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2021

RHETORICAL TWEETING: A SOCIAL MEDIA PEDAGOGY FOR THE FIRST-YEAR WRITING CLASSROOM AT JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY

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An Essay Submitted to the
Graduate School of
John Carroll University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
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2021

Introduction

A tired group of final exam-stricken, first-year students listlessly slogged to their seats on a cold December morning about three minutes before class. It was one of my last days shadowing a first-year writing course at John Carroll University. As the students settled in their chairs, it happened– the compelling spectacle that I wouldn't be able to shake from my head over the upcoming holiday break. To my amazement, *every* student in the room was glancing down at their phone screen, neglecting the tangible space around them as they swiped away their cares. The room was completely silent, aside from the gentle noise of footsteps one could hear carrying over from the hallway. Rather than bearing the awkward conversations that classmate acquaintances had to endure in the past, these students were individually and intimately homing in on their personalized and digital worlds. The only thing that would eventually break this technological trance was the professor initiating the period by uttering an optimistic good morning. Initially, I thought the scenario laughable. A room filled with iPhone-mesmerized students would provide many a baby boomer with the ammunition needed to discredit the new and decadent generations of "mediocrity." And then, I felt embarrassed. I started reflecting on my phone use (most notably, my own pre-class "phone surfing" escapades of my undergraduate career). Had our society become this tech-dependent? Could we no longer communicate orally? After much reflection, I felt somewhat disheartened. Yet, my opinion towards this technological phenomenon would soon change.

The following semester, I began teaching first-year writing in my own classroom. This striking occurrence of cellular bewitchment would once again unfold. At four minutes to two, at least half of my students would remain enthralled with the activity transpiring on their phones. Consequently, one day in early March, I decided to address the pre-class phone surfing epidemic

on campus. I invited students to share what they typically do on their mobiles before the period starts. They admitted to checking their social media accounts; students might like an Instagram image, swipe through Snapchat, or post a tweet – all within that tiny window of time before class. My inquiry eventually led to a lively conversation concerning the agency and importance of social media within the average college student's life. An easygoing pupil described the inspiration she receives from social networks, inspiration she wishes to cultivate as a media influencer. The class athlete expressed how social platforms help keep him informed of the latest sports developments. A political science major stressed the necessity of social media within the modern news cycle. An introvert happily declared her love of TikTok, deeming the video-sharing application an easy way to relax and have fun without having to talk to anyone in real-time.

It was during this conversation that I realized the significance of these pre-class phone surfing sessions. More specifically, I realized the importance of the social media platforms that constitute such sessions. They represent a paradoxical connectedness; while students remain mute in the real world, their digital realm constantly buzzes with ideas, arguments, and language. They represent dynamic communities for millions of diverse identities, from the athlete to the academic. They represent a way of generating knowledge, of expressing oneself uniquely, of discovering new frontiers. They represent a centralized space where one might share joy, grief, injustice, scandal, and the like. They represent the very practices and issues of rhetoric that compositionists study and teach. After all, *social* media is just that – a *social* technology. As with any social technology, communication plays a key role. Where there is communication, then, there is persuasion, and, according to Kenneth Burke's argument in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, "wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric" (qtd. in Bizzell et al. 1164). Here, Burke asserts

the all-embracing agency of rhetoric within existence, an agency one can certainly apply to social media. In other words, due to the technology's encompassing role in the modern college student's life and the rhetorical implications it harbors, social media remains a promising tool when teaching student writers how to transfer what they learn in the first-year writing classroom to other academic/non-academic contexts.

Teaching for transfer remains one of the most important aspects of my first-year writing course. I owe my prioritization of transfer to Kathleen Blake Yancey, Kara Taczak, and Liane Robertson. In their study, *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*, Yancey et al. describe the importance of transfer for composition students. The authors note that to realize the total value of a writing class, a student must understand the rich complexities of composing within multiple contexts; an instructor, then, must explicitly teach to transfer these complexities across such contexts. Yancey et al. further elucidate that if a composition instructor fails to emphasize transfer, the average student will become disinterested in their own writing process and the complexities of composition altogether (2, 25, 45). Therefore, I am constantly considering how I can best show students the persistent and overarching role of rhetoric in both academic and non-academic contexts. By manifesting this epiphany regarding social media – a perpetual technology of rhetoric– I felt like I had struck gold. I was ready to put a transfer pedagogy based around social networking into practice.

But what might a social media pedagogy look like at John Carroll? To deliver an effective curriculum that best transfers rhetorical/compositional practices between the classroom and cyberspace, I thought it wise to start with the students. Just as I did on that early day in March, I set out to learn more about how a sample of students on campus use social media and how the technology influences their everyday life. I decided to develop a survey for first-year

writers at John Carroll. I tailored the survey questions around two sites that I believed best facilitated the transferability of rhetorical skill between social media and the classroom: multimodal composing and virtue ethics. My research for the survey primarily focused on two scholars who helped me identify and develop these sites of interest. Jason Palmeri's *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy* illustrated the rich history compositionists possess within the realm of multimodal composing. Such a history, I found, undoubtedly complemented the multimodal nature of social media that students would employ regularly. John Duffy's text, *Provocations of Virtue: Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Teaching of Writing*, offered invaluable insight on the responsibility a writing teacher holds in instructing students how to communicate ethically within the modern world of fake news and toxic rhetoric. The possibilities that Duffy's exploration of virtue ethics presented also supplemented the unique aspects of social media that a college student would surely encounter. These two texts not only informed the development of the survey I distributed. They also formed the trajectory of the additional research I performed to strengthen my pedagogy.

The overarching goal of this essay, then, is to detail this pedagogy of social media for the first-year writing course at John Carroll University. As such, this essay argues that a social media pedagogy is advantageous to students in that it illustrates how aspects of rhetoric/composition, that is, aspects of multimodal composing and ethical communication, manifest in their everyday life. To articulate a social media pedagogy, I will draw from Palmeri and Duffy's works, among others, and the survey I distributed to first-year writing students on John Carroll's campus. I hope that my work will elucidate the promising role social media might play in the composition classroom. I will also emphasize the rhetorical/compositional challenges the modern student experiences via social platforms and how a social media pedagogy might remedy these

challenges while granting students the confidence they need to analyze and participate in online discourse. Therefore, the aforementioned pre-class phone surfing sessions will take on new meaning, as the modern aspects of social media will merge with students' broader awareness of rhetoric and ethics.

Literature Review

In addition to the survey distributed to JCU students, three research areas informed this project: social media's role within composition studies overall, the multimodal nature of social media composing, and the ethical implications of analyzing and composing social media discourse. Furthermore, reviewing the literature of these investigative areas will provide a credible and comprehensive backing to this essay's social media pedagogy. This section will supply an overview of these three categories of literature under the following subheadings: composition studies and social media, multimodal composing and social media, and the role of virtue ethics in social media composition.

Composition Studies and Social Media

The field of rhetoric and composition has experienced noteworthy developments within the context of social media. Because social media is a relatively new technology, the scholarship remains broad and mutable. The demands of the professional job market undoubtedly contribute to the vast and fluctuating nature of such scholarship. William Magrino and Peter Sorrell address the professional implications of the technology in their essay, "Professionalizing the Amateur: Social Media, the 'Myth of the Digital Native,' and the Graduate Assistant in the Composition Classroom." Magrino and Sorrell advocate for incorporating social media in writing curricula.

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They believe the technology to be a critical component that a student, both undergraduate and graduate, must be familiar with to succeed in the current job market. The authors assert, "social media skills are one area where [compositionists] may directly and productively intervene, as they are just as applicable in creating a dynamic and interactive classroom environment as they are in the domain of marketability" (77). While this essay does not explicitly focus on social media's professional potential, Magrino and Sorrell's work still proves useful to my central claim. These scholars illustrate a social media pedagogy's feasibility while simultaneously articulating the technology's importance in contemporary society, thus framing this project in an expedient light. Concurrently, they stress the dynamic nature of social networking itself, presenting the technology as a promising tool an instructor may employ to enhance a writing class's marketability and relevancy altogether.

Others have formulated social networking pedagogies emphasizing the technology's transferability strictly within the academic realm. In "Reverse Transfer: Using Social Media to Teach Academic Paper Principles," Kali Jo Wacker presents concrete examples and activities that an instructor may implement to transfer rhetorical ability between the Internet and the academy. Wacker formulates such exemplars around a "flipped" notion of transfer. She states,

> Instead of looking at transfer through the lens of "how can I get my students to transfer the skills they potentially learn in my courses to their other courses/other publics/other situations?," I contend that we should use social media and their subsequent public contexts to further *existing* potentials of our students by engaging their *existing* multiliteracies within social media and multimodal communication practices by way of social media to further perpetuate the goals under which FYS [First-Year Seminar, equivalent to a first-year writing course] operates. (2)

This notion of transfer emphasizes the functionality of social media within a composition course. Wacker argues that a student already possesses the skills required to be successful within several rhetorical contexts; according to Wacker, social media is responsible for vesting students with

these skills. While Wacker's concept of transfer seems somewhat limited in that it only allows for a one-way transmutation of knowledge, she provides two valuable ideas to this project. First, Wacker provides a social media pedagogy based around Facebook "creeping," emoticons, and dating app use. Such a pedagogy illustrates the creative and applicable social networking components that a college student would find relevant and enjoyable. Second, Wacker substantiates the claim that social media manifests as an excellent transfer locus within rhetoric and composition courses. In fact, the exercises that Wacker presents in her essay directed my attention toward the multimodal aspects of social media composing.

Multimodal Composing and Social Media

Recent scholarship in composition studies has accentuated the importance of multimodality in a writing course. Jason Palmeri's *Remixing Composition* addresses the diverse manner of communicating a student possesses. Palmeri's primary contention that writing teachers should encourage multimodal writing assignments runs parallel to my argument in that we both hope to "encourage teachers to consider ways they can employ digital multimodal composing in order to meet many of the objectives they already pursue as writing instructors" (10). Palmeri explores broad notions of auditory art, photography (both fixed and moving), and visual imagery, articulating how these modes add critical depth to one's composing process. However, he does not prioritize one composing mode over another. Instead, Palmeri emphasizes that instructors should combine these modalities "to develop a more nuanced and complex view of what it means to teach composition in the contemporary digital moment" (15). Palmeri's text, then, serves as a critical guide for the modern composition instructor, one that eases instructors into the demands of the increasingly digitized world.

As I have suggested, social media undoubtedly remains a distinct component of the dynamic "digital moment." Similarly, Palmeri identifies social media as a critical locus of multimodal composing. He discusses the promising nature of the technology within a rhetorical context overall: "[N]ot only should students analyze how social networking sites influence the rhetorical construction of identity, but they should also have the chance to employ social networking platforms in order [to] compose and distribute persuasive activist texts to public audiences" (159). Social media for Palmeri, then, remains a valuable tool for instructing students on the complex and powerful implications of multimodal composing. Moreover, this text supports the pedagogy I wish to present, as Palmeri emphasizes the significance of multimodal composing in a writing course and how social media might serve as a tool to encourage such composing.

Others have examined social networking's multimodality in greater depth, placing the field of study into a quantitative framework via surveying. In his essay, "Digital Writing, Multimodality, and Learning Transfer: Crafting Connections between Composition and Online Composing," Ryan P. Shepherd presents a survey distributed to first-year writers in the United States and Canada. The survey explored multimodality within both social platforms and the composition classroom. Shepherd establishes the foundations of his study by declaring, "[d]igital writing and multimodality are deeply intertwined. It is difficult to think of examples of modern social networks, apps, or other digital writing spaces that do not use multiple modes to convey information to readers simultaneously. In fact, multimodality is not encouraged but often *required* in popular forms of social media, such as Instagram or Snapchat" (103). Here, Shepherd emphasizes the inevitability of multimodality within social networking composing. Such a notion complements both Palmeri's work and my pedagogy of social media.

Shepherd's survey explored the types of writing first-year writing students employ in their daily lives. He found that students spend most of their time writing digitally, via email, text messaging, and social media. Interestingly, however, Shepherd found that students failed to recognize writing as primarily a digital technology (106). In other words, students were unable to understand how the writing they perform in the classroom is comparable to the digital writing that they regularly employ. Consequently, Shepherd develops an argument that stresses the importance of multimodal instruction: [We] need to help students to create a broader definition of writing that includes digital writing and multimodality in addition to traditional print-based literacies in order to help them create a larger theory of what counts as writing – and what can be connected – so that they can draw on all of their writing experiences when they encounter new writing challenges" (112). The need for a social media pedagogy that stresses multimodality becomes apparent through Shepherd's thoughts. His claims reinforce the notion that an instructor must expand a student's conceptualization of rhetoric and composition across other modalities. Such an expansion of thought will encourage the possibility of transfer more productively.

The Role of Virtue Ethics in Social Media Composition

Equally crucial to the idea of multimodal composition is the notion of virtue ethics. A social media pedagogy should not only concern itself with the way a student composes materials. It should also address the content that a student shares to a social network itself. In other words, the ethics of writing takes on substantial prominence in the interconnected world of social media. The technology abides by the same best practices of rhetoric found in all modes of discourse – the ethical use of language is veritably one of those best practices.

A pedagogy of social media, then, requires a proper basis of virtue ethics. John Duffy's

Provocations of Virtue productively articulates the importance of virtue ethics within writing

instruction. Duffy's work explores the ethical ramifications that accompany the writing

classroom. He claims,

> [A]s teachers of writing we are *always* and *already* engaged in the teaching of rhetorical
> ethics; that the teaching of writing *necessarily and inevitably* involves us in ethical
> deliberation and decision-making. I am proposing that the very act of sitting down to
> write places before the writer and teacher of writing those questions that speak to the
> kinds of people we choose to be, the sorts of relationships we seek to establish with
> others, and the kinds of communities in which we wish to live. (11).

When students use a social platform, they experience the same "ethical deliberation and

decision-making" processes common to other rhetorical modes and discourses. Further, the

conceptualization of ethics that Duffy puts forward predicates the very foundation of how

individuals interact online. Duffy begins his text by citing specific examples of "toxic" rhetoric

within online media (3-5). He defines toxic rhetoric "as language that is disrespectful to

strangers, hostile to minorities, contemptuous of compromise, dismissive of adverse evidence,

and intentionally untruthful (29).

Toxic rhetoric undoubtedly plays a sinister role within the realm of social networking, so

much so that a "post-truth" society has begun to pervade the lives of many individuals. Duffy's

pedagogies center around the idea of combatting this notion of post-truth. He contends,

> When individuals and institutions deliberately reject truth and truthfulness, confidence in
> institutions wanes, objective information is discounted, and conspiracy theories flourish.
> The 2016 US presidential campaign, for example, provided so many examples of truth
> being twisted or simply disregarded that it eventually led to Oxford Dictionaries (2016)
> selecting "post-truth" as its 2016 Word of the Year. To the extent that writing teachers
> insist upon truthfulness in making of claims – insist, that is, on "the *moral* domain of
> intended truthfulness and deception" … – the writing classroom effectively becomes a
> site of resistance to "post-truth" rhetoric and politics. (103)

The resonance of this passage has only increased in the year 2021. The 2020 election manifested the frightening and toxic nature of post-truth rhetoric. The critical aspect of this manifestation is that much of this rhetoric unraveled via social media platforms. The misuse of this technology, then, seems an area of concern; instructors of composition must prepare their students to remedy this ethical dilemma of post-truth. To ward off the dangers of a post-truth society, one must be willing to accept the actual truth, whether it bodes in their favor or not, concurrently refraining from the employment of toxic rhetoric. Upon embracing the truth and responding to it with due diligence, one may genuinely embody what it means to be virtuous, particularly within the increasingly fragile realm of social media. Thus, social media instruction takes on great exigency within the modern classroom, vesting my proposed pedagogy with greater significance.

One might wonder how the aspects of virtue ethics might transpire within the realm of social media. Scholars have addressed such a notion while expanding on Duffy's assertions. In their study, "Shoaling Rhizomes: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Social Media's Role in Discourse and Composition Education," Paige Walker and Jud Laughter provide a theoretical framework that places social media ethics and composition in conversation with one another. Walker and Laughter primarily focus on race, gender, and class issues, identifying specific examples of toxic and uplifting rhetorics that ultimately form the concept of "shoaling rhizomes" on social platforms. These rhizomes work as complex intersections of discourses related to one's identity in which "[c]easeless social media connections make breaks in the dominant discourse, providing a cartography of language use online" (62). Educators and rhetoricians may use this cartography, as Walker and Laughter argue, "to analyze social media with students and colleagues and possibly establish a more inclusive social discourse" (61). The idea of inclusion via social media discourse strongly reflects the rhetorical virtues that Duffy

proposes, as it combats the microaggressions common within the foundations of toxic rhetoric. The shoaling rhizome theory proves helpful in offering students a method to employ virtuous rhetoric within their discourses, both online and across other contexts. Walker and Laugher's approach provides a concrete manifestation of Duffy's conceptions, as they put the ideas of writing ethics into social media praxis. Such praxis indeed serves as a model for my pedagogy, as it confirms that one may formulate a critical and productive curriculum of social networking focused on ethics.

But what of the post-truth society that Duffy stresses? Such a significant contention area surely has surfaced in other scholarship, as post-truth rhetoric continues to haunt rhetoricians and students alike. In their essay, "Online Public Spheres in the Era of Fake News: Implications for the Composition Classroom," Dan Ehrenfeld and Matt Barton home in on the "pedagogical questions" that arise when considering the "fake news" that is, the post-truth nature, of the digital world. According to Ehrenfeld and Barton, "As teachers of composition with an interest in writing technology, we are naturally concerned about how we can better equip ourselves and our students with both the critical and technological know-how to not only survive but also to flourish in this challenging media environment" (10). They then provide two examples of assignments an instructor may implement "to [have students] investigate emerging misinformation practices, disinformation practices, and data-driven influence campaigns" (10). The first assignment invites pupils to create "a set criteria for the circulation of texts in the space of digital writing" (11). The second exercise asks students "to propose theories about the ways that varied forms of ethos shape the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of texts in the public sphere" via a controversy they find intriguing (12). Like Walker and Laughter, then, Ehrenfeld and Barton offer strong illustrations of a social media pedagogy that harken back to

Duffy's musings of virtue ethics. Once again, Ehrenfeld and Barton's work serves as a model for my pedagogy. They concretely elucidate how one might effectively integrate virtue ethics in the instruction of social media discourse.

Bringing the Scholarship Together

As this scholarship indicates, social media is a significant, emerging area of concern in composition studies. Many have already begun to construct pedagogies based on social networking practices. What's more, the sites of multimodality and virtue ethics certainly provide the technology with practical and timely implications within the first-year writing classroom. It seems important to note, moreover, that these sites often overlap. The multimodal composing process entails the notion of decision making – that is, of choosing a responsible and virtuous manner of engaging in dialogue with others. Instructors might assuredly observe this overlap in both the survey and the pedagogy presented in this essay. Furthermore, this research lays the groundwork for the surveying conducted on John Carroll's campus and the social media pedagogy formed from such observations.

Methodology

This project's primary research method was a survey distributed to John Carroll University (JCU) students enrolled in EN-125, Seminar on Academic Writing, or EN-120, Developmental Writing, during the Fall 2020 semester. All JCU students are required to complete the first-year writing curriculum to graduate. The University places students in one of these two tracks: the one-semester course, EN-125, or the two-semester sequence, EN-120 and EN-121. Both tracks aim to guide students through the best practices of writing within several

contexts of academia and beyond. The latter track, however, serves as a developmental writing curriculum in which students are given more time to learn about and cultivate their writing process.

The goal of the survey centered on how and to what extent first-year writers employ social media in their day-to-day lives. Such information would be used to develop a social media pedagogy tailored for the first-year writing course at JCU. All students enrolled in Seminar on Academic Writing during the Fall 2021 term were emailed a link to a Google Forms survey consisting of 10 questions about social media. Specific questions were formulated with the ideas of multimodality and virtue ethics in mind, while others pertained to social media in a general sense. All responses remained confidential. In the fourteen days that the survey was available, 79 students offered a response. In short, the survey provided the necessary material to elucidate how social media use can help John Carroll students accomplish the following: become stronger users of rhetoric; gain a more ethical awareness of the world; transfer their writing knowledge to other contexts.

Student Survey Results

This survey uncovered three major findings. First, students at JCU use social media regularly from week to week, typically employing platforms focused on visual modes. Second, students do not seem to consider the rhetorical implications of social platforms overtly. Third, students recognize and value the importance of ethics when posting on social media or when browsing through others' publications.

The survey's first three questions sought to uncover general information about a student's social media use. Question one revealed that 72% of responders spend at least five hours a week

on a social media platform. 26% of students recorded that they spend between two to four hours a week on social media. Only one responder indicated that they spend less than 1 hour a week on a social platform. These findings illustrate the significant amount of time a typical JCU student spends engaged in the world of social media. Because students are using these platforms consistently, an instructor may justify the need for a social media pedagogy. Question two invited students to share which platforms they use weekly. The most popular applications were Snapchat and Instagram. This data indicates that many students favor services requiring multimodal composing, meaning compositions involving images, text, sound, and graphics. While these two platforms were the most popular, other applications also garnered significant attention, as illustrated in Figure 1:
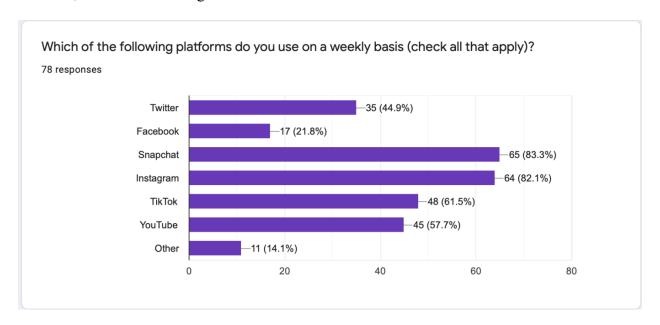

Which of the following platforms do you use on a weekly basis (check all that apply)?

78 responses

Platform	Value
Twitter	35 (44.9%)
Facebook	17 (21.8%)
Snapchat	65 (83.3%)
Instagram	64 (82.1%)
TikTok	48 (61.5%)
YouTube	45 (57.7%)
Other	11 (14.1%)

Figure 1: Social Media Platforms Used on a Weekly Basis

This broad array of platform use reflects the various instances of multimodality a student would experience. Intriguingly, only 17 students selected Facebook as a platform of service, while 35 selected Twitter. While these applications employ multiple modes of expression, they are geared toward primarily textual publications. A preference for visual posts among JCU students seems

probable. What's more, question three found that the most popular form of social media overall for these students was TikTok, a video sharing platform. Such a finding strengthens the claim that JCU students favor imagery-based modalities.

Question four focused solely on the multimodal nature of social platforms. Students were invited to select all the modalities that they employ via social networks. The results appear below in Figure 2:
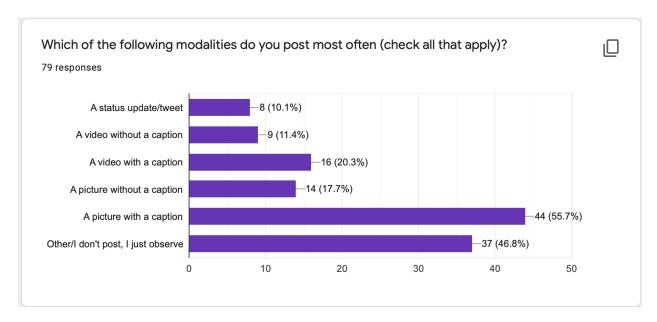

Figure 2: Commonly Employed Social Media Modalities

The most popular option, "A picture with a caption," veritably embodies multimodal composing; half of the responders participate in a complex composition process in which text and visuals combine to form a complete product. Students use other modalities, to a lesser extent, indicating the diverse spectrum of composing processes that manifest within responders. It is important to note that 37 responders selected the "Other/I don't post," I just observe option. Such data reminds one that a social media pedagogy might not exclusively center on the notions of composition. Instructors may also prepare students to analyze the content of others on social platforms fruitfully and responsibly.

The remaining six questions focused on social media in a general sense or on the technology's ethical principles. Question five asked responders whether they enjoy creating posts via social media. The results were staggard. About 38% of students stated that they enjoy the composition process. 33% were neutral. 28% of responders did not find creating social media posts enjoyable. Those who enjoy creating social media posts might have an easier time transferring their composition practices between the classroom and the Internet. Moreover, such data reminds one that students might not always find composing via social platforms to be necessarily enjoyable.

Question six asked students whether they have considered the rhetorical principles that social media use entails. Fifty-four percent of responders indicated that they had considered such principles, while about 36% remained neutral. In total, eight students declared that they have not considered the rhetorical aspects of social networking technology. Furthermore, because social media possesses countless rhetorical implications, an instructor would want to capitalize on those who have considered such implications already when forming a pedagogy.

The next three questions revealed that students generally recognize the ethical implications that accompany social media discourse. Seventy-four percent of students believe that social media can be a credible tool to communicate information. This statistic sheds insight into how students conceptualize the technology and whether they think one may use social networking within contexts possessing a greater formality level. Similarly, 73% of responders declared that a class centered on ethical social media use would be useful. From these data, it seems as though students feel accepting toward curricula focused on social media ethics. Question nine, then, justified such acceptance, as approximately 80% of students felt as though

how they present themselves on social media is important. A pedagogy that considers how one might best present themself seems logical.

The results of question 10 clearly encapsulated the need for a social media pedagogy. About 90% of students asserted that social media would continue to grow in importance over the next five years. If students believe social media will become even more critical in their lives as years progress, shouldn't instructors prepare them for such an occasion? The sooner an instructor can incorporate a social media pedagogy in their classrooms, the more prepared a student will be to tackle the nuanced rhetorical aspects of the technology that are gaining importance with each day. Therefore, this survey embodies social media's exigency on JCU's campus, as students persistently indicated the technology's ubiquitous influence over their daily activities.

Discussion of Survey Results

This survey reinforced several ideas presented in the literature review scholarship, namely that students consistently craft multimodal compositions and that students recognize and value the importance of ethics in the digitized world. For instance, JCU students favor platforms that primarily use non-textual modes (visuals, audio, graphics) such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok. As shown, Palmeri prioritizes these modes, designating them as critical components that expand a student's definition of composition. While students are clearly employing these modalities, the survey indicated that pupils are not necessarily constituting their social media compositions as deliverables with significant rhetorical implications. This claim manifests in that a considerable portion of JCU students remained neutral when asked whether they have considered social networking's rhetorical principles. Perhaps responders did not understand the question; they might have felt confused about the meaning of "rhetorical principles," thus

increasing the number of neutral responses. Moreover, a significant parallel develops between this project's findings and that of Shepherd's. A disconnect exists between the traditional writing of the classroom and the digital composing a student performs in both instances. Thus, the exigence for a social media pedagogy concentrated on transfer resurfaces once more. Further, the argument Yancey et al. offer regarding the explicit encouragement of transfer in the composition classroom takes on greater magnitude.

Additionally, a notable tension develops when placing the JCU survey in conversation with Wacker's social media pedagogy. This tension arises from the dissonance between the social platforms Wacker highlights and the platforms typically employed by JCU students. While Wacker champions several activities revolving around Facebook and Twitter, such activities may not be as practical on JCU's campus as fewer students use these applications. Instead, Wacker's activities that focus on Instagram and YouTube might be more fruitful. An instructor might even appropriate these activities around media that Wacker neglects, such as TikTok and Snapchat. The pedagogy presented in this essay prioritizes compositional ventures on social platforms that are most relevant to JCU students, including Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube. While students might not use Facebook or Twitter as extensively, instructors should still acknowledge these platforms due to their rhetorical/compositional principles. An instructor might even survey individual class sections to get a feel for the most popular social platforms to create a more effective curriculum.

Furthermore, because students prioritized a curriculum revolving around ethics on social platforms, and because John Carroll is a Jesuit university, Duffy's conceptions consequently acquire additional value. Aspects of toxic rhetoric and fake news constantly remind college students of the significant responsibility one possesses when entering the public sphere of social

media. Therefore, their support for an education that stresses virtuous rhetoric is logical. An additional factor influencing such favor for a pedagogy on ethical social networking is the University's Jesuit identification. As a Jesuit institution, John Carroll encourages students to serve and advocate for those that are marginalized. The average JCU student understands the Jesuit mission's significance, and many pupils strive to enact its virtuous teachings both inside and outside classroom walls. A pedagogy based around virtue ethics, then, fits seamlessly within the core curriculum of the University in that it invites students persistently to consider how their actions affect the world for the better, that is, in a manner that proves most just.

What's more, as the survey demonstrated, most JCU students believe that one may use social platforms credibly. In other words, students have the potential to regard the technology as a serious communication locus. One must employ social media virtuously to conduct essential business affairs, spread a political message, and proliferate the latest news. A social pedagogy would reinforce the notion that professionals may use the technology productively and ethically, ultimately influencing societal undertakings positively. The professionalized notion of social media certainly dovetails with Magrino and Sorrell's claims regarding the technology's emerging role within the modern job market. Ultimately, a JCU student would most likely appreciate a pedagogy of virtue ethics. It would encourage students to use social media in a professional yet truthful manner that reflects the Jesuit mission's very foundations.

Recommendations

This section contains two recommendations for first-year writing instructors at John Carroll University based on the research and survey outlined above. The first recommendation focuses on a project emphasizing multimodal composing via social platforms. The second

recommendation outlines an activity centering on social media analysis within a framework of virtue ethics. As stated, aspects of multimodality and virtue ethics overlap. Therefore, one should approach these recommendations as flexible tools (or perhaps as foundations) for social media instruction, tools that an instructor might appropriate to meet a specific classroom's needs.

Recommendation 1 – Expanding Composition's Boundaries: Transforming a Textual Argument

The first recommendation puts into practice the importance of learning social media's rhetorical possibilities and how multimodal composition fits within the technology's parameters. For this project, students would repurpose a more traditional, textual argument into a social media post consisting of images, audio, emojis, graphics, and/or verbal and non-verbal text. Instructors might assign this project in the final sequence of the first-year writing curriculum at JCU. Sequence four traditionally consists of a less strenuous assignment as students recuperate after writing their research essays in the previous unit. An instructor might have students write a personal narrative about a significant life event or create a visual text that illustrates the field of composition's multimodal aspects. While this assignment's placement within the course syllabus is flexible, it will be necessary for an instructor to oversee the project *after* a student has written an essay with an argument (such as the research paper). Students must possess the necessary information to compose a deliverable that will be most conducive to a specific audience within a designated social media platform. The traditional, text-based paper will serve as the groundwork for their multimodal products that will appear across such platforms.

When commissioning this project based on multimodal translation, an instructor must overtly explain the assignment's purpose. Some students may find it inappropriate within the context of an English class, thus eliminating the likelihood of transfer. Palmeri captures this

purpose best when he posits, "it is important that we help students gain a global understanding of creative processes that is not tied to any specific modality – an understanding that they can use to help guide their composing with diverse alphabetic, audio, and visual materials" (28). That is to say, the purpose of this assignment is for students to understand how compositional processes transfer to realms beyond the writing classroom, nay, realms beyond academia completely. An overt emphasis on transferability remains paramount, as Yancey et al. declare. When it comes to multimodal composing, a composition instructor should not be cryptic when describing this assignment's goals. Instead, instructors must explicitly detail how the rhetorical/compositional skills taught in their course seamlessly jump between modalities, genres, and contexts that are academic, professional, or personal. Moreover, by translating a textual argument into a multimodal product via a social platform, students will realize that *everything* is an argument, including the Instagram posts, the TikTok videos, and the tweets they so persistently encounter. This all-encompassing notion of argumentation harkens back to Burke's conceptualization of rhetoric, in which he identifies rhetoric's presence in life's many instances.

To fortify the notion that everything is an argument, instructors should not limit the social platforms/modalities students may use when translating their arguments. However, instructors will most likely want to promote the applications JCU students seem most comfortable maneuvering, including the imagery-based platforms of Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube. Depending on a teacher's familiarity with social media technology, an instructor might allow students to distribute their posts on Instagram, Snapchat, or Facebook "stories," in which an image or video remains available for only 24 hours. Permitting the use of these stories would add an interesting dimension of time to a student's argument. To preserve comfort, an instructor should not require students to use their personal accounts to post this assignment

unless they willingly choose to do so. Pupils might create separate accounts explicitly dedicated to this project (some students might not even use social media). By offering a student this choice, an opportunity arises for an instructor to stress the importance of what one posts to their social accounts. In other words, students might refrain from using their social platforms for academic purposes to maintain the brand they have already established. Additionally, instructors would not intrude on students' social media presence by examining their pseudo profiles. Undoubtedly, a discussion regarding the rhetorical construction and compartmentalization of identity would fit well when offering students the option to create these fake social networking accounts.

The challenge of this assignment, then, is that a student must repurpose a textual argument (perhaps a lengthy and in-depth argument) to fit the rhetorical confines of a social media post. Students should freely choose the platform and modality that will best convey their argument. To ensure students receive practice composing with several modes, an instructor should require that a post contains at least one image, video, or audio clip in conjunction with text (though a student might not choose to use text at all, especially in video compositions). For instance, a student might post an emotional image of a neglected animal on Instagram to capture the seriousness of animal abuse. Or one might compose and publish a YouTube video in which the student uses multiple sound bites, graphics, and personal interview recordings to express an argument relating to the Coronavirus pandemic**.** Students writing on more lighthearted topics might choose to frame their post in a humorous light, creating a meme or TikTok video that wittingly parodies the absurdness of a particular situation that has recently developed on their campus. By choosing the best platform and mode(s) to convey their argument, students will not only expand their definition of composition. Pupils will also maintain a more concrete understanding of genre as they analyzed and studied the many conventions and expectations that

accompany specific social platforms. Such a notion harkens back to Wacker's activity centered

on formatting according to genre (10). Additionally, students will consider the audience

members that frequent particular platforms; a group that explores Facebook is assuredly vastly

different than one that uses TikTok. Therefore, an audience mini-lesson might transpire during

this project's sequence, in which instructors have students identify and analyze the target

audience for multiple social applications.

Students may submit their posts via screenshots, direct links, or email attachments.

Accompanying these posts will be a two-to-three-page write-up in which students articulate how

the composition process of their social post compared to the composition of their original, text-

based essay. One might detail how long they spent composing their post, the challenges they

faced while crafting their message, and the number of "drafts" (that is, posts that get published

then deleted) they prepared. Students will uncover via this write-up that the composition

processes between textual and non-textual modes are largely similar, thus reinforcing the notion

of transfer and expanding their conceptualization of composing. Instructors should also have

students explain why they chose the platforms/mode(s) employed in their project while

describing the reasoning behind their design choices. This write-up will *require* students to

consider the rhetorical implications embedded within social media posts. Therefore, this write-up

will also remedy the neutrality exhibited by JCU students when asked whether they have

considered the rhetorical intimations of social networking in the survey detailed above. Students

should close their write-up by stating how successful they think their post was in conveying their

argument. One might report the number of likes or comments a post received or how well those

in the student's network could interpret that post's argument. Instructors could even pair those

with similar arguments together to compare how well their posts faired across different platforms and modalities.

An optional component of this assignment could also involve a class discussion about virtue ethics. Students who took their posts public might have received interactions from their network, especially in the case of provocative arguments; friends, family members, or even strangers might have agreed or disagreed with the arguments offered via these publications. Therefore, an instructor should ask students to analyze such feedback, particularly when individuals disagreed with the student's claim(s). Students should discern whether the responses offered by these individuals seemed disrespectful, uncompromising, or combative of the truth. Such an exercise would enhance a student's ability to recognize the occurrence of toxic rhetoric, an ideal expanded upon in the following recommendation section. Instructors might ask how students responded to these provocative comments, that is, if they decided to respond at all. Such a discussion is contingent, of course, on whether an instructor has fully addressed the aspects of virtue ethics in previous assignments/units.

After completing this project, a student should realize how the familiar, relaxed, and seemingly simple characteristics of social media compare to the very skills they have learned in the writing classroom. In fact, this project's overall objective should be for students to recall this assignment every time they compose a post for a social platform. In doing so, students will more comprehensively understand that their social media publications entail a complex composition process mirroring the same procedures they exude when writing formal, alphabetic essays. In other words, students will discover that their social media posts are valid instances of rhetorical wonder akin to the research paper, the personal narrative, or the critical analysis.

Recommendation 2 – Identifying Toxic Rhetoric/Promoting Virtue in a Digital Realm

This focus on rhetorical importance and ethics continues in the second recommendation. Such an activity encourages students to consider how the ethical applications of their formal writing transfer to social media discourse. Instructors will most likely initiate this activity when discussing the artistic proof of ethos. At JCU, such a discussion would typically occur early in the semester as teachers prepare their students to compose a rhetorical analysis within the course's first sequence. Before conceptualizing the idea of ethos within the boundaries of social networking, a student must fully understand the proof as an "appeal to the audience's trust in the speaker's character and authority" (Bizzell et al. 1646). It might help for a class to initially examine ethos in contexts including political speeches, literary texts (novels, poems, plays), and films/television shows. Regardless of the context explored, an instructor must emphasize that ethos, in the words of Duffy, details "the kinds of people we choose to be, the sorts of relationships we seek to establish with others, and the kinds of communities in which we wish to live" (11). Framing this definition in the context of social networking will allow students to recognize that the technology is a pivotal component to the modern definition of "community."

Once students hold a firm understanding of ethos, an instructor should ask their class how aspects of the appeal surface on social platforms. This inquiry might lead to a discussion in which students begin to unearth the significant rhetorical issues that surface when one irresponsibly employs the technology. After prepping the class with discussion, an instructor should invite students to free write about a time in which social media might have jeopardized their ethos, that is, their character or their credibility. Students might record their involvement in a heated Twitter argument. Alternatively, one might reflect on how they alter the content of their dating app profile to attract a greater audience of potential "matches." While these might seem

like humorous scenarios, they are, in fact, situations that a modern college student would confront, situations that indubitably possess ethical implications. A student could even write about when they posted something that degraded or emotionally harmed another individual, whether purposely or inadvertently.

After writing this reflection, an instructor may ask students to share these experiences of when they believed their ethos had been jeopardized. Of course, instructors should not require pupils to share what they wrote, in that some of the reflections might contains sensitive information that a student would not want others to hear. An instructor might encourage students to consider how they could have responded to these ethical situations in a more responsible manner. By reflecting on and sharing these experiences, students will realize how subtle instances of ethos constantly manifest in their social networking endeavors. Therefore, such an activity will vest students with an ethical consciousness when composing social posts hereafter, as they strive to create publications that most appropriately reflect who they are as virtuous people. Duffy's scholarship outlines the purpose of this activity. He writes, "the teaching of ethical rhetoric, should we acknowledge and embrace it in our classrooms, provides a vocabulary with which our students might learn to 'talk to strangers' and perhaps begin to repair the broken state of our public arguments" (12). When students examine the ethical dilemmas of their social media use in the past, they will be more prepared to "talk with strangers" and engage civilly in the public arguments of their future.

The second half of this activity would require students to analyze rather than compose social media discourse. Because a notable percentage of JCU students declared that they only observe social publications rather than posting themselves, this exercise would surely be helpful. After examining instances of irresponsible social networking use within their own lives, students

should be invited to consider where they observe cases of toxic rhetoric in others. Instructors should allow students to use their mobile devices or computers in class to locate harmful rhetoric examples on their social platforms. Such examples might stem from their friends, family members, celebrities, politicians, news sources, or even strangers. Once again, class members would share their findings and explain how those involved in the situation might have handled it differently using virtuous rhetoric in the place of toxicity. Further, teachers could ask their students to think critically about how the toxic rhetoric illustrated in particular examples affects different individuals or groups. A post maliciously denouncing the Black Lives Matter movement, for instance, might lead to a conversation that illuminates the struggles of African Americans. Such discussions parallel the issues of virtue ethics that Walker and Laughter present in their shoaling rhizomes theory. Therefore, instructors will reinforce the Jesuit mission's foundations as they educate their students on how one may use toxic rhetoric to oppress marginalized peoples.

The recent awareness and focus on fake news certainly fall under the toxic rhetoric category. As Duffy points out, fake news emerges when one intentionally manipulates the truth in a manner that threatens or discredits other persons/groups. However, an instructor might save a lesson regarding fake news for the research essay sequence. By re-emphasizing notions of virtue ethics later in the course, students will understand that ethos is an important topic that manifests in all instances of rhetoric. What's more, by teaching students how to identify fake news, a pupil will be more readily prepared for the demands of academic research. Like the exercise presented in the previous paragraph, instructors might have students track down fake news examples, specifically on social platforms. The class could then deconstruct the situation,

analyzing what the publisher had to gain (and whom they wished to harm) by intentionally manipulating a narrative.

To reinforce the notion that multimodal composition and virtue ethics often intersect, an instructor might choose to explicitly highlight examples of toxic rhetoric that contain several modes of communication. To clarify, instructors might have students explain how images, graphics, and other media contribute to the dismissive, disrespectful, and altogether unethical characteristics of toxic rhetoric. For example, a fake news story on Instagram might use a photoshopped image to promote a misleading ideology. Similarly, a TikTok celebrity might share an appropriated sound bite to discredit another person's character or credibility falsely. By explicitly addressing the appeal in a multimodal framework, students will comprehend that ethos can develop through modes other than words, thus reinforcing the idea that multimodal composition involves the same ethical decision-making of traditional alphabetic writing that Duffy champions.

Furthermore, by overtly exploring the issues of virtue ethics within the context of social media, students will depart class with a clear understanding of ethos and how aspects of toxic rhetoric and fake news affect the appeal. Most importantly, however, instructors will expose students to ethos in a context they use consistently. Ultimately, pupils will more critically, carefully, and virtuously analyze and respond to the compositions that perpetually dance across their phone screens. Yet, as in the previous recommendation, an instructor must overtly reinforce that these ethical skills naturally transfer back to the very writing assignments that make up much of the writing course's curriculum. An explicit emphasis of transfer, consequently, will provide Duffy's work with the attention it deserves in the ethically concerned realm of writing.

Conclusion

As this essay has illustrated, my concerns regarding the seemingly disheartening phone surfing sessions performed by JCU students were too simplistic. In fact, such concerns were perhaps unproductively judgmental, in that I inadvertently devalued the digital activities that the modern student prioritizes and values. Those students might very well have been participating in the complex, rhetorically involved processes that social media necessitates. Indeed, a digital marketing major might have been composing an Instagram post, making careful, deliberate, and powerful decisions that would influence their brand, and ultimately, their ethos. A journalism student might have been engaged in a Twitter debate, choosing how best to convey their case in a respectful yet persuasive manner. Or, an aspiring biologist might have been witnessing the latest TikTok hit, enjoying a multimodal spectacle that humorously captures the absurdness of a recent cultural fad. While these phone surfing sessions seem disengaged, incommunicative, and impractical, they are anything but. They represent the present and the future of writing, of composing, of rhetoric.

A composition instructor's responsibility, then, has increased and will continue to grow within the contemporary realm of digital media. Writing teachers must prepare their students to contemplate how their pre-class phone surfing sessions relate to rhetoric's circumstances. As evidenced by the feedback from students and the recent work in the field, the sites of multimodal composing and virtue ethics certainly provide the necessary characteristics to encourage such contemplation. By implementing a pedagogy based on these scholarly locations, educators can more overtly address the ever-vital idea of transfer while shaping students into rhetorically aware composers and, as we try to instill at John Carroll, ethically responsible citizens. Accordingly,

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the writing classroom and the students who frequent it will thrive in both the dynamic arena of academia and the all-pervasive realm of everyday life.

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