

1-1-2014

# Technologically-Mediated Writing In The First Year Writing Classroom: Twitter And Immediate Writing

Jason Kahler  
*Wayne State University,*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/oa\\_dissertations](http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/oa_dissertations)



Part of the [Other Education Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Kahler, Jason, "Technologically-Mediated Writing In The First Year Writing Classroom: Twitter And Immediate Writing" (2014).  
*Wayne State University Dissertations*. Paper 890.

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@WayneState. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wayne State University Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@WayneState.

**TECHNOLOGICALLY-MEDIATED WRITING IN THE FIRST YEAR WRITING  
CLASSROOM: TWITTER AND IMMEDIATE WRITING**

by

**JASON KAHLER**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2014

MAJOR: COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

Approved by:

---

Advisor

Date

---

---

---

**© COPYRIGHT BY**

**JASON KAHLER**

**2014**

**All Rights Reserved**

## **DEDICATION**

For Zachary, Jacob, and Gabrielle

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to my dissertation committee, for their understanding and guidance.

Thank you, also, to my colleagues and students at Saginaw Valley State University, for their participation and encouragement.

Thank you Diana, for her patience and support.

And thank you to my family, for everything.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication _____	ii
Acknowledgements _____	iii
Chapter 1: From Writing-Process Instruction to Immediate Writing _____	1
Chapter 2: The Classroom, Composition, and Immediate Writing _____	38
Chapter 3: Saginaw Valley State University and Immediate Writing _____	64
Chapter 4: Immediate Writing Using Technologically-Mediated Writing in a First Year Writing Classroom _____	89
Chapter 5: Where We Went; Where We Go _____	144
Works Cited _____	164
Abstract _____	169
Autobiographical Statement _____	170

## Chapter One: From Writing-Process Instruction to Immediate Writing

Since the emergence of Composition as a field of study, theorists and practitioners have worked to uncover a standard, reproducible method for bringing writing tasks to a conclusion from a blank-page beginning. Though this is a honorable goal, the resulting process-oriented pedagogy that has developed from this work ignored other, valid approaches to writing. In particular, process-oriented pedagogy has neglected writing that is inspired, completed, published, and reviewed within a limited time frame. This type of writing, which I will call immediate writing, has as its foundation considerations of *kairotic* moments that require a writer's attention and response.

Immediate writing is more important now than ever before thanks to technologically-mediated writing. These written artifacts, published and transmitted through the internet and other digital files, become accessible to an audience almost instantly. These files are then potentially available for all kinds of redistribution, reappropriation, and remixing. With what some theorists are labeling rhetorical velocity, rhetorical products churn across computer screens to be used by the next author, requiring a new way of thinking about the way we write and what happens to our work when we're done (along with the possibilities for borrowing from other's work ourselves). But writing-process pedagogy requires students to produce work that is too far removed from the energy and activity of technologically-mediated immediate writing.

Writing-Process pedagogy's emphasis on revision generates pages upon pages of words, without ever necessarily reaching a point of completion. While it is true that writing often is as much about re-writing as anything else, that approach fails to encourage students to look at their writing as immediately eligible for publication and evaluation. I won't go so far to say that process-oriented pedagogy encourages lazy writers, but it's not a stretch to see that over-

emphasis on the act of writing begins to ignore the purpose of writing: to create a product for readers' consumption.

What I will propose is a First Year Writing approach that pays attention to technologically-mediated writing—its challenges and opportunities—while at the same time continuing to prepare students for their later work in the academy. This chapter begins by tracing the rise of process-oriented pedagogy and its incorporation into the FYW curriculum.

### Process-oriented Pedagogy: The Beginning

The cognitive psychologists spearheaded the move to quantify the ways we think about writing and the ways we think as we write. This inspired the move away from consideration of product and toward consideration of process, and also evened-out the conflict between the differing approaches to teaching rhetoric. Regardless of the purpose for or intent of the writing, writers could be inspected and analyzed scientifically. This new interest in the cognitive steps during the act of writing took shape and gave birth to Writing Process instruction.

Though Writing Process essays were being published as early as 1953 (Mills), the first research project to identify the process writers endure while composing was published as *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* in 1971. In the report, Janet Emig moves the conversation about writing away from the products of writing and toward the ways student writers bring their work to completion. The writers of Emig's study are eight high school seniors, described as having above-average and average intelligence. These are good high school students, selected for the study in part because of their talents for writing. Through a series of interviews and conferences, during which the students sometimes narrated what they were thinking as they wrote, Emig tracked the cognitive moves the students performed as they composed.



Emig divides the students' writing processes into ten "dimensions": Context of Composing, Nature of Stimulus, Pre-Writing, Planning, Starting, Composing Aloud: A Characterization, Reformulation, Stopping, Contemplation of Product, and Seeming Teacher Influence on Piece (34-35). The first two dimensions describe how students first set to writing, their attitudes toward and reasons for the writing, and other factors that provoke the rhetorical action. Students may continue along the process at this point, or may encounter what Emig calls "blocks" (39). Blocks might take the form of difficulties as a result of lack of skill or motivation, or the form of mental and emotional blocks.

Once the writer accepts the call to write, the next steps are Pre-Writing and Planning. For Emig, Pre-Writing is "that part of the composing process that extends from the time a writer begins to perceive selectively certain features of his inner and/or outer environment with a view to writing about them. . .to the time when he first puts words or phrases on paper elucidating that perception" (39). Emig defines Planning as the "establishment of elements and parameters" (39), and noted that while Pre-Writing happens only once, Planning may happen over and over. Both Planning and Pre-Writing are greatly influenced by the specifics of the situation and context, and while some students might embrace the freedom a broadly-worded assignment might present, others will be paralyzed by the number of choices and variables that play into their decisions for writing.

While Starting might seem a simple act of beginning to write, Emig stresses that what actually happens within the writer is quite profound. She pinpoints the point of Starting to be that moment when words appear on paper, but also what I would label the complex internal struggle between doubt and confidence that every writer feels. As her students Composed Aloud, Emig identified that they were engaging in an activity similar to planning, but since it was

occurring within the piece—both in terms of the context of the event happening as writing was happening and with using the language of the specific piece—Emig has decided to label this move Anticipating. Students anticipate small decisions that will unfold as they write, as opposed to more global choices they make in the Planning phase of the process.

When students correct, revise, and rewrite, they are Reformulating (Emig 43). Listed here in order of smallest to largest task, the Reformulating phase is the point at which, as Emig writes, the students shifted the way they were using their memories. While writing requires a relatively limited use of memory, Reformulating requires the writer to consider his or her writing on a larger scale, as well as potentially access knowledge about grammar and spelling rules or genre conventions. The act of writing is an encoding process, while Reformulating incorporates decoding as a writer rereads his work.

Stopping occurs throughout the writer's work, but Emig identifies the final act as when the writer feels finished, as if all the possible choices have been explored and exhausted. Again, Emig stresses that the context of the writing—for a school assignment, for example—influences the act of stopping. Emig ends her consideration with a rather obvious thought: “hypothesis: Stopping occurs most 'easily' when one's personal sense of closure occurs at the same time as a deadline imposed by oneself or others” (44). During the Contemplation of Product, the writer “feels most godlike” (44). The writer considers his or her creation and how it will be received in the world. Emig allows for the writer—students in her study—to consider the Seeming Influence of the Teacher at the very end of the writing process.

Emig's study was important to the field of Composition because it revealed the mistakes that teachers were making in their writing instruction. Additionally, Emig showed that the act of writing is more complex than merely identifying elements from models to emulate, or waiting

for the liberal cultural rhetoric “vision” to appear. Berlin refers to the effects of her study as “widespread and significant,” (160) and it's obvious this is not only for the specific data Emig reports in her study. Most importantly, Emig gives Composition a new set of language to use to describe how writing works.

Sondra Perl's study into the Writing Process is different than Emig's in that Perl's work moves away from the narrative description of writers' processes and toward a quantitative charting of the specific moves, large and small, that a writer makes during composing. In Perl's study the composing process is coded and charted in intricate detail. When placed on a timeline, a precise picture of the writers' actions during the composing session could be created.

Perl's study confirms the belief that writing takes place in recognizable patterns of sub-sequences: pre-writing, writing, and editing (31). What her study also shows, however, is that those sub-sequences have a great range of variation from writer to writer. Even the most basic of writers, like those in Perl's study, display some sort of writing process, even if their processes differ from one another. Despite this, Perl concludes that researchers might be able to “suggest regularities in composing behavior across individuals” (39), though she concedes that work will be completed by future researchers.

Importantly, Perl's research shows that writers who seem to have very few tools or strategies available to them during writing in fact are manipulating a plan of attack that isn't easily detected when just analyzing the product of writing. Perl concludes that the writers' plans are a part of what gets in the way of the writing, and that attention to editing certain details—like spelling and grammar—restrict the flow and rhythm of writing. What these writers really lack is the ability to perceive their writing on a larger scale full of big decisions that can be changed even after words are placed on the page (38). Though this creates roadblocks for the students'

writing, Perl notes that as researchers we can see how recursive the writing process is for everyone. In basic writers, the recursivity and the constant “error-hunting” prevent hinder the development of new ideas and possibilities.

In a 1970 piece from *English Journal*, Robert P. Parker Jr. describes the emergence of Writing Process instruction as a major focus of conferences and conversations, as well as the establishment of two camps of belief: the process-types and the product-types. While he positions himself firmly as a process-type, Parker is unwilling to completely abandon considerations of product. In fact, Parker simplifies the overall sequence of composition into two major sections. The *process* stage, as Parker describes it, actually itself is subdivided into pre-writing (when things happen “to” the writer and “in” the writer and the writer “does” work) and inscribing (when the actual writing of words takes place). The *product* stage—or *product-evaluation* stage, as Parker himself suggests—is the point at which a writer reflects on his or her work, and the work itself is presented potentially through publication or presentation.

As a process-type teacher, Parker stresses that if pre-writing and inscribing are done well and thoroughly, the *product* stage will take care of itself. “I do believe,” Parker writes after admitting to giving the *process* stage short shrift, “the the proper focus on process will, quite organically, lead to the proper focus on product” (1333). But Parker clearly thinks that the teaching of writing is foundationally in the work that occurs before the product is complete. Additionally, there is a moment when a composition is “done,” set-aside and celebrated, displayed and published. So clearly, despite his gestures slightly to the contrary, Parker has embraced Writing Process instruction and calls for it to help create what he refers to as “self-generating” and “self-balancing” approaches to process and product instruction (1333).

Parker's call for Writing Process instruction requires that teachers devote a great deal of

class time to activities before inscription. Formalized work as pre-writing allows for teacher involvement and evaluation by a teacher of student work before the product is submitted for grading. In 1970, set aside time for work before final inscription was new. Parker describes workshop format class time for students to receive feedback from peers, a classroom practice that seems almost mandatory today. It's striking how novel this approach seems to Parker. Also of note is the way Parker describes how teachers successfully teach young writers to craft poems by intentionally avoiding what I would term "teaching the product." Parker explains the first two elements of the teaching strategy of Kenneth Koch from the book *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children To Write Poetry*:

(1) He did not begin by teaching children about poetry. No conceptual mastery first, no conscious deductive application of the principles of poetry writing, or poetic analysis.

(2) He saw his role in pre-writing as that of explaining and inspiring. (1330)

I think it's interesting to quote him at length here as he describes a different group of students working through what we would now call peer revision:

Lest you think that this situation can only be obtained with young children, let me say that I saw exactly this kind of writing class happen on two different occasions with a seemingly blasé group of seniors at Hyde Park High School in Chicago. They talked, teased each other, made suggestions and criticisms, and passed their work around while it was still in process. Moreover, each person handed something in, even a couple of students who hadn't done a single piece of writing outside of class all year. (1331-1332)

We see how Writing Process instruction begins to become the preferred mode of classroom

activities. It would feel good to see students excited about the act of writing. And the work would appear productive (students who hadn't written outside of class before are miraculously producing discourse!). The allure of having something to grade other than a stack of nearly-identical written pieces must have been powerful for the early Writing Process practitioners.

What I wonder, though, is why these early process teachers failed to see the value of the in-the-moment writing that could have been captured in the social situations these teachers had established. They describe rooms filled with thought and energy. These places, I believe, would have been perfect for immediate writing practices. Instead the energy is shunted in directions away from writing itself. As I explain going forward, I argue that classroom activities should re-orient themselves toward writing in the moment.

#### Shifting and Re-Shifting Focus

But even with the development of Writing Process instruction, there still remained those scholars interested in the small errors and hunting them down, if even just for scholarly purposes. Perhaps most-notable in this way is Mina Shaughnessy and her book *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*, originally published in 1977. Though her book and work remains largely well-regarded, Joseph Harris is very critical of the book's aims and methods in his own book *A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966*.

Harris writes in glowing terms about Shaughnessy's own writing (“elegant” and “good literary criticism”) and how she presents her arguments for the teaching of writing, “but *what* Shaughnessy argues can (and should) be taught to these new students is dismaying,” he writes (81). She is, Harris believes, stuck in the mode of checking on product over depth of ideas, “fluency and correctness at the almost total expense of meaning” (81). I want to argue, though, that Shaughnessy was onto something interesting that Harris doesn't value. Harris derides

Shaughnessy's reliance on timed, first draft work. Shaughnessy may have been looking for the wrong things—correctness of usage and volume of work—but she was looking in an exciting place, at least for our purposes today. The student work Shaughnessy chose to deconstruct was written in a moment of immediacy, though no one seems interested in how that context influenced the process or structure of the work. It's a missed opportunity.

For Harris's classes themselves, he seems to stress product over process, and though the cognitive moves he requests his students make are interesting and important, the methods for getting students to make those moves don't appear to bring much of anything new to the table. He opens one of his “Interchapter” pieces this way:

The aim of [his course, Writing About Movies] is not to train students in a particular method of film criticism or analysis, nor is it to have them reproduce the sort of easy critique of ideology that seems the goal of much current teaching about the media and popular culture. . . . My goal is instead to get students to reflect critically on the ways of talking about movies that they *already* have, and in doing so maybe to learn something about themselves as readers of their culture.

(69)

The aim of the course, “a critical look at ourselves as moviegoers,” is an interesting topic for investigation, but the stated goals reveal that the course is less about writing and more about thinking through writing. And this thinking is very specifically cultural- and self-critique. Since the stated purpose of the course is to generate a specific flavor of discourse, it could be argued that this course is less of a writing course and more of a content course that reaches its goals through writing. Again, that's a noble pursuit, but juxtaposed as it is within a book about the teaching of writing; the Writing About Movies class seems to have an unfair advantage.

The endgame for the course is when Harris asks students “to look at what has been perhaps the most powerful (and thus often most invisible) shaping force on their work the last few months—to write, that is, on how being a part of this particular class has affected the ways they view and think about movies and TV” (74). In keeping with the goal of the course, Harris has asked students to perform some impressive cultural critique and personally reflective heavy lifting, but the goal is not writing, and there is no visible writing instruction. So Harris has described a course that would fit into the rhetoric of liberal culture, as Berlin described it, and not some new way of conceiving the teaching of writing, as Harris would lead us to believe.

By 1984, backlash toward the writing process approach was appearing in composition journals. In “Moving Away from Writing Process Worship,” Raymond J. Rodrigues criticizes what he states seemed to be the “be all and end all” of writing instruction: the writing process method. Rodrigues is strong in his language toward the writing process, likening the people who teach it and adhere to as missionaries presiding over a cult. And though research by that point had proven that writing takes place not as a process but as innumerable processes particular to each writer and each writing situation, “writing-process converts,” as Rodrigues calls them, still adhered to a rigid set of steps to follow in the writing classroom.

Rodrigues calls for a shift not all the way back to a skills-based writing instruction, and not all the way an abandonment of the writing process, but a combined approach that takes into account all the known (at the time) theories of writing instruction:

We should continue to teach process approaches to writing, but integrated into those approaches should be other techniques, such as models, simulations, and inquiry. Other metaphors easily come to mind instead of "pluralization." Hybridization. Mongrelization. I like them all. They imply a strengthening of the



genetic pool, a willingness to create something new, and a selection from a variety of attributes, all potentially good. (26)

Though he doesn't use the terms, Rodrigues is asking for a genre-based, contextualized approach to teaching writing. He believes this is more structured than the freewheeling, freewriting strategies employed by writing process "worshippers." Students would write with the help of models, and teachers would provide assistance in the form of a relatively new concept at the time, scaffolding. Teachers will be guides and coaches, ensuring that students have the skills to make the correct decisions for a given assignment.

Rodrigues is careful to point out that writing from a model is not the same as re-writing a model. He doesn't want students to merely mimic the exact turns that the given samples take; he wants writers to evaluate the options available and then choose to employ them at appropriate times. The teacher's role is to provide meaningful, structured contexts in which the students can write (27). This predicts the call Elizabeth Wardle makes in her "Mutt Genres" essay. Both pieces hold in common the idea that different writing actions or strategies can be taught to students, then students can be taught to seek out opportunities to apply these strategies. This raises questions of transfer, of course, and how well we can expect students to identify common solutions to varied writing challenges. My proposed move toward immediate writing puts students more often in positions to make choices and practice responding in varied ways to rhetorical situations placed before them without prior warning.

Some writers, like Joseph Petraglia have begun to question some of the most-basic of activities that we undertake in the classroom. In "Writing as an Unnatural Act," Petraglia writes about the conflict of writing in school: writing is always contextualized, but most school-based writing asks students to think about different contexts and ignore the fact that they are writing

in/for school. Petraglia wants us embrace the context of school and accept that writing done in/for school will always be influenced by that context.

He writes that in a general writing skills instruction (GWSI) framework, the parameters for writing are often “fictive; that is, in much classroom writing the 'rhetorical' goals of the writing are often identified for the writer beforehand even if the specifics are left 'open'” (91). He goes on to explore the conflict between what we know about how we think and what we know about how we teach writing:

Paradoxically, then, the artificiality and hypotheticality that permits composition skills to be taught in the first place is in direct conflict with the assumptions of ill-structuredness on which a cognitivist understanding of writing must be based. (91)

Writers in real-world situations are influenced by the context of their writing in a way that students in a classroom could never be, no matter what lengths the teacher goes to in an effort to “make real” the rhetorical situation. Petraglia feels that any attempts by a teacher to authenticate student writing—by, as he writes, having students write about real world issues or target their writing to real audiences—ignores the powerful hold that the classroom has as a context (92). He argues that even when the scaffolding is in place to create the appearance of an authentic writing situation, unless the writer truly accepts the premise of authenticity, the rhetorical situation is always artificial that context remains reflected in the writing. “To summarize the point,” Petraglia writes, “the job of making writing real is complicated by learners who stubbornly refuse to bow in the face of our good intentions” (93). When we discuss “purpose” in the context of FYW, teachers often ignore the *real* reason, i.e. grade acquisition, in favor of the artificial reason draped over the assignment. Technologically-mediated writing that quickly finds its audience can mitigate this problem of the lack of authenticity.

Learning writers who are using classroom writing as practice often fail to get their work up to a completed version. They might see their work as something other than the actual performance, and this means that their writing never reaches the level of authenticity teachers are hoping for or expecting. Petraglia writes that we should abandon any pretense of providing authentic, “real world” writing situations for our students while they remain so contextually situated within our classrooms, and that we should “relieve students of the burden of pretending to be effective rhetors in contexts in which writing has no rhetorical 'effect' other than the teacher's appraisal of the text” (97). Immediate writing using technologically-mediated composition allows audience to become more authentic by raising the stakes of published writing. When the real world audience really does have an opportunity to engage with our student writers—even if that real world audience never responds—student writers must engage in return.

As I'll discuss shortly, my call is to shift away from a dedicated process pedagogy in favor of classroom practices that take advantage of technologically-mediated writing to produce texts in the moment and disseminate those texts to audiences quickly. These texts may take many forms, depending on the rhetorical situation, but this type of composition lends itself well to many of the various multimodal writing forms that are finding their ways into classrooms today. Jason Palmeri writes that our turn to multi-modal writing can be an innovative way to build upon Composition's past. In *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy*, Palmeri argues that Composition has always been interested in multimodal work, and that writers and teachers of writing can learn a lot about the ways we invent and compose by looking to other disciplines. Even if our end product is an alphanumeric text document, the ways in which we go from a blank page to a completed piece are not so different, Palmeri claims, than

the ways visual artists and musicians accomplish their work. Taking as example the act of revision, Palmeri states that having students rethink of their writing in terms of a visual-spatial text can have emerging writers look beyond the mere deletion and punctuation adjustment that often encompasses students' revision efforts (35).

So I place my concerns inside of Palmeri's alternative history of Composition. A shift away from process pedagogy, at least in part during the course of the semester, moves to reclaim some of the historical interest compositionists had in the generation of a variety of texts, but also in the generation of texts in a variety of situations. I maintain that, though the timed write and in-class essay exam have always had a place in our classes, these texts were evaluated in a context that expected less of the texts themselves. Since these texts were generated without the "benefit" of proper process, the texts could be evaluated given different standards. Instead, we should approach writing generated at a particular time as a completed produce itself, and teach our students to operate in that way. Taking advantage of the available technology to generate and publish multimodal and alphanumeric texts, immediate writing returns our classrooms to asking students for an important flexibility and authenticity in their work.

#### A Look To Something Different

The cognitive psychologists who developed Writing Process-oriented pedagogy were researching the inner workings of a writer's mind as he or she wrote, but their work was separated from time and audience beyond marking that a writer might consider if a reader might understand or like the work. Process-oriented pedagogy extended the writing moment so each small rhetorical move could be microscoped and theorized. This leaves no room in writing instruction for writing that is produced in a compressed, timely fashion: immediate writing.

At first blush, what I am calling immediate writing has a lot in common with what

teachers have always called impromptu writing. Both activities ask students to generate texts with little or no preparation. But as I'll explain going forward, my call for a new configuration of *in the moment* writing differs from the old impromptu writing activities in some significant ways.

Impromptu writing has a long history in composition pedagogy scholarship stretching back to the 60s and 70s when scholars and teachers debated the usefulness of impromptu essay exams. One of those early pieces of criticism, published in a 1977 issue of *Research in the Teaching of English*, implores its readers to “not scrap the impromptu test essay yet” (Hogan). The essay concerns itself with two experiments that probe the efficacy of impromptu writing tests for measuring or predicting improvement in the writing skills of college students. The question the researchers posed included comparing pre- and post-test results for students who were measured using impromptu writing and measured using a “researched paper” (Hogan's quotes). When significant differences are noticed between pre- and post-test for the researched papers—but not noticed for the pre- and post- versions of the impromptu pieces—the study's authors conclude that “the 'writing-as-a-process' component of the instruction was responsible for the significant increase in scores obtained using the researched papers design” (Hogan 220).

Hogan proceeds to critique the study's conclusions and describes a study he conducted himself with students at a different school using similar methodology. Hogan's findings did not show as marked a difference between using impromptu or researched papers for evaluation of writing skill growth. In other words, “the gain in scores demonstrated on the research paper tests was not significantly greater than the gain in scores on the impromptu paper tests” (Hogan 224). Hogan's essay ends with some other conclusions, including noting the correlation between the nature and conditions of the test to the nature and conditions of the instruction, as well as making a call for further research into the value of rewriting.

The value of rewriting—and its impact on impromptu composition—is taken up a short time later in *College English*. In her response to Barbara Hansen's “Rewriting is a Waste of Time,” Betty Bamberg defends rewriting as a point of pedagogical intervention, remarking that “although Hansen's study did not show the revising/rewriting method to be superior, we might question whether writing an impromptu essay offered a true test of the experimental students' ability to revise” (Bamberg 837). Bamberg also assumes that teachers of composition have monolithic goals in mind. Bamberg writes, “Most composition teachers are more concerned about the effects of revising and rewriting on compositions which students write *outside* of class” (839, emphasis original). While most of Bamberg's short letter is devoted to thinking about the potential power of rewriting and revision—including an interesting tidbit about how rewriting and revision might serve the writer during invention—Bamberg's piece is indicative of the conversation considering the role of impromptu writing in the classroom, particularly as a device for measure or assessment.

Finally, I'd like to highlight “An Apologia for the Timed Impromptu Essay Test” by Edward M. White from the February 1998 issue of *College Composition and Communication* and the response to that piece named “Apologia Not Accepted” by Alan C. Purves. In White's piece, the focus continues to be the efficacy of impromptu writing as a measuring tool, in particular, as a tool to evaluate a student's grasp on matters of the writing process. Coming as it does a number of years deep into the use of the impromptu essay and at the beginning of the rise of the portfolio approach to evaluation, White writes that “the time has come for portfolio advocates, among whom I number myself, to recognize the important role essay testing has played in the past—and can still play—and to stop attacking essay testing as an unmitigated evil in order to promote portfolios, which can very well stand on their own” (31).

White's essay goes on to outline the impromptu essay's history as an admittance tool for colleges and universities, among its other uses as an evaluation piece, particularly contrasting the use of the essay with multiple choice tests. White does, however, critique the shortcomings of the essay test for its artificiality and the limited scope of the information that might be gleaned from it (36). His essay concludes with an acknowledgment that essay testing can be a cost-effective way of assessing student progress, though he still prefers portfolio reviews for their comprehensiveness. Anything, he decides, is better than multiple choice tests (44).

This discussion continues in Purves' response. Still, the focus remains on testing, specifically the triad of portfolios, impromptu essays, and multiple choice exams. Very little in Purves' response, or White's response to the response, is about the act of writing itself. Rather the focus is on the behind the scenes use or value of the writing. Purves states of impromptu writing that "the measure is designed to reward the person who can come up with an idea fast and throw together some good sentences" (549). His response ends, still focusing on testing, with Purves writing that he "much prefer(s) the portfolios of students judged within the context of the situation in which the portfolios were created" (550). White's response to the response continues to highlight that considerations of in the moment writing focus on its validity as a measuring stick:

I am both puzzled and annoyed by Alan Purves' response. I am puzzled that this distinguished researcher and former president of NCTE is responding to my deliberately provocative title rather than to the article itself, which he seems to have not read with his usual expertness. I am annoyed because the attitudes he expresses exemplify so fully the stock response of the English establishment to large-scale assessment and thus show why we are generally held to be irrelevant

to the measurement enterprise that we and our students cannot avoid. (550-551)

What we see here is the general shape of the impromptu writing conversation. That is, scholars largely took up impromptu writing as a testing tool. When impromptu, in the moment writing isn't being used as an evaluation method, we see the suggestions of pedagogs like Peter Elbow to use freewriting as an invention technique. But Elbow's thoughts aside, impromptu writing is most-often championed for its utility during evaluation, then decried for its potential artificiality (Hogan 219). In each case, the activity of impromptu writing often occurs in a bubble devoid of influence or instruction specific to the moment or the task. In other words, impromptu writing is evaluated in the same terms of other forms of writing or other writing situations. I want to split here, and say that writing in the moment is a writing task that involves, in part, different skills than writing in other situations (researched papers, for example, to use Hogan's term).

Writing in a moment is different than other forms of writing, but at the same time might draw upon some of the same skills as other common forms of writing. Perhaps I am trying to have both my cake and eat it too, here, but I refer to the ways impromptu writing was evaluated in those experiments and conversations. That is, writing done in the moment was evaluated the same way as writing of different genres, though the purpose of the impromptu writing was different. Impromptu writing was used to measure skills applied during researched writing, but was not used to measure the success of writing created in a moment in its own right. I contend that this is a writing of a different sort, and a valuable sort, at that. Writing done in the moment is the kind of writing we do so often now, made possible often through technology, and therefore is more authentic than impromptu writing done in the bubble of the closed classroom.

Given the potential for technology to bring the act of writing closer to a real-time



experience than ever before, I feel it will be useful to see how writing *in the moment* can influence both product and process in a writing classroom. This kind of immediate writing is available to our students more and more as various technologies—from the internet and social media, to inexpensive printing and publication—make it possible for the work of writers to reach their audiences almost instantaneously. This is the way that many of our students are already writing through the use of applications like Facebook and Twitter, and beyond that, there is the reality that much of the writing our students finish for school is completed without the benefit of time and reflection. (That's why computer labs are filled with students banging away on keyboards before large papers are due.) We now also have the technology to observe the effects of audience feedback during the writing process. This opens up new cognitive moves to consider.

Technology and new media have had roles to play in the classroom since there were classrooms. As new technologies emerge, teachers feel the urge and the responsibility to address these technologies in their classrooms. First Year Composition classrooms, in particular, are powerful spaces in which to address and explore how writing technologies can be used by or against our students. Because of this, theorists and practitioners have begun to lay-out ideas about the use and application of new media and writing technologies. Generally, writers who consider new media writing technologies fall into one of two camps: those who use new media to enhance or extend the classroom experience, and then those who suggest that new media spaces should be addressed as places of inspection and inquiry. What follows here is an exploration of those two approaches to new media in the FYC classroom. The chapter ends with a proposed different approach that suggests that new media writing technologies can be taught in the classroom while still adhering to university expectations of FYC programs.

Studies in new media have rethought the position of the subject across multiple platforms, and some theorists see College English and First Year Writing as a powerful space in which to do this thinking. In his piece “Networks and New Media,” Jeff Rice opens by stating that College English should “be” new media (127). His reasoning comes as a result of his belief in the power of networks. Networks, he writes, connect users and content through applications in ways that highlight the relationships we have to information and to each other. He defines networks this way:

What I call the network are these spaces—literal or figurative—of connectivity. They are ideological as well as technological spaces generated by various forms of new media that allow information, people, places, and other items to establish a variety of relationships that previous spaces or ideologies of space (print being the dominant model) did not allow. (128)

For English Studies, Rice wants to develop a new metaphor for thinking to replace the old metaphor of writing. That metaphor should be networks, he argues, because of the ways the network contributes to “media-based rhetorical production” as a function of it being a “product of new media culture” (130).

Rice extends his discussion of new media and the classroom in the book *The Rhetoric of Cool: Composition Studies and New Media*. A significant portion of the book's introduction is devoted to defining what is, and isn't, “cool” in Rice's understanding. Cool is the meshing of media and text, compositions that use aspects of new media together and aware of each medium's abilities and disadvantages. Most importantly, Rice justifies his project this way:

The culture is getting more demanding, and so are the pedagogical practices

needed to engage with new media in general. Cool's rhetorical complexity demands its breakdown through theoretical and pedagogical application. Cool, I have come to discover, consists of a variety of rhetorical gestures and moves.

(7-8)

What those gestures and moves are exactly make-up the majority of the rest of Rice's book, and the purpose of Rice's work here is to challenge how we teach what we teach. He is pointedly critical about textbooks that hold onto the old ways of teaching the old modes of writing, despite being increasingly surrounded by new, cool communication (24). Cool demands we pay attention to the new ways we write, and therefore, the new ways we can teach writing. This book is the theoretical counterpart to a textbook of cool writing that Rice has also prepared. Drawing on multiple genres as it does, and located across multiple books (and, one can assume, multiple essays that lead up to the books' publication), the effort as a whole stands as an example of the theory Rice describes. It exists as both theory and performance, two approaches to thinking about computers and writing that Rice feels have not existed together before (9).

One of Rice's most vibrant examples of new media texts in action is the blog, which, as he states, was still fairly new technology in 2006. Blogs are writing spaces in the broadest sense, endless blank canvases on which to write, draw, display video, play music. Importantly, blogs allow for the interconnection of others blogs and other websites, resulting in layers of meaning (143). These items, when displayed on the screen, can be changed and manipulated as if they were elements pasted to a poster board. (PowerPoint also mimics a poster board, though now it's being replaced by the even more dynamic web-based application Prezi.) But perhaps most-importantly, the new media writer does not have strict control over the reader's experience. Though the writer may provide links by way of evidence for his or her arguments, for example—

as a sort of technological shorthand for citations—the reader is not obligated to click on them. A reader may not necessarily play the displayed video. Webpages and blog posts can be read out of order.

### Using technology

Ensuring that student writers understand how their technology works, and then asking them to use it well, is the focus of *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* by Stuart A. Selber. *Multiliteracies* predates Rice's book, and makes some small appearances within it, but I take it up now because our focus remains on new media classroom practice. Selber argues that most digital literacy programs deal with technological issues like the operating of software and hardware, but he calls for digital literacy programs to teach students to consider technology more critically, and even for students to create technology instead of merely using technology. This is a slight shift from creating *with* technology to creating the technology itself. In his call for rhetorical literacy as it pertains to technology and digital writing spaces, Selber states that students must become reflective producers of technology, not merely users or questioners. Selber's line of thinking echoes that of many new media theorists in that literacy must now encompass multiple platforms. As Gunther Kress writes, student products are shifting away from *telling* the world toward *showing* the world (140). While Kress connects this shift explicitly to reading first, writing makes the same shift. Immediate writing and technologically-mediate writing allow for students' showing in two ways. First, in terms of revealing a student's "world." Immediate writing can help a student generate an authentic text in ways that process-produced work might not. Immediate writing, though polished, is also closer to the bone of invention than work that's been filtered through peer revision, teacher feedback, and writing center tutorial sessions. Second, immediate writing should be published to the world efficiently

and near-instantaneously. This act shows the world the student's work, encouraging the writer to think reflectively about his or her rhetorical action in a powerful, perhaps different way compared to process-pedagogy classwork.

This concern for the reflective comes as a result of the politics woven throughout Selber's book. Selber believes that basic technological instruction, like the use of word processing software or the preparation of a spreadsheet, is bad for the working population. The ability to use the technology without the ability to critique its use is called functional digital literacy, and "often becomes a blunt tool with which ruling classes create minimally skilled workers" (33). Selber critiques the move of referring to a computer metaphorically as a tool because it masks the political and social implications of its use (38). But when student writers and technology users can interrogate the technology and its application, these effects are minimized and writers and users can reclaim some of the power lost by being forced into information work. This, in Selber's terms, is critical literacy, and he sees it as an important part of a person's educational development:

My view is that students who are critically literate can work against the grain of conventional preoccupations and narratives, implicating design cultures, use contexts, institutional forces, and popular representations within the shape and direction of computer-based artifacts and activities (95).

What Selber hopes to achieve is to move students to reflect upon and evaluate the workings of online environments to effect change. This he calls rhetorical literacy (182). When a student is rhetorically literate, he or she can look *through* an online interface and see how its functions and appearance operate on levels beyond the merely communicative. They see that interfaces can argue and persuade and that specific interfaces work differently than others. Most importantly,

however, the students will be able to generate interfaces and other digital spaces themselves with intention toward persuasion and social action. This last element is important. Design is not merely about knowing how to operate the design applications, but understanding how design is a series of decisions whose conclusions have deliberate, intended consequences that the student can articulate (147).

Gunther Kress considers design, as well, where he writes that “design does not ask, 'what was done before, how, for whom, with what?' “Design asks, 'what is needed now, in this one situation, with this configuration of purposes, aims, and audience, *and with these resources*, and given *my* interests in this situation?’” (49). Kress, like the other new media theorists, is stressing the critical response users must have when placed in rhetorical situations that require a technologically-mediated response. A proper response goes beyond merely operating the technology correctly. A fully realized entry into discourse requires the ability to effectively respond in a number of modes as well as the ability to distinguish between which mode is most appropriate. Immediate writing practices allow students to practice their flexibility with decision-making as far as design principles are concerned. Students must quickly assess the goals of a particular project or situation, evaluate the resources available, and then act accordingly to produce a text.

### Multiliteracies

We should pause a moment to reflect upon the role multiliteracies have played in classroom instruction. Since the New London Group proposed “A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies,” the field of composition has worked to integrate into its varied curriculums acknowledgment that meaning is contextualized, situated, and very specific. In the words of the New London Group, our minds are embodied, situated, and social (New London Group). This opened for

consideration the varied ways in which we can write and learn through writing. The New London Group's focus here is social change and economic equality, and though they make no explicit mention of new media artifacts, it's obvious—beyond the mere appropriation of the term “multiliteracies”—that composition theorists that came later drew from their work. The New London Group was the first to give attention to the grammar of design. This is reflected in nearly all the new media theorists' work, and when pedagogy is part of the discussion, theorists always stress the importance of teaching content as well as presentation. While they don't always explore the under-pinnings of design as effectively as Selber, design's role in the message always makes its appearance.

Instead of using the term “multiliteracies,” the writers of *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric* use the term from their title, “multimodal,” to describe emerging avenues of discourse. This is a valuable shift as it implies that individual instances of discourse might be situated in more than one space at a time. Texts can be made across a variety of platforms simultaneously. These authors place their call firmly in the classroom (though they maintain a focus on social change reminiscent of the New London Group and other theorists) as they hope that teachers will prepare all students to take advantage of communication technology. Design and use of new media is not just for the graphic designers or the artists, they write, but rather also for “ordinary people” (xii). The lynchpin of their argument is that multimodal rhetoric allows for users to take effective action in kairotic moments.

#### Technology and *kairos*

Process pedagogy has abandoned *kairos*, but technology allows us to bring it back through immediate writing practices. The appeal of the writers of *The Available Means of*

*Persuasion* is to think about *kairotic* struggle not in terms of what a rhetor can do textually at a specific instance, but rather how a user can use multimodal work to address a situation across a wide context of instances that grow from the user's interest and action. They see the rhetorical urgency begin before words are committed to page when the writer decides upon the most-effective mode in which to operate. In fact, the rhetorical struggle begins when the would-be writer's attention is first drawn to action. Then, *kairos* includes not just choosing to act in a particular way at a particular time, but also all the innumerable influences on rhetorical action. Additionally, *kairos* is extended to include any instances after the text's original creation where the text is accessed or encountered. This, the authors write, is a piece's rhetorical velocity—the way in which it moves through and is received by the world.

The concept of immediate writing arose from graduate seminars in composition theory, and specifically in discussion of the concept of *kairos*. In his essay detailing the history of *kairos*, James L. Kinneavy explains that though *kairos* and its application have evolved over time, typically the concept contains two components: right timing and proper measure. To various degrees other elements comprise the concept of *kairos*. Kinneavy highlights matters of justice, epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics. He also writes about the way *kairos* forms a foundation for Aristotle's notions of rhetoric—a foundation Kinneavy argues has been ignored because it's not explicitly stated by Aristotle. *Kairos* also appears in Plato's rhetoric, Kinneavy writes, in respect to Plato's conception of “propriety of time” within *Phaedrus* (59-60).

Kinneavy also elaborates on *kairos* through an interview written-up by Roger Thompson in *Rhetoric Review*. Thompson reports that Kinneavy understood *kairos* to be an integral part of rhetoric—so important, in fact, that there would be no rhetoric without *kairos*. “Even rhetorical theory,” Kinneavy says through Thompson, “has to take into account something like a concept of



right timing and due measure, too. So I don't think that either in theory, but especially in practice, can there be a rhetoric without a concept of timing" (77). This element of timing is vital, Thompson explains, to understanding the importance of *kairos* within rhetoric and language writ large, as it serves to take into account the reality of the rhetorical situation wherein the rhetor lacks control over many of the outside forces present in the given situation.

Thompson and Kinneavy address *kairos* in the classroom. Thompson writes, "Kinneavy believed that by unifying their times with their situations, students might begin to see how they could create change through a rhetorical act" (74). This is, of course, the sophistic project. Thompson and Kinneavy turn to the circumstances beyond the speaker's control during a rhetorical act (the uncontrolled elements of the rhetorical situation I mentioned earlier):

**Thompson:** Do you believe *kairos* is beyond the rhetor's control, or can the rhetor manufacture or create *kairos*?

**Kinneavy:** Well, I can see that a rhetor can choose the right time, and in that sense he can create it. He may realize *this* is not the right time to bring *this* up yet, but if he waits too long it's going to be too late. (77)

Joining this with the timelessness of technology, then, we can see how complicated *kairos* becomes. Through technology, can it ever be "too late"? So long as there is an audience to access the posted words, it can always be considered the right time.

John Muckelbauer links *kairos* to innovation in his consideration of rhetoric *The Future of Invention: Rhetoric, Postmodernism, and the Problem of Change*. Muckelbauer connects *kairos* to two main concepts—ethics and ontology—in his exploration of situatedness and singularity. In his discussion, Muckelbauer helpfully quotes the philosopher John Smith's distinction between *chronos*—the amount of time—and *kairos*—the qualitative character of time

(Muckelbauer 115). But, as Muckelbauer writes, though both concepts regarding time are linked, there is no assumption that *kairos* has any predetermined length or brevity, so “a kairotic event might last an instant, or an entire season” (115). Despite this uncertainty, *kairos* is never a random event but rather a result of the singularity of the situation. It is in our response to that moment that *kairos* ontological elements are revealed.

My research question, then, wonders about the ways we can try to generate *kairos* authentically within the classroom. Already, the statement is charged with contradiction. Can *kairos* be generated, or is it by definition impossible to create an authentic rhetorical situation that requires response? I believe that teachers can enact classroom practices that allow for *kairotic* work, and that this work looks like immediate writing. Through the use of technology, students can be placed—and place their writing—in more precise moments than ever before. *Kairos* can be created, because the moment rests with the writer, not the actor responsible for establishing the moment. In this case as the teacher responsible for creating the problem that requires students' *kairotic* response, I can use ethnography to judge how my students react to the situation.

It's a tremendous stretching of our understanding of *kairos*, and one with powerful implications for the teaching of writing with new media. New media texts are characterized by their adaptability. They can always be changed. They can always be re-experienced in a new way. The options for editing and design are power and important and customizable. New media pedagogues stress how vital it is to teach students how to take rhetorical advantage of this property of new media texts. On the other hand, however, is the the permanence of new media texts. Once they are created, they are hard to destroy. Old versions can be resurrected. Nothing is ever really deleted. New media artifacts have persistence unlike their old media counterparts.

This means that through new media texts' extended kairotic moments, the right time in the proper measure for any given text may be out of the hands of a text's creator.

This isn't to say that new media technologies create some sort of "forever text." Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel also describe the birthing of new media artifacts as an action fraught with peril:

Complexity, uncertainty, instability, and contingency enter into the process at every translation. Cameras fail; computer files get corrupted; editors refuse to look at manuscripts (or, when they do look at them, apply to them culturally biased standards and reading practices); compositions get blown from door handles by the wind and end up in mud puddles; incredibly compelling videos languish on YouTube because no one knows they're there; and so on. (73-74)

The teaching of and the teaching with new media must address the possibilities of technological failure, failure to reach a favorable or intended audience, hardware challenges, and other new media artifact creation landmines. How much time do we spend telling our students about how things might break? Based on the literature, it doesn't seem like much. But preparing students for the 3 AM empty printer cartridge (like light bulbs, they only fail when you need them) should be a part of the curriculum. *The Available Means of Persuasion* reminds us that an important part of thinking about how your response to the kairotic struggle might succeed is thinking about the ways in which it might fail.

A text's success is impacted by its rhetorical velocity. A text's rhetorical velocity concerns the ways in which it might be received, adapted, adopted, and reused by another writer (Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel). This is a valuable cognitive exercise for our students. How will your work be repurposed? How could your work be abused? How can your intentions be

reinterpreted? If the elements of new media texts are materials with which to work, those materials can be taken piecemeal and reconstructed in new, potentially unintended or dangerous, ways. We already do some of this work, especially when we teach visual rhetoric. There is room for more of it in new media pedagogy writ large. This, I believe, is where immediate writing is applicable. We can teach students to operate within these modes that are different from the work they'll do following a process-oriented pedagogy. The most significant point of departure between the two approaches is that immediate writing requires reaching an end point much more efficiently. This is anathema to the way writing-process pedagogy organizes written assignments.

One of the challenges encountered with teaching new media is that we can get mired by the necessity of teaching the technology and not teaching the “whole package” of writing. I mean this in a couple of ways. First, there is the very real possibility of abandoning our responsibilities in a FYW class by focusing too much on producing interesting new media artifacts over the production of writing. While many of the cognitive moves behind a video public service announcement might be the same as the work behind a persuasive essay, the details and actions required to generate one over the other remain very different. And in truth, students are far more likely to need the experience of bringing a writing assignment to completion than they are to need video editing skills. What happens so often is that students learn to accomplish a particular assignment, but fail to learn how that assignment applies across all their tasks or all their classes. In part, it's a matter of transfer, but this struggle is also a result of classroom focus on writing genres in limited contexts. Students learn to use an application to complete the specific requirements of an assignment, but aren't asked to consider the assignment's goal and select applications based on their efficacy.

It's a problem that many theorists have identified, at least in passing, as they call for teachers to teach not to the specific assignment but rather to each application's needs and uses (see *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* and *The Available Means of Persuasion*). Elizabeth Wardle, in her piece "Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?," addresses a similar issue. She describes teachers who have chosen to run their FYC courses as specifically-targeted genre-centric courses. This work, despite earnest effort, are described as unsuccessful. Wardle's suggestion for improving FYC is two-fold. First, she requests that FYC devote itself more fully to genre analysis of various disciplines in order to get students to writing these genres more wholly or more authentically. That is, if we insist on continuing down that path. She criticizes this approach in a number of ways, but most powerfully, Wardle claims that "learning to write" in the FYC class has given a free pass to teachers of other disciplines. A composition teacher will never be fully fluent in all the genres that exist across the university, and to presume so is doing our students a disservice. So her second suggestion is to reshape how we conceive the purpose of FYC:

If we start from what we know about writing, I propose we start with the goal of teaching students about writing (Russell, "Activity") in a course called something like Writing about Writing (WAW). In such a course, the subject (as Wendy Bishop put it) is always writing: how people use writing, how people learn to write, how genres mediate work in society, how "discourse communities" affect language use, how writing changes across the disciplines, and so on. The research is about language, the discussions are about language, and the goal of the course is to teach students the content of our discipline. (784)

Just what exactly is the "content of our discipline?" The practitioners of FYC are pulled from a

diverse background even if they they all have the Rhetoric/Composition statements on their diplomas. (And this fails to account for the vast numbers of graduate students and adjunct faculty that daily teach in FYC classrooms but enter those rooms with vastly varied experience and interests.) So Wardle's suggestion is problematic on its face. But I've taken up her article here to illustrate how complicated and troubled FYC's relationship with new media can be. As I've illustrated earlier, theorists want teachers in FYC to *thoroughly* teach new media technology. Wardle wants the same. Can the average FYC make any of them happy when it comes to new media, or are we just destined to do things halfway?

### The Two Approaches Toward New Media

The literature at this point offers the FYC teacher two avenues to pursue in regards to the teaching of new media. As we've seen from the previous discussion of theorists and their work, one way to incorporate new media into the FYC classroom is to teach rhetorical principles through new media. That's what Rice describes, as well as the writers of *The Available Means of Persuasion*. What their texts have in common is an understanding of basic writing principles coupled with an understanding of how these principles operate in technologically-mediated environments. It's a similar approach that is taken in the important book *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*. The authors of *Writing New Media* call for teachers of writing to embrace technologically-mediated writing because the materiality of new media texts is so similar to the materiality of “normal” texts. That materiality forms the foundation of Wysocki's argument, that new media should be incorporated into the FYC curriculum:

Writing teachers are already practiced with helping others understand how writing —as a print-based practice—is embedded among the relations of agency and

extensive material practices and structures that are our lives. Writing teachers help others consider how the choices we make in producing a text necessarily situate us . . . (Writing teachers) can bring to new media texts a humane and thoughtful attention materiality, production, and consumption, which is currently missing. (10)

For Wysocki and her co-authors, the role of the FYC instructor is more than just that of a tech-trainer. We should be showing students the nuances of new media artifacts so students themselves can make them operate. Additionally, students will be resistant to the effects of new media texts targeted at them.

But again most importantly, the book returns over and over to new media texts' materiality. As Wysocki writes, we should see “composition of page and screen as material craft” (22). This is what I like to call the “stuff” of writing that can be manipulated like building blocks. Through this stuff, students can learn the rhetorical value of various approaches that appear in new media texts. Students can also interrogate the new media texts they already generate, and the texts that make up the technologically-mediated world around them. This is where Wysocki's text can be pushed further, because while she and her co-authors advocate the creation of new media texts, they do not ask students to analyze the texts students come to class having already generated. I am arguing that students should be asked to look closely at the new media texts they've already written and read as part of their new media studies.

The other role of new media in the classroom as described by scholars is an extension of the classroom. In this approach, new media artifacts are not a point of inquiry. Their manufacture is not the content of the course. Their use and design are not critiqued. Rather, new media texts and technology are laid over the top of existing curriculum. Social media

technology, in particular, is targeted for use this way. *Personal Learning Networks: Using the Power of Connections to Transform Education* describes how social media can increase the reach and accessibility of teachers and instructional materials when used for intellectual pursuits (Richardson and Mancabelli 21). When taken as a group, technologies like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other online social media can be used to create learning networks that “change the game by allowing us, in a sense, to create our own global classrooms and collect teachers and other learners around the topics we want to learn about” (22). With personal or online learning networks, students are connected with teachers and other online resources, and while the use of those resources may result in the creation of new media texts, those texts and the spaces in which they are created are rarely critiqued the way Wysocki, Rice, and the other theorists I discussed earlier recommend.

These networks are a fine example of how rhetorical velocity can be used to take advantage of immediate writing strategies. In fact, personal learning networks and the technology behind them are students' and student-writers' first experience with immediate writing. Though of course the average Facebook page or Twitter feed established by students is not originally employed for academic purposes, the use of social media technology becomes familiar to students through these writing spaces. The mechanism used by Facebook to catalog when other users “like” a post is a virtually tangible example of rhetorical velocity that student-writers will understand. Rhetorical velocity can be taught through this practice. (Retweeting functions similarly on Twitter. Upvoting and reblogging have the same functions, along with the share feature of many social media applications.)

One interesting way new media technology is critiqued can be found in issue 12:2 of the online journal *Kairos*. In the webtext “Space, Time, & Transfer in Virtual Case Environments,”



the authors examine the use of education content/course management systems like Blackboard and Saginaw Valley State University's Vspace. These CMS systems are, in effect, curated online learning networks that function a bit like Richardson and Mancabelli describe in their book. In CMS networks students are shepherded much more closely, though, and some of the spontaneity and discovery of online learning is sacrificed in favor of a more standard student experience. “Space, Time, & Transfer” is largely concerned with the ways in which CMS experiences differ from “brick and mortar” classroom activities, how the CMS teacher often tries (and fails) to simulate face-to-face classroom activities, and how the differences in experiences are notable and exploitable. Students are never expected to respond to how CMS systems impact their learning, though, nor are they asked to think about the ways the virtual space influences their writing.

That seems to be the case in much of the published work about new media in the classroom. There is very little discussion of new media texts as places of investigation. No one writes about using new media as a tool for understanding writing and writers' work. There is no lack of discussion of new media and social media in the classroom, however. That discussion just takes the form of a very surface-level application exemplified by a piece from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. In it, Brian Croxall describes how Twitter can be integrated into a course methodology. Croxall's use of Twitter—which he describes as being only partially successful—is targeted at providing his students a “social sixth sense.” Twitter is placed over the top of the course, and its primary use is social. Croxall's use of other social media applications is similarly shallow, though valuable for its ability to maintain and extend classroom conversation.

Croxall largely describes a course in which students are either encouraged or required to add to social media conversations. Mark Sample approaches Twitter's use in the classroom in a similar way. Additionally, Sample makes practical suggestions for social media's incorporation

into the classroom, including how to evaluate students' participation on social media platforms.

Sample's own students' tweets took three forms:

- 1) to post news and share resources relevant to the class;
- 2) to ask questions and respond with clarifications about the readings;
- 3) to write sarcastic, irreverent comments about the readings or my teaching.

(Sample)

Sample dissected his students' use of Twitter, but the students themselves never questioned how the platform effected their tweet's content. The use of new media in the course never expanded beyond merely rehashing what was already done in the classroom.

What is admirable about how Croxall arranges his classroom, however, is that he never abandons his dedication to the university-wide project of FYC. Whether compositionists like it or not, we are often beholden to freshman composition and the expectations placed on us. We teach students to write. Prepare them for work in the university. This position within the university provides graduate assistantships and positions at teaching schools like Saginaw Valley State University. If we approach our classroom activities the way Wysocki, Rice, and the others champion, then we let down the university writ large. If we devote our days merely to the five-paragraph them overlaid with nods to the latest social media trends, we overlook a significant space in which to think about composition and rhetoric.

### Conclusion

In my study, I am going to take advantage of technological to reintroduce immediate writing to the FYW classroom. The study will take the last half of my three ENGL 111 classes at Saginaw Valley State University and change the assignments from my traditional, process-oriented pedagogy to a progression that works toward the completion of immediate writing. That

means writing in an immediate way, but also thinking about how that writing will be evaluated by an immediate audience. To accomplish this, we will use Twitter as a space for inspiration, and as a space to solicit and provide feedback as students write. We will also use Twitter for audience feedback during student presentations, making for a sort of immediate speaking situation to accompany our immediate writing.

I hope to measure the success students have writing in this new mode. I will then evaluate how immediate writing can be used in a longer time frame—an entire semester, perhaps—while still maintaining connection to the expectations of a traditional FYW course curriculum. My report will take the form of classroom ethnography, leaning heavily on readings of student-generated work in the form of essays and Twitter feeds.

## Chapter Two: The Classroom, Composition, and Immediate Writing

Technology allows us to teach the immediacy of writing in ways we never could before. In fact, it is because of technology's ability to quickly publish writing that immediate writing should return to the classroom. My study will show how technology can be used to teach writing that has immediacy in regards to its production and distribution. To that end, I will complete a series of technologically-mediated writing activities in my First Year Composition classes at Saginaw Valley State University. This chapter explores the history of classroom-based research in the field of Composition and concludes with a description of the activities I will conduct in my classroom-based research project.

Classroom-based inquiry as a research method has often played a role in composition studies. I believe ethnography is a powerful tool in this regard because, as we understand it, language and its development is a primarily social activity. Language is “primarily a mode of social conduct, a type of group behavior” (Barnes, qtd in Berlin, 89). To that end, the researcher must go where the social interaction is primarily taking place. Though more and more of the social interaction of writing can occur in virtual spaces—as my project here proves—the primary place for the social work of composition pedagogy occurs in the classroom.

Early research into Composition and writing instruction focused on the products of writing. In their 1963 report “Research in Written Composition,” Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones, and Lowell Schoer present a model for scientific inquiry into writing instruction as they understood it. Their model calls for a close reading of student compositions and a rating on a sort of proto-rubric. It's a very detailed approach to coding rhetoric moves the student writers make in their compositions, but lacks insight into classroom practices and teacher/student interaction (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer). This research was an important stepping stone towards a more full understanding of how we might research writing pedagogy. The essay also serves as a unique look into what sort of writing

characteristics were privileged at the emergence of Composition as a field.

This type of research methodology was the primary mode for writing pedagogy researchers at the outset of the field, until attention turned away from product and toward process. Perhaps the best-known early research in a composition classroom was the study conducted by Janet Emig for her 1971 essay *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. In the report, Emig moves the conversation about writing away from the products of writing and toward the ways student writers bring their work to completion. The writers of Emig's study are eight high school seniors, described as having above-average and average intelligence. These are good high school students, selected for the study in part because of their talents for writing. Through a series of interviews and conferences, during which the students sometimes narrated what they were thinking as they wrote, Emig tracked the cognitive moves the students performed as they composed.

Sondra Perl conducted a similar study for her essay “The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers.” However, Perl's work moves away from the narrative description of writers' processes and toward a charting of the specific moves, large and small, that a writer makes during composing. In Perl's study the composing process is coded and charted in intricate detail. When placed on a time-line, a precise picture of the writers' actions during the composing session could be created. Even the most basic of writers, like those in Perl's study, display some sort of writing process, even if their processes differ from one another. Despite this, Perl concludes that researchers might be able to “suggest regularities in composing behavior across individuals” (39), though she concedes that work will be completed by future researchers.

Joseph Harris conducts his own project, and deconstructs another, in his book *A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966*. In his book, Harris discusses Mina Shaughnessy and her book *Errors and Exprectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*, originally published in 1977. Though her book and work remains largely well-regarded, Joseph Harris is very critical of the book's

aims and methods. What is notable for my purposes here is that both books use the teacher/researcher's own classroom as the basis for a field study.

There is an entire sub-field of Composition that concerns itself with matters of community literacy. These researchers often employ ethnography to better understand the role of writing in these target communities. Perhaps one of the best examples of this kind of work is done by Linda Flower, who writes about the power of rhetoric and written communication in relation to social action. In particular, she unpacks the ways rhetoric and the teaching of writing can work to enact social change in urban environments (Flower).

Since the emergence of Composition as a field, ethnography has played a role in its study. That is a result of Composition starting as and then significantly remaining a teaching discipline. As such, researchers must enter classrooms and report on what they find there. First Year Writing, as a sub-field of Composition, is solidly located in the classroom, and it isn't enough merely to theorize about pedagogy. It must be observed at work. As Ruth Ray notes, teacher-research is the type of work in composition studies that has the chance to “potentially change the field” (172), and the conclusions that result from such studies can make important contributions to the field of composition pedagogy.

One general claim against the use of classroom-based studies as a research method is that it presents a very specific instance or example as indicative of a more general expectation of fact. In other words, these investigations are not as valuable as they might appear because each study is a self-contained instance that cannot be applied more broadly. In his *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*, Steven M. North warns of the over-reliance on ethnographic results and studies, telling us that observations made during an ethnography “are made in the context of, and thus tied to, the specific phenomena” that occur during the study (278). This type of criticism is aimed particularly at studies like those of Sondra Perl, whose work I discussed earlier.

Another challenge of composition research is the prior relationship we have with our subjects

when those subjects begin first as our students. When the field for our fieldwork is also the classroom we control, the social and connotative interactions we attempt to observe are necessarily influenced. As Beverly J. Moss writes in “Ethnography and Composition: Studying Language at Home,” the role of the ethnographic researcher who is also a member of the community being studied is complicated and fraught with potential pitfalls. These complications arise from the social environment of the classroom and the established relationships between students and teacher/researcher that influence the work being studied.

Membership in a community impacts the way the community members being studied interact with the community member doing the study, and vice versa, as previous experiences and expectations work to color the attitudes and perceptions of everyone involved. Moss writes about her preconceived notions of African American churches, for example. Teacher/researchers might make similar mistakes about their students' past work, or previous classroom interactions, or other assumptions about students serving as test subjects.

One way these complications manifest is in researchers' inability to notice patterns of behavior in familiar contexts. In other words, since the researcher is a member of the studied community, he or she may fail to realize some behaviors' importance and take them for granted. As Moss writes, she had assumed that much of what she observed was unimportant, “routine 'stuff’” (395), but as she learned, it's the routine, regular, predictable “stuff” that can be the most valuable data to collect. She refers to this as the necessity of making the familiar unfamiliar. It's a fine warning, because we can begin to take for granted even the simplest of actions and decisions that occur within a social context. This is true even more so for the teacher-researcher who has been in the classroom for several years and might take classroom procedure of all sorts to be inconsequential.

Moss also warns that researchers may tend to rely on prior knowledge when collecting data during their study. Teacher-researchers, she writes, must take care to actually *see* what is happening in

the community and the behavior they are studying. For teachers studying their own classrooms, this might require videotaping or otherwise recording class interactions, or asking for another researcher to also observe the class.

A final warning that Moss offers for teacher/researchers is in regards to the actual writing of the study. For a researcher who is also a member of the community being studied, there may be concerns over how the community is portrayed, how other members might react to that depiction, and how critical the researcher should (or should not) be (396). These concerns are especially acute for teacher/researchers, who have all the worries that other social scientists might have, with the additional baggage of facing the reality that what is being critiqued is that teacher's work. The success and failure of students unquestionably reflects on that teacher's work as an educator. The researcher studying his or her own classroom must employ honest reflection in the analysis of classroom practices.

Another issue that arises as a result of classroom-based study or teacher-research is the role of the researcher as an interventionist. Flower's book alludes to this issue, though only obliquely. A more proper analogy might be to a photographer or a documentation, who, like ethnographers, are tasked with observing and reporting but not necessarily obligated to act. At what point can and should a knowledgeable observer act on his or her subject's behalf? I'm reminded of those wildlife documentaries I used to watch as a kid about turtles, and sometimes, some turtles ended up upside down. I always hoped, after the cameras stopped rolling, the cinematographer just flipped the little guys upright so the turtle could go about its turtle business. That might be a bit of a labored comparison, but it's true that researchers performing ethnographic work might be faced with similar ethical choices. This holds especially true when the researcher is also a teacher, and the study's subjects are also students. It's easy to say that teachers will always work in their students' best interests, but when faced with the pressure of reports and publishing, complications could get in the way.



Ruth Ray also discusses critiques of teacher-research. In her view, critics' believe the method has the following shortcomings:

- 4) teachers, as participant-observers, may lack the perspective necessary to see and interpret their own classroom environment
- 5) teachers conduct research that does not always meet the expectations of the established research community
- 6) teachers do not always frame their findings in terms of theory, and thus their research has little relevance beyond their own classrooms
- 7) teacher research creates a tension in the classroom between researching and teaching, dividing the teacher's attention between data gathering and instruction

(Ray 183-184)

These challenges are similar to the challenges I discussed earlier, and as Ray points out, apply broadly for everyone working with ethnography no matter the specific context. She takes issue especially with those critics who misunderstand the role that theory should, can, and does play in our classrooms. She writes that “Teacher-researchers know that there is always a theory underlying their practice; the purpose of classroom-based research is to make that theory explicit and to examine and question it” (184). This is a pointed criticism of those who would disparage the work of teacher-researchers as something other than legitimate scientific study.

I appreciate, however, those critics' concerns regarding the results of studies where the observer is also the observed. The researcher in teacher-research is more than a lab attendant; he or she is intimately involved in the processes being observed. The average lab scientist does not impact results through his or her Bunsen burner technique. Neither does his or her personality influence the results of an experiment. In the classroom, though, a teacher-researcher's own subjectivity greatly impacts the processes of the study. The teacher-researchers personality, the students in the class, social-cognitive

positions of the study participants—these and more exert powerful forces into a study's outcomes. These are the realities of doing research in our own classrooms.

When we take the role of teacher-researchers, we must be keenly aware that we are observing a culture in much the same way as other researchers who enter cultures to which they don't necessarily belong. It's difficult, of course, because these are *our* classrooms. They have our names above the door. We are not just members of these classroom communities, but in many important ways, we are their owners. Responsible for the rules and procedures of our classrooms, we may discover that watching them in practice beyond how they effect ourselves is a difficult task.

Kay Losey attacked these problems in her classroom-based ethnography by thinking about the macroethnographic and microethnographic dimensions of her research project (89). In this way she divides out the various cultures represented in her classrooms. For Losey, the key to the effective classroom ethnography is navigating the multiple communities and perspectives at work. This is a solid approach, but not entirely applicable to my study. For her study, Losey observed another teacher, positioning herself even more apart from the classroom culture, but allowing her the freedom of observation that comes from not being the ultimate arbiter of classroom activity. She admits that her shift in subjectivity had an unknown impact on her study:

By chatting with students during break and sitting in the back row with some of the most notorious students, I compromised my position in the teacher community. To what extent these problems related to studying multiple communities affected my role in understanding of either community I do not know, but it is a factor of which researchers must be aware and of which they should make their audience aware.

(91)

Losey is not all that encouraging here. As teacher/researchers we run the risk experiencing our own version of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. The more we look at one aspect of our own classroom,

the less we can know about others. And a Losey writes, knowing what is really happening in our observations is complicated by the filters of subjectivity shifting as we think about the perspectives present in the classroom. Between students, teachers, and researchers, it can be difficult to know whose perspective is valid or worthy of note within a study. As I'll note in a little bit, these decisions are fraught with the potential to greatly impact our studies as we select which observations, and of which kind of observations, that eventually enter our studies' records.

The goal of my study is to investigate how we can teach immediate writing in a FYW classroom. By immediate writing, I mean writing that is begun and finished within a very definite time frame (a class period, for example), but still has the elements of polished compositions. Additionally, immediate writing should rely on timely inspiration or rhetorical impetus; writers shouldn't know ahead of time the subject they'll be addressing. Immediate writing, in my formulation, also has the trappings of good writing. Writers should be producing final drafts, not sloppy copy rough drafts. The study takes place in my three ENGL 111: Composition I classrooms at Saginaw Valley State University during the Winter 2013 semester. I will use ethnography to evaluate the success of my attempts to teach immediate writing. The main focus of the study will be how technology can be used to teach and monitor immediate writing.

The methods I will use address many of the concerns critics of classroom-based research have voiced. Because I am changing my curriculum and lesson plans from what they've traditionally been, I am already making the familiar unfamiliar. There is an advantage here to teaching a different way in that I have no preconceived notions of how successful or unsuccessful this approach might be. The technology also provides a virtual outside observer, as well as an emotionally-detached recorder, of students work and progress. In this manner I think I can effectively address the concerns critics of ethnography raise, and I can also take into account the specific concerns critics of teacher-research voice. Theory is, as Ray requires, the basis for the changes to my practice—that we can and should be

teaching writing from a different angle.

But also, as Ray writes, a key to good teaching-researching is understanding the point of view that a teacher-researcher brings to bare when analyzing his or her own teaching practices. It will be vital that I allow for the movement of quality teacher-research, as Ray describes. She explains that “the distinguishing feature of all these teacher-research studies is that the teachers gave up their attempts to control study learning, and in the process students helped teachers to see, think, respond, and even write in different ways” (178). Professor Ray also outlines the model I will use to guide my next chapter. She explains that the following must be key features of teacher-research:

(I)t grows out of a classroom problem . . . ; it makes use of narrative to re-create the classroom context . . . ; and it emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning and teaching. (Ray 176)

Following Ray's model assuages the concerns of critics, I believe. And the most important element of teacher-research seems to be that the researcher should not only be honest about his or her position in the classroom, but revel in it. As teacher-researchers, we have a well-defined interest in the life our research leads when the study is done, and as Ray reminds us, we are uniquely positioned to understand and investigate what happens to student learning in our classrooms.

But as we attempt to understand our classrooms, and as investigation shifts from observation to interpretation, how do we decide what gets reported and what is left on the cutting room floor? This question is the focus of Robert Brooke's “Ethnographic Practice as a Means of Invention: Seeking a Rhetorical Paradigm for Ethnographic Writing.” His focus, he writes, is “the issue of how I, as a writer of ethnographic reports, 'see' what I see, and the question of who I am as I write” (13). Brooke considers this a matter of invention. I tend to agree, though his approach to invention leaves me a bit cold. In an attempt to mitigate the subjective nature of what we do in composition classes, Brooke develops heuristic categories to apply to his own teaching as well as his students' work. These

categories guide the review of his classroom actions and then shape his reflection.

As Brooke sees it, the notes he makes for his teaching sessions highlight “the ongoing tension between description and selection” when enacting and reporting ethnography (16). “Obviously,” he writes as he considers sets of notes from teaching days and the choices he made as he wrote the notes, “too much is going on in the classroom for me to record it all” (16). His categories help him filter which actions do and which actions do not become notes and then part of the written record of his experiences. My concern, however, is that these categories could still serve to blind the ethnographer from truly seeing everything that's happening in the classroom. More broadly applied, it's as if the ethnographer already knew what the answer was before the question was asked. Perhaps that's the provenance of an experienced ethnographer, and despite the limiting observational categories a well-seasoned ethnographer can focus his or her observations in such a way while still “taking it all in,” as it were.

I find a point well-taken in Brooke's concern for the researcher's subjectivity as he or she navigates the shift from teacher to researcher/observer to writer (and, I might add, through to student, scholar, and back to teacher). “Like Foucault's mediator,” Brooke writes, “the ethnographic writer finds herself entering such a web of modifying subjects when she immerses herself in her work that she finds herself aware that she will not be the same kind of subject when she leaves the text as when she enters it” (22). I am acutely aware of this positioning as I write this paragraph. This paragraph is a result of many months of writing, and is situated within a chapter of a much larger project. Additionally, this paragraph is being added to a draft named “Chapter Two Second and a Half Draft,” though it's soon to be renamed “Chapter Two Third Draft.” This chapter is about a type of research methodology specific to my study, but in fact, that study is now done save for the reporting, which takes the form of, in part, this paragraph within this chapter.

That's a long rehash of recent history, but it's illustrative of Brooke's reminder that we are not

the same at the beginning of a study as we are at other points throughout a study. My writing tonight is flavored by the reading and experiences I've encountered since I saved a file called "Chapter Two First Draft" to this computer. I find myself relying more on my classroom notes as the time since my student study-subjects winds on and my memory is clouded by a new set of students. I am not the same teacher that initiated the study that is the subject of my writing. I was not the same teacher at the end of my study as I was at its beginning. As Brooke notes:

For the writer embarking on a participant-observation project, rhetoric, politics, and the personal must necessarily be "with us," because the rhetorical nature of this work will lead us to rely on and question the categories we use to think, the choices we make about which categories to follow, and the selves we become as we try to explain to others what we've learned.

(23)

I worry that this "new self" I find typing today will be replaced tomorrow, and that neither of them will understand what my old self—my old self who was teaching on any given day during my study—was thinking during my study. This is the danger of ethnographic work that Brooke's categories attempt to avoid. Without some sort of system in place, conflicting subjectivities may render a study undecipherable. On the other hand, perhaps the focus of classroom ethnographies should be placed elsewhere.

In my mind the solution to the shifting subjectivities of the teacher-researcher in the context of a classroom ethnography is to allow our students' voices to do much of the heavy lifting of our reporting. By presenting much of our students' writing whole we ensure that their true voices are represented in our studies' reports. This is not unlike the careful transcription of conferences that the earliest process-oriented researchers included in their reports. The subjectivities within my students' writing at that moment remains locked in time through their written record, even though my "self" has been reshaped

over these months. My hope is that this focuses the perspectives acutely enough to take into account Kay Losey's understanding of the multiple perspectives at work in the classroom. Still, my study will not be able to completely extricate itself from my “self,” or, as Losey puts it, my “interpretation” (94). I can only hope that by staying close to my students' own work I can remove my prejudices as much as possible.

Returning to the specifics of my study, I feel that technology itself, and in particular social media, provide both the method and the reason for teaching immediate writing. Let me begin by unpacking the reason. The speed-of-light dissemination and retransmission of technological artifacts mean that writers always must be ready to angle their rhetorical action toward the shifting landscape of the discourses in which they are participating. Student writers should be prepared to write in these conditions. Additionally, much of what we write in the “real world” is as a result of unplanned rhetorical situations. Throughout our way days and personal lives, we encounter occasion to respond through writing. These instances that demand our attention are not planned, but they can be anticipated, and teachers can work to prepare student writers for these engagements. Social media and other technologically-mediated forms of discourse highlight these impromptu writing situations: much of what gets published across the internet comes as a result of immediate writing. We can teach students to think about their writing in terms of responding to these situations, and for their writing being fodder for the next writer's response (in keeping with the concepts of rhetorical velocity from Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel).

As for method, using technologically-mediated writing as both a product and as a monitoring system takes advantage of the timeliness and quick publication abilities of these writing spaces. Additionally, using social media spaces for writing projects encourages students to critique their rhetorical value (a practice supported by Wysocki and others), while at the same time, grounding students in a familiar landscape. The use of ethnography to evaluate student writers' success will

establish some basic understanding of how immediate writing might be adapted into future classroom situations. Since we are primarily concerned with the teaching of writing, student work and students' responses to the work—not just writing products, but also cognitive reflection on the writing as an action—are the most-valuable pieces for study. One of the main advantages of ethnography for my study is that I will be having students speak—through writing—for themselves, asking their work to stand in the forefront to ground my interpretation of their work. I feel this correctly positions myself as a teacher-researcher concerned with the pedagogical implications of my study and the growth of my students as writers.

The majority of the data I will be collecting will come in the form of student writing and students' responses to writing assignments. This will include their work on formal essays that the SVSU FYW program already mandates, as well as writing the students will complete in the form of reflections, blog posts, peer review, journal entries, and impromptu responses. The focus of the data I will collect is to analyze how technology can influence the writing process and how students think about writing. An example of a prompt I will use is “How does writing on a computer differ from writing by hand on paper? How does the computer change how you write? Or is your writing the same?” Additionally, I will take notes during face-to-face conferences with students regarding their writing process, challenges, and ways they brought their writing tasks to completion.

I will be collecting data in primarily two locations. The first location will be my classroom, though the specific room will vary from section to section. Also, my classes each are in a computer lab once a week as dictated by the FYW program. The second location will be my office, where conferences will be held. I expect that approximately 90 students will be taking part in the study, drawn from my three sections of ENGL 111 this winter. Students under the age of 18 will be excluded, as will students who choose to opt out of participation. I will draw my subjects from my ENGL 111 students in the Winter semester of 2013. The consent documentation will ensure students that their



grades will not be influenced in any way by the study, and that their course activities are still within the expectations of SVSU's FYW courses. All of my ENGL 111 students in the Winter 2013 semester are eligible for this study, with the exception of students under the age of 18.

The assignments my students will complete follow a progression that begins by introducing them to the way Twitter works. Though SVSU students tend to be fairly tech-savvy, the assignments are scheduled to have them learn about Twitter and its uses along the way. Students will need a Twitter account to complete the assignments, though they will be free to create a “dummy” account to use instead of their actual accounts.

The first assignment, the Hashtag Analysis Pre-Assignment, is meant to encourage students to think about Twitter's application in the real world, to conceive of Twitter as a communication tool with tangible potential effects and stakes. Students will read articles about Twitter's role in the Iranian revolution of 2009, and then reflect on the mechanisms of Twitter and the way it works as a communication tool. In this way, students are becoming aware of the power of Twitter as a medium for writing. It also acquaints them with the technology. While this assignment doesn't approach the kind of immediate writing we are looking to do, entering into the technology is an important step to the project as a whole; it's important that the use of the technology doesn't roadblock the work they'll do later.

## ASSIGNMENT ONE      Hashtag Analysis Pre-Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize yourself with Twitter, and its potential uses.

To begin, read the articles you'll find by clicking on the following links:

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1905125,00.html>

<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Global-Issues/2011/0630/Social-media-Did-Twitter-and-Facebook-really-build-a-global-revolution>

<http://www.aucegypt.edu/gapp/cairoreview/pages/articledetails.aspx?aid=87>

Once you've read the articles, write a one-page summary of how you understand Twitter was used for the events covered in the articles. In what ways did Twitter work differently for its users than other forms of media or communication? How did Twitter (the system, not the company, necessarily) allow for ideas to be transmitted in an interesting or different way?

Make sure your writing adheres to standard conventions of college-level writing. Since we all know which articles you're discussing, we won't require citations or a work cited list.

The second assignment is the Hashtag Analysis. This time students will follow tweets posted using a hashtag the students select for themselves. Students will be looking for trends or relationships they see developing among the tweets and Twitter users. An important element of this assignment is that students select the hashtags themselves, and therefore are likely to critically consider Twitter as a communication tool they use on their own outside of school.

Like the first assignment, a main purpose of Assignment Two is to introduce the technology to the students. In this case, we are taking a look at how the hashtag mechanism can be used to link users and their messages. The rather-substantial analysis essay also dovetails into the FYW requirements. Another intention with this assignment is to have students begin to think about the message content of tweets, and how a reader might interpret a message's intent. This assignment also contains rubric information, with categories taken directly from our FYW handbook. It's been my practice to include them on most assignment sheets, along with an explanation of how those categories apply in the specific assignment's context.

## ASSIGNMENT TWO

## Hashtag Analysis

Select a hashtag on Twitter, and read 4 days' worth of posts that use your selected hashtag. (You can find lists of trending hashtags on the site [hashtags.org](https://hashtags.org), search Twitter, or seek out hashtags in other ways, if you'd like.)

After reading through the tweets, make some notes about trends or relationships you see developing.

Include answers to all of these questions in the context of your essay:

Who appeared to establish the hashtag?

What can you say about the twitter users who post with the hashtag?

How frequently is the hashtag being used?

Do the hashtag-users seem to comment back and forth with each other?

What sort of back-and-forth conversations develop within the hashtags?

How can you categorize the tweets that use your chosen hashtag? Are they intended to advertise? Educate? Persuade? Amuse? Inspire? Provoke? Something else?

How is tweeting different from other forms of communication?

Write your thoughts about the hashtags in a short analysis essay. The categories of our rubric will apply to this essay in this way:

Content: In 350-500 words, essay analyzes a groups of Twitter posts using a selected hashtag; essay tries to make conclusions about the users and the kinds of posts they've written; essay considers the

type of communication Twitter allows or requires

Organization: Essay has an introduction that explains the selected hashtag and the dates analyzed; paragraphs each have “jobs”

Style: Writing is appropriate for college; essay makes use of direct quotes visually effective

Conventions: Essay is free from basic errors in spelling and grammar; essay uses MLA or APA format for margins and font (abstract not required); essay correctly attributes quoted tweets in a reference list and citations

Enter a Conversation is the third assignment, and during it students will actually use Twitter and its hashtag system to communicate with other Twitter users. By selecting a hashtag and then tweeting using it, the intention is to experience how Twitter can unite like-minded commentators. Students can, in effect, hijack an ongoing thread of discourse, and try to change the tenor of the conversation. This is the first time in this sequence of assignments that students are actually using the technology for immediate writing.

This assignment opens up students for a chance to write “in the moment,” as the conversation shifts and changes. This is also the first assignment in the sequence that requires students to take an active role as a participant using Twitter. This also adds a bit of difficulty for assessment, however, as the student now needs to provide proof of the conversation. This makes for a potentially unwieldy submission when the assignment is due, but without it, there's no way of knowing if the students completed the work as assigned. There are several ways technologically that students can retrieve their posts—Storify, for example—but the assignment suggests using Word, an application very familiar to

students.

The written element that accompanies students' tweets is a move to help make visible the thinking that was behind each of their rhetorical moves. One of the criticisms of social media is that users can post without much thought going into their message content. This assignment tries to counteract that history, if only temporarily, by asking students to report on their reasons for the posts they write.

### ASSIGNMENT THREE                      Enter a Conversation

For an hour, select a Twitter conversation that interests you and enter into it. You'll need to use hashtags to identify the conversation, and also to make sure other Twitter users can see your tweets.

Over the course of the hour, you must post at least 10 tweets related to the hashtag.

Monitor how the conversation shifts and changes, and how people respond to you (and how you respond to them).

It may be helpful to you if you copy and paste your tweets and the tweets of others into a Word document.

At the end of the hour, you may begin to write-up answers to the following questions:

What was the conversation that you entered into about? What was the hashtag that was being used?

How did you choose that conversation?

What were your specific tweets? What was your thought process behind each tweet?

How did other Twitter-users respond to your posts?

How did their responses change your own posts?

In what ways do you think a Twitter conversation is different from a “real” conversation? How is it the same?

Include with your responses a copy of all of your tweets you posted for this assignment, as well as all the tweets you were following—print out the whole conversation!

For the fourth assignment, students will write a brief argument about Twitter and other social media platforms. Using the trappings of good argumentation—like concepts of pathos, ethos, and logos—this assignment continues the critical thinking students will be doing regarding social media. It also will serve as a grounding assignment, reminding us that the goal of FYW is to generate good, academic texts. While this assignment doesn't generate immediate writing per se, it connects to the other assignments' analysis of new media technology.

#### ASSIGNMENT FOUR

#### Mini-Argument

To go along with our discussions and writing about Twitter, and to practice for writing a larger argument paper, write a short argument that focuses specifically on Twitter.

In a 300- to 500-word essay, argue that Twitter, and by extension, all social media, is either good for users or bad for users.

This will be an opinion piece, but support your opinion with sound reasoning, and examples that take advantage of what we learned about pathos, ethos, and logos.

As part of your essay, include quotations of at least three tweets (which will then, of course, appear in a reference list). Your paper must be written in either MLA or APA format (but no abstract is required).

Your mini-argument is worth 50 points.

Assignment Five uses Twitter to inspire and monitor immediate writing. Named “Write Now!”, this assignment requires students begin and complete a written argument in the span of a class meeting (80 minutes). Their topics are to be drawn from hashtags trending on Twitter the day the assignment is written. As students work on their essays, they will live tweet about them using the #writenow hashtag, so the class and teacher can monitor progress.

This assignment really gets to the heart of the immediate writing experiment: students must produce a polished text in a given amount of time. We will use the technology both as a way to discover a topic, and as a way to reveal the process students experience as they write. A key element is that students should feel the pressure of time and the expectation of producing college-level writing. The expectation of interaction via Twitter during writing with other students should also add another layer of pressure to their writing. Going into the assignment, it will be interesting to see how students respond to the writing aspect of the assignment versus the social interaction required for it. This assignment only works, obviously, because we have access to a computer lab for class. This allows students to complete their writing, as well as monitor the Twitter feed. In addition to students watching on their own computers, I will use my instructor computer to display the feed to the class via projector.

## ASSIGNMENT FIVE

## Write Now!

In class today you will be writing a short argument. I'd like for you to choose as your topic one of the currently trending topics on Twitter. You might have to be inventive in developing your argument.

As you write, I want you to live tweet using the hashtag #writingnow. The Twitter feed will be projected as you write your paper, and you will follow the feed on your computer. You are free to use other identifying hashtags as you want. Everyone should tweet about every ten minutes.

Your essay itself should incorporate two sources, in addition to your own reasoning and opinion. The sources you choose may come from anywhere, but remember: not all sources are equal. Use the best sources you can access in the moment. Write your paper using either MLA or APA format.

I expect that your tweets during the class time will focus on your paper. Your essays are due at the end of class. Print one, save the file, and also post it to turnitin.com.

Your Write Now! Essay is worth 25 points and will be evaluated based on how well-written and complete your argument is.

Assignments Six and Seven are interconnected. Assignment Seven is what might be called a fairly standard argument essay, though much longer than the piece required for Assignment Four. Assignment Six, however, adds a layer to the work by asking students to live tweet as they write. As the assignment requirements state, for their live tweeting, students are encouraged to ask questions,



give encouragement, and otherwise use Twitter however they want, but at least ten tweets a week must be reasonably about “the writing process.” Simple little tweets saying “nice job” or “thumbs up” are encouraged and certainly welcome by way of feedback, but won't count.

For these assignments, immediate writing in the form of Twitter use is laid over a typical FYW essay assignment. As in Assignment Three, one of the challenges of this assignment from an instructor's position is the monitoring of the students' tweets. The hashtag system makes monitoring as a whole easy, and I will use Storify to compile them. But for individual students' work, the messy cut-and-paste system into a word processing document will be most accessible to them.

I always provide a list of “off-limits” paper topics for argumentation. These are topics that have been done over and over, and I explain that since they aren't fresh, they don't interest me as an audience as much as some of the other topics students could explore. The argument assignment again features a description of our rubric's application for this specific context. I've also asked students to take one of two approaches for an argument that are featured in our textbook, *Writing Today* by Richard Johnson-Sheehan and Charles Paine: present, describe, explain, and then solve a problem, or attempt to change a reader's thinking or behavior regarding a subject.

## ASSIGNMENT SIX          Live Tweet a Paper!

Now that you've been assigned your third major paper and have started working on it, begin posting about it on Twitter using the hashtag #comppaper .

Keep track of all your posts throughout your time working on your paper, and use that hashtag to keep tabs on how your classmates are doing.

You are encouraged to ask questions, give encouragement, and otherwise use Twitter however you

want, but at least ten tweets a week must be reasonably about “the writing process.” Simple little tweets saying “nice job” or “thumbs up” are encouraged and certainly welcome by way of feedback, but don't count. So make sure the ones you want to count have some substantial, meaningful feedback.

On the day your rough draft is due in class, bring a list of all your tweets up to that point. Bring a comprehensive list for the entire duration of your third paper the day your final draft is due in class.

Your lists are each worth ten points.

## ASSIGNMENT SEVEN

### Argument Paper

For your last major paper of the semester, you're going to write an argument.

Your argument must take one of two forms. You may present, describe, explain, and then solve a problem, or you can attempt to change your reader's thinking or behavior regarding a subject.

The following topics are off limits: abortion, drug legalization, anything related to the drinking age.

Your essay will be 1000-words long.

Our rubric categories apply to this essay in the following ways:

Content—includes appeals to pathos, ethos, and logos; correctly incorporates four academically-rigorous sources; makes argument's approach clear

Organization—presents argument and evidence in a sensible way

Style—writing and voice are appropriate for college writing

Conventions—uses correct APA style, including citations, reference list, title page, and abstract

This essay will also dovetail with our “Live Tweet a Paper” assignment.

After completing the argument paper, students will then make an in-class presentation based on their argument. Again, that's not a particularly different FYW assignment. Our wrinkle will be that the students in the audience will be live-tweeting the presentations as they go. Live-tweeting events has been happening since Twitter was first made public, but incorporating the activity into a classroom setting is a new way of not only having the students in the audience practice a form of immediate writing, but also having students making presentations respond to this writing in a timely, appropriate fashion. It's technologically-mediated feedback in line with the kind of feedback speakers have always gotten, but our classrooms have moved away from this active engagement in favor of well-mannered student audiences.

Purpose: To make an oral presentation of your Argument Paper

Reader: Your classmates and your teacher

Context: A speech of 7-10 minutes

In this presentation, describe what you learned through writing your Argument Paper.

Include all of the main elements of your paper in your presentation.

Your presentation must include a visual aid. This can be either a PowerPoint presentation or a Prezi presentation. Visually, your presentation should match the suggestions from Chapter 32 in our textbook.

Your presentation will be graded based upon how well-prepared it is based upon the design of the visual aid and how smoothly and thoroughly you present the information.

Additionally, your classmates will be live tweeting your presentation. You are encouraged to make note of the Twitter feed and adjust your presentation accordingly.

Your presentation is worth 50 points.

All student work will be compiled into a portfolio and collected at the end of the semester for evaluation (used in course grades) and review (used for this study). Tweets will be compiled and sorted using the online Storify application. Class activities for the study begin March 6, 2013, and end with

the closing of the semester, the week of April 29, 2013.

In the next chapter I will discuss how this new approach differs from the traditional methods used in a FYW course at SVSU, and present some defining characteristics of my students, the subjects of my study.

### **Chapter Three: Saginaw Valley State University and Immediate Writing**

In this chapter I will describe the landscape in which I will conduct my experiment, using technologically-mediated immediate writing in a First Year Writing university classroom. After describing my institution, Saginaw Valley State University, and the ways in which our ENGL 111 Composition I course is usually taught, I will set out to describe more fully my specific plans for the experiment and the theoretical foundations behind its implementation.

#### Saginaw Valley State University

Saginaw Valley State University is the youngest of Michigan's 15 public university and colleges, located in University Center, between the Tri-Cities of Saginaw, Bay City, and Midland. Enrollment for the Fall 2012 semester was 10,522 students, including 1,653 freshmen (“SVSU Fast Facts”). SVSU was accredited as a baccalaureate degree-granting institution by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association in 1970, and was granted master's degree level status in 1980 (“Institutional Accreditation”).

According to the 2011-2012 Common Data Set reporting required by the state (the most recent available), 716 men were enrolled as first-time, full-time freshmen, along with 1013 first-time, full-time freshmen women. Just over 52% of incoming freshmen that year had an ACT Composite score between 18-23. A little over 28% entered school with an ACT Composite of 24-29. Three percent entered with scores of 30-36, and a just over 16% were admitted with ACT Composite scores of 12-17 (“OIR—Information & Data”).

The 2012 Fact Sheet identifies the total 2012 enrollment as 74.29% White. African American students are 9.84% of the student population, followed by 5.75% identified as International (though Canadians are given their own identifier and a mere .15%). Hispanic students represent 2.96% of total enrollment, with other groups represented in smaller numbers. Students from Saginaw County, SVSU's

home county, are 23.75% of the student body. Only 5.35% and 11.17% of the students come from nearby Midland and Bay Counties, respectively (numbers that are probably reflective of the relative affluence of those areas). Students from counties other than Bay, Saginaw, Midland, Genesee, Tuscola, Huron, Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne constitute 21.77% of the student population. The average age of SVSU undergraduates is 22 (“Fact Sheet 2012”).

#### First Year Writing at Saginaw Valley State University

Saginaw Valley State University's First Year Writing Program is a continuum of classes: ENGL 080 and ENGL 111. Each class is one semester, four credits each, and placement is determined by ACT English scores. If a student enters SVSU with an ACT English score of 15 or less, they are placed into ENGL 080. Students with higher scores are placed in ENGL 111. Additionally, all student in both courses complete a diagnostic writing sample during the first week of the semester. These diagnostics can be used by the professor to suggest that students move into the other class, though the FYW coordinator and the student can decline such a move (“First-Year Writing @ SVSU”).

FYW at SVSU is supported by the *Saginaw Valley State University First Year Writing Program Instructor's Guide*. It lists expectations, course outcomes, best practices, and other programmatic information, along with some sample syllabi and assignments. While instructors are free to determine their own specific approaches to classroom activities, the course description is fairly detailed:

Frequent writing assignments to produce informal and formal texts, with emphasis on academic thinking and writing. Develops effective writing processes, from inventing and investigating through organizing, drafting, revising, and editing. Helps students meet the needs of their readers. Includes workshop approaches to develop students' abilities to analyze and evaluate their own writings as well as the writings of others.

(Instructor's Guide 11)

The outcomes are similarly prescriptive. The Guide directs instructors to have students use processes

that develop drafts through rough drafts and revisions and into final drafts. Library instruction is also an important element of the FYW program—all students in ENGL 111 visit the library twice to receive direction in accessing and using academic resources in their writing (Instructor's Guide 11-13). In all, there are five course outcomes for ENGL 111:

1. Use writing processes that develop exploratory drafts into revised prose for specific audiences, including the ability to:
2. Generate, select, and focus writing topics
3. Plan, organize, and structure writing to develop a focus and a purpose
4. Use specific and credible evidence to support positions in a convincing manner
5. Review, critique, revise
6. Edit writing to conform to the general conventions of Standard English

- 1 Produce formal college essays that exhibit the requisite skills to attain a C level or better on the course rubric, which signals that the student is prepared to enter Communications Intensive courses and engage in academic discourse at the university level.
- 2 Conduct introductory library and other research, integrate facts and evidence from multiple sources, and document appropriately.
- 3 Read critically and analyze material written for multiple audiences and purposes.
- 4 Effectively participate in interactive/collaborative reading and writing activities.

*(Instructor's Guide 11)*

The Guide also describes the practices and methods that instructors might employ to meet those outcomes. These include requiring students write four formal essays, two of which use outside resources, and using the program rubric for evaluation. Teachers are also directed to base at least 75% of a student's final grade on these formal papers (as opposed to process work, or attendance, or



something else). The final listed course practice hints at one of the deeper purposes of the work we do in FYW: “Instructors will actively engage in strategies that work toward student retention and student success” (*Instructor's Guide* 11-14).

The *Guide* also includes a rubric with which to score student papers (figure 1). The rubric is divided into four categories for evaluation: Content, Organization, Style, and Conventions. Though individual instructors are free to assign point values as they see fit, the rubric describes student writing for each of four possible grade levels. This rubric, or a form of it, is often used across campus as an evaluation tool for student writing by various assessment committees, and the rubric has also been made available to teachers of non-English disciplines for use in their courses.

The program as a whole exists in a unique place within the university administration structure. FYW is housed within the Department of English (*Instructor's Guide* 4), but also receives some attention from the university's General Education programs since ENGL 111 is a prerequisite for all Written Communication, Literature, and Communication Intensive courses (“General Education”). FYW is directed by a First Year Writing Coordinator, a position that as of this writing is still being codified by a formal job description. The Coordinator is selected and approved by a joint understanding between the English Department Chair and the University Provost.

At SVSU, ENGL 111 is by far the most-offered course of any given fall semester. A mixture of full-time tenure track professors, lecturers, and part-time adjuncts combine to teach more than 60 sections each new school year (as of this writing, I hold the rank of Instructor, a rare position at SVSU that is a tenure track line in which I can be promoted through the assorted professor ranks). Winter semesters see a significant drop in the offering of ENGL 111; in winter 2013, we featured 19 sections of ENGL 111.

Programmatically, teachers in our FYW program have what one could call structured freedom. We get to choose one of three possible main textbooks: *Writing Today*, *The Composition of Everyday*

*Life*, or *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Writing*. We also all use one standard handbook, *Keys for Writers*. We use a custom version of the handbook that includes our FYW rubrics and some other, SVSU-specific information. In a recent textbook review survey, our First Year Writing committee learned that the three “big books” are used almost equally across all the sections of ENGL 111. Each of these three books, though slightly different in some respects, approach the teaching and learning of Composition in the same basic way. Students learn to write different genres through the writing process, with an emphasis on growing in ability toward a research paper or an argument. The books also each have assorted readings for each genre, writing skills exercises or explanations, and sections that describe the MLA and APA formats.

In my three years at SVSU, I've followed a fairly consistent syllabus with some small deviations based upon the textbook *Writing Today*. My students wrote four formal papers: narrative, summary/response, researched argument, and I-Search. I changed the narrative paper in my second year to an object analysis. The reason I changed was to encourage students consider their writing more analytically earlier in the semester; students come to college used to telling stories, but unfamiliar with the higher-order thinking they'll need to execute for most of their work at the university. I also changed the I-Search paper, and moved to having students write what I called a program review essay. In this new assignment, students researched their major and other facts associated with their program of study, including interviewing a professor who teaches in that area. This assignment was designed to help my freshman Comp I students feel more connected to their field of study. So many of them spend a year or more without really understanding the way a university is structured that they begin to feel lost, or they just lack basic information about how our school operates.

What follows is the assignment sheet for the Program Review essay I described.

- Purpose: To explore and describe a program / major at SVSU
- Reader: An interested audience who may not know about SVSU
- Context: 1500-word paper using APA format

In this paper, your last of English 111, you will identify and describe a major or program offered at Saginaw Valley State University. It probably *should* be the major or program you are pursuing, but doesn't have to be.

Your paper will include the following parts:

An explanation of the types of classes you would take to receive a degree from that program / major. Who is the head of the department? What college is it in?

The sort of jobs you might be able to do with that diploma—entry level to just-before-retirement. What are the job prospects, what do they pay, and where do those people work?

A review of one academic journal dedicated to that program / major—what is it, who writes in it, what sort of articles appear within them?

An interview with a professor who works within that major / program. What kind of education, experience, background does he or she have? What work other than teaching does that professor do? What inspired that professor to follow his or her path?

A discussion of the on-campus presence of the program. What are the student organizations centered around it? What activities are available to participate in?

A reflection on what you learned.

Our rubric categories apply to this assignment in the following ways:

**Content:** Essay includes all of the required sections, especially explaining details specific to SVSU in a way a non-SVSU reader can understand

**Organization:** Required sections are differentiated by appropriate textual transitions and APA headings that logically present the selected topic

**Style:** Writing is clear and compelling; the voice modulates where appropriate for the specific sections

**Conventions:** Essay's grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage are correct throughout the writing; APA format is accurate and correct throughout, including abstract, headings, citations, and reference list

The assignment outlines the various criteria that I will use for evaluation, criteria which follow the rubric all of our FYW program uses.

Like all my essay assignments, the Program Review would be taught using process pedagogy. For each of the essays, we set aside one class meeting to peer review rough drafts. After a few years of allowing open peer review in which students wrote comments they saw fit and marked or edited as they

noticed errors or places a paper might change, I switched to a system of Peer Review GuideSheets. My hope is that these GuideSheets scaffold peer revision and make it more meaningful, emphasizing assignments' teaching points. When I was a high school teacher, we learned that some schools used assignment folders that listed Focused Correction Areas for each writing task. My GuideSheets work similarly. I've included the text of the GuideSheet for the Object Analysis essay assignment below.

Kahler ENGL 111 Composition 1

Object Analysis Peer Review GuideSheet

Reviewer's Name:

Paper Writer's Name:

Use the following checklist to evaluate the essay you've been given.

### **Content**

includes planned uses	yes	no
includes potential unplanned uses	yes	no
includes targeted user(s)	yes	no
discusses presumptions about the people who made it	yes	no
discusses presumptions about the people who use it	yes	no

### **Organization**

introduction describes the object physically	yes	no
every paragraph has a job and does its job	yes	no
conclusion is efficient	yes	no

### **Style**

writing is clear and appropriate for college writing	yes	no
------------------------------------------------------	-----	----

### **Conventions**

paper is free of errors in grammar or punctuation	yes	no
paper uses MLA lay-out for headings, margins, and font	yes	no

What do you feel is the essay's strongest element or section?

Where do you think the most improvement could happen? What should that improvement look like?

Write to the author generally, and give your impressions overall of the essay. End your response with one more tangible suggestion to make the essay stronger.

What can be seen through these assignments and the peer review handouts is that my classroom was deeply indebted to a classic, process-oriented pedagogy. That continued through to the end of the semester.

I have always ended semesters with portfolio evaluations. For this assignment, students were asked to compile all of their assignments into a binder and write reflections based upon suggested formats in a chapter from *Writing Today*. These reflections would discuss what skills the students used to complete the assignments, what students learned from the assignments, and how their assignments show their growth as writers. Generally, students would come to class the day of our Final Exam with these reflections prepared and submit their portfolio in a three-ring binder. The rule for a well-presented portfolio is simply "make it neat and complete," though I always have a group of students who embellish their work with glitter and pictures. Some semesters I have collected these portfolios for review later, but I found that I could read their short reflective pieces during our final exam time, so now my common practice is to evaluate them the day they are due while students wait to be called up during our exam meeting.

I've included the text for a recent portfolio assignment description here.

Kahler ENGL 111                      Portfolio Assignment

Purpose:            To present and reflect upon your work

Reader:            You and your teacher!

Context:           Binder of materials that includes your work and reflections

Create a Learning Portfolio as described in Chapter 30 of *Writing Today*. Your portfolio will include the following parts (called artifacts) in the following order:

Program Review Essay Reflection

Program Review Essay

Position Essay Reflection

Position Essay

Summary/Response Essay Reflection

Summary/Response Essay

Object Analysis Reflection

Object Analysis

Your reflections will all be typed. Your essays will include the final draft (teacher-marked versions are preferred), rough drafts, outlines, research, and all other materials. Journals can be their original typed or handwritten versions.

Your reflections are Learning-Focused Reflections that you will write for each major assignment. Consider each Reflection a miniature argument whose claim is “I learned how to do \_\_\_\_\_ by completing this assignment.” Obviously, the blank will often be more than one particular thing in most

(all) cases. Support your argument in each reflection by pointing to a specific section of the original work or describing the process that moved you to completion.

Your portfolio will be assessed based on how thoroughly you complete your reflections and how neatly you build your portfolio. Portfolios are worth 100 points and are due the day of our Final Exam.

In addition to the formal papers I've described, my students were required to complete a series of informal and semi-formal assignments. I began having students write journal entries to start each class—half-page responses to prompts that directed their thinking about some of the work we were doing in class, addressed a current event, or added some levity to the semester (“What three movies would you bring to a deserted island?” for example). I found these difficult to evaluate without lugging around massive canvas bags filled with notebooks and binders. A year ago I moved away from in-class journaling and replaced it with blogging using the Wordpress platform. Some blog assignments were completed in class (we are assigned a computer lab once a week), while others were completed outside of class. Assignments related to the blog included researching other blogs with similar themes or focuses and commenting on classmates' blogs. My students' blogs were all listed at a small blog I established, the First Year Writing Blog located at <http://firstyearwritingblog.wordpress.com/>.

Below is the text for the Blog handout I distributed in the first week of classes.

#### Kahler ENGL 111 Blog Assignment

Create a blog on wordpress.com. Your blog can have whatever focus you want, but it must have some kind of a theme or topic that you will maintain throughout the semester. We'll work on setting-up our blogs during class.



Your first entry, which you will begin today, will act as a freewrite and Invention as you describe what you envision your blog to be about. As part of your first entry, research and discuss two blogs you find that have similar themes.

How will your blog be similar, and how will it be different?

Each blog post will be 200-250 words, and as the semester progresses, you'll be encouraged, and then expected, to make use of more and more of the blogging technology. Your blog entries will also be evaluated on how they continue to consider your blog's theme in a new, interesting way, and how polished your writing is.

More assignment due dates will be given in the future.

Your first blog entry is due by the beginning of our next class. Also, before our next class, email Kahler with a link to your blog.

Blogging has proved to be popular with my students, and most of them approached their writing enthusiastically. I found that my students wrote much more interesting posts when they were allowed to “freestyle” without a specific assignment in mind. They also appreciated class time to go through other students' blogs, an activity that resulted in some rather heated exchanges across the sports-themed blogs. The biggest coup occurred when one student's blog was noticed by an online publication with a similar focus, and for a short time, my student contributed content to their online magazine.

Below is a version of the syllabus I used during the Fall 2012 semester, which shows all of these assignments in sequence with each other.

Fall

2012

Monday B213 and Wednesday B212, 8:30-9:50

Jason

Kahler

989-964-6065

jjkahler@svsu.edu

Office: Brown 357 Monday and Wednesday: 12:30-2:30, or by appointment

**Course Description:**

Frequent writing assignments to produce informal and formal texts, with emphasis on academic thinking and writing. Develops effective writing processes, from inventing and investigating through organizing, drafting, revising, and editing. Helps students meet the needs of their readers. Includes workshop approaches to develop students' ability to analyze and evaluate their own writings as well as the writings of others.

Prerequisite: P grade in ENGL 080 or satisfactory performance on Course Placement Test in Writing.

**Texts:**

Johnson-Sheehan, Richard and Charles Paine. *Writing Today*. Boston: Longman, 2010. Print.

Raimes, Ann. *Keys for Writers: Sixth Edition*. Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011.

Print.

**Disability Statement:**

Students with disabilities that may restrict their full participation in course activities are encouraged to meet with the instructor or contact the SVSU Office of Disability Services, Curtiss Hall C112, phone 964-4168, for assistance.

SVSU does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, physical impairment, disability, or veteran status in the provision of education, employment, and other services.

**English 111 Course Outcomes:**

The student who successfully completes English 111 will be able to:

7. Use writing processes that develop exploratory drafts into revised prose for specific audiences, including the ability to:
  - a. Generate, select and focus writing topics

- b. Plan, organize, and structure writing to develop a focus and purpose
  - c. Use specific and credible evidence to support positions in a convincing manner
  - d. Review, critique, revise
  - e. Edit writing to conform to the general conventions of Standard English.
8. Produce formal college-level essays that exhibit the requisite skills to attain a C level or better on the course rubric, which signals that a student is prepared to enter Communication Intensive courses and engage in academic discourse at the university level.
  9. Conduct introductory library and other research, integrate facts and evidence from multiple sources, and document appropriately.
  10. Read critically and analyze material written for multiple audiences and purposes.
  11. Effectively participate in interactive/collaborative reading and writing activities.

### **Details and Expectations:**

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend every class. Your assignments are still due on posted days, which includes work completed and submitted the same day. Students should exchange emails with each other to ensure an easy contact person in the event of an absence. (It's bad form to ask a college teacher "Hey what'd I miss?")

**Supplies:** Please have your books and writing implements in class every day.

**Assignments:** No late work is accepted. Hard copies of assignments may be submitted to my office or delivered by another student in the event of an absence. Missed quizzes and exams are your responsibility to reschedule with me.

**Tardiness:** Any late arrival of more than ten minutes will be marked as an absence.

**Classroom Climate:** Our classroom is a place where everyone is welcome to express his or her opinions and beliefs provided they are phrased in ways that do not hurt or attack. Please respect the fact that someone's right to learn in a safe environment is paramount to our activities.

**Academic Honesty:** The appropriation of another author's ideas, words, or structure is plagiarism, an offense that will result in failure of the assignment and possible further action by the college.

According to the *SVSU Student Handbook*, "Cheating occurs whenever one attempts to gain an advantage through a violation of rules regarding the relevant behavior. It should be assumed that collaboration is cheating unless explicitly authorized" (16).

Cheating in any form will result in a grade of zero (0) for that assignment.

"Plagiarism involves intentionally or unintentionally presenting another person's expressions--ideas, opinions, illustrations, data, style--as one's own expression (16). Forms of plagiarism include directly transcribing (copying) without quotation and attribution, summarizing without attribution, paraphrasing or patchwork paraphrasing without attribution, patching electronic materials (including pictures,

graphs, and/or charts) without attribution."

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site. (Turnitin.com Registration Agreement)

### **Grade Scale:**

93-100%	:		A
90-92%	:	A-	
87-89%	:	B+	
83-86%	:	B	
80-82%	:		B-
77-79%	:	C+	
70-76%	:	C	
60-69%	:	D	
0-59%	:	F	

You must pass with a C or better to enroll in Communication-Intensive (CI) courses. Progress during the semester and contributions to the class will be considered in the case of a borderline grade.

### **Course Activities:**

#### *Beginning of Class:*

There will be a writing prompt at the beginning of every class.

#### *Vspace and Technology:*

Our class will use Vspace for its grade book, announcements, and the discussion board.

Students will find having a flash drive (also known as thumb drives or zip drives) very useful. Additionally, your instructor recommends buying a spare black printer cartridge now. Very much like light bulbs burning out, printers only run out of ink when you need them.

Half of our class time will be spent in a computer lab. You are expected to treat university technology with the utmost respect, and use it in accordance with university and instructor policies. Using computers for work other than classroom activities could result in you being marked as absent for the day.

Personal technology—cell phones, iPods, teleportation devices, etc.—should be turned off and kept stowed during class.

*Assignments:*

We will write approximately 10,000 words this semester. Many of those words will be written in the process of writing four formal essays, but we will also produce smaller, informal writing across several genres and modes.

All assignments will be submitted according to the directions provided. Two of our formal papers will use MLA style, and two will use APA style.

In class, I will distribute copies of the Eng 111 Rubric, which I will use to grade all essays. My written comments on your papers will reflect specific areas of the rubric and are intended to help you grow as a writer.

Many of your assignments will be eligible for entry in the English 111 Writing Contest. More information on those will be given later in the semester.

Assignments based on mini-lessons covering grammar, mechanics, and other topics will be given as needed as class demands dictate. Many of those will use our *Keys for Writers* book.

Part of your Final Exam will be a presentation of a portfolio. Your portfolio should include all of your assignments from the semester. Be sure to save them. Someone at the end of the semester will have forgotten about this. Don't be that person.

*The Writing Center*

Students at SVSU have a great resource in the SVSU Writing Center. You are encouraged to visit early and often.

At the Writing Center, you will find other students working as tutors, helping other students with a wide variety of writing projects from across all the classes at SVSU. It can be very beneficial to hear another voice help you through your writing projects.

The Writing Center takes students on a first-come, first-served basis.

When you visit the Writing Center, be sure to take a copy of the assignment description with you.

Visit <http://www.svsu.edu/writingcenter> for more information.

*Important Dates:*

Last Day to Withdraw with a W: October 26

Last Day to Withdraw with a WP or WF: November 9

Final Exam Week Starts: December 10

**Grading (Assignments, Approximate word counts, Target objectives, and Points values)**

Letter (one page)	10
Object Analysis (MLA, 750 words, Obj. 1 and 2)	100
Summary/Response (MLA, 750 words, Obj. 1, 2 and 4)	150
Article Search (Obj. 3)	10
Argument (APA, 1250 words, Obj. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)	200
Program Review (APA, 2500 words, Obj. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)	300
Presentation (Obj. 5)	50
Portfolio (250 words, Obj. 4 and 5)	100
Blog (ongoing, Obj. 1, 4 and 5)	10 per week
Assorted Odds and Ends	TBA

**Tentative Class Schedule**

**Reading assignments will be discussed the day they are listed. Please read them in advance.**

## WEEK ONE

8/27: Introduction and In-Class Writing Assignment: Letter; Vspace introduction

8/29: *WT*: Chapters 1-3; Diagnostic Writing

## WEEK TWO

9/3: NO CLASSES LABOR DAY

9/5: Object Due in Class; Object Analysis Assigned; *WT*: Chapter 4

## WEEK THREE

9/10: Blog Creation

9/12: In-Class Object Analysis Peer Revision

## WEEK FOUR

9/17: In-Class Writing Assignment

9/19: Object Analysis (Formal Paper); In-Class Reflective Writing

WEEK FIVE

9/24: Library Visit!!! *WT*: Chapter 14 and Chapter 15; Summary/Response Assigned

9/26: *WT*: Chapter 16; Bring your Summary/Response article

WEEK SIX

10/1: Summary/Response Outline Due; *WT*: Chapters 26-28;

10/3: *WT*: Chapter 18

WEEK SEVEN

10/8: Mid Term Assessment

10/10: *WT*: Chapter 11 and Chapter 22; In-Class Summary/Response Peer Revision

WEEK EIGHT

10/15: Summary/Response Due (Formal Paper)

10/17: “A More Perfect Union” (*WT*: 719) and “TV Watching” (*WT*: 727); Argument Paper Assigned

WEEK NINE

10/22: “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift (web link on Vspace or in textbook)

10/24: Library Visit

WEEK TEN

10/29: Article Search Due; In-Class Writing Activity

10/31: Happy Halloween!! *WT*: Chapters 24 and 25

WEEK ELEVEN

11/5: In-Class Argument Paper Peer Review

11/7: Argument Paper Due (Formal Paper); Introduction of Program Review Paper

WEEK TWELVE

11/12: *WT*: Chapter 30

11/14: *WT*: Chapter 32; Portfolio Assigned

WEEK THIRTEEN

11/19: In-Class writing activity

11/21: NO CLASSES

WEEK FOURTEEN

11/26: In-Class Presentations

11/28: In-Class Presentations; Program Review Due (Formal Paper);

#### WEEK FIFTEEN

12/3: Reflective Writing for Portfolio

12/5: In-Class Portfolio Preparation

FINALS WEEK! 12/10-12/15

Looking back I see that my class activities lacked immediate writing with a formal audience. The journals were an example of writing with a potential that could have been exploited, but the challenge of evaluating them, and therefore the impetus on students to do their best, makes journaling in this context less effective. To be frank, the grading of once-a-week blog journals is a laborious task that requires careful indexing of blog sites, record-keeping of day and time stamps, and complex systems of comment-counting to assign grades that are fair and encourage class participation. While it's true that students were often very enthusiastic, I still found that motivation to "be heard" was not nearly as powerful as the motivation "to get points." I'm sure I am not the first teacher who ever faced this dilemma, but that doesn't make its reality any less defeating. Journals proved to be a unique, interesting way to encourage a different type of writing, but they never addressed what I considered to be a classroom need: authentic writing for an audience in the moment.

One way to address this shortcoming in my pedagogy was through technologically-mediated writing. As I will unpack in the next section, technologically-mediated and multimodal writing is an emerging subfield within Composition, and theorists and teachers are discussing the ways in which these new writing spaces work, and how they best can be utilized within our classrooms. Specifically I begin exploring the relationship technologically-mediated writing has with process-oriented pedagogy and the *in the moment* writing my project at large has been exploring. Ultimately, I argue,



technologically-mediated can be used for this type of writing that has been missing in my process-oriented classroom.

### Technologically-mediated Writing: Theory and Practice

New configurations of the composition classroom are interesting steps toward a future for Composition, but I would like to propel these ideas further. As compositions begin investigating ways to introduce new or popular technology into their classrooms, new approaches—especially those which utilize multimodal writing—appear to displace process-oriented pedagogy. What we see, in many cases, however, is process pedagogy given a new skin. The products we ask students to create in multimodal writing classes are varied and exciting, but still rely on process pedagogy strategies to bring the projects to completion. This is not to say that the cognitive work done in a process classroom isn't important. It is important to ask students to think reflectively about how they bring their work from start to finish. It's equally valuable to have students begin practices that ask them to consider purpose, mode, and audience as they create their compositions. While multimodal writing proponents use much of the language of process pedagogy, they often position their approach in opposition to process work. As Jason Palmeri writes in *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy*, this is not necessarily the case. Palmeri finds examples in both invention and revision activities that multimodal writing is a type of process pedagogy, and that as students work through process-oriented writing they are working multimodally. In other words, the cognitive moves of process-oriented writing encourage the use of multimodal texts (at least within the writer's imagination), and multimodal writing involves the same stages of writing that process pedagogy teachers use in their classrooms (Palmeri 34 and 35).

In both process-oriented and multimodal approaches, we are losing an important element of composing. We are losing the opportunity to have students produce quality texts in a timely manner, in a particular moment, in a particular manner. Classic rhetoric enthusiasts will hear echoes of the Greek

term *kairos* in my description of what we've lost in the modern composition classroom. Process-oriented pedagogy has resulted in the abandonment of asking students to produce responses to rhetorical situations in the moment. Instead, we ask students to create texts far-removed from the moments of inception, introduction, and invention. This is contrary to the kind of writing our students are most likely to do outside of the classroom. Through technologically-mediated writing especially, our students must navigate the many and varied routes to rhetorical action, often publishing their work for others to see almost instantaneously. In the workplace, our students are asked to respond to memos and emails without the benefit of peer review or writing centers. Our students use Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Tumblr, and other forms of multimodal composition to respond to others, and what they're really doing in that moment has far more in common with the ancient Greek rhetors than the practices of process pedagogy. Our dedication to process pedagogy has distracted us from the day-to-day writing that our students do using technology. My project is to bring those forms of composing that our students often already do into the classroom and use them to invent and publish texts that return Composition to a focus on timely texts produced in the moment of inspiration and rhetorical urgency. I call this kind of work immediate writing.

Immediate writing refocuses classroom activities toward pressured text creation. Composition pedagogy has moved away from timed writing, and the result is that texts students generate remain unfinished, trapped in an ever-revising portfolio purgatory where no piece is ever *done*. I understand that writing often is revised over and over, and that even published works are sometimes re-published in a different form, but students should be given the chance to create at a given time, for a given reason, and pressured to choose the manner and nature of their response. Students will be working through all the problems they might encounter in a process-oriented approach—thinking about their purpose, audience, voice, etc—and students will also have the advantage of working in multiple modes of writing. In this way, two of the most-recent approaches to composition pedagogy will be found in one

unified direction that also seeks to reclaim some important elements of writing theory.

Specifically, my project will use immediate writing through the social media site Twitter. Some new media critics are beginning to investigate Twitter and other social media platforms as spaces of rhetorical engagement with rules and affordances all their own. My goal is to bring these forms of writing into a more academic setting, synthesizing what we know about the process approach with what we know about multimodal writing to create a set of classroom activities that embrace the *kairotic* potential of technologically-mediated writing while still respecting the institutional responsibilities of First Year Writing. Students can create texts in the moment and use them to better understand broader concepts of writer that will then transfer to other rhetorical situations they will face.

Since Composition's turn toward cognitive studies and the accompanying rise of process pedagogy, classrooms activities moved farther and farther away from focusing on product creation in favor of evaluating the steps of text creation. As Composition historians have pointed out, process pedagogy has remained the primary mode of instruction since the 1970s, despite great changes in technology. Most recently, however, scholars have suggested a shift in the types of products teachers ask students to generate, leading to the creation of multimodal texts that convey messages in a variety of ways, and considerations of multiple literacies as scholars begin to understand the various ways in which we can read and write.

In the title of his essay "What Should College English Be? Networks and New Media," Jeff Rice firmly declares where he thinks our understanding of English Studies should go. Rice believes the literacy we should be teaching is the network, given the ubiquity of computers, and the ways in which we and our students are already connected to machines and connected to each other through machines. Rice argues against other Composition theorists, most notably David Bartholomae, who resist the moving of our field away from the page toward something different, toward somewhere else. For Rice, the somewhere else is the network, "where multiple writers engaging within multiple ideas in multiple

media at multiple moments function” (130). Furthermore, Rice states “In that process of making networks, writers, through their work, see themselves connected to information in ways *the space on the page* does not allow” (130). He goes on to explain the importance of connecting information across spaces so information might “socialize” (131). Through the network, information can be created and established in important ways. The point of interest for English studies would then be “how ideas fluctuate in specific types of spaces and contexts” (131).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of media networks, as unpacked by James J. Brown, Jr in his essay “Louis C. K.'s 'Weird Ethic': Kairos and Rhetoric in the Network,” is the exposure to vulnerability while responding to rhetorical situations in the moment. Brown's essay uncovers the performative nature of responding in the moment, and in explaining the (lack of) rehearsal practices for famed television comedian Jackie Gleason, concludes that responding effectively is dependent upon “an attunement to *kairos* rather than the memorization of a script” (4). This attunement comes as a result of making a full commitment to the context of the rhetorical situation, be it the commitment of Gleason or Louis C. K., as described in Brown's essay, or the commitment of our students who choose to work within the limitations we establish for them. These limitations force us—as writers or actors or whatever—to develop creative solutions to our rhetorical problems. The vulnerability and the fear of exposure to ridicule in the event of failure drives C.K. to create better comedy in the way we all have the capacity to do better when placed in high stakes situations.

Like Rice, Greg Ulmer also asks us to think of cyberspace foundationally as a space in which writing—especially invention—can occur. He argues that technologically-mediated writing has a set of rules specific to itself, and that these rules can be exploited and therefore taught in the service of argumentation. Ulmer stresses the sense of place a writer can experience when using new media technology to compose. Form is important to the act of invention, and shifting across forms when writing, especially with the assistance of technology, must change the way we approach the blank

screen / page. My project follows Ulmer's work in that I am asking students to work across multiple platforms and consider how those platforms allow for different kinds of writing.

Other theorists have conceived of technologically-mediated and new media writing in similar ways, perhaps starting with Bolter and Grusin. Their text makes use of the term I've used to describe our classroom activities—*immediacy*—in a way slightly different than my own, but their ideas nonetheless continue to color how I think about technologically-mediated writing. Technology serves as a window through which we are constantly being assaulted by the stuff of the world—images, sounds, the flickering lights of transmissions across wireless spaces—while simultaneously assaulting the windows in return. As their book explains, in their view, immediacy is the way media allows us experience a live event.

The theorists' ideas outlined above each approach new media in the classroom in slightly different ways, and I see my project as carving out the area between them. Bolter and Grusin's explanation of hypermedia, with windows layered upon windows, is present in my project during student presentations and the monitoring of Twitter feeds during writing. I want to make writing the live event, using technologically-mediated writing to both create and share that event. Through both actual work within and reflective work about social media technology, I believe my approach to immediate writing shares some theoretical framework with Ulmer. Operating in the context of immediate writing, we replicate that pressure that Brown describes in his essay. In class and through our use of social media as an extension of class we build the networks that Rice proclaims as important. I want to highlight, however, that for all the work my students will do in the spaces built from new media technology, we will stay tethered to our work on the page. It's possible to pay attention to the possibilities networked writing hold while not abandoning Composition's history or responsibility to the page.

Conclusion

My goal with the technologically-mediated assignments I introduced was to allow for students' immediate writing. At the same time, however, I was looking to be sensitive to new media scholars' calls for student work with technology to critique the technology itself (Wysocki; Sheridan). Coupled with a deliberate break from (at least some of) the trappings of process-oriented pedagogy, I wanted to show how students could learn FYW-type skills in a different context. I give the specifics of my assignments in Chapter Two, so here I'll just outline the general principles I hope the assignments address.

Most importantly, I want my students to adjust their writing to a changing rhetorical situation. I also want them to respond to the responses of an audience, much in the ways ancient rhetors adapted their speeches as they were given. I believe technology allows us to demonstrate, practice, and record this type of writing. I also believe students can complete this sort of work while at the same time considering technologically-mediated writing's strengths, weaknesses, rules, and capabilities. Students already often write in these spaces, but I believe they don't often consider the ramifications or the possibilities that accompany writing with technology. My assignments allow for that. Finally, I hope to show that the concept embedded within process-oriented pedagogy can be taught using immediate writing assignments, ensuring that students continue to receive the same skills instruction that FYW is responsible for teaching.

## **Chapter Four: Immediate Writing Using Technologically-Mediated Writing in a First Year Writing Classroom**

My classes began our experimental work the week of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Because of the student release forms required for IRB approval of the project, students knew we'd be making some changes to our "business as usual plans," and seemed genuinely excited to be a part of the study. My students and I had already developed a supportive relationship for the semester, and they enjoyed hearing that their teacher was also a student, doing homework, reading books he'd been "assigned," writing a research paper that was even longer than the papers required of them. Our students at Saginaw Valley State University are also used to their work being used outside of the classroom for programmatic review—students all sign statements allowing for the First Year Composition program to use student essays in norming workshops. I was happy to receive so many signed release forms.

All told, 46 students allowed me to use their work for my study out of the 65 total enrolled and regularly attending class that semester. Seven of my students that semester were high schoolers enrolled through the Great Lakes Bay Early College program, and though their work is not discussed in my study, they completed the same assignments as the participants. My students were spread across three sections of ENGL 111 that each met twice a week. The student demographics of two of the classes were fairly unremarkable and in keeping with expectations one might have for classes at SVSU (see Chapter Three for more information about SVSU's student demographics). My third class, however, was notably different. In a class of 23 students, five of them were from the Early College Program. Another five students were international students from Saudi Arabia, so nearly half of the students in that section were students who might in some capacity be considered "non-traditional." This led to repeated conversations about the differences between the experiences my students were having at our university, with three groups each having a different shared experience: the traditional

American college-aged students, the high school-aged students, and the Saudi students. It might be valuable someday to investigate further the potential connections international students have with Early College program students, since both groups of students can be seen as “non-traditional” in some ways.

What follows in this chapter is the anecdotal record of my experience of changing my curriculum to incorporate immediate writing through the use of the social media application Twitter. For each assignment I will discuss how the assignment was presented and make some observations about students’ general responses. Also included are samples of student work, shown here as they were submitted (including usage errors and the like). While I’ve included a range of student work drawn from all three of my ENGL 111 sections, I’ve also chosen to include all of the assignments submitted by one student, Brooke.

Brooke had spent a short time at Baker College before coming to SVSU. From all appearances she is a traditional, first year student, but with a little college experience under her belt and a well-defined dislike of annoying classroom grandstanders. (She had a playfully antagonistic in-class relationship with the class clown, who asked to be referred to in this study by the pseudonym M.C. McSkittles.) The title of the blog she wrote for class, *Hopeless Romantic*, reveals a bit of a softer side, though, and her posts there show her to be a sensitive young woman interested in real-world and fictional relationships. Her first post introduces her plans for her blog:

My name is Brooke, which is probably quite obvious at this point. When my teacher told me to make a blog, I was very concerned. Sure, I have a lot to say, but how much do I have to say about one topic? I thought about a lot of topics: Movies, Music, Books? But then I realized something, in all of the topics I was considering, there was a common theme in what I would talk about...Love. Love to me is the basis in life and for me, being a hopeless romantic, that’s what I would have talked about in all of those topics anyways. The romantics movies, the love songs, the romance novels. So, it just seemed



to make sense. When I say I am a hopeless romantic, I don't mean I sit around and wait for the "perfect" guy to come and sweep me off my feet and fly me up in a hot air balloon and propose by giving me the speech of a lifetime and a million dollar ring and we live happily ever after. Of course every girl has thought about that, but that's not what I mean. I simply mean that the mere thought of love intrigues me. I like the thought that with everything going on in the world with wars, random killings, hostage situations, and hate, you can still see love in the world if you let yourself. I know it's hard to believe, but it's true. Also, being a hopeless romantic means that I like to hear the music that is generated by it, and watch the movies and books inspired by it. Sure, a lot of people will find all this lame and cliché, but it's my blog so oh well.

Her other posts discuss relationships, loss, and the television shows *The Bachelor* and the newest incarnation of *Beauty and the Beast*. I chose her to include so heavily because I feel Brooke is a representative example of the sort of insight a student might have when given the opportunity to write and think in this new curriculum. Although her writing isn't always entirely successful, the cognitive work and reflective moves are obvious.

For the other examples of student work, I will discuss the students as I present their samples.

A note about Twitter: Twitter feeds present the newest tweets first, at the top of a list. Newer tweets are then added to the top, "pushing" older tweets to down. I've maintained Twitter's display convention here, which means newer tweets are printed at the top of students' Twitter feeds. A reader wishing to experience the tweets in the order they were posted should read each feed from the bottom up.

Student responses to the first assignment assignment—which asked them to consider Twitter's role in real-world events—largely reflected their lack of global awareness. The events described in the articles I assigned as reading were for the most part unknown to my students, and students especially

were surprised by Twitter's ability to help facilitate moves for social change. My students and I also all think of Twitter as a "new" social media application, but the site has been active for more than six years. Perhaps my students don't view newer image-based social media sites, like Instagram, Tumblr, and Vine, for example, in the same way they view a text-based application like Twitter.

The samples I show below are representative of many student responses that remarked upon the power of Twitter to convey information. Several students related the everyday nature of most of the communication that happens on Twitter, as well as the site's use by celebrities and other business interests as a marketing platform. To many of my students, Twitter's role in an "important" event came as a bit of a shock. Though no student discussed the technical reasons for Twitter's involvement in these movements even when faced with attempted government communication black-outs, most were impressed that a social media application they used themselves could be used for such a meaningful reason.

Presented first is Brooke's response to the assignment. Notably, Brooke gets Twitter's developmental history wrong. She does insightfully notice that Twitter has been overrun with young people, and that Twitter is a more open platform than social sites that require friend-type approval to see communication.

#### Hashtag Analysis Pre-Assignment

Brooke

Different social media sites have been popular for a while. First it was MySpace, and then came Facebook, and now onto Twitter. But Twitter seems to have a very wide range of people using it, it is not just teenagers talking about their lives anymore, it has become much more than that. Twitter also has many uses that typical social media sites are not good for or does not work with.

Twitter is a fairly new site created in 2006 and probably was geared more toward teens and

young adults, but what has come out of Twitter is anything but expected. Time.com refers to Twitter as the “medium of the movement,” and for good reason. During the events of Iran in 2009, Twitter was used for something much more global than what it had mainly been used for in the past. People were using Twitter to revolt. The world watched the feed and called it “The Twitter Revolution.” People were using Twitter for something bigger than themselves. They were using it to inform the world as best they could of what was going on there. This was not the last time people have used this up-and-coming social media site for such things. After the events in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya in 2011 people flocked to the site to update the world. Once again, Twitter proved itself to be a global revolution.

Apart from the more global issues, Twitter can also be used for many other things as well. Celebrities find it easier to communicate and be more personable with fans. Corporations use it to boost their products outside of the limits of television and radio. The reason this site is so explosive with not only the US resident, but the whole world, is that it is completely public. Unlike other social networking sites, as soon as you post to the site, the world may view what you have just said. The system is also very easy to use, mobile, fast, and hard for any central authority to control.

In conclusion, Twitter is not just for teens anymore. It can be used for much more global issues and is completely anonymous if you choose. Twitter is easy to use and is a way for people to speak their mind to the public and be able to be part of something. Twitter definitely is a global revolution.

Especially notable was Brooke’s critical reading of the *Time* piece. I appreciated that she connected with the label “medium of movement,” because that’s a very evocative line and highlights Twitter’s role in the actual social movements, as well as the kinetic nature of the communication taking place there. Though Brooke doesn’t connect that phrase with theoretical terms like “rhetorical velocity,” I see Brooke beginning to grapple with electronic communication’s abilities to move across platforms and purposes.

Emily spent some time at a college for creative arts, but came to SVSU for its cost-effectiveness. A visual artist, she sports multiple tattoos and black leather shoes with wicked-looking silver spikes. She recounted several times road trips she took to see rock bands play in small venues, and as we'll see in a later sample of hers, spent one class meeting preoccupied by the line-up announcement for the Lollapalooza music festival. She's a "nice girl in a tough girl package," and a very capable writer. In fact, she was impressive throughout the semester and needed very little intervention on my part.

This response delves into the technical aspects of Twitter more deeply as well as the political power it might have. Emily also critically considers the user's role in spreading messages, particularly messages that perhaps shouldn't be sent.

### Hashtag Analysis Pre-Assignment

Emily

One click of a hashtag at the end of a tweet pulls up information and opinions of billions of people all around the world. A tweet is sent through the social media website, Twitter, and is limited to only 140 characters or less. Hashtags are generally used at the end of the tweet and is included in the 140 character count. They are denoted with a pound symbol and words combined together with no spaces. For example, "this is my 140 character tweet #followedbyhashtag." Twitter is thought of as a harmless way of communication, but because of the incredibly fast way of spreading information globally, it has become so much bigger than that.

After reading the three articles, it seems like Twitter can potentially threaten countries who want certain information to be hush-hush. Especially in the past few years, leader of Iran and Egypt put a ban on Twitter and Facebook as a way of censorship. However, with citizens of these countries having a ban of these social media websites, new ways of expressing their opinions became available. For

instance, Speak2Tweet was created. Speak2Tweet is an international phone number used so that if you call it, you simply speak what you would tweet and it becomes translated and available on social media. Because of these social media websites like Twitter or Facebook, it is without question that information is being spread remarkably easy and quickly, whether senders of these tweets realize it or not. At that, I personally believe a person should read and reread before pressing that blue “tweet” button, because even though you can go back and remove tweets, someone could have read the tweet before you have the opportunity to delete it. Censorship of Twitter should unquestionably fall in your hands if not someone else’s.

Emily’s last line about “if not someone else’s” is a little off-putting, and I don’t think she is claiming to be in favor of government censorship here, though her writing is a little vague.

Samir is a Saudi Arabian student. A little older than most of my first-year students, Samir remained quiet throughout most of the semester. His spoken English is heavily accented, and probably accounts for his reluctance to interact verbally. His written English is easily understandable, however. Though it’s marked by some of the common errors ESL students tend to make, Samir’s writing contains some really interesting connections and observations. I really like the metaphor he uses below that likens Twitter to a restaurant where you “sit at the table hear a talk to you from all directions.

#### Hashtag Analysis Pre-Assignment

Samir

The word Twitter and one of the words distinctive that we hear a lot whenever escalated events somewhere in the world, was Twitter is the means by which penetrated blocking in Iran, Tunisia, Egypt and others to tell the world what is happening there away from the censored, and was Twitter is the way, which toured the world with lightning speed to tell what is happening in the disaster Hawaii and Chile, Seoul, Jeddah and other disasters the moment they occur, what is Twitter and what a story that

Sparrow that moved the world to become a symbol of freedom, and how it can benefit from it?

This is what we learning through this simplified the overall theme and away from technical jargon as much as possible.

What is Twitter, it can be likened Twitter great restaurant: enter the restaurant and sit at the table hear a talk to you from all directions. May seem at first glance just noise, but if you listen well will begin in Note deep dialogues, dialogues, important news, news not unfounded, useful information, personal thoughts, and more. As you hear the conversations of others can also talk you overhear others benefit which says whether a story or joke funny or just Personal Thoughts!

You may feel sometimes that you wasted your time in listening and may not benefit in some cases as much as waiting for, but you always come out of the restaurant near the events in your mind jokes, information, news expand your horizons and make you closer to this changing world.

This is Twitter: large courtyard electronic where millions gather to talk, he can count anyone within this courtyard to hear their voices and hear they voice.

Twitter is a free service allows you to send messages to your friends and followers whatever number once, and once you send the message appears to have an alert on mobile devices or on a computer, and in return if sent friends messages via Twitter will have remains up to date what they say and stay up to date including says. There are no restrictions on the number of relay or from your followers or the number of messages you send, but the only limitations is the number of characters that you type into a single message, which allows you to Twitter in each message to 140 characters only. You might think it a big disadvantage in Twitter but when interacting with him will discover that it is a great advantage, because they force the speaker to be is center, direct, and meaningful.

Samir is a little generous to Twitter here, I think, but his restaurant metaphor has its charm. Social media is like a crowded room, and reading posts is a lot like eavesdropping, though Samir over-

estimates the value that eavesdropping usually has. Also notably is his unpacking of the power of limited the message to 140 characters. As he writes, the character limit can “force the speaker to be is center, direct, and meaningful,” and that’s a canny observation about the rhetorical space of Twitter and its technological affordances.

Student responses to the Hashtag Analysis were really fun to read. There was a tremendous range in the hashtags they chose to investigate, from serious tags related to current events, to common tags used by many users to arrange their daily posts, to deliberately comedic hashtags. The list below contains many of the hashtags my students discussed in their writing:

#NFL  
#10thingsIgetalot  
#Turndownforwhat  
#Iknowimnottheonlyonewho  
#oomf  
#birthdaytweet  
#sarcastic  
#replacemovietitleswithpope  
#minecraft  
#yolo  
#sillycat  
#music  
#freedom  
#avpsy  
#android  
#twitter  
#firstworldproblems  
#pope  
#mlg  
#tbt  
#KONY2012  
#fatpeopleproblems  
#singlebecause  
#tabletopday  
#quoteyourmom  
#lollapalooza  
#sorrynotsorry  
#android  
#teamheat  
#wewerecooluntilyou  
#kidcudi

#healthcare  
#thestruggle  
#teamceltics  
#verve  
#ifwedated  
#guncontrol  
#whoops  
#erotica  
#whitepeopleactivities  
#justsaying

I was unfamiliar with most of the hashtags my students chose, so the class conversations we had were very illuminating. During our talks, my students and I decided that hashtags and the tweets they are attached to can be thought about as having what we called a “volume.” We liked how the term refers to a measure of amount, as well as a measure of sound intensity. Most hashtags have a consistent volume, unmarked by appreciable spikes in the occurrence of their use. Good examples of this type of hashtag are #ifwedated, #wewerecooluntilyou, and #whoops. Other hashtags have predictable fluctuations in volume. It isn’t surprising that #teamheat and #teamceltics were used more the nights the Heat and Celtics faced off in the NBA playoffs. A new Pope was elected during our analysis, and so #pope appeared in lists of trending hashtags. Table Top Day, an event organized by hobby and game stores to encourage playing board games, came and went as reflected by the hashtag’s volume.

We decided that hashtag volume is a potential way to gauge public interest in events and topics. The louder the tweets, the more intense the interest is. This has value for marketers, politicians, and the like, of course, in so far as the universe of Twitter-users might be an audience worth reaching and measuring. My students reminded us that, despite its popularity, Twitter is still representative of a limited slice of the population. Still, hashtag usage is an interesting way to assess rhetorical intensity. It’s valuable enough that current television shows—in particular shows targeted toward a teen audience—feature superimposed hashtags on the screen as pivotal plot points move through the storyline. In this way, viewers can increase the volume of tweets for a show and allow engaged viewers to respond.



And, of course, be measured and databased.

One of the challenges posed to my students for this assignment was tracking down the origins of hashtags. Through some searching, students thought they'd found the first instances of individuals' usage, though I remain unconvinced that Twitter's search feature is robust enough to be entirely inclusive and authoritative. Still, students were surprised to find the intersections of popular social use of hashtags and corporate or professional considerations. For example, #teamheat appears to have started among Miami Heat basketball fans, but that hashtag now is often used for official Heat communications. This just shows that messages and their users are often veiled by multiple layers of history and intent, a valuable lesson for my students to learn.

Brooke's analysis takes a look at the history and usage patterns of the hashtag #iKnowImNotTheOnlyOneWho. I am particularly taken with her critique of the relationship between the poster and his or her potential audience, where she writes "These kinds of tweets with this hashtag are mostly tweeted to entertain and amuse. Yet, sometimes all they want is a response to let them know that they are not alone in what they do." It seems to me that she's explained the crux of much of what happens on social media sites.

## Hashtag Analysis

Brooke

Twitter has been used for many things and is getting increasingly popular now with each tweet. Twitter has been "the next big thing" for a while now and it has been gaining more and more fans daily. One of the major factors that is setting Twitter apart from other social media sites is the "hashtag." Hashtags are categories that people attach to their post that can be virtually anything. These tags help people categorize the tweets, make it easier for the public to search and give the author some control on where it goes.

One of the hashtags that has been extremely popular lately is #iKnowImNotTheOnlyOneWho. This hashtag has been going on for months now but has been getting more popular each day. This hashtag has been used almost daily since early December of last year. The point of #iKnowImNotTheOnlyOneWho seems to be to put the hashtag and then say something that you think is a unique habit or feeling to themselves. It is pretty self-explanatory. This hashtag has been so popular because the people who usually make the statements, make them so that the post can relate to a lot of people.

The person who seems to have started this hashtag is @KingDri. He started this trend with the post “Yep it’s official #iKnowImNotTheOnlyOneWho who hates CourseCompass.com and Ulearn.com.” It caught on pretty rapidly after that. The people who post using this particular hashtag seem to be younger, in their teens or twenties. They also seem to be reminiscing in a way. A lot of the post will use the hashtag and then say something like “#iKnowImNotTheOnlyOneWho opens the fridge multiple times to check for food.” This post is something a lot of people relate to because a lot of people have that habit.

The people who post using this hashtag usually do not post back and forth to each other, but if they do, it would be to basically say if they agree or disagree with the original post. There are not many lengthy conversations going back and forth though. These kinds of tweets with this hashtag are mostly tweeted to entertain and amuse. Yet, sometimes all they want is a response to let them know that they are not alone in what they do.

Tweeting is different as a social media for many reasons. First, people can use Twitter for many reasons besides the basic social aspect. It can be used for religious views, political campaigning and to discover different world cultures. Twitter can also be used for schooling and education which is fairly new for social media sites. In addition, Twitter is different from other social media site because it allows it to be completely public yet anonymous if desired. Finally, Twitter seems easier to use and to

search because of the aspect of the use of hashtags. It makes the whole site more organized and easier to use.

In conclusion Twitter is a fairly new yet extremely popular social media cite. It uses a fairly new phenomenon called “hashtags” which allow the post to be organized and categorized accordingly. Twitter can be used for many things, it is for that reason that the site has become a worldwide trend in itself.

Brooke still over-emphasizes Twitter’s newness. Also of note is her developing understanding that social media sites can be used for more than just social interaction. That would be a common theme in most of the “small talk” sections in many students’ writing this semester. (“Small talk” is my label for the fluff that often appears in students’ introductions and conclusions.) While I’d probably account for such revelations as a helpful appeal to a teacher’s attempt to try something new and feel validated by it, it is nice to think that maybe I shifted some attitudes toward the use of different writing spaces.

Steven is a traditional first-year student. A stocky white male, he and I shared an interest in sports, sci-fi movies, and the occasional comic book. He found solid success in our class throughout the semester, writing well enough but never quite pushing as far as I thought he could. This cavalier approach to effort and success is reflected in his hashtag analysis, a piece in which he criticizes the guerilla marketing techniques of an energy drink.

#### Hashtag Analysis

Steven

Tweeting has become a stepping stone for online marketing, #Verve is a commonly used hashtag on twitter to promote an all natural energy drink by the name of Vemma. Thousands of twitter users around the world are tweeting #Verve, not because it’s fun or a cool thing that kids are talking

about, but these individuals are literally making money to tweet this product. Could you imagine that you could be getting paid to do a shout out for a product that millions could potentially see, and now a day's it's as simple as pulling your phone out during a car ride. Well I took a look into how these so called "employees" discussion and found some very interesting pieces of information out.

I decided to choose this hashtag because in my mind making hundreds of dollars to just sit on the couch, eat pizza and, watch sports all day sound like an application that soon I could see further investing some time into. Well I decided to see just exactly how much these individuals spend time wise to make some money, I tweeted in a sense of discourage towards this "business" to see what type of rise I could get out of people if any. I tweeted such as " #Verve tastes like shit", and specific tweets relating to how I believe that this opportunity is a scamby tweeting such as " Why is all the pictures of #Verve checks the same #Scam" but the only reaction that I could tell was from only 2 individuals believing on how much this fast cash is a fraud. The only thing I could think was how these "employees" ,sense at least twenty or thirty of them follow me, could not find the time to explain themselves or why any of the statements that I have tweeted were false. The only thing that one could believe after this was exactly my point in the tweets and find this opportunity as a scam.

I know that tweeting is not the best way to communicate between two people over such a detailed topic such as vemma, but I also know how talking to these people in a face to face encounter would still have a hard time to convince me that this is worth my time and money. I know from prior experience that this so called "Business opportunity" is much easier to understand from a drawn out graph while explaining, but there is too many holes in the system most do not have the answer for. I learned a lot over this so called experiment in the case of #Verve, and I'm glad I am leaving this behind knowing that there is not sufficient help in #Verve and that I will never waste money on such a scam.

There is real learning going on in this piece—life learning. This type of marketing is the new form of

Tupperware and Partylite direct marketing, though instead of (typically) women selling to each other, the sales staff members are plugged-in young people. While there is a product being sold, in this case an energy drink, what is really for sale is the social cache of hashtag volume. Steven is pretty suspicious of this. I don't know if he'd been approached for this "business opportunity," or if he'd just seen it scroll across his Twitter feed. His passionate writing on the subject suggests the latter, so perhaps he was contacted to enter the so-called multi-level marketing program.

What's clear is that he's correctly identified some of our discussion concepts at play in the real world. We hadn't talked about how the motivation toward profit can influence social media interaction, so I was impressed that he'd so accurately recognized the Verve business plan. Though Steven's own motives in his investigation were far from pure, as he notes:

I decided to choose this hashtag because in my mind making hundreds of dollars to just sit on the couch, eat pizza and, watch sports all day sound like an application that soon I could see further investing some time into.

Emily's analysis was inspired by her love of music, and in particular the long-running music festival Lollapalooza. In addition to writing about the reasons behind the tweets themselves, Haley spends part of her analysis comparing the various social media platforms. She is wary of the elements of Twitter that focus on user opinions instead of facts or explanation. My explanation for this trepidation is that, at this point of the year, Haley was relying upon social media platforms for legitimate information about the festival: band line-ups and order, ticket information, lodging specials, etc. This type of information is vulnerable to opinion and flat-out wrong "facts," a situation that must be very frustrating when social media reportage is the most obvious avenue of information.

Emily

What importance can a pound symbol followed by a word have on a social media site? The pound symbol with a word attached, such as #lollapalooza,” is known as a hashtag. Hashtags are used on Twitter in order to categorize tweets in subjects so that tweeters can read more or find updated information on that certain subject. For my analysis specifically, I choose to look at Lollapalooza (#lollapalooza) or lolla (#lolla) for short. Lollapalooza is a three day concert festival located in Grant Park in Chicago, Illinois. It is typically the first weekend in August, Friday through Sunday, and the festival lineup is released in April. On twitter, the excitement for Lollapalooza is beginning to come to a boil, and many people are starting to question the lineup. In addition, the early bird tickets go on sale at an unannounced time and they are extremely limited, and many tweets are being sent rumoring the date of their sale. Lollapalooza hashtags can be useful to many people on Twitter to find extremely new and exciting information.

While the Lollapalooza hashtag was more than likely established in the same year as Twitter, being that Lollapalooza became an event in 1991, the hashtag is used by people with Twitter accounts just about every day. It doesn't appear that people who use the Lollapalooza hashtag don't seem to be tweeting back and forth to one another, but some news has been retweeted between people who are looking for more developing information regarding the festival. The users that post using the Lollapalooza hashtag seem to have in common that they all share excitement for the festival and that they are looking forward to attending it. Hashtags founds by searching Lollapalooza or lolla are intended to educate, amuse, and possibly provoke conversation for other Twitter users. For example, some Twitter users mention their guesses for who may be performing at Lollapalooza or when the early bird tickets will appear on sale on their website. These tweets may provoke other people to tweet their opinions on who they believe will be performing. The Lollapalooza hashtag is one that I find myself

frequently searching and hoping new information is available.

Tweeting is differing from other forms of communication in that you can only type 140 characters in a tweet including spaces. While texting can be similar to a tweet, a text is only sent to a specific person or group of people and is not posted on the internet. Social media sites such as Facebook differ from Twitter in that Facebook doesn't limit the characters used. Other social media sites, like having a blog on Wordpress or Tumblr for example, are also different from Twitter because it is mainly a short opinion expressed in writing rather than a long detailed explanation. While all forms of social media can be helpful to find information quickly, keep in mind that many are biased because a person wants to specifically share his or her opinion exclusively.

Emily highlights the strength and the weakness of relying on social media for news and information. With so many voices working at once, information can often be disseminated much quicker than it can be when using traditional media outlets. But because there is very little vetting outside of users responding to each other, the accuracy of these reports is often in question. The #lollapalooza is also a powerful example of social media volume as the ebbs and flows of social media posts reflect the approach and consumption of the event and information regarding the event.

In fact, in class we witnessed the amplification of hashtag volume first hand as the official band line-up for the festival was announced during our class. We were completing our Write Now! activity detailed later, and Haley was clearly distracted. Our solution was this: I set my teacher computer to display through the class LCD projector, and the browser was set to automatically refresh every few seconds. When the band line-up was made official and posted, our class was among the first to know. In between paragraph writing, Emily tweeted her excitement using her cell phone, adding her own voice to the social media volume.

Ava is a mixed-race young lady with a wild head of hair and a penchant for rolling her eyes at

teachers who remind her of her student responsibilities. The blog she wrote for class focused on Youtube videos of techno music and featured as a background a repeated, flashing, rotating heart embossed with Asian script that looked like an animation taken straight from a Geocities webpage in 1997. Truth be told, I never felt like I connected with Lita in the way I connected with other students. She was bright but aloof, and though her work was more than satisfactory, I always thought there was a potential for much more. She also tended to ignore small elements of classroom activities, including skipping a scheduled conference.

Her piece here shows sophisticated analysis of the hashtag #SingleBecause, a commonly referenced hashtag users post along with jokes or relationship insights. Ava never explains her interest in this particular hashtag, though I imagine the cynical voice users of the hashtag often taken on would have been appealing. Still, Ava claims the critical ground in regards to the posts' contents. She writes, "The hashtag's purpose appears to be solely for amusement because they seem to provoke no kind of educational or inspirational value whatsoever." It's interesting that Ava sees the lack of useful or interesting content to be a negative aspect of the posts connected to #SingleBecause, and perhaps is evidence of Ava's own attitudes toward relationships. In effect, her analysis is her own #SingleBecause post.

#SingleBecause

Ava

One of the current trending hashtags (a tag that allows others to quickly find posts surrounding a specific topic) featured on hit social networking site "Twitter" is #singlebecause. Using this hashtag, fellow tweeters express their reasons and opinions on why they are without a significant other. The hashtag's purpose appears to be solely for amusement because they seem to provoke no kind of educational or inspirational value whatsoever.

Ranging all the way from being in the friend zone to celebrities not knowing they exist, most of



the tweeters using the #singlebecause hashtag have similar reasons as to why they think they are still single. While some of them approach the tag in a more serious light such as @ShannonLynnW who claims she is single because she holds herself to higher standards or @HadexoxVemedy who “can’t stand getting played or lied to again”, other tweeters aimed for a more comical tweet like “I’m too bootylicious for ya baby” from @Sade\_HaslamXO or “my hand hasn’t fell off yet” tweeted by @Joshcraighobbs. Some tweeters even offered completely bizarre responses such as @Makeitshine01’s tweet in which she claims to be “waiting for a fictional character” or @PEENIEWALLIEEE’s “I threaten to stab people in the neck with my scissors who get up in ma grill & no one wants an abusive relationship.

Judging from the various tweets that I have observed under hashtag #singlebecause, I have summed up that the twitter users using this particular tag are either sick of getting their hearts broken, waiting for the right person to come along, single by choice, or so bored that they are seeking attention and acceptance through simply posting absurdly ridiculous tweets in their spare time. It is difficult to pinpoint where the trend actually started, since #singlebecause dates back several days, but judging from the incredibly long and still increasing list of #singlebecause tweets, the hashtag seems to be put to use very frequently by twitter users.

Ava’s conclusions about the Twitter users who make use of #SingleBecause are scathing, and the strength of the opinion with which she writes is one of the reasons I’ve chosen to highlight her piece here. Though her analysis lacks some of the detective work the assignment required, Ava deeply considers the motivations behind the users and their tweets in a powerful way. She echoes a lot of the criticism that public voices raise towards social media, but Ava supports her ideas with well-chosen examples.

I had high hopes for the third assignment, “Enter a Conversation.” Since conversations, digital

or otherwise, behave almost like living organisms, I assumed students would need to move and adapt as the conversations shifted. This, I thought, was the foundation of immediate writing and an interesting strategy for rhetorical practice. What I learned, though, is that Twitter conversations don't work as cleanly as I'd hoped, and in fact, Twitter conversations rely upon social cache in an interesting way. I had used a particular metaphor to describe the assignment to my students: Imagine being at a party, and after listening to a group's conversation for a while, step in and join them in the discussion. While social mores in that particular context almost require that strangers give you some attention as you enter the conversation, digital conversationalists on Twitter feel no such pressure to be polite. By and large students reported being unable to provoke the back and forth dialogue I was hoping they'd create. That's not an indictment of their efforts, but the realities of Twitter as a writing space.

Dimitri, despite what his self-selected pseudonym implies, is a traditional first year student of Hispanic decent. He liked writing about movies and routinely produced quality work in class, despite being pretty quiet. His response to the assignment highlights the challenges the students faced in actually provoking a response from fellow Twitter users. Included below are the written piece he submitted, the tweets he posted, and the brief exchange he was able to generate with another user.

Enter a Conversation

Dimitri

The conversation I entered was about an event that happened in the SyFy series *Lost Girl*. It was discussing the killing off of one of the main characters of the whole series, Dyson. As for the hashtag being used, it was simply #lostgirl. I chose this conversation by looking under the hashtag *lost girl* and finding a tweet about the latest episode, at the time I was watching the episode so I decided to check out the tweets under it. In correspondence to looking up tweets I posted on my own, focusing on the episode, cast, and story line of "*Lost Girl: The Dawning*". One of the tweets I posted was "im kinda lost in the new *lost girl* episode 3lostgirl" since the story line and events were all over the place. Even

though I posted during the live broadcasting, I did not receive a single response to my post. I decided that I would post tweets that would be discussion inviting such as about the relationship between Bo, Dyson, and Lauren. As for Twitter itself and its conversation, Twitter allows for conversation to be organized and be spread worldwide and viewed by numerous people at once. They also are written different and are more informal but can be both. As for its similarity to a real conversation, the conversations on Twitter can be one on one, about a specific topic, and be amongst people.

#### Tweets

@Dimitri: im kinda lost in the new lost girl episode #lostgirl

@Dimitri: So who will Bo choose Dyson or Lauren? #lostgirl

@Dimitri: who agrees that lost girl is one of SyFy's best series? #lostgirl #SyFy

@Dimitri: @K\_IsTheWolf @KrisHolden\_Ried Dyson is a beast. one of my favorite characters #lostgirl

@Dimitri: At least Dyson told Bo how he felt, took long enough. They were great together #lostgirl

@Dimitri: rewatching tonights lost girl, was confused on most of it. #lostgirl

@Dimitri: Kenzi, Dyson and Bo are the best people from the Lost Girl cast. #lostgirl

@Dimitri: #lostgirl "im just a werewolf asking a succbus..."-Dyson epic quote

@Dimitri: #lostgirl why are there so many different fae? TOO MANY

@Dimitri: Was it a role reversal or an alternative universe? #lostgirl

#### Conversation Tweets

@Dimitri: @RoxieKat : If you're gonna kill Dyson off then let's just kill everyone off!!!!!! \*\*throws hands up\*\* #LOSTGIRL

@Dimitri: @RoxieKat Preach! Dyson is awesome, killing him would ruin the series #lostgirl

I am not overly familiar with the show *Lost Girl*, other than knowing it from a few promotional

advertisements on its network. A genre show like *Lost Girl* usually has a small but devoted fan base active online and in social media, so I was a little surprised Dimitri wasn't able to successfully generate responses to his posts. That supports my conclusion, and the feelings of many of my students, that on Twitter a user's social cache or reputation (generated largely through his or her number of followers) is vitally important for getting the attention of fellow users.

Brooke's response is less critical of the assignment, and it's true that she had more success in provoking other users to respond. She also entered a conversation about a genre television show, *Beauty and the Beast*, the show I earlier noted she discussed on her blog. The conversation's hashtag refers to hoping the show will be picked-up by the network for another season (it was). Perhaps there's an innate passion in the fan base that adds to the volume of the posts that accounts for the better response Brooke received. Also, Brooke deliberately chose to attempt her assignment while the show was airing, which no doubt also plays into her success.

#### Enter a Conversation

Brooke

Twitter has many uses, but for this assignment, I chose to enter a conversation with the hashtag #GiveBATBSecondSeason. This hashtag means "Give Beauty and the Beast a Second Season." I chose to enter this conversation because I like the show and I do want it to have a second season. I entered this conversation because I thought it would be more convenient to do this assignment when the show was on and when most people are talking about it.

My tweets varied tremendously. I responded to a few people and started my own tweets as well. When I was writing the post, I was basically just looking to find something that people could relate to and respond to without there being a fight. I got a few responses back, especially from @Cathy\_Chandler, which is a character from the show. I do not know if it is the actress behind it or a fan, but either way, it was entertaining to watch her and the other characters from the show interact

with each other. Overall, I got a few responds and they were all very positive because they could relate to what I was saying. Their responses didn't really change my own post ideas because there were no genuine conversations going on, just little responses saying "I agree" or "You're right." Not really any back and forth chatter though.

That is what is great about Twitter, you can start a trend with people who are into the same things as you with just a simple hashtag. It was kind of amazing to see how many people, at the end, came into the conversation. It is definitely different from "real" conversation in the fact that people tend to be a little more casual. People can also join conversations they might not in real life because the essentially don't really know anyone. Twitter does have similarities with a "real" conversation. There is still the same back and forth, there is still people that will say too much of what they feel, and there are still people who talk too much. You can still get a sense of the person's personality by what they are saying and that is pretty neat.

Tweets

@Brooke: @iLeenaC Right, I just want it to come out...like now.

@Brooke : @sonyalic You are definitely not the only one... Lol

[@Brooke](#) : @Shirley\_1006 You could not be any more correct. They make it look like "true love" lol

[@Brooke](#) : @LucreRank You could not be more correct. :)

@Brooke :@Cathy\_Chandler Beastie and proud! :)

@Brooke Is it just me, or is @Cathy\_Chandler the coolest female role on television right now!

#GiveBATBSecondSeason

@Brooke : @Beauty\_BeastCW Must have that face mask! #GiveBATBSecondSeason

@Brooke : Is there anyone who is against the #GiveBATBSecondSeason movement? Because that would be lame.

@Brooke : @BATBphilippines Agree completely!

@BATBphilippines : #GiveBATBSecondSeason because it's everything I wanted it to be. VinCat all the way!! :) Retweeted by Haley G

@Brooke: @Beauty\_BeastCW I hope you #GiveBATBSecondSeason!

Another factor that perhaps contributed to Brooke's success was her more determined use of other user's names, called a "mention" in Twitter parlance. This would have gotten her posts more attention than just merely using the hashtag, and allowed her to more effectively mimic an actual conversation. She also retweeted other users' posts, an action that would have also gained her notice and added to her credibility as a user worthy of letting into the discussion.

For the Mini-Argument assignment, I attempted to connect what my classes had discussed regarding sound reasoning and argumentation with our new focus on social media. Though the assignment guidelines explicitly asked for students to make moves toward using pathos, ethos, and logos in their short arguments, I think students mainly focused on the interactivity of social media for good and for ill. Looking through their work, it seems they were not equipped with the information they needed to properly address a full argument about social media in this context, and I was expected too much from their pieces given the time and length I allotted them. Still, there is value here as they consider technology that has increasingly played an important role in their lives and place their thoughts about it into an academic setting.

Emily's response to the assignment highlights the power of personal connections that can be forged or renewed through social media. It's a well-written piece, complete with appropriate direct quotations of her recent tweets. I present her essay here as written, with her Twitter citations changed to protect her identity. Though her paragraph organization is a little rough, her piece is emotionally powerful.

Mini Argument

Emily

Social media including Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Wordpress, MySpace, and many others are used every day by a variety of people. However, for most everyone, I personally believe that all forms of social media should be praised for having the ability to link everyone's posts of what they believe is acceptable to share online. The most popular forms of social media right now are Facebook and Twitter, Facebook posts on a timeline and the people you add are known as your "friends." On Twitter, a user posts short 140 character tweets, including spaces, and you have the ability to link tweets through hashtags or not. The people that would most likely read your tweets are known as your followers. With social media, users should be cautious of things they post because more recently employers are beginning to look at Facebook and Twitter, but all in all social media is good to use.

Focusing on Twitter specifically, it can benefit a user in many different ways. For example, I know Twitter personally helps me when I need to know a piece of information fast. For instance, when I sign in to Twitter and I perhaps was unsure of what the reviews were for a new movie out. I could search the movie title and see by other's tweets and opinions if it would be something I would enjoy seeing. Additionally, Twitter gains insight into people's day to day opinions on obstacles they run in to. I recently tweeted, "I can't stand body mod hate" (@Emily), meaning that I dislike that other people don't accept people the way they are, piercings or tattoos included. Looking back on other recent tweets I've found a link to an Instagram photo with the tweet attached "One of those days where you look at a photo and instantly start bawling, trying to think how different life would be if you were still here" (@Emily). The linked picture was a photo of my father and I, who passed when I was only four. That tweet was favorite by my best friend who then texted me, asking if I was okay. Tweets can give information, make users feel a certain way, and portray a user's side to an opinion. For example, I tweeted last week, "Can't wait to go home and cry to Afraid of Heights in anticipation for @wavves"

(@Emily). Afraid of Heights is a new and great album by Wavves and I showed my opinion by tweeting. All in all, social media is good for all users as long as everyone thinks before they post. Tweeting can be very beneficial for some users to gain information or feedback in nearly an instant.

Remarkably, Emily's mini-argument spans across the relatively mundane, to the culturally relevant, to the personally impactful. She also shows a deep understanding of the elements of social media. Though not all of my students were so well-versed in the technology and the options available with social media, all of them had opinions regarding it. The majority of students viewed social media as relatively harmless, but cautioned against its overuse. A few saw social media as a waste of time. Haley G's response, shown below, defends social media from its detractors.

#### Mini-Argument

Brooke

What do you think of when you hear the term "social media sites?" Do you think of teenage bullying, popups, or maybe scammers? It seems like a lot of people feel that way. They feel as if the only thing social media sites are good for are fights and teenage or celebrity drama. I am not one of those people, not at all. Sure all of this happens on social media sites, but one site that tends to steer people away from this line of thinking is Twitter. Twitter is like other social media sites in the fact that there are still followers, still friendships, and still some of the nonsense described earlier. There are also a lot of differences between other social media sites as well, such as worldwide topics, it is easier to be grouped with people with similar feelings or thoughts, and there seems to be less fighting between teenagers.

Twitter is good for users, especially users who are going to use social media sites regardless. Twitter does have other uses than what people typically think of. For one, it brings people together, not only people from the states, but people from all over the world. People from Egypt can join a post



with people from Australia about a topic that started in Japan. People can also choose which hashtags, or topics, they want to join and make popular or trending. The hashtag #MentionSomebodyYouWantToMeet is popular right now and it is a way for people to share who they would like to meet and for people to respond such as “#ToMyFutureKids I don’t care if you’re gay, lesbian, or bisexual. I will ALWAYS love you, with every part of my soul” posted by @LifelessSammy.

Twitter is also a great way for celebrities to connect with their fans. Miranda Lambert posted “Just rolled through my hometown at 70 miles an hour... 13 more hours to go. Lindale your still beautiful. Wish I could slow this bus down” to let her fans know where she was and that she was thinking of them. Her fans can respond to her as well and respond with each other such as Crysta Lee who responded with “@mirandalambert there’s no place like home! #lindale.”

Overall, Twitter is great for keeping up with friends or even making new ones. People can communicate with each other so easily now, yet Twitter seems to have less fighting between teenagers. Twitter can be used for so many other aspects than just a social media site. It can be used for school, communication, worldwide affairs, and many others. I understand many people may think Twitter only causes problems, but I believe if they could be shown the useful parts, their minds would change. Twitter is different from other social media sites and therefore it is very much more useful than destructive.

#### Works Cited

- LifelessSammy. (2013 March 25). #ToMyFutureKids I don’t care if you’re gay, lesbian, or bisexual. I will ALWAYS love you, with every part of my soul. Retrieved from <http://twitter.com/LifelessSammy>.
- MirandaLambert. (2013 March 13). Just rolled through my hometown at 70 miles an hour... 13 more hours to go. Lindale your still beautiful. Wish I could slow this bus down. Retrieved from <http://twitter.com/MirandaLambert>.

Crysta Lee. (2013 March 13). @mirandalambert there's no place like home! #lindale. Retrieved from [http://twitter.com/Crysta\\_Lee](http://twitter.com/Crysta_Lee)

The two samples I've included share the same sense of world-spanning opportunities the writers see as possible with social media applications. Also, as with many of the student submissions that see social media as primarily a positive part of our lives, both samples stress the importance of real interaction. Students who viewed social media as negative tended to see social media as a space for bragging or fighting—negative rhetorical interactions. The positive views often took these negative aspects of social media into account but overwhelmingly saw that the positive potential outweighed any possible negative uses of the technology.

Our fifth assignment generated some impassioned responses. The pressure of tweeting and following tweets while writing a timed, polished piece generated some excited energy along with more than one tweet poking fun at my supposed love for torturing my students. Below is the Twitter feed from my second class to complete the activity. It is presented in the bottom-up fashion I described earlier in this chapter. This class's experience with the activity was fairly typical of the three classes that completed Write Now! last semester. Looking through the feed, you can see how some students struggled with the pressure of the expectations. These struggles manifested in the feed as cries for help ("I think I am the only one confused writing this paper"), and as carefully-worded barbs ("I feel like an employee in the 'Kahler sweatshop of literature,' he's working my fingers to the bone with this paper!"). In the case of the former, I physically checked on the student. She was unable to finish the assignment in the class time allotted, and was given more time to complete it. After the Twitter feed below, I present the completed essay she submitted the following day.

The feed itself shows students announcing topics, asking questions, making fun of me, and generally working through the challenge of the assignment. Also displayed is a tweet from someone

not in my class, but one of my students' followers who entered into the conversation himself. This interaction shows a potential drawback of using Twitter as a platform for this kind of educational experience: Twitter is not a closed space, and anyone can wander in, perhaps causing havoc or mischief. That was not the case here, but it was a possibility I hadn't fully considered. The feed also shows one of my students apologizing to his followers for the "noise" of the #writingnow tweets he was required to post for class. He was concerned such posts would cost him followers.

Students were given the full class time of 80 minutes to complete their work, and during that time I displayed the Twitter feed for the hashtag #writingnow at the front of the room. I attempted to stay just an observer, but as you'll see in the feed, I stepped in a few times with some responses. This is a practice I maintained across all three classes that completed this activity, electing to make most of my interventions verbally instead of virtually.

#### Write Now! Twitter Feed

[@Alicia](#)

I rushed the last 15mins of my [#writingnow](#) paper [#uhOh](#)

[@Jonathon](#)

Done! [#writingnow](#)

[@Genoveva](#)

I am definitely failing this paper [#writingnow](#) [#struggling](#)

[@Genoveva](#)

I hate this [#writingnow](#)

[@Brian](#)

I am the definition of done. [#writingnow](#)

[@Genoveva](#)

I think I am the only one confused writing this paper [#writingnow](#)

[@MatthewRichardson](#)

Done and Done [#writingnow](#)

[@JamesBlanton](#)

Almost done with this paper! [#writingnow](#)

@Dana  
pew done with [#writingnow](#)

@Paul  
[@Dana](#) your irritating lol, focus on [#writingnow](#) before you get beat up later

@FriendlyGhost  
And I am done. I think this makes the 3rd time I've wrote about social media in this class.  
[#writingnow](#)

@Paul  
[@Jason\\_Kahler](#) Fasho. "Fasho" [Fuh-show] noun:to confirm, or agree. I had to help you understand the slang, lol [#hahaKahlerisold](#) [#writingnow](#)

@Emily  
[#writingnow](#) 652 words on new "sacrilege" video. done. now go watch it.

@Genoveva What is a source? [#writingnow](#) [#foolin](#)

@Garvin  
Does this have to be two pages? [#WritingNow](#)

@AnotherEmily  
Just finished my paper about the new twitter policy [#writingnow](#)

@TalentTae  
he has a twitter? [#writingnow](#)

@Dana  
[@Paul](#) duhhhhhhhhh [#writingnow](#)

@TalentTae  
Can we get a water break.. [#WritingNow](#)

[Jason@Jason\\_Kahler](#)  
[@Paul](#) Yes. Yes it does. [#writingnow](#)

@PoohBear  
[#writingnow](#) hard to find sources but i got oneeee doeee

@Genoveva  
Will a paragraph do? [#writingnow](#)

@Paul  
[#writingnow](#) this has to be done by the end of class?

@Paul

I feel like an employee in the "Kahler sweatshop of literature," he's working my fingers to the bone with this paper! [#writingnow](#)

@TalentTae

i cant tweet and type,,,,this shit hard [#writingnow](#)

@Winter

Half an hour to finish this paper. [#writingnow](#)

@TalentTae

sorry kahler im [#writingnow](#)

@Mario

A half hour remaining and I'm done..... Just have to do my cited page. [#writingnow](#)

@Genoveva

Freaking out I don't think I am going to finish this paper [#writingnow](#)

@Dana

typing away. gay is okay! [#writingnow](#)

@TalentTae

i cant tweet and type,,,,this shit hard [#writingnow](#)

@Louis

Remembering to tweet while writing only induces writers block. [#writingnow](#)

@Paul

Just finished my first sentence. [#writingnow](#) [#Awesome](#)

@Paul

Just finished my first sentence. [#writingnow](#) [#Awesome](#)

@TalentTae

who is this haley girl,,is she in our class? [#writingnow](#)

@Alicia

Page 2 of my paper [#writingnow](#) [#ohYeah](#)

@Paul

Just finished my first sentence. [#writingnow](#) [#Awesome](#)

@Louis

Remembering to tweet while writing only induces writers block. [#writingnow](#)

@FriendlyGhost

[#writingnow](#) Love how twitter decided not to send my last tweet. Yay Twitter! rough draft looking good.

@PoohBear

sorry guys going to be using [#writingnow](#) atm and [#comppaper](#) for english class. it's annoying i know but it's my grade so no effs given :p

@Emily

Sacrilege is the violation or injurious treatment of a sacred object or person- very well done yyy [#writingnow](#)

@AnotherEmily

Even though the new twitter policy is bad, many are OVERREACTING [#writingnow](#)

@Paul

Just finished my first sentence. [#writingnow](#) [#Awesome](#)

@PoohBear

sorry guys going to be using [#writingnow](#) atm and [#comppaper](#) for english class. it's annoying i know but it's my grade so no effs given :p

@PoorBear

[#writingnow](#) we live in a country where we can be who we want to be

@Winter

I am half way done with my essay. [#writingnow](#)

@Dana

onto page two [#writingnow](#)

@Alicia

I'm really getting into this essay I'm [#writingnow](#) It's easier than I thought.

@Emily

"The level of plotting and characterization is deeply impressive for a four-minute music video" [#stereogum](#) [#writingnow](#)

@JaneDoe

I AM STRAIGHT! but trying to argue that being gay is okay for others is really hard to talk about. [#writingnow](#)

@AnotherEmily

Currently writing about [#WeWantOLDTwitterBACK](#) [#writingnow](#)

@AnotherEmily

Many people need to interact with their followers [#WeWantOLDTwitterBACK](#) [#writingnow](#)

@AnotherEmily

the twitter policy needs to go back to the way it was [#WeWantOLDTwitterBACK](#) [#writingnow](#)

@Emily

[#writingnow](#) i like writing about stuff i'm interested in, makes it go a lot faster, 1 page down!

@Paul

I keep getting lost in my timeline but im back [#writingnow](#)

@Mario

I just went on a HUGE rant on my paper.... I feel like I just let out a lot of stress. [#writingnow](#)  
[#feelingbetter](#)

@TalentTae

im [#writingnow](#) about a TV show ,,dont take my idea!!!

@PoohBear

[#writingnow](#) respect each other and mind your own business

@Mario

Typing about religion is always and easy way to keep an argument going. [#writingnow](#)

@Dana

[#Twittermademerealize](#) that it's okay to have strangers as followers [#networking](#) [#writingnow](#)

@JaneDoe

Writing a paper about Gay Rights... [#writingnow](#)

@PoohBear

[#writingnow](#) always struggling with writing a strong intro.

@JamesWhitman

People sure do have a lot of strong opinions but I dont see a whole lot of facts. [#writingnow](#)

@Emily

"The video stars British model/philanthropist Lily Cole kissing a whole host of men (and a woman)"  
[#pitchfork](#) [#writingnow](#)

@Paul

I thought doing work on twitter would be cool but I was wrong...very wrong [#writingnow](#)

@Paul

sitting here confused looking at my paper while everyone is [#WritingNow](#)" You know Kahler has no mercy lol better start

@PoohBear

[#writingnow](#) about respecting each others view points for english class.

@Paul

I thought doing work on twitter would be cool but I was wrong...very wrong [#writingnow](#)

@FriendlyGhost

I feel bad about bashing twitter while tweeting. [#writingnow](#)

@Winter

Writing about [#TwitterMadeMeRealize](#) for my [#writingnow](#)

@Paul

“@ChrisWebby: with all that said, i canceled my subscription to XXL and you should too”  
[#writingnow](#) yes, the cover was TRASH

[Allen the LIONHEART@MrAM1026](#) :

Whoever said twitter wasn't educational?! Lol RT [@\\_Alicia](#): [#TwitterMadeMeRealize](#) is my topic for today [#writingnow](#)

@TalentTae

im about to be [#writingnow](#) about [#thegame](#)

@Paul

“@Alicia: I picked a topic now I'm super confused on what to do [#writingnow](#) smh” sucks to be you

@Dana

writing about the human rights campaign [#writingnow](#)

@Alicia

I picked a topic now I'm super confused on what to do [#writingnow](#) smh

@Louis

Can't find anything worth writing about on twitter trends. [#writingnow](#)

@Genoveva

sitting here confused looking at my paper while everyone is [#WritingNow](#)

@Alicia

[#TwitterMadeMeRealize](#) is my topic for today [#writingnow](#)

@Emily

[#writingnow](#) thankful for the new yyy video out, that should be pretty controversial to write about

@Paul

sitting here confused looking at my paper while everyone is [#WritingNow](#)

@TalentTae



finna start [#writingnow](#) - \_\_\_\_\_ -

@Paul

Writing about the XXL freshman cover, [#writingnow](#)

@JamesWhitman

Writing about the defense of marriage act in class. Should be interesting. [#writingnow](#)

@FriendlyGhost

[#writingnow](#) Found a twitter post on how pointless twitter and facebook is. Luck gods are with me today.

Write Now!

Genoveva

After spending a month writing papers about Twitter, and actually being required to post tweets in order to pass my English class, I have realized many things. [#TwitterMadeMeRealize](#) I have been wasting my time tweeting while I could have been doing something more productive with my life. I have spent many nights of my life just tweeting unnecessary things, when I could have been doing my homework. [#TwitterMadeMeRealize](#) I should not have an account, because it just serves as a distraction to me as well as for many other people. I have lost track of the many nights I have had to stay up all night doing homework, because I wasted my afternoon reading twitter drama tweets.

Twitter also made me realize I am not the only one wasting my time tweeting instead of doing something productive. Searching the web I came across users who faced the same problem, “but the big problem was that I was paying attention to Twitter too often when there was something much higher I should have been paying attention too—especially work that needed to get done” (Karp). It was a relief to read that someone else felt the same way for Twitter as I was feeling. I continued doing more research on how Twitter was a waste of time, and I came across a famous person who agreed with me. The manager of the Manchester United soccer team agrees that Twitter is a waste of time, and many other things could be done instead of going on Twitter. He says, “There are a million things you can do with your life other than that” (Ferguson). Twitter is clearly a controversial problem worldwide.

More people should begin looking into the idea of deleting and avoiding these social media sites. That is why I have decided to delete my account, and begin spending my day on things more productive and beneficial than Twitter.

#### Works Cited

Karp, Scott. "Why I Stopped Using Twitter." *Publishing 2.0*. Publishing 2.0. 11 Dec. 2007. Web. 27 Mar.

2013.

Telegraph staff and agencies. "Twitter is a 'waste of time,' says Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson." *Telegraph*. The Telegraph. 20 May 2011. Web. 27 Mar. 2013.

Genoveva's piece is simple and powerful, and I assume born from her frustration with the assignment. It's not the best example of writing she completed during the semester, but considering she was nearly in tears during the class, it's not bad work. I was torn on the matter of when she'd be allowed to complete the piece. The goal of immediate writing is to drive students to work within a timeframe that exerts pressure on them. By allowing her extra time, it's true that I abandoned the principles of immediate writing. Going forward, a strict time limit is something I will need to consider using for similar class activities. In this case, I decided it would be better for my student to complete the assignment than to take the zero.

Brooke's essay is far more-developed, and she completed it in the given time. I've included it here, along with the four tweets she posted during her time writing the essay.

#### Write Now! Tweets

Brooke

#writingnow this is getting good

#writingnow This is a lot harder then I thought it would be.  
#writingnow UGH this paper. No no no no no.  
#writingnow a paper about #DOMA, a topic that is close to my heart.

### Write Now!

It is no secret that there is a big dispute going on in the US today. For years there have been arguments between relatives, coworkers, friends, and just about everyone about the Defense of Marriage Act. Almost everyone has seems to have their own opinion. The Defense of Marriage act is “the 1996 law that forbids federal recognition of same-sex marriage” (Stokes, Alan). That is what the Government is debating as of now. It seems as if someone does not have an opinion, they are trying to form one. The bad thing about forcing yourself to form an opinion quickly is that you do not get all the facts and opinions out there.

“Equally important, history suggests it would be unwise for the Supreme Court to impose a uniform solution on the nation now” (Cole, David). It is very hard for me to understand where Stokes is going with this. He first says equality is important, but then goes on to say that we shouldn't make up our minds? The title of his article says it all, “Deciding Not to Decide Gay Marriage”. We have been “not deciding” for too long. I know the world will never be a perfect place, but when people are being teased, bullied and even killed for loving someone of the same sex, it just seems to make it worse. The logic behind some of these bullies is that it is illegal. Maybe if it was not illegal to love someone of the same sex, there would be less of these instances.

It just seems unfair and unjust to tell someone they cannot marry a certain person because they are the same sex. Who is the government to ban people from this? Another argument is that the Bible says it is wrong. Since when did the whole world revolve around the Bible. I am not here to say that people who worship the Bible are wrong and stupid. I do believe in God, but the God I have been taught about at church and at Bible study would never say that just because one person loves someone

of the same sex, that they may not be married under his name. It just does not make any sense. These people who claim that God is great and holy and he loves all his people are the ones saying that all the “gay” people are going to Hell. It is also very confusing that these Christians are more understanding of atheist, people who do not believe in god at all, then people who do believe in God and just want to marry their partner.

Most of my friends are either bisexual or gay, and to be honest, I find that most of them have more devoted love lives than most straight people. They tend to know right away who they belong with and do not stray from that. Maybe if we allowed gay marriages in the US, there would be a decline in the divorce rate. My friends that are gay or bisexual are some of the nicest people you will ever meet, so why people want to tease them and bully them before they even know their names is ridiculous. America was built on different cultures, different believes and everyone has a different path. So why should it be any different for people that are gay or bisexual.

Finally, I believe that people who love the same sex are born that way. As a straight person, I cannot pick who I love, it picks me. If I can marry the person I just happen to fall in love with, I see no reason why they should not be able to. Love is love. So regardless of stereotypes, all I wish to see is that people give this movement a chance. What harm can it really do? Nothing. All it will do is prove to the world that we are an understanding country, we believe that love is universal and that the people do have a voice.

#### Works Cited

- Cole, David. “Deciding Not to Decide Gay Marriage.” *New York times*. March 26, 2013. PA27. Academic One File. Web. 27 March 2013.
- Stokes, Alan. “Secretly Hoping an Epiphany Can Resolve Gay Marriage Doubts.” *The Sydney Morning Herald*. March 27, 2013. P35. Academic One File. Web. 27 March 2013.

This is a solid essay, and where there are some errors of writing conventions, notably with the way she incorporates quotations; However, Brooke approaches a serious topic with measured emotion and reason.

The sixth and seventh assignments were presented simultaneously, and students attacked them with an impressive energy. By this time, we had grown comfortable with using Twitter and its hashtagging system for school work, and students began using the #comppaper almost immediately. Like during the Writing Now! activity, students used their tweets to ask questions occasionally, but far and away most of the tweets were used to express frustration or celebration. An interested person could still search Twitter for the hashtag #comppaper to find the complete list of posts, but I've printed some representative highlights below.

I am procrastinating like a boss right now #CompPaper

The last paper was way easier than #comppaper.

my #comppaper was a bitch glad its final done.

#Comppaper Final Draft is due today.

#comppaper Mr. Kahler is taking forever to set up this presentation assignment.

Prezi is so hard to use #comppaper

What should I wear to present my #comppaper

finished 2 tests and 1000 freaking words essay !! this weekend is one to be remembered !!!  
#comppaper

#comppaper yes!

I don't think I've ever been this down to the wore on an assignment #comppaper

Yay for this #comppaper being over!

Gathering all my tweets for my #comppaper #theStruggle

I hope prof kahler I'd happy with my #comppaper

Twitter has been rough. my account will R.I.P. after this #comppaper

Made some notecards for my presentation #comppaper

It takes me 15 minutes to drive, and i need 10 minutes to organize and print. i need get up at 6! #comppaper

don't live tweet a bunch on my presentation tomorrow, ya'll, i'm gonna go over the time limit as it is :/ #comppaper

I find it interesting that some of the tweets read as calls in the wilderness, while others are obviously targeted toward classmates. This really highlights what many of my students had remarked upon in their work, that social media sites like Twitter are a mixed-bag of narcissistic rambling and important bridge-building.

The hope with these two assignments working simultaneously was that we'd find that traditional writing process pedagogy and immediate writing pedagogy could work together to enhance both. Looking across the Twitter feeds, I am not so sure that occurred. The feed is too superficial to be able to state definitively that immediate writing occurred, assuming that with immediate writing we expect meaningful, polished prose. Still, what we find is a useful record of real-time process pedagogy that could be expanded and then exploited to reveal more of what or students experience as they work through rhetorical challenges.

Brooke again provides the most representative sample of my students' work on this essay. During the assignment, Brooke had her wisdom teeth removed, as reflected in her tweets. Coupled with signing up for an early face-to-face conference with me, she certainly felt pressured to complete the assignment. As her paper and Twitter feed show, however, she was very successful in completing her work, and the essay that resulted from her efforts was very good. I did question some of her sources, however, which resulted in a slightly lower grade. Still, Twitter use revealed some of the internal cognitive work she completed to bring her writing to fruition, and seems to have played a positive role in her essay's development.

Presented below are the tweets Brooke posted using the hashtag #comppaper, and the essay she submitted for the assignment.

Live Tweet a Paper! Twitter Feed from Brooke

Yay for this #comppaper being over!

Yesterday did not go as bad as I thought it would. Maybe this #comppaper wont end in disaster.

Looks like I'm not the only procrastinator on this #comppaper. Lol

Forgot about my Reference List for my #comppaper. Doing it now.

Finally! My #comppaper is done!!!

Still way in over my head with this #comppaper.

This #comppaper is so hard. I am really struggling.

Why did I sign up for the first day of #comppaper reviews. I'm dumb.

Removal of wisdom teeth and this #comppaper do NOT go together. Ouch.

Does anyone remember what is due for the #comppaper today?

I did find some good okay articles on my topic for my #comppaper Now to decide if I want to keep it.

This #comppaper is going to be the death of me!

Gah! I still have to start my #comppaper

Stem Cell Research: Ethics and Guidelines

Brooke

Saginaw Valley State University

Abstract

This paper goes into detail about the phenomenon behind stem cell research. The debate about stem cell research is explored as well as the views and politics behind each side. Ultimately stem cell research

has been used for years, yet has not been as much of a debate. Other countries have already begun clinical trials for these procedures and the US has fears of being behind in the technology. Although some experts believe it is far too early to begin these sorts of trials, it is certainly not too late to begin the research that is behind it. Stem cell research can be very beneficial if done with the right guidelines and restrictions.

#### Stem Cell Research: Ethics and Guidelines

With the population growing and people living longer, it is common for researchers to try and find cures for what is ailing the population. Whether it is the flu, shingles, or chickenpox, they do their best to find a cure or treatment. But what if what is ailing you does not have a known cure or has basically been named impossible to fix. That is where the debate of stem cell research comes in, it is one of the great debates today. Stem cells are somatic cells of the body that can be from infants or cord blood. They exist in each compartment of the body and are thought to be able to “become” different types of cells after time (Cedar, 2006). Some research has been found that suggests that bone marrow stem cells may be introduced to become brain stem cells (Cedar, 2006). If this research is “proven” true, it would mean that diseases such as Parkinson’s, Stroke damage, Huntington’s, Alzheimer’s, Spinal cord injuries and many more could potentially be treated using stem cells which would be created into different specialized cells (Lindvall and Kokaia, 2006).

Some promising research is there, but there is not enough to do clinical trials under the FDA guidelines. There needs to be more research done but in order to do that, there are many obstacles. First of these obstacles are the lack of funding. The research is sure to be expensive and it is under debate if it should be funded, and who should have to pay for it. More than likely it will be more tax dollars people will pay. Where the scientist are getting these stem cells is a problem as well. As of now, most countries are using aborted fetuses that were already going to be aborted. Then, of course, the problem with that arises with consent and whether the patients know what they are doing and that they are



giving their aborted fetus to science. So, there would have to be a very long and tedious consent form. In other countries they have been cloning human embryos for their stem cells (Barclay, 2009). This is where the biggest ethical debate comes in. Is the embryo a living thing, and is it right to create it with the intentions of ripping it apart? Many feel it is wrong, but what if there was a way to get around creating an embryo and destroying it. There might be. Parthenogenesis is the sequence of events that occurs when an egg begins to develop without genetic contribution from a sperm (Kelly, 1977). Could this mean that there is a possible compromise?

This alternative does not necessarily clear any of the disputes at all. Many religious followers and many others believe that life is a gift from God and should not be in human hands. Humans should not be able to cure a man because only God may cure him. Another of the disputes is consent and whether people will get compensated for their donation to science such as giving plasma or organ donation. If that were to happen, women may get pregnant to give the child to science. Consent is a big issue. All of these issues need to be addressed and decided upon.

In a perfect world, no one would need stem cell therapy. They do, though so is it fair to deny them their treatment and research because a lot of people think it is ethically wrong? No. There needs to be very strict rule about what can and cannot happen. First, there needs to be a very long consent form that is very thorough and the people who donate their unborn fetuses should not get compensated, that would lead to too many problems. Next, the cloning or creating of human embryos should not be able to take place. The embryos are living and creating them just to destroy it is ethically wrong. Also, there should be a lot more research and proof before they go forward in clinical trials because there is not a good enough record to start treating people. When clinical trials do start, there needs to be another consent form explaining that the treatment is not one hundred percent that it will work and that the side effects may worsen the condition. In essence it is the person requesting the treatment that is taking the chance, it might be worth it to try to them. Also, once approved for treatment in hospitals or clinics, the

advertisement for this kind of therapy should be very straight forward about what might happen, how much it cost, and what essentially the therapy derived from. The patients should not be in the dark at any step of the process that it may not work up to their hopes.

In conclusion, the debate over stem cell research is very relevant and needs to be resolved. The options need to be talked about and decided on so that the research may get some funding to start their projects. Although other countries have started treating patients with stem cells without waiting for clinical trials to validate the safety of using them for health problems, the research needs to take its time and do it right before following in their footsteps. Also, taxpayers need to be brought to light on the topic and how much the stem cells could potentially do if funded. Eventually, we need to vote on how much funding should be provided and when the treatments come available if insurance should cover it. Overall, there just needs to be a lot of guidelines. There needs to be some sort of list of what is and what is not aloud or tolerated. Science is not trying to take over the role of God. We are simply trying to help those who got dealt a difficult hand. The science is there, so why not use it.

## References

- Barclay, E. (2009, March 14). Stem-cell experts raise concerns about medical tourism. *The Lancet*, 373. <http://search.proquest.com.library.svsu.edu/docview/199038617/13D7D06F2AE11171233/1?accountid=960>
- Cedar, SH. (2006). Stem cell and related therapies: Nurses and midwives representing all parties. *Nursing Ethics*, 13.3. <http://search.proquest.com.library.svsu.edu/docview/201430419/fulltextPDF/13D7D1351BC302DACBF/1?accountid=960>
- Kelly, J. (1977, February 28). Parthenogenesis. *Off Our Backs*, 7.1. <http://search.proquest.com.library.svsu.edu/docview/197135732/fulltext/13D7D0D10312FB797F0/1?>

accountid=960

Lindvall, O., Kokaia, Z. (2006, June 26). Stem cells for the treatment of neurological disorders. *Nature*, 441. <http://0-search.proquest.com.library.svsu.edu/docview/204539915/fulltextPDF/13D7D1921A139402948/2?accountid=960>

Looking over Brooke's essay, I think she's done a fine job of touching on all the essential elements of a complete argument. She's also done some nice critical thinking ("This alternative does not necessarily clear any of the disputes at all."). As I mentioned earlier, there could be some better work done with her sources. Perhaps this is where Twitter could be used further in the future. Students could use Twitter to report on sources and how they'll be used—rather like a virtual annotated bibliography—or students could highlight interesting ideas and quotations.

Student presentations ended our in-class activities, and these presentations included student audience members tweeting back to presenters. To facilitate the display of the Twitter feed as well as presenters' visual aids, we used a secondary computer/screen/projector combination. Students tweeted as the presentations progressed, using the classroom computers during our lab days and smart phones on the days we were in the regular classrooms. As you can see from the picture, this made for an interesting classroom arrangement.



Many students took advantage of the Twitter feed during their presentations, soliciting comments and opinions from their classmates that were then included as part of the presentation. Often, these appeals for participation were included on PowerPoint slides or as part of a Prezi, as shown in the following pictures.



Also interestingly, one student tweeted in response to the Twitter feed *while* he was presenting on the topic of technology addiction. He used his smart phone, and without missing a beat during his preplanned remarks, the student posted into the feed. The result was “oohs” and “ahhs” from his classmates, and at the end of his presentation I joked that he’d just provided material for ten pages of my dissertation.

While Live Tweeting presentations and conferences has been occurring for several years now, using Twitter in this way to create an immediate writing / immediate speaking environment was new and a successful experiment. Students in the audience were engaged in a way they rarely are during classmate presentations, and presenting students were forced to consider their audience in a new way. Students in both roles were much more attentive to the presentation as a whole, with an energy I hadn’t seen in student presentations. Whether this can be attributed to the novelty of Live Tweeting or a genuine connection facilitated through the technologically-mediated writing spaces is a question I’d like to further explore in the future.

Displayed below are the tweets Brooke posted during her classmates’ presentations. Included are two exchanges between other classmates that occurred as a result of the posts.

From Brooke, with conversations including Sam and Saad.

#comppres Still a good idea. Not only can you hurt yourself, but you can hurt others

#comppres Not going to lie. It's is tempting but it is not worth it.

#comppres I don't know what's going on. What is going on in Tibet?

#comppres absolutely nothing

#comppres Eat meat, but execute humanly

#comppres I don't really know much about it at all. Ready to learn

#comppres I agree with you about that. It is just asking for trouble.

#comppres. I see both sides.

#comppres I like the topic. I'm interested

#comppres I think ACT should be done. But I feel that schools should prepare students starting freshmen year.

#comppres How would they be tested then? EVERYONE would get scholarships then

#comppres. I have no opinion yet...

#comppres I'm not effected by it at all. Marry who you want.

#comppres Go Mike. I love this topic. Individual rights is good.

#comppres that is sad. Nobody should have to go though that.

#comppres That is so sick and wrong

#comppres Apple products are hard and expensive to fix and are expensive to buy.

#comppres Microsoft used to be easier to use than Apple but now with Microsoft 8, I'm not so sure.

#comppres owned both, like both. Microsoft is my choice.

Dolphin eyeball? #comppres

#comppres This is wrong.

#comppres just because others use it and other torture methods, it still doesn't make it right. and who says it won't be used on Americans?

#comppres torture is not right. Then we are just as bad as they are.

#comppres No. no. no. no. no.

@DJMcSkittles Don't be rude. #comppres

All to be the most effective #comppres

I thought minimum wage was \$7.40? #comppres

@AlSa #comppres as a student in Saudi Arabia students do not usually work because the government pay them monthly and the education is free

@AlSa That is really interesting! Which do you like better?

@Brooke I think it not beneficial for us it makes the people like lazy to or do not care for building career from starting from zero

@SamDubs #comppres Minimum wage should stay the same. It gives more reasons for college and to get an education thus getting higher paying jobs.

@SamDubs I completely agree!

Taxes would raise #comppres

Not sure. Might increase prices everywhere #comppres

Still deciding. It depends a lot on the individual. I think that once you reach 60 years of age you should have to retake the test #comppres

Drive with a teacher for ALL hours because I lied and really never practiced. My sheet was just signed

Knock on wood, I have never been in an accident. My sister had a similar experience, though. #comppres

How are they supposed to get experience then? #comppres

I completely agree. They don't have time for jobs so this would help them a lot! #comppres

#comppres interesting topic. I have no clue about it. Ready to learn

I probably would if financial aid offered more for students year round #comppres

I would have laughed at you in high school #comppres

Makes sense. Starting to change my views. #comppres

#comppres. No. It would just stress the kids out and make them drop out

Great job Marla. #comppres

I think poverty is the biggest cause. #comppres

Very sad. #comppres

Great topic. Excited to learn about your views #comppres

Interesting topic. Very well done Jamie. You did it!!! #comppres

Go Jamie #comppres Great topic



Great, now we all have to follow that#comppres. Good job MC.

#comppres no idea. Probably not much

#comppres Increase crime rate

#comppres Fun once in a while. But a waste of money

As the feed shows, Brooke responded to presentations about topics including the legal status of Tibet, cloning, gambling, raising the minimum wage, and the educational system in Saudi Arabia. As her tweets show, student posts during the presentations tended to be much more serious and content-focused than the Write Now! activity's tweets, with the addition of tweets of support like Haley's "Great topic," "I completely agree," and "Nice job."

Our experiment with Live Tweeting also highlighted the struggle ESL students had with many aspect of our work using technologically-mediated writing and immediate writing. My international students had difficulty providing feedback to other presenters, despite being familiar with the technology. Though their presentations were vibrant and engaging, particularly the presentations about Tibet and the Saudi educational system, unfortunately they could not completely participate in our classroom work.

For our final exam students were required to submit a portfolio of all their work along with a reflection for each of the four sections I'd identified. Of these sections, the fourth and final section included the work we'd done that's included in this ethnography. I was happy to see that most students found value in the work we'd done using technologically-mediated writing. The first student's reflective piece I've selected below shows how aware my students were of the stakes of this experiment for me on a personal level. This student writer, an active participant on our men's rugby club here at SVSU, was at times openly hostile to my classroom methods. He voiced dislike of some of our topics and—upon reflection I concluded rightly—challenged an offhand remark I'd made in class once. In

the end I hope we both got to a place of mutual respect, and recently as of this writing I've had repeated positive interactions with him as we passed through campus halls. Still, I can't help but feel that our interactions were a missed opportunity on my part, and I wish I'd worked harder, or at least differently, to establish a better classroom relationship with him.

#### Chapter Four Reflection

Brian

Personally, I disliked using Twitter as much as we did for the papers. I would have rather just made things up and typed it on that. I was wary about it because I felt bad for the people that had to see my Twitter feed, and probably got really annoying with it. I just thing it wasn't a great thing. The idea of it was a cool thing to think about, and that is about it. I understand what you were trying to do, I just didn't really like it that much. From essay to essay though, I kept it as pretty solid work. I had some issued with getting people to participate in the experiments we were running. Other than that it wasn't too bad. I hope that the Twitter analysis's really helped with your paper you are writing. I know getting knew information and materials is hard, and I am glad to be a part of your experiences to help further you in the future.

Finally, Brooke goes assignment-by-assignment in her summary of our final weeks in class. Her description of the challenges of the assignments makes the argument of immediate writing's continued place in a FYW course.

#### Portfolio Reflection

Brooke

I enjoyed having mini or smaller assignments mized in with the bigger ones. It made it easier to

focus and keep us on track. The “enter a conversation” paper was quite interesting. I don’t think it worked as well as I might have liked because the “real” Twitter world does not tweet back and forth with each other as much. I really thought the mini argument paper was good for us to do because it prepared us for the real argument paper and we could see where we needed some work and where we were doing alright. The hashtag assignment was alright. It was interesting to write and about and it made us really think about the social media sites in a new way. The write now assignment was difficult. I have a really hard time writing a whole paper in that short amount of time, let alone have it be a good paper. I think it was good that we did it, though. It got us ready for what is to come in college and our work worlds. Sometimes I will not have days to write a paper.

Looking back broadly, it’s interesting to see how my students’ writing practices changed shape as a result of our immediate writing activities and our classroom discussions regarding those activities. Most notable were the changes in the Twitter postings when I compared the postings for the Write Now! activity to the presentation postings. The presentation postings had an obvious, immediate impact on the presentations themselves, and students showed impressive flexibility in their rhetorical approaches based upon the feedback they were receiving. As I’ve mentioned earlier, many students took pains to solicit responses from their audience, and having acknowledged these responses, shifted their presentations appropriately. I again point out the student who tweeted *during* his presentation. He serves as the perfect example of students beginning to understand their role as simultaneous producers and consumers of texts. He tweeted during his presentation completely on his own; I imagine if I mention his efforts to my next batch of classes, it will happen more often.

Reflecting on my project and my students’ work, I’ve wondered if they’ve learned about their composing processes somehow better as a result of their use of technology, or if their learning was somehow impaired because technology and process are somehow at odds. It’s true that technology can

add a layer of complication that some students find difficult to navigate. In particular, students who are English Language Learners and students unfamiliar with social media technology struggled with our technologically-mediated immediate writing. I include other examples of students' struggles along these lines in my fifth chapter, but here I would like to highlight the efforts of one of my international students. The following is a paragraph from his Write Now! essay, reproduced here as originally submitted, in which he argues that the sport Americans call "soccer" is the rightful owner of the name "football:"

Moreover, soccer is biased on the skills that you have using your feet, football got none. Also, the only case that the ball is to be touched by somebody's foot is when the team deserves to have an extra shot to have an extra point. The team should score in the goal, and that's the case in soccer, and that should be the purpose for the whole game; however, football focuses on the player crossing the line, so how can we call it football. Also according to Arjun Kulkarni "Let's start with soccer, It is clearly the older of the two" (2011). which in my opinion give soccer the advantage to be called football.

T.J.'s paragraph shows some powerful thinking. He has a point: soccer *does* use the foot more than football. And while T.J.'s source, for which he included a poorly-formatted reference page, is from a less than academically rigorous website named "Buzzle," he uses the source correctly to support his argument. The weakness of the paragraph is its collection of errors common to ELL writers, including misuse of similar sounding words and punctuation errors. I believe that T.J. would have rooted out these errors and fixed them in a non-immediate writing context. T.J.'s response creates a classic predicament: how would this piece get evaluated? On the one hand, it's a fairly successful argument. On the other hand, the essay's errors as they exist should prevent it from getting a particularly high grade. This is a challenge for immediate writing practices that I'll need to rectify going forward.

From the outset of my project, I believed that immediate writing could be used to reveal to

students the multiple processes that are at work while they write. In keeping with Jason Palmeri's discussion of the cognitive similarities of a process approach and multimodal writing (see my third chapter for more discussion regarding this) I believed my students would use our new class activities to more closely interrogate their composing practices. These practices, I hoped, would be drawn from across the varied writing spaces in which my students operate, including the classroom and social media. My conclusion is that technologically-mediated immediate writing can be an effective tool for teaching student writing processes that will transfer across rhetorical situations.

## Chapter Five: Where We Went; Where We Go

For my final chapter, I will take a critical look at the success and failures of the immediate writing approach practiced with my students, with an eye toward making broader pedagogical recommendations. Ultimately, the approach's success or failure should be judged on the overall success of my students' writing over the course of several years, across several cohorts of students. Since that kind of longitudinal study was not the goal for this project, it will have to wait for future consideration. My evidence for the efficacy of this project, then, must remain the work my students produced in the moment.

### The Role of Technologically-Mediated Writing in Our Pedagogy

From the onset of this project, I have struggled with the two poles seemingly at odds within Composition pedagogy and theory; those are, the pull and lure of technology and the potential immediacy of technologically-mediated writing versus the traditional process approach. The first hurdle of this project was coming to terms with the fact that process pedagogy did not need to be fully abandoned in favor of immediate writing, but rather, immediate writing could be taught both for itself and as a way to get through to process pedagogy. Immediate writing through technologically-mediated composition can be used to teach process because it forces students to consider the elements of writing in an authentic, material way.

In this way I am expanding on the concept of rhetorical velocity and the materiality of composed pieces as described in *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric*. Technologically-mediated immediate writing is the ideal space for asking students to consider what happens to their writing after publication. This sort of writing naturally lends itself to borrowing and appropriation—a rhetorical move that students are already familiar with in such avenues as research papers' source incorporation, Facebook “liking,” and

Twitter's ability to re-tweet posts. Where this approach differs from process-pedagogy, however, is that here students are now thinking about how other writers might enter the rhetorical situation after them and borrow or reuse their work for their own. This layering of writers' efforts is an important concept for students to appreciate, because they so often see their work as a hard stop in the process of discourse, with nothing entering the conversation after themselves. Technologically-mediated immediate writing helps students see their work on a continuum, as part of a much broader and reaching history of discourse.

This move into seeing their work as part of a stream of written work is important for students because it is necessary for them to begin the process of entering the tradition of scholarly discourse. The concept of rhetorical velocity implies that rhetors have a responsibility to their work and their audiences that can and should be included as part of a First Year Writing curriculum. As rhetorical artifacts pass across the boundaries of mode and medium, students must understand their responsibilities as producers and consumers of rhetorical products. Students' writing will become less and less a series of one-shot pieces, essays written then discarded in favor of the next, unconnected to the writing done before or after it. Students will, as they progress through their studies, instead write work that builds upon earlier efforts, or generate pieces that connect to others as a series.

These assignment progressions are not new. What I am adding here is the idea that technologically-mediated immediate writing can use the materiality of rhetorical moves explained in the concept of rhetorical velocity to better prepare students for the reality of entering discourse situations where all work is eligible for appropriation and remediation. When students see their work as possible fodder for future writers, they will treat their own writing and the writing of others differently. With more respect, we hope, and with a better understanding of the processes of academic writing. Not to put too fine a point on it, but when students are alerted to the possibility that their work might be used—and abused—by future writers, the students will better control their own use of other

writers' work. Merely just using appropriate citations and bibliographies (the academic equivalent of re-tweeting) now becomes a matter of honor and mutual consideration.

When students begin thinking about the writing spaces they use every day—and, as I learned, since not all of my students were familiar with Twitter, writing spaces that students *could* be using—students think about all of their written interactions differently. As outlined in *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*, this new way of configuring students' writing takes place in a familiar landscape, which allows students to better understand how their words are perceived. So students must be continuously aware of the impact their words have in a new way—as materials to be used by the next writer.

And as student writers work their ways through these issues, perhaps also they consider how their writing also writes themselves. Many theorists have written about the power of writing to create and influence identity, how writing is created by us and also creates us. In her introduction to *Composing (Media) = Composing (Embodiment): Bodies, Technologies, Writing, The Teaching of Writing*, Wysocki name checks most of these writers: N. Katherine Hayles, Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong, Mark Hansen, and others. Through a series of essays, the book argues Wysocki's key assumption, which I reproduce here in her original pseudo-poetic and italicized format:

*we assume*

*—alongside our first set of assumptions about what constitutes  
embodiment and about a corresponding need for engagement  
with a range of media—*

*that embodiment has to be acknowledged*

*as both active and passive,*

*felt by us as well as produced by us. (19)*

Wysocki's point about the book as a whole and media writing is that at no time is our interaction with



media and media composition a one-way street. The transactions we have in technologically-mediated writing's production and consumption are always moving towards us and away from us. We produce as we consume. As we consume, we continue production.

As I am writing this, on a Sunday afternoon in my office at Saginaw Valley State University, Michael Nesmith has just posted a status update onto his Facebook timeline. Nesmith—a songwriter, musician, ground-breaking television producer, and member of the 60s manufactured pop band The Monkees—is reflecting upon his recent tour with the surviving Monkees and his impending solo tour. Nesmith writes:

We                    teach                    what                    we                    are.  
 We                    are                    not                    what                    we                    teach.  
 The                    songs                    sing                    themselves.  
 We hope they sing us well.                    (Nesmith)

Nesmith is getting at the same process that Wysocki describes: the simultaneous transaction and translation that occurs as we produce and consume media and are produced and consumed by media. He is also notably *using* new media to document his observation. Nesmith is created by his post as much as he is responsible for its creation. In return, those of us who consume his post, me included, are changed by having read it. The technology of Facebook allows users to respond to the post, by “liking” the post, “sharing” the posts on our own timelines, or by typing a comment beneath it. In any option, the post is manipulated like a material object through the consumer's feedback. The post is moved (through sharing), over-written (through liking), and amended or extended (through commenting). The processes described by Wysocki, Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel occur under the veil of the technology of Facebook.

All social media have similar feedback mechanisms, and all technologically-mediated forms of writing have the potential to be shaped and shifted in a similar way. The real key, however, is the ease

with which these processes might be undertaken. A post is “like”-ed with a mere click of the mouse, or moved wholesale to my timeline just as easily. It’s the simplicity of these processes that makes them so valuable to us pedagogically, because from here it’s a short leap to begin thinking of all writing as material substance to be used in our own work. Now students can begin to see the elements of research and other discourse as building blocks for their own work tied into their physical space. These elements can be manipulated, used and misused, even worn. In return, other rhetors will unpack our work for their own, and our work will be reflected in this new discourse, and reflect upon us in regards to our identity and even value.

Our students may now see themselves as crafters of objects with worth in a new, powerful way, a move argued by Kristin Prins in her essay “Crafting New Approaches to Composition.” Prins writes that “multimodal composition can make more apparent to students their options for composing and the choices they make as they write” (148), an argument she attaches to several media and composition theorists including Wysocki and the influential New London Group. Where these and other theorists fall short, Prins goes on to say, is that they do not place enough emphasis on the ethical elements of design and usage. She argues that a necessary point of instruction in a composition classroom using multimodal writing must be taking into consideration “composition that foregrounds our responsibilities to each other” (154). For Prins the key point is to focus a writing pedagogy on craft, that is, emphasize that written pieces are created like physical objects. People learn a craft, craftspeople use tools, those tools can be used as recommended or repurposed by other craftspeople (158). Prins even suggests this writer-as-maker concept get driven home by shifting “the language of the course from a vocabulary ‘writing’ to ‘making,’ which better accommodates nontextual and multimodal composing” (159).

Where does this work fit into my project, and how does it support my call for immediate writing? I believe that immediate writing can be approached as craft in the way Prins describes, and

my project results bear this out. My students showed growth in the way they thought about the textual objects they created, and the way they interacted with the textual objects created by others. Students described the feeling they got knowing that classmates were reading their tweets, and the importance of responding appropriately to the tweets of others. Like the craftspeople Prins describes, my students thought of themselves as producers and consumers, but also as a writer who is simultaneously seeking an audience and acting as an audience. Going forward with immediate writing, Prins's call for a return to craft is one I think that FYW teachers would do well to remember. Her point is well-taken when she writes this in conclusion to her essay:

Craft both engages and extends many practices common to FYC. It invites us to carefully consider the social, historical, and material contexts of composers and users; the materiality of tools, technologies, and texts and how we might differently engage those tools and technologies; and the social and ethical implications of the texts we produce and ask students to produce. (159)

Though my project did not focus on the ethics and social implications of immediate writing, it's easy to imagine how these might be included in the future. Students are already well-aware of the potential misuses of the immediate dissemination of social media technology. Students are also becoming aware of the competing realities of technologically-mediated writing's permanence and ephemerality; though technology might allow writers to quickly post, edit, and delete writing, that writing is never really all the way gone, and through the processes of saving and sharing and archiving, may out-last its intended lifespan and be reappropriated in unexpected and unplanned ways.

The book that features Prins's essay, and indeed many of the texts that treat technologically-mediated writing and the composition of new media texts, moves away from the construction of traditional textual responses to rhetorical situations. Here I believe their efforts are taking a turn that we should consider potentially dangerous for FYW. Too often, these multi-modal texts are presented as

possible alternatives for the typical essays that are the bread and butter of FYW programs' curriculums. My fear is that when FYW instructors overly-embrace multimodal composing to the avoidance of more traditional composition artifacts students enter general education and other courses unprepared. FYW programs are in the position to service a segment of the university population that both hinders and enables our work. It's true that no other field owes allegiance to the university as a whole the way we do in FYW, and this allegiance limits us to some extent. But it also ensures credit hours to be taught and funds graduate programs at larger universities. The field of Composition has content to teach in its own right, but we also as a field have a responsibility to prepare our youngest students for their work in the university. Our challenge is to incorporate all we know about composing—multimodal composition as well as the production of traditional texts.

The space we must carve out, then, is somewhere between the poles of generating traditional texts and new media texts. Technologically-mediated immediate writing is uniquely positioned in this space in that it can be used in the manufacture of either traditional or multimodal new media texts. As Composition scholars, we can push our field forward through studies and projects like the one I've described in my previous chapters, as well as paying correct attention to the requirements of university realities. A preferred approach would be to better integrate immediate writing with traditional pedagogy, unlike the sequestered approach I used for my study. One criticism I have against my method is that there was a discernible shift that I made in the semester toward immediate writing and away from traditional process teaching. I am looking to take advantage of immediate writing instruction methods throughout the semester going forward.

### The Role of Ethnography

Another possible criticism of my project rests in the ethnographic method of my study. I still maintain that the best place to observe the social interaction of writing (using James Berlin's words) is the classroom. As Ruth Ray reminds us, teachers are always aware of the theory and reasoning behind

the actions taken in the classroom. Though I might edit that by saying *good* teachers have that awareness, what Ray is telling us is that teachers are best-prepared for observing and studying their own classes. During my project, though, I did experience some of the potential complications that Ray outlines. I'd like to add that one of the challenges I faced came as a result of my students' goodwill. I believe they were genuinely excited and interested in being part of an academic study. Additionally, they really wanted to be a part of something that helped me (bless their hearts). Several students used their portfolio reflections to praise the concept and activities we completed as a result of my project. The following comment is representative of those reflections:

On the days I did miss class I really wanted to go because it was always something new and exciting going on. In the future I feel like teachers should try to use Facebook and Twitter in their classes. It would make it easy and more exciting and students would be more interested in the class. This (project) was just such a good idea and I really enjoyed every moment of it and I hope one day I get to do it again.

That's awfully sycophantic. Teachers are used to seeing this sort of last-minute, end-of-semester gushing, and we're properly inoculated against the sway of such sweet words. In the context of an academic project, however, these words offer little in the way of meaningful pedagogical introspection. There's not much there I can use. My role as teacher (who students are looking to help, impress, make happy) has gotten in the way of my role as a researcher. While I made plans for this—by keeping my observations of student writing close to their actual work, by documenting the theory behind my classroom activities—I could have done more to ask students to be more powerfully inward-looking. I could have asked students to drill down into the content of Composition instead of allowing her to be content with merely describing her affective response. As we can see with her reflection, and the reflection I reproduce later in this chapter's section on technology, I still struggle with encouraging students to intelligently consider in their reflections their roles as audience, rhetor, producer, and

consumer. I believe students are becoming more aware of their varied and simultaneous roles in rhetorical situations as evidenced in their clear responses to writing assignments, but I'd like more of that understanding to show through in their reflections.

What needs to be found is a way to encourage the critical thinking that all the new media theorists say is vital for the proper introduction of technologically-mediated and multimodal writing, along with a way to make that that thinking visible for proper academic study. Perhaps we might have enough evidence of our students' critical thinking by merely measuring the writing students produce, but we will never really be sure of their reasoning behind their decisions this way. When we do ask for reflection, we run the risk of students telling us what they think we want to hear. This is the challenge of classroom ethnography. The solution, I believe, is to allow more space for reflection, and to establish open reflection along with more prescriptive reflection. I didn't ask, for example, how students' perception of technologically-mediated writing and writing in social media changed as a result of our work. While some students supplied answers to those questions to varying degrees, I could have been more pointed about specifically inquiring toward those concepts. There is the risk of students being lead into the answers we want, so the solution is to allow for a mix of open and guided reflection coupled with close observation of the products students create.

### The Role of Classroom Technology

We at SVSU are very lucky. Our First Year Writing courses each meet in computers labs for half of their meetings. These labs are assigned, used almost exclusively by other FYW teachers, protected by electronic keypad-equipped doors, maintained by our Information Technology staff, and frequently updated. Additionally, we have the ability to easily access other equipment (like the projector and portable screen I used for presentation days) that is equally well-maintained. Any reflection I have of my project's success or failure must include a few words about the advantages this environment has in regards to teaching with or through technology.

As with any project that requires students to make use of an unfamiliar technology, teachers run the risk of leaving behind some students or adding the additional burden of learning the technology along with the key concepts we're hoping to teach. Although I tried to teach the technology as much as I could, I discovered in student reflections that the technology proved to be a roadblock to several of my students. The following response was written by one of my non-traditional students. During his essays generated during our work with social media and immediate writing, he expanded on his belief that much of the effort people put into social media interactions would be better spent with other activities. He also struggled with the technology a bit, which took me by surprise during our semester because he always seemed fairly technologically savvy:

This (set of) assignments I did not care for at all. Though I'm sure that was made clear from my papers in this chapter. I think a lot of it may have been either my age or stubbornness. While I play around a little on Facebook, I have no interest in Twitter. Nor did I wish to learn it.

Many of these assignments seemed directed toward the younger crowd who already knew and understood the concepts of hashtags, trends and tweets. I did not.

I spent much of the time just trying to understand the very basics of the system. Learning how to follow, trying to find the trending topics and things like that. I did not feel very confident that I had succeeded. The topics that I found were trite, and didn't seem to have any educational value at all. In short, I spent more of those weeks thinking I was doing it wrong.

While some in class complained that their followers were annoyed at them, I had no followers. Only one friend uses Twitter and she helped me out a little, but I still felt overwhelmed. Having completed this assignment with decent scores all around, I am still glad this assignment is over. Even now I still feel a little intimidated by Twitter.

There is a lot that is remarkable about his reflection. I am impressed by his candor, a little saddened at imagining what it must have felt for him to be worried that he was “doing it wrong.” His response also shows how technology can come between a student and the class’s goals. Going forward, I’d suggest building a better FAQ for my students who lack the experience with social media that other students might have.

This student’s response, and the other responses that echoed the theme of technological difficulties, highlight that challenges of multimodal writing. Here I identify two. First, that we must become teachers of technology in addition to teachers of Composition. Teaching technology is not just a matter of displaying its use. To assume that we, as users of technology, can easily become teachers of technology is to make the same error as those who assume that anyone who writes can teach writing make. Much forethought, and perhaps training, is required for teaching the use of technology. I don’t feel like the technologies I used in my project were particularly robust, so my students’ difficulties with working through technologically-mediated writing should serve as a warning in particular for teachers looking to employ more complicated technologies in their classrooms. The second challenge of multimodal writing I identify here is that we must maintain a closeness to the matters of composition that encompass our field and our research. By this I mean that I am cautioning against blind adoption of multimodal or technologically-mediated writing because it seems to be in fashion or the latest edge of classroom activities. The goal of the instruction should imply that technology is the best way to achieve that goal. Too often, we look to technology’s use as the end result. It should be a medium, not an outcome.

### The Role of Language in Immediate Writing

Immediate writing is a real challenge to English Language Learners. My students whose primary language was not English showed real difficulty in completing the immediate writing tasks I set before them. For two of my Saudi students, I routinely offered extra time to complete assignments.



Though I knew this undermined my goals, I still felt compelled to allow them enough time to complete their assignments, often allowing them to email their responses later in the day or submit their assignments at our next class meeting. How we incorporate our ELL students into our classroom activities is an important question at SVSU in particular as we reach out to more Saudi students and continue to develop relationships with our Chinese sister institution, but I am sure this challenge is not unique to our school. ELL students have well-documented struggles with much of our FYW curriculum: reading assignments that require lengthy efforts to translate into home languages, readings and models that use unfamiliar cultural references, cultural differences in expectations for academic writing, to name a few.

How can I approach immediate writing for students who can't do the writing immediately? I quickly learned to be flexible. I allowed my Saudi students to use Twitter feeds that were displayed in Arabic. This solved the language problem, and also displayed trending topics that were more relevant to the students. This was little help for the in-class writing we did. Other than the use of various dictionaries, there was little I could offer by way of support during immediate writing sessions other than extra time. Because of this, the students missed the deliberate pressure of time that was supposed to influence their writing decisions. It's hard to be critical of your process when that process includes so much time translating words and ideas across languages.

Several months removed from the in-class portion of my project, I am still struggling to answer the question of how to best incorporate ELL students into an immediate writing classroom. It's a matter that I will need to resolve if I hope to continue using immediate writing in my classroom. Places to look for answers include all the work being done in the fields of ELL and ESL. Another possibility is to have students respond in the moment of the writing in their most comfortable language, then translate it into English later. This might give my ELL students the flexibility to use all of their critical skills in the act of writing, worrying less about mistakes of usage and so forth. While this is not a

perfect solution, it probably gets ELL students as close to the experience that is the goal of immediate writing in the classroom as I can provide.

### Looking Forward With New Research

Thomas Rickert's book *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being* was published after much of my planning and study was completed, but it sheds important light on some of the ideas I was getting at during my work. I'd like to spend some time here considering Rickert's ideas and the implications they have for pedagogy and classroom theory. Rickert's main concerns don't include classroom activities. In fact, the words "classroom" or "pedagogy" don't appear in the index of his book. But the overarching argument of the book is applicable for a teacher looking to include a broader scope of rhetorical actions in the classroom.

In his early chapters, Rickert explores the concept of space, specifically, the varied spaces in which rhetorical action might occur. Rickert's project writ large is to problematize the relationship between subject and object as understood by most of rhetorical theory, and as he explains his broadening of what we understand to mean when we discuss agency, he unpacks the concept of *chora*. I've written about *chora* in previous chapters, specifically in reference to Ulmer's work. Rickert also invokes Ulmer's understanding of *chora*, and then expands on it to focus on distending what he calls subject/object dichotomy. As Rickert explains, to maintain the subject/object dichotomy is to ignore all the ways in which the world—and all the varied potential spaces within the world—might exert influence. In other words, Rickert believes that in the course of rhetorical action a subject might also work as an object, and vice versa, until the relationship is less a one-way exchange and more of a continuous/simultaneous transmission.

This muddies our understanding of what it means to be an agent within a world. Beyond that, Rickert also wants to reposition what he calls a "separatist mind/body/environment paradigm" (43). These entities are not separate, but are instead connected in a way that allows them to exert varied

influence at any given time. Also, these entities have porous boundaries that facilitate their influences' and concerns' leaking through each other. Objects, actors, and environments that exist seemingly in the background each potentially spill into the rhetorical situation and demand the rhetor's attention, sometimes quietly, sometimes forcefully. In large part, too, Rickert argues, all objects, actors and environments from one's past can reach forward in time to exert influence on a rhetor's decisions. Taken collectively, the myriad histories and presences (pun unintended, but useful) at any given time begin to contribute to what Rickert is describing as the rhetorical ambience his book describes. This is particularly true when we think about place and the placing of rhetorical action, which brings us back to *chora*. Rickert explains what I've been trying to unpack here:

From the choric perspective I seek to explain here, minds are at once *embodied* [emphasis original], and hence grounded in emotion and sensation, and *dispersed* [emphasis original] into the environment itself, and hence no longer autonomous actants but composites of intellect, body, information, and scaffoldings of material artifacts.

(43)

I take Rickert to mean here that we are *in* the world at the same time we are *of* the world. This makes assigning rhetorical agency more difficult than when we operate with the historical subject/object dichotomy, because we can now see that those roles fluctuate within rhetorical situations. Rhetoric operates within multiple simultaneous feedback loops.

Rickert goes on to explain how *chora* shapes our rhetoric and our theories of rhetoric. *Chora* takes on a rich meaning for Rickert, as it takes into account not only physical space, but also technological, virtual, implied, and imagined spaces. Additionally, *chora* subsumes matters of medium and affordances in invention. Leaning again on Ulmer and others, Rickert explains that “the *chora* transforms our senses of beginning, creation, and invention by placing those activities concretely within material environments, informational spaces, and affective (or bodily) registers” (45). *Chora's*

relationship with theories of invention is important since space does so much to limit and inspire (and inspire through limiting) our responses to given circumstances. In fact, we could say that *chora* is most-often responsible for the impetus for action. Our environment provides the reason for rhetorical response. At the same time, *chora* can provide the medium for that response. Rickert highlights this relationship between invention and action within the concept of *chora* while critiquing the field of Rhetoric Studies's lack of work on the subject. He writes:

In short, *chora* helps us understand that rhetorical concepts such as “beginning,” “invention,” and “place” are not in fact clear and that, far from this being only a philosophical or theoretical concern, such inquiry can itself lead to innovative inventional practices. (47)

This statement leads to Rickert referring to what Plato called “conditions of possibility” (57) as he discusses that *chora* does not merely refer to presence. What matters to us as actors within rhetorical situations are the ideas that might come to be as a result of *chora*, creating an environment that exerts assorted influences on our responses; these myriad influences of history and environment begin to encompass what Rickert calls “ambiance.”

To describe what this shift in rhetorical theory might look like, Rickert explains that “a choric rhetorician will attend to memory, networks, technologies, institutions, and environments (places), because these things all touch on place as something generated, not statically present and hence perceived” (67). I am interested in how this attending might look in the context of a classroom, and here I begin to draw a connection between Rickert's book and my classroom experiment. Though my project was planned and implemented before the publication of Rickert's book, I see my classroom activities as a direct application of Rickert's theories. As my students manipulated technology to invent and publish their work they were operating with an ecology scaffolded by the possibilities that technology presented. We didn't use the word at the time, but my students were responding to the

rhetorical ambiance at that moment. But as Rickert explains, what my students did was more than just responding to ambiance. They also allowed that ambiance to shift toward them. What I mean is that, when thinking about our Write Now! Activity, for instance, my students' essays were shaped by the available suggested topics on Twitter as well as the technology of Twitter itself. Their responses within Twitter, in addition to being influenced by the Twitter ecology itself, impact their own writing and the writing of others. In short, my students began to have a real understanding of the differing realities of assorted writing spaces.

As an example of my students coming to this understanding, I refer to the response from Brooke that I quoted at length in Chapter Four. Here is the relevant section:

That is what is great about Twitter, you can start a trend with people who are into the same things as you with just a simple hashtag. It was kind of amazing to see how many people, at the end, came into the conversation. It is definitely different from “real” conversation in the fact that people tend to be a little more casual. People can also join conversations they might not in real life because they essentially don’t really know anyone. Twitter does have similarities with a “real” conversation. There is still the same back and forth, there is still people that will say too much of what they feel, and there are still people who talk too much. You can still get a sense of the person’s personality by what they are saying and that is pretty neat.

Perhaps some of what I am calling her understanding isn't new-found, but rather the intuition of a bright young person who was already aware of the practical differences between types of writing spaces. That is why, going forward, further inquiries into the use of technologically-mediated writing that are concerned with measuring growth in students' understanding of writing spaces should include an early pre-test that uncovers how much students have thought about these matters. My inclination is to think that students of a certain age or higher—say, maybe 14, or so—do already know that writing

works differently in different spaces. We learn from a young age to modulate our communication given the situation (no loud talking in church, for example), so this concept isn't new to young people. However, they may not have been explicitly asked to do the cognitive work technology theories suggest we ask students to complete in regards to using technology. I believe that once we ask the question, we'll be pleased to see that most students understand what the theorists describe.

Rickert's ambient rhetoric theory has at its foundation a certain materialism. That is to say that the world around us presses against us in many ways. Its assumptions, allowances, histories, social constructions, environments, ecologies, languages, and more, are always pressing (against) us as we press (against) them. The world defines us in a tangible way, though the elements that work on us may themselves be intangible. Ambient rhetoric makes visible the many invisible forces that influence our discourses. Ambient rhetoric reveals the layers upon which which our rhetorical actions are built. There are perhaps no better places to see this revealing at work than in the writing spaces hinged on technology. In technologically-mediated writing we see the materials of rhetorical construction. Thought processes and feedback loops are recorded and tracked in email exchanges, Twitter feeds, and Facebook "likes." Hyperlinking allows an audience to traverse a writer's research and influences without leaving the original work or hunting down a reference. Images, videos, sounds, and other multimodal artifacts can be embedded seamlessly into texts. Technology reveals the *stuff* of rhetorical action, and allows for its repurposing and easy manipulation.

When I was in the early stages of this project, the *stuff* of rhetorical action was an important point of analysis. I was struck by how the ancient Greek rhetors learned to manipulate their oral arguments given specific needs of the situation, by how they had practiced and prepared stock responses and pieces of responses that they could draw on when needed. In other words, the *stuff* of rhetoric, though this time, an aural rhetoric that relied upon their memory. While my students wouldn't need necessarily to rely on such memory, I thought that writing might be conceived as being similarly

performative. To get at that, students would need to be placed in situations that required rhetorical flexibility to “perform” successful writing. These writings would need to be judged as complete, final texts, in much the same way the ancient Greeks might have gotten a one-shot speaking chance. Here, then, my project began to lean toward studies of *kairos*, and the search for the right response at the right time.

I believe I did have my students engaged in *kairotic* writing, but I think my study only just begins to think about the materialism of writing as a collection of moves and artifacts that might be called upon and manipulated for given moments. Rickert writes about Rhetoric's complicated relationship with “things” and how they shape our language and our understanding of the world. Artifacts can hold much sway over the way we can form our thinking, and they are rich with meaning and implications. As he writes in his discussion of the photograph *Earthrise*,

We never step outside of meaning, which is impossible in any event. But meaning is not the entire story. Humans certainly attribute or read meaning into *Earthrise*, but this attribution cannot account for the image's power because the materiality of the earth—the fragile, sheltering beauty of the “blue marble”—is more than a meaningful image. The stay of materiality bears up the meanings we reach for, even as the meanings we reach for have already emerged with the worldliness of our existence. Our dwelling practices take for within this give and take. (216)

I take Rickert to mean here that the image, which I reproduce below, is more than a photograph by way of becoming a vessel into which we place our understanding of the image. I imagine any number of possible interpretations of the “meaning” of *Earthrise*: a victory for science, proof of humanity’s ability to overcome challenges, a spiritual awakening.



*Earthrise*, as photographed by Apollo 8 astronaut Bill Anders, from Wikimedia Commons, January 21, 2014.

Rickert is asking us to consider how the materials of the world work together to generate meaning. These meanings are tied to the ways artifacts exist as physical objects to be manipulated, as well as physical objects inseparably linked to their own creation and publication histories.

We could theorize that these objects could be the elements of rhetoric my students generate—elements that may exist as objects outside of my students' work in their own right. Draw a line, then, from thinking about student writing as similar to *kairotic* speech to thinking about the elements of *kairotic* writing as objects to store and call upon when needed. Meaning is then created by assembling the materials of rhetoric. Furthermore, the completed rhetorical responses themselves become material objects that enter the world with—to use Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel's term again—rhetorical velocity, where they may be absorbed by the churning action of later rhetorical work.

## Conclusion

When I began this project, it was about a lot of things: the role of classic rhetoric in modern classrooms, identity through writing, technology and writing, teaching writing, teaching *kairos*, *kairos* and technologically-mediated writing. The list goes on. As I peeled away the unnecessary topics and



subtopics, what I found was the core of my research interests. What can we prepare students for the writing they'll most-often do, while maintaining our responsibilities to them and the institutions at which we work? My answer, as discussed in my previous chapters, was immediate writing.

First Year Writing has abandoned immediate writing in favor of writing process pedagogy that results in writing that is constantly churning in place but rarely getting to a finished state. And while it's true that writing is never *really* done and is subject to constant revision and revisitation, writing process has left our students lacking experience with writing experiences that require quick, adaptive thinking, intimate knowledge of their own writing abilities (and even their processes), and the chance to produce work in an environment they will most certainly live in for most of their writing lives. There is room in FYW for this kind of writing, and I believe it should be a part of a well-balanced approach to writing instruction. Given the preponderance of technology and multimodal writing, the teaching of immediate writing is more relevant and more accessible than ever. Writing process pedagogy has robbed our students to chance to work on their writing *in the moment*. I believe we should bring that opportunity back to the classroom.

## WORKS CITED

- Arola, Kristin L. and Anne Francis Wysocki, eds. *Composing (Media) = Composing (Embodiment): Bodies, Technologies, Writing, The Teaching of Writing*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2012. Print.
- Bamberg, Betty. "Rewriting—A Waste of Time?" *Comment and Response. College English*. Vol. 40, No. 7. (March, 1979): 837-839). *ProQuest*. Web. 25 Nov. 2013.
- Berlin, James. *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987. Print.
- Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999. Print.
- Brook, Robert. "Ethnographic Practice as a Means of Invention: Seeking a Rhetorical Paradigm for Ethnographic Writing." *Voices and Visions: Refiguring Ethnography in Composition*. Ed. Christina Kirklighter, Cloe Vincent, and Joseph M. Moxley. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1997. 11-23. Print.
- Brown, Jr., James J. "Louis C.K.'s 'Weird Ethic'" Kairos and Rhetoric in the Network." *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*. Vol. 3, Issue 1, 2013: 1-7. PDF.
- Chiseri-Strater, Elizabeth. "What Goes on Here?' The Uses of Ethnography in Composition Studies." *Exploring Composition Studies: Sites, Issues, and Perspectives*. Ed. Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda. Logan: Utah University Press, 2012. 199-210. Print.
- Douglas, Wallace. "Rhetoric for the Meritocracy: The Creation of Composition at Harvard." *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*. Ed. Susan Miller. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009. Print.
- Emig, Janet. *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. Urbana: National Council of the Teachers of English, 1971. Print.

- “Fact Sheet 2012.” *Saginaw Valley State University*. n.p., n.d. Web. 15 April 2013.
- “First-Year Writing @ SVSU.” *Saginaw Valley State University*. n.p., n.d. Web. 15 April 2013.
- Flower, Linda. *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008. Print.
- “General Education.” *Saginaw Valley State University*. n.p., n.d. Web. 30 April 2013.
- Harris, Joseph. *A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1997. Print.
- Hogan, Craig. “Let's Not Scrap the Impromptu Test Essay Yet.” *Research in the Teaching of English*. Vol. 11. No. 3. (Winter, 1977): 219-225. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 December, 2013.
- “Institutional Accreditation.” *Saginaw Valley State University*. n.p., n.d. Web. 15 April 2013.
- Kinneavy, James L. “*Kairos* in Classical and Modern Rhetorical Theory.” *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*. Eds. Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. Print.
- Kress, Gunther. *Literacy in the New Media Age*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Losey, Kay. “Describing the Cultures of the Classroom: Problems in the Classroom Ethnography.” *Voices and Visions: Refiguring Ethnography in Composition*. Ed. Christina Kirklighter, Cloe Vincent, and Joseph M. Moxley. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1997. 86-94. Print.
- Mills, Barriss. “Writing as Process.” *College English*. Vol. 15, No.1.October (1953): 19-26. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 March, 2013
- Moss, Beverly. “Ethnography and Composition: Studying Language at Home.” *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Ed. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. 153-171. Print.
- Muckelbauer, John. *The Future of Invention: Rhetoric, Postmodernism, and the Problem of Change*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008. Print.

- Nesmith, Michael. "I think about the Monkees tour that has passed and my solo tour. . .".  
Facebook timeline post. 1 Sept. 2013. Accessed 1 Sept. 2013. Web.
- North, Stephen M. *Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Upper  
Montclair, N.J: Boynton/Cook, 1987. Print.
- "OIR—Information & Data." *Saginaw Valley State University*. n.p., n.d. Web. 15 April 2013.
- Palmeri, Jason. *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy*. Carbondale:  
Southern Illinois University Press: 2012. Print.
- Parker Jr., Richard P. "Focus in the Teaching of Writing: On Process or Product?" *English  
Journal*. December (1972): 1328-1333. PDF.
- Perl, Sondra. "The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers." *Cross-Talk in Comp  
Theory Second Edition*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana: National Council of the Teachers  
of English, 2003. Print.
- Petraglia, Joseph. "Writing as an Unnatural Act." *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing  
Instruction*. Ed. Joseph Petraglia. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1995. Print.
- Prins, Kristin. "Crafting New Approaches to Composition." *Composing (Media) = Composing  
(Embodiment): Bodies, Technologies, Writing, The Teaching of Writing*. Kristin L. Arola  
and Anne Francis Wysocki, eds. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2012. Print.
- Purves, Alan C. "Interchanges: Apologia Not Accepted." *College Composition and  
Communication*. 46.4 (December 1995): 549-550. PDF.
- Ray, Ruth. "Composition from the Teacher-Research Point of View." *Methods and Methodology  
in Composition Research*. Ed. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan. Carbondale: Southern  
Illinois University Press, 1992. 172-189. Print.
- . "Teacher-Research Point of View." *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Ed.  
Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. 172-189. Print.

- Rice, Jeff. "Symposium: What Should College English Be? Networks and New Media." *College English*. Volume 69, Number 2, November 2006: 127-133. PDF.
- Rickert, Thomas. *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2013. Print.
- Rodrigues, Raymond J. "Moving Away from Writing Process Worship." *English Journal*. September (1985): 24-27. PDF.
- Saginaw Valley State University First Year Writing Instructor's Guide*. Saginaw Valley State University, 2012. PDF.
- Sample, Mark. "Practical Advice for Teaching with Twitter." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 25 Aug 2010. 9 Sept 2013. Web.
- Sheridan, David M., Jim Ridolfo, and Anthony J. Michel. *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric*. Anderson: Parlor Press, 2012. Print.
- "SVSU Fast Facts." *Saginaw Valley State University*. n.p., n.d. Web. 15 April 2013.
- Thompson, Roger. "Kairos Revisited: An Interview with James Kinneavy." *Rhetoric Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1/2 (Autumn 2000), 73-88. Print.
- Ulmer, Gregory L. *Heuristics: The Logic of Invention*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. Print.
- Wardle, Elizabeth. "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?" *College Composition and Communication*. 60:4 June (2009): 765-789. PDF.
- White, Edward M. "An Apologia for the Timed Impromptu Essay Test." *College Composition and Communication*. 46.1 (February 1995): 30-45. PDF.
- . "Interchanges: Response." *College Composition and Communication*. 46.4 (December

1995): 550-551. PDF.

Wysocki, Anne Francis, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Cynthia L. Selfe, and Geoffrey Sirc. *Writing New Media: Theory and Applications for Expanding the Teaching of Composition*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009. Print.

**ABSTRACT**

**TECHNOLOGICALLY-MEDIATED WRITING IN THE FIRST YEAR WRITING  
CLASSROOM: TWITTER AND IMMEDIATE WRITING**

by

**JASON KAHLER**

**May 2014**

**Advisor:** Dr. Richard Marback

**Major:** Composition and Rhetoric

**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

A series of assignments in First Year Writing classes at Saginaw Valley State University utilizes social media to address issues of *kairos* in student writing experiences. The term “immediate writing” is applied to these writing activities which require students to produce polished writing in a specific moment, a different objective than commonly-used impromptu or freewriting. Included are considerations of technologically-mediated writing and the artifacts used to generate it.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

A life-long resident of Michigan, I teach at Saginaw Valley State University, which is about 30 minutes too far north but otherwise perfect.

I am writing this statement in an office that includes my children's artwork, a LEGO zombie buggy driver, a set of lacrosse equipment, and a specially-commissioned water color of Blue Beetle (the Ted Kord version).