledge, the overlap with Writing Across Curriculum (WAC) pedagogies is intentional and important. Where Process teaches students to learn the procedures of composition, WAC teaches that those same principles can be effectively applied across the different disciplines. According to Chris Thaiss and Susan McLeod, “[WAC] pedagogical theory says that the composition teacher and course can only be part of a developmental process for the student *that must include other teachers* who take some role in this discursive, epistemological education” (287). Teaching as a social activity not only includes the individual teacher and student, as well as student groups, but also groups of teachers across multiple disciplines.

Interwoven into this line of thought, with preference to Process Pedagogy, is the primary pedagogical thrust of Researched Writing, namely the concept of understanding *why* things are done instead of simply being satisfied with *how* things are done. In conjunction with the applications and implications of technology as an educational tool as expressed the New Media pedagogy, this forms the foundation of my professional teaching philosophy. Altogether, the cumulative effect of the influence of these pedagogical approaches in my own teaching philosophy is one that places its emphasis on comprehensively teaching students to understand

what they do, why they are doing it, how to best utilize the available tools to manage their knowledge, and how it all applies to the breadth of their academic experience.

Yet, for all of the complexities embedded within these pedagogies, and many more not mentioned in this essay, it is still highly unlikely that any student enters a class with any real sense of understanding the professor's individual pedagogical approach. Instead, students want to know what they will learn and if they will have a fair chance to succeed. If they have any thoughts about their professor at all, they will most likely wonder if this professor will turn out to be a person they can have a meaningful connection with. A student will always find a way to perform well and succeed in a class in which they have a meaningful personal connection with the professor because they can recognize the role of both student and professor in the social activity of learning. Regardless of the academic rigor of the course, such a professor will always be one who finds ways to motivate his students to perform well and to succeed. Conversely, a professor can be the most brilliant mind in his or her field, but without this ability to connect to students, he or she will never be a good teacher.

A basic assumption made by effective teachers is that teaching is only half of what makes the educational discourse possible. The student must also actively participate in the learning process and is responsible for his or her half of the exchange of knowledge, an exchange in which the teacher presents information and the student receives it. From this perspective, true learning only occurs when a student recognizes that he or she must constantly push against what they can already do before any growth can take place or any new knowledge can be obtained. Much like a weightlifter can only get stronger when more weight is applied to what they can already lift easily, students must likewise push themselves intellectually to learn what they do not already

know. Ultimately, a good teacher does not simply present information and then curates their students' assimilation of it, but rather guides students on how to learn and how to use what they learn to improve their self-sufficiency. In addition to my pursuit of academic efficacy through the application of the pedagogical approaches, I believe that being an inspirational and effective teacher is one of the most important qualities I could have as a professor.

What would this approach look like when applied in the classroom? Consider as an example a freshman-level composition course, which has the potential to be one of the first difficult classes that new college students will experience because it can be one of the first classes in which they encounter concepts more advanced than anything they encountered in high school. Unfortunately, a significant number of the new students who would take this course would have at best a cursory understanding of writing because of the limited instruction they received from their high school English teachers. Regarding this literacy pedigree every student brings into class on the first day, Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs tell us that "prior experiences with writing create negative or positive feelings about writing, and those attitudes and feelings remain with people throughout their lives...we are always an accumulation of everything we have experienced and done" (9). Much of what would be taught in this introductory course, and the pedagogical approaches used to facilitate and deliver the information, is specifically designed to teach students the academic writing and research skills that are essential to their collegiate career, regardless, and at times in spite of, the prior experiences they bring with them. However, the reality is that in such a scenario I would likely not be teaching a room full of new college students, so I could expect to need to diversify and differentiate the amount of time spent acclimating them to the basics of college academics and more time engaging them in a general

way as college students. Some of my own favorite classes as a student were taken during the early semesters of my college career, expressly because my professors conducted those classes in ways that made me feel like a college student. Being able to give that same sense of meaning and motivation to my own students would be a proud moment for me, and I would ensure that each student was able to enjoy the sense of accomplishment that comes with being treated as a college student instead of a recent high school graduate. The pedagogies I employ are better suited to the comprehensive intellectual development of my students as opposed to the development of their social ideologies that seems to be the focus of other alternative pedagogical approaches.

In this hypothetical introductory College Writing course, the initial focus is primarily on helping students transition from the mindset that results in a high school essay into the mindset that can produce a college-level essay. As students progress through the course, the pedagogical focus shifts from helping students make a drastic academic transition to helping students develop the abilities and knowledge that make their academic writing stronger and their research skills more proficient. This would be accomplished by gradually implementing more elements of each of the pedagogical approaches with each passing week and with each assignment designed to assess students' progress in learning the new material. Essentially, this course would be less about the wonder of pulling back the curtain for students in regards to what they know about academic writing and more about getting them familiar with the mechanics that make academic writing rooted so firmly in research. Therefore, what students will learn is that good academic writing is not just knowing what research is, but also knowing how to find good sources, how to

synthesize the ideas presented by those sources, how to integrate them into an essay, and ultimately, how this process can be applied across the breadth of their academic studies.

One of the potential challenges to teaching a course like this is the very real possibility that students will become overwhelmed by all the nuances and demands of collegiate writing, conducting research, or simply absorbing new information, especially if, for example, their previous research experience is little more than cursory readings of simple generic search engine results. The natural question is how do I, as the teacher, accommodate these difficulties in my pedagogical approach and strategy as well as help students navigate these challenges having never faced them before? One answer would be to be as anticipatory as possible of student concerns when developing lessons and when conducting class discussions. Another answer would be to have such a comprehensive content mastery that I am able to present course material and objectives with an absolute confidence that instills confidence in my students. As an aspect of Process Pedagogy, this content mastery is directly applied to each step of the writing process in a social action that is easily expanded to include discussion about why we do what we do as scholars, both the emerging and the experienced.

Overall, I believe that these pedagogical approaches are fundamental to my philosophy as a teacher and scholar because they present the most potential to cultivate rhetorical and academic contexts in which I can effectively teach my students the necessary writing, research, and synthesis skills that will be essential to their academic success all throughout their college years. Perhaps it is a little bit of my experience with good professors across multiple fields of study, but I believe that with a foundation of good academic writing students will possess the most useful skill of their entire college career. And as no man is an island, neither are his thoughts

and opinions, regardless of how academic he may be. Writing, research, and synthesis are how we make sense of what we know, and through these pedagogies I would be dedicated to teaching students how to do these with excellence.

Curriculum Application Analysis

Thinking about different pedagogical approaches, or explaining their appeal and influence in my professional teaching philosophy, is only one side of the coin. In order to fully appreciate how these pedagogical approaches have impacted me as both a teacher and a scholar, it is necessary to demonstrate how they have influenced the development of the curriculum I use in my classroom, including subject matter and course materials. Although the influence of these pedagogical approaches can be seen in nearly every class I teach, it is most apparent and most conspicuously formative in a 9-week workshop entitled *Writing and Research Skills*, which is given to a high school class of 10th-grade honors students (See Appendix C). This workshop very literally walks students through the major steps of the writing process, and even though it was originally designed for high school students, it can easily be adapted for use in a college-level course by increasing the depth of academic expectations and the complexity of the scholarship used at each step of the process, expanding it from a 9-week seminar workshop to a full 16-week semester course.

The influence of Process Pedagogy is clearly evident in every aspect of this curriculum, despite the fact that it was developed well before I was myself aware of the formalized pedagogy described in Anson's chapter. I would say that this also represents the clearest example of an idea mentioned in an earlier section, that these pedagogical approaches that I chose to include

in this paper are most consistent with what I have already been doing as a teacher. As I read Anson's chapter, I could only nod my head in agreement as page after page served as confirmation of the direction my department is taking in implementing this program and the objectives we are developing for it. In this, I found a scholarly voice for the vision I had for my students. My intention in initiating this program several years ago had been to teach high school students how to write college essays in 10th grade, give them two years of practice, and then graduate them after having mastered the skill set. Anson echoes that sentiment this way: "An obvious consequence of a new focus on students' processes was to shift the orientation of learning away from expectations for a final text and toward developing the knowledge and abilities needed to produce it" (217). In the nascent stages of this program there was still an emphasis on the finished product of the writing process, an emphasis that has seemed more and more disproportionate to the maturing objectives of the course material. This sentiment was finally and resoundingly confirmed after reading Anson's chapter and several changes are being made to accommodate these clearer objectives and purposes. However, since the true nature and manifestation of these changes are still being determined within the department, they are not fully represented in the documentation provided in Appendix C.

Some of the steps of the writing process mentioned in Anson's chapter, and steps that will be, or already have been, incorporated in this program include prewriting, drafting, and peer reviews. What brought about the desire to develop this program and incorporate it into the curriculum is that the existing curriculum did little to teach students writing skills that would translate into college readiness, neglecting to teach any of those steps in favor of teaching rudimentary essay writing. In retrospect, these writing assignments that I have long since

discarded more closely resembled the “Current-traditional paradigm” of pre-process writing pedagogies that focused almost exclusively on the product of the writing process (Anson 215). By shifting the focus of our writing development objectives from product to process, we have seen an improvement across the board in writing ability, a result I attribute to the students’ improved willingness to write because they are being more effectively and thoroughly taught how to write.

Another change that I am excited to implement into this program is an increased reliance on some of the principles expressed in the Researched Writing pedagogy, namely, the concept of explaining *why* we do research as opposed to simply teaching *how* to do research. In the existing edition of this program, even in what we taught this previous school year, the emphasis of the research lesson unit was on how to do academic research. On one hand, scholarly research is quite a quantum leap for high school students to make, but on the other hand, it is counterproductive to teach them incorrectly. Instruction on this topic was essentially limited to monitoring student progress and answering their questions as they plowed through pages of article abstracts, and this was arguably the weakest part of the entire program. In fact, as I read the chapter on Researched Writing, I was forced to admit that this part of the program was perhaps even a little reductive in how we taught students research skills. Howard and Jamieson write that “reducing the research component of the course to a set of skills to be measured in the final written product risks undermining the critical thinking, information-seeking, and reading skills that structure the collaboration between research and writing instruction” (242). In other words, research skills should be taught as a component of a student’s ability to write instead of as supplement to that ability. The annotated bibliography assignment (see Appendix C) was

introduced to this program as an important step in the writing process, but the bridge of synthesis between what was researched and the purpose of that research was never really crossed. In the Spring of 2019 we introduced the concept of the Uneven U paragraph from Eric Hayot's *The Elements of Academic Style* in an effort to teach students the important synthesis of research and original text, but it also ended up being just as effective at teaching them how to integrate citations into their own essays as well.

Under the influence and principles of these pedagogical approaches this program can flourish as a highly effective course on academic composition. Anecdotally, I have spoken to several alumni who have said that what they learned in my class, and especially what learned in this writing and research skills workshop, helped them in their freshman English courses in college. I hear this as a ringing endorsement of the program and the curriculum we have developed to teach it, especially since, as Howard and Jamieson articulate, "from the student's perspective, researched writing is a meaningless activity, simply a hoop through which students must jump" (231). My hope is that this program makes both academic writing and research more than just a hoop to jump through. The challenge is to make getting a good grade in my class feel like an accomplishment instead of a formality, and the payoff for both me and my students is when their transition to college writing is a matter of making small steps because they have been adequately prepared by a program that so comprehensively embraces these pedagogical approaches.

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Appendix A: Literacy Narrative

My literacy journey began in the living room of our house in Salisbury, North Carolina in 1987. Although we lived in a small town, all the adults in my life, including my parents and teachers, made sure that my siblings and I always had access to books, so getting my hands on a book was not the challenge it was for some of my friends. Even after we moved to California in 1989 some of my most vivid memories are of summer trips to the central library. The first book I remember reading was *Danny and the Dinosaur* by Syd Hoff. The significance of this first step is something I can only fully appreciate now, because at the time I was just so overcome with enthusiasm and joy that I was able to read on my own that I read the book more several times before I finally put it down to go eat dinner.

From Salisbury in 1987 my narrative travels to Huntington Beach, California in 1992 to recollect my second significant moment. Our tv broke and we did not get a new one for almost an entire year, and that was the year that I began reading profusely for no other reason than there were books laying around and no tv to watch. Of all the things I did that year, what sticks out the most is that I read *My Teacher is an Alien* by Bruce Coville in a single afternoon. I distinctly remember how the sun was warm on my body as I moved through a vast array of positions on the sofa that afternoon, captivated by nothing more than the fact that I, as a ten-year-old boy, found this book immensely interesting and that I was able to read it with ease. I read many books that year, but that was the one that has cemented itself into my memory. Even today there are times when I think of that year and I wonder where I would be now our tv had never been replaced and had I spent the last 25 years reading instead of watching sitcoms and movies.

In the year 2000 I still lived in California and I was a high school senior, and it is in my high school English class that my next moment can be found. By the time third quarter rolled around, we had already read many of the classics, at least, we were supposed to have read them. In the eight years that had passed since our tv was replaced, my attention had also since been divided and my motivation to read had waned significantly. But there, in Miss Cybulski's third period English class, I encountered the poetry of Isaac Rosenberg for the first time. I was struck by the innocence and woeful beauty of his verse as it was draped over the violence and chaos of World War 1. Yet, even as the gravity of his verse weighed down on my own mind, a single line seared itself into my memory that not only awakened my love for poetry, but also stirred the beginnings of my affinity for the Modernists and solidified my utmost awe and respect for the War Poets. "When the swift iron burning bee / drained the wild honey of their youth" Rosenberg penned in the poem *Dead Man's Dump*, one of his most famous works.

I write of these three landmarks in my literacy narrative as signposts of my overall development as a literate person. Literate not only in reference to marking the progression of my ability to read, but also in marking the progression as a writer. Even though the major events I will mention here are not necessarily tied directly to the signposts, they still live as significant memories in each of the three anecdotal phases of my pre-teaching life: elementary childhood, adolescence, and the college years.

In 1990 I was a third grader in Mrs. Reed's class. To be totally honest I remember very little of what happened in my life at that age, but there is one particular memory that does persist. One of our major assignments that year was a to write a paragraph that we would then go back and make the corrections that she had marked with her red pen, rewriting the entire

paragraph on a new sheet of paper. As she passed them back, all of my classmates got papers back that had red marks all over the place, but when I got mine back it was almost clean. The only mistake I had made was that I needed to add a semi-colon in one of my sentences. She let me trace over it with a pencil and said there was no need to rewrite it. I thought nothing of it at the time, other than being thankful that I did not have to spend so much time rewriting the entire paragraph, but as the years went by I began to more fully appreciate what an accomplishment it actually was. Today, this story is an important part of the canon of anecdotes that I share with my students to build the mystique and mythos of “Mr. Davis,” although I do embellish it slightly, saying that I correctly used a semi-colon in third grade.

As I was reading Isaac Rosenberg in Mrs. Cybulski’s 12th grade English class, I was also beginning to experiment with writing my own. Initially, this was due to the fact that one of the major assignments we had for the year was to put together a poetry portfolio, but as I wrote the poems for that portfolio I discovered that writing was something that I really enjoyed doing. I had always been good at writing, but it was not until then that I began to have the realization that I was a good writer. Yes, several of those poems were typical teenage angst tropes, but several of them were also genuine attempts to see what I could actually do as a writer, and those were also the poems that received the highest marks in my whole portfolio. One of those poems I can still recite, almost twenty years later. However, it was not the poems themselves that make the most important contribution to my narrative, but rather the fact that it was the beginning of my fascination with how writers, poets in particular, so masterfully manipulate language with such precision that it can even affect the way people see reality.

After graduating high school, I went on to college where I declared as a History major because that was the subject that came easiest to me, and which held the most fascination, and because I also enjoyed writing and reading, I declared my minor to be English. I made my way through the program and then encountered History 490, my senior seminar. The entire class was geared towards the production of a massive 25-page research essay, which required a significant bibliography. However, even after all I had already accomplished in all my other classes, I found myself struggling with this assignment. And then the paradigm shifted. My professor, after reading one of my drafts, made the comment that I “needed to tone down my inner poet” in my writing. My reaction was two-fold. First, I considered if that was even possible. Second, I wondered that if it was, if it was something I even wanted to do. Not wanting to spend my entire professional career suppressing such an important part of who I was as a writer, I not only switched my major and minor (I was actually only 6 units shy of double-majoring), but I transferred schools and immediately found myself at peace in the litany of literature classes that populated my schedule for almost three years. In terms of my literacy experience, it was a homecoming of sorts, a finding of my true calling. I was not only encouraged to utilize my poetic voice, but was also able to write enough poetry of my own to entertain the idea of seeking to get it published. Rosenberg ignited my love of Poetry in high school, and then Billy Collins stoked the flames and inspired me to pick up my own pen, and for those few agonizingly poignant years I became an amateur poet who hung out with hipsters at dive bars and went to open mic nights to read my work to those coolly half-interested proletarian urbanites. What poetry had done is help me see the world with the eyes of a poet and give me a profound appreciation for catharsis

and pathos. This is what remained when all the dross of the brooding poet was burned away when much happier circumstances would no longer allow me to be so dreadfully moribund.

Now, in the hindsight afforded by what we have learned in the past few weeks, the pedagogical approaches of those teachers are not strange or unique to our studies in this course. Mrs. Reed engaged a room full of ten-year-olds with a basic form of the writing process, perhaps even involving some elements of basic writing. Mrs. Cybulski employed genre pedagogy in using poetry as a primary method to teach us writing skills. And my history professor invoked both process and genre pedagogies in order to guide us in writing that monolith of a research paper. In retrospect, and now that I am aware of these pedagogical approaches, what my teachers were doing is somewhat obvious, especially considering my own experience as a teacher who develops and utilizes pedagogy. But I think an interesting aspect of this analysis is the fact that students are so often unaware of how teachers teach. I can say with certainty that had any of these teachers, from when I was ten all the way up until my last moments of college, employed any other pedagogical approaches I would have not noticed the difference, and if had I would not have been able to explain what the difference was. There is less certainty in pondering if the outcomes of these experiences would have been different if these pedagogies were substituted with others, but I do believe that the existing results of my literacy narrative, and the pedagogies to which it was exposed, played a significant role in my development not only as a writer, but as a person.

Appendix B: Teaching Philosophy

The word “philosophy” tends to take on a rather esoteric or ethereal connotation in general public discourse because the general public tends to place “philosophy” in the realm of metacognition that is accessible only to erudite intellectuals who can quote Plato or Descartes. In reality, the word “philosophy,” although it can refer to existential questions, most often refers simply to the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, as a quick reference check on a word processing program reveals. In fact, the Greek roots of the word are “philo” and “sophia,” which combine to literally, and not so abstractly, mean “the love of wisdom.” So to examine one’s teaching philosophy does not necessarily mean to analyze the existential and metacognitive nature of teaching, but rather more commonly means to look more neatly at the fundamental nature of what he or she knows and believes about teaching. Naturally, this analysis of one’s teaching philosophy cannot be accomplished without also analyzing the pedagogies and theories that influence a teacher, because although a philosophy of teaching can be extrapolated from these pedagogical approaches and the theories that help form them, it cannot be manifestly independent of them. As I recall my own experience as a new teacher myself, I realize, as many teachers do, that in my early years of teaching the application of my teaching philosophy was determined more by my ideology than by my experience.

The first months of my teaching career were not filled with the expectant joy of taking those first enlightened steps into the hallowed halls of reverent learning, where my very presence commanded the attention and admiration of the students. I was expecting to be Robin Williams’ John Keating from *Dead Poet’s Society*, but reality more closely resembled Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Kindergarten Cop*. I was naïve and idealistic, much like many first-year

teachers tend to be, but I believe it was the naivete and idealism, in conjunction with the support from my administrators and the encouragement from my new colleagues, that allowed me to continue and survive that trial by fire. My naivete prevented me from knowing that I was in such an unenviable situation, while my idealism pushed me to make improvements until I had a classroom that was to my satisfaction. Our staff development material that year was Harry Wong's books *The Classroom Management Book* and *The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher*, which immediately had a significant influence on how I conducted and managed my classroom and still sets many of the standards and practices I use in every class.

My current pedagogical philosophy is reminiscent of those first months, especially in the sense that my desire to make my classroom into a healthy and productive learning environment still drives every decision I make. Since those first years I have also become more adept in classroom management and have burned away the dross of uncertainty with the confident fire that comes with content and curricular mastery. As I did in those idealistic first months, I firmly believe that being a teacher is more than just merely instructing students and providing information to them, it is inspiring them to achieve and accomplish more than they ever thought was possible. This means cultivating within them the sense that they have value as intelligent and individual human beings who can make many positive contributions to the collective human experience. Students are people, and they have personalities, experiences, emotions, and their own sense of self. My job as a teacher is not to shape them into what I believe they should be, but rather to show them how to dress themselves in the distinguished garments of their own academic accomplishments.

However, teaching is only half of education. The student must also participate in the process and uphold their half of the exchange. In other words, if I must teach them, they must learn. Learning occurs when a student recognizes that he or she must constantly push against what they can already do before any growth can take place and they have learned something new. This push is nothing that I can do for them, they must push for themselves, but I can show them how to push. If they do not push themselves, students can become complacent in what they already know, never gaining any new knowledge and never broadening their understanding of the bigger world around them. This idea about the nature of the relationship between teaching and learning comes from my understanding of what being a good teacher means, both for me and for my students. To his students, a teacher is a door that opens to them a whole world of new knowledge. A good teacher opens the door wide and invites students to step through. No student enters a class wondering about a professor's theoretical approach or differentiated pedagogical strategies. Instead, students simply want to know if they will have a chance to succeed, and if this professor will turn out to be a person they can have a meaningful connection to. A student will always find a way to perform well and succeed in a class in which they have a meaningful personal connection to the professor, regardless of the academic rigor of the course. A professor can be the most brilliant mind in his or her field, but without this ability to connect to students and make the knowledge he or she possesses meaningful to the students sitting in the classroom, he or she will never be a good teacher.

The best gauge of whether a teacher is successfully making these connections with students is not in an administrator's performance review, but rather in the genuine feedback from previous students. Having taught for several years now, I am starting to have a number of

alumni who return to visit our campus say that what I had taught them has helped them be successful after they graduated and moved on to the next level. There have even been a few who, after being uncooperative in my class, have returned to begrudgingly admit that I was right about what I tried to prepare them for.

All of these concepts, strategies, and pedagogical approaches are balanced in the daily routines, procedures, and practices of my class. Good, clear procedures foster effective and clear behavioral expectations, while intentional and purposeful academic practices foster effective and clear academic expectations. Every assignment, every discussion, and even every casual conversation is an opportunity to encourage and empower my students. One of the little things I've taken to doing recently is randomly saying to students I pass by in the hallway "Good job, [student's name]!" Confused, they always reply with "For what, Mr. Davis?" To which I respond with a playful smile and a cheerful "I don't know, probably something!" Although I'm not entirely sure how helpful this practice is, but the point I'm trying to make with my students is that I want to be known as the teacher who is always trying to encourage them. In the classroom, my students are rising to the challenge of the rigorous coursework. In every section I teach we read a novel every quarter, for which they have a number of guided (my novel worksheet packets are as infamous as they are effective) and independent learning assignments, and for which I set the expectations for analysis and interpretation high in anticipation of them becoming prepared college students. Earning an A in my English class has, for some enclaves of honors students, become somewhat of a rite of passage that results in a tremendous sense of pride in their accomplishments.

All in all, what I am most pleased to see in the continued development of our English Department is the increasingly common idea among our students that doing well is a prestigious accomplishment that comes with the satisfaction of successfully completing something difficult.

Appendix C: Curriculum

Course Title: Writing and Research Skills

Course Objectives: Students will develop a comprehensive and operational understanding of the steps of the academic writing process. With a specific focus on the mechanics and purpose of each step in the process, the goal of this course is not to perfect the product of a student's writing, but to cultivate a more comprehensive competency in college-level composition.

Course Description: From a broad perspective, this class is about writing an essay. However, from a more focused perspective it is a detailed examination of the entire writing process, from selecting and researching an essay topic, to developing a thesis statement, to drafting the essay and conducting peer reviews, to submitting a final draft. Students will have exposure to, instruction in, and practice with each step of the writing process.

Course Material

- *Everyone's an Author*
- *Various articles and online resources*

Sample Course Assignments:

1) Thesis Development Exercise

This exercise is intended to give you practice in developing critical skills in essay pre-writing. Each of the three parts should be completed on a separate typed document using standard format.

Part 1: Basic Thesis Development

Select three topics from the General Topic list. Using the question conversion method, develop a Thesis Statement for each Topic

Part 2: Objective Thesis Development

Select four topics from the General Topic List. Using the question conversion method, develop a thesis statement from one of the topics for each of the four major types of essay: **Expository, Comparative, Informative, and Persuasive.**

Part 3: Essay Outline Development

- A) Select three of the thesis statements completed for Part 2. Follow the model below and determine the major points of discussion in each of your thesis statements and turn each of the major points into a major heading of your outline.
- B) Select two topics from the General Topic List. Use the question conversion method to develop a thesis statement for each topic, then follow the model below and determine the major points of discussion in each of your thesis statements and turn each of the major points into a major heading of your outline.

(Expository Essay)

Subject: Current Events

Topic: How to improve security of air travel

Question Conversion: How can passenger, aircraft, and aircrew safety and security be improved during air travel?

Thesis: Increasing security agents, implementing stricter safety protocols, and upgrading aircraft technology can improve passenger, aircrew, and aircraft safety and security in the air travel industry.

Structured Thesis: Increasing security agents, implementing stricter safety protocols, and upgrading aircraft technology can improve passenger, aircrew, and aircraft safety and security in the air travel industry.

Essay Outline (example):

1. Introduction/definitions
 - a. Contextual information
 - b. Define key terms and concepts
 - c. Thesis Statement
2. **Improving** passenger safety/security
3. **Improving** aircrew safety/security
4. **Improving** aircraft safety/security
5. **Increasing** security agents
6. **Implementing** stricter safety protocols
7. **Upgrading** aircraft technology
8. Conclusion
 - a. Brief summary of arguments
 - b. Restatement of Thesis Statement
 - c. Concluding thoughts

2) Annotated Bibliography

Sources:

- 1) **Olin Library Reference
Research & Learning Services
Cornell University Library
Ithaca, NY, USA**

- 2) **Purdue OWL**

What Is an Annotated Bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

Annotations vs. Abstracts

Abstracts are the purely descriptive summaries often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles or in periodical indexes. Annotations are descriptive and critical; they may describe the author's point of view, authority, or clarity and appropriateness of expression.

The Process

Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis, and informed library research.

First, locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic. Briefly examine and review the actual items. Then choose those works that provide a variety of perspectives on your topic.

Cite the book, article, or document using the appropriate style.

Write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. Include one or more sentences that (a) evaluate the authority or background of the author, (b) comment on the intended audience, (c) compare or contrast this work with another you have cited, or (d) explain how this work illuminates your bibliography topic.

Critically Appraising the Book, Article, or Document

For guidance in critically appraising and analyzing the sources for your bibliography, see [How to Critically Analyze Information Sources](#). For information on the author's background and views, ask at the reference desk for help finding appropriate [biographical reference materials](#) and [book review](#) sources.

Choosing the Correct Citation Style

Check with your instructor to find out which style is preferred for your class. Online citation guides for both the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) styles are linked from the Library's [Citation Management page](#).

Sample Annotated Bibliography Entries

Below you will find sample annotations from annotated bibliographies, each with a different research project. Remember that the annotations you include in your own bibliography should reflect your research project and/or the guidelines of your assignment.

As mentioned elsewhere in this resource, depending on the purpose of your bibliography, some annotations may summarize, some may assess or evaluate a source, and some may reflect on the source's possible uses for the project at hand. Some annotations may address all three of these steps. Consider the purpose of your annotated bibliography and/or your instructor's directions when deciding how much information to include in your annotations.

Please keep in mind that all your text, including the write-up beneath the citation, must be indented so that the author's last name is the only text that is flush left.

Sample Annotations

The following examples uses MLA style

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Anchor Books, 1995.

Lamott's book offers honest advice on the nature of a writing life, complete with its insecurities and failures. Taking a humorous approach to the realities of being a writer, the chapters in Lamott's book are wry and anecdotal and offer advice on everything from plot development to jealousy, from perfectionism to struggling with one's own internal critic.

In the process, Lamott includes writing exercises designed to be both productive and fun. Lamott offers sane advice for those struggling with the anxieties of writing, but her main project seems to be offering the reader a reality check regarding writing, publishing, and struggling with one's own imperfect humanity in the process. Rather than a practical handbook to producing and/or publishing, this text is indispensable because of its honest perspective, its down-to-earth humor, and its encouraging approach.

Chapters in this text could easily be included in the curriculum for a writing class. Several of the chapters in Part 1 address the writing process and would serve to generate discussion on students' own drafting and revising processes. Some of the writing exercises would also be appropriate for generating classroom writing exercises. Students should find Lamott's style both engaging and enjoyable.

In the sample annotation above, the writer includes three paragraphs: a summary, an evaluation of the text, and a reflection on its applicability to his/her own research, respectively.

Waite, Linda J., et al. "Nonfamily Living and the Erosion of Traditional Family Orientations Among Young Adults." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 51, no. 4, 1986, pp. 541-554.

The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living.

The following example uses APA style (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition, 2010*) for the journal citation:

Waite, L. J., Goldschneider, F. K., & Witsberger, C. (1986). Nonfamily living and the erosion of traditional family orientations among young adults. *American Sociological Review, 51*, 541-554.

The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living.

Student Exercise

For this assignment, students are to choose three articles from their body of research and compose an annotated bibliography entry for each. Each annotation must be between 250-400 words and must include the correct citation format as seen in the examples on this worksheet. Either APA or MLA format is acceptable.

Works Cited

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