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Lauri B. Goodling
Georgia State University

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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT 2.0: A BLENDED PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES AND
ACTIVISM

by

LAURI GOODLING

Under the Direction of Lynée Lewis Gaillet, PhD, and Ashley Holmes, PhD

ABSTRACT

This study looks at the practice of teaching civic engagement through digital and Web 2.0 tools and examines the impact on agency and self-efficacy of first-year writing students. The primary focus is studying student attitudes toward use of these tools, civic engagement in general, and the perceived value of engaging civically through use of these tools with the hopes of better understanding the value of this work and the impact it will have on future civic, community, and political engagement. Based on the findings of a triad of studies published in 2012 – a CIRCLE study (“That’s Not Democracy”), Giovanna Mascheroni’s study of Italian youth and political uses of the web, and a study conducted by DoSomething.org – the researcher designed a first-year composition course that asked students to choose a cause or issue for the

duration of the semester and take on roles of informer, reformer, advocate, and activist on three fronts: Twitter (microblogging), Wordpress (blogging), and YouTube (digital advocacy videos). A feminist methodology was used for this study, understanding that the participatory nature of the research was an essential part of the ethos of the researcher. Qualitative data was collected through analysis of student work, reflection essays, and semi-structured focus group conversations. Through the focus group discussions, the student participants and the researcher worked collaboratively to create knowledge. The findings of this study echoed those of the three studies mentioned above. In addition to showing that instruction and experience with digital civic engagement *are* linked to an increased likelihood to engage in the future, the study showed that there are numerous benefits to teaching new media, civic, and academic literacies through an activist lens in writing studies. Students acquire a host of academic and professional skills that will help them succeed in the classroom and their future careers. Beyond acquisition of research and 21st century writing skills, teaching digital activism empowers students, increases agency, and helps them grasp the value of disrupting existing, outdated, or oppressive power dynamics in effective ways. Finally, it helps develop lifelong learners who are self-motivated.

INDEX WORDS: Multiliteracies, Civic engagement, New media, Digital pedagogy, 21st century literacies, New literacies, Multimodal composition, Digital activism, Social Media, Rhetoric and composition

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by

LAURI GOODLING

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Georgia State University

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2015

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LAURI GOODLING

Committee Chairs: Lynée Gaillet
Ashley Holmes

Committee: Elizabeth Lopez

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
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DEDICATION

For Britt and Christopher, thanks for making me want to be a better person and do my part to make the world a better place for you to grow up in.

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My family has been an endless stream of support and encouragement. Every single time I heard the words “You can do this!” or “We are so proud of you!” I have felt refueled to carry on. Thank you Mom, Daddy, Jack, Pam, Britt, and Christopher for reminding me that you believe in me over and over again. I love you all so much!

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Teaching Philosophy

As a teacher of writing in the college classroom, I believe my purpose to be threefold: to teach my students how to communicate effectively through writing; to teach them how to glean meaning from a variety of written texts (and put them in context); and to steer them in the direction of being responsible, self-reliant, contributing citizens of this world. In order to accomplish my teaching goals, it is necessary to recognize how my students learn. Though I have taken a couple of current-traditional detours in my fifteen years of teaching composition studies, I would define my pedagogical philosophy as more rhetorical, social constructivist in nature.

As a compositionist, I believe that language and thought are interconnected. Writing is both social and political, and writers are constantly contributing to an ongoing, community-wide discourse. Learning takes place when students 1) are actively engaged in the material, 2) interact with knowledge by thinking critically about it, 3) are provided opportunity to reflect on the material that is delivered and 4) are encouraged to apply it to their own experiences. I follow the Vygotsky model of social construction when designing meaningful assignments for my students.

Much like John Dewey and David Kolb, I believe wholeheartedly in experiential learning. Dewey, in particular, advocates for the valuable learning experience, one that arises organically, noting that it “arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a person over dead places in the future” (38). He also says that “every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into” (38). This theory provides the framework for my course design.

Some academicians prefer lectures to engaged, student-driven learning. They seek to separate learning from action or service, which Dewey refers to as the “separation of mind and

body” (1916). However, if students are educated using what Freire refers to as the “banking” model instead of being actively engaged in their own learning, then learning will stop as soon as the formal education has ended – once the degree is earned. My goal is to foster in my students a love for learning, so they will become lifelong learners (a goal echoed by Dewey, Kolb, Deans, as well). This will not happen if students are “passive consumers of knowledge”; instead, they must be “active contributors, informed participants” (Fischer, 1999).

In line with my tendency toward engaged learning, I consider myself a pedagogue of multiliteracies. I work to increase my students’ cultural, community, public, and social literacy competencies (Street, 1995) and also their digital, information, technical, visual, and new media literacy competencies (New London Group, 1996; Wyocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, Sirc, 2004; Shipka, 2011; Arola and Wysocki, 2012; and Bowen and Whithaus, 2013).

I believe, like many of the scholars I’ve studied over the years (Dewey, 1916; Haswell, 2002; Gerriets and Lowe, 2002; Hutchinson, 2005), that reflection is critical for real learning to occur. Not only is this a valuable skill for students to have throughout their academic careers, but it is an essential life skill. To reflect is to learn from experience, as “no experience having meaning is possible without some element of thought” (Dewey). As a result, students employ the reflection essay multiple times during my classes. They reflect on the technology and media being used, their academic performance, their civic engagement experiences, and real-world application of concepts we explore together.

1.2 The Problem

There are obstacles to our students’ successful engagement in community, social and political, by way of new media that aren’t being adequately addressed in the composition

classroom, the natural place for this new medium and audience to be taught. The problem is multi-part:

1. There is a broadly accepted assumption that students are disengaged from community and civic work, which may or may not be true, but the reality is that if we don't ask them to engage and teach them how to do so meaningfully, fewer of them will.
2. The types of "activism" and "engagement" have expanded to include new literacies, which aren't being taught or written about widely enough, particularly not in the context of civic engagement in the field of composition studies.
3. The skillset needed in order to engage in this new digital form of activism isn't sufficiently valued next to the traditional, alphabetical literacies. This lack of value is rooted in lack of sufficient pedagogy surrounding multi- and new literacies, the privileging of alphabetical literacies in higher education, and an inadequate body of knowledge on successful ways to assess such work.
4. Much of the engagement that does exist in digital and new media has been labeled "slacktivism" in the mainstream media and in activist scholarship, which implies that it is not a worthwhile type of engagement.
5. While there is research that supports the use of civic engagement, service learning, new media, and multimodal communication in the classroom, very little research specifically addresses how these teaching strategies work together to help shape student advocacy work or activism in the 21st century.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative study, I have looked at the practice of teaching civic engagement through digital and Web 2.0 tools and examined the impact on agency and self-efficacy of freshman year writing students. My primary interest was studying student attitudes toward use of these tools, civic engagement in general, and the perceived value of engaging civically through use of these tools. The conceptual framework of this study consisted of effective teacher research. The research design involved semi-structured, focus group interviews. The information gathered in the focus groups has helped determine the value of teaching civic and digital literacy on student civic engagement practices. Three separate class assignments comprised the experience on which the focus group conversations were based. The research findings have implications for future teachers who want to more effectively work toward a combined academic and civic purpose using 21st century literacies in their classes.

1.4 Background

I have been a civically, socially, and politically engaged individual since I was in the third grade. Since that time, I have served in student government capacities, as a legislative intern, on political campaigns, as an activist on several reform and civil liberties-related issues, and as a political blogger. I have voted in every national and local election I can remember since my 18th birthday, and I have traveled to each of the surrounding southern states at one time or another to participate in a political rally or work on a political campaign. I believe in the criticality of being engaged in the world, and I teach toward that end. Unlike my fellow activist researchers who bring their activist work into the classroom and engage their students on particular issues or causes, I believe strongly in my role as a distant leader. I do not believe my personal, social, or political views have relevance in my classroom, and I do not wish for my

students to even be able to identify those views from the way I deliver my lessons or facilitate our class discussions. In fact, projecting my civic and political values onto them is an obstruction to the development of the agency I hope they acquire more of during our time together.

Instead, it is my goal to encourage my students *to* engage, to introduce them to a wide variety of ways to engage, and then to send them forth to make the decisions on what issues to engage in fully on their own. I see my role in this venture as an encourager, a leader, but not one who pulls my students along my political path with me.

1.5 Teaching Civic Engagement through New Media

Despite the message of the mainstream media, a message of disengagement that is argued in Robert Putnam's oft-referenced book *Bowling Alone*, and a body of pre-2008 research that shows civic engagement in young adults declining, the more recent research is showing a different message: civic engagement among young people is actually on the rise.

The website DoSomething.org, which touts itself as "one of the largest orgs for young people and social change" has 2.5 million members working to "make the world suck less." It specifically targets U.S. and Canadian citizens under the age of 26 (affectionately calling the 26+ crowd "old people") and provides opportunities for users to serve on issues they care about, on their schedule, to whatever degree they want. It's basically action tailored to activists' lives. In fact, in a 2012 study, DoSomething.org found that a whopping 93% of young people *want* to volunteer. The study also showed that the more social a young person is, the more likely s/he is to engage in social action. And the primary factor in whether or not a college student engages civically? Friends ("The DoSomething.org Index on Young People and Volunteering").

The findings of the DoSomething.org study tell us that the key to getting more young people engaged in social and political action is to make it, well, more social. And this is where social media comes in.

There is also a host of qualitative data resulting from focus groups with young adults that exposes some common trends in propensity toward civic and community engagement. The information gained in these studies can help us identify opportunities to impact engagement in a variety of ways we might not have previously considered. In those areas where young adults are disengaged, great opportunity exists.

Italian scholar Giovanna Mascheroni (2012) studied young people's attitudes towards civic and political engagement through peer group conversations. She wanted to understand how young people used social networking services (SNSs) as a means to engage. For the most part, her empirical evidence showed that young people who were already engaged in some way – or whose parents had made political conversation part of the family “culture” – were part of a “civic culture” (211-12) and therefore politically interested or engaged, despite sometimes feeling jaded about how much influence they would actually have on problems facing their community. However, young people who came from lower-income families and/or those families that did not discuss politics and social issues were part of an “uncivic culture” (211) and were predictably disengaged or disaffected with politics.

This probably seems like common sense: if parents discuss political, social, and cultural issues at the dinner table, for example, children will grow to be more civically literate, thus, engaged (Mascheroni, 2012). However, because not all young people come to college with these requisite skills and experiences, the responsibility is on educators to teach them.

Recent work out of The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University shows that young people who are *asked* to engage (say, by a community leader or in a college class or by a friend) tend to *stay* in engaged civically (“That’s Not Democracy,” 2012). This engagement can be as simple as joining an ongoing conversation about community problems, much like the work Linda Flower (2008) has done in the Community Literacy Center, or it can be more active and action-oriented (like serving at a shore sweep or on a Habitat for Humanity project, maybe working on a political campaign).

The goal should always be to have an element of reciprocity in the work being done. That is, the civic activities should be fulfilling to the individual engaging in them as well as the perceived beneficiary of the engagement. Without this element of reciprocity, there is little chance that the engagement experience will have a lasting impact and the desired element of longevity. Even worse, service without reciprocity is an obstacle to agency. As Thomas Deans and many other civic pedagogues warn, an imbalance of benefits of service can result in less engagement and deeper strain on existing community relationships than had the service never occurred (Deans, Roswell, & Wurr, 2010).

We can help students develop their civic mindedness through both asking them to engage in the public sphere and also teaching them how. For example, Mascheroni notes that young people who “develop complex patterns of news consumption online” and are free to choose “lifestyle-related forms of engagement” (p. 216-7) will engage more in what Bennett calls “social movement citizenship” (qtd in Mascheroni 217). As compositionists, we can provide both instruction and opportunity to develop meaningful, informed, and effective civic participation. Finally, introducing social media into our classes – and linking that tool to social or political

action – can be just the right formula for prompting many more of those 93% who *want* to engage to actually take the steps to *do something*.

I was inspired to design a course that focused on a blended pedagogy of multiliteracies and activism because of my own passions surrounding civic and political engagement and new media. It seems natural to incorporate these passions into my course design, particularly because they are steeped in critical thinking, analysis, composition and rhetoric, skills that are already part of first-year composition. I also want to better understand how my students think and feel about their role as a participant in civic life. As part of this investigation of student attitudes and behaviors surrounding civic engagement, I designed an English Composition I course in which I teach students how to engage through various new media platforms.

1.5.1 Course Design

I looked to the findings in the CIRCLE study (“That’s Not Democracy”), the Mascheroni study, and the DoSomething.org study to help design a course that would offer instruction and experience in digital civic engagement. Bearing in mind the factors those studies cited as likely to increase engagement, as well as my own experience as a civic pedagogue which suggested that a lack of agency and self-efficacy was inhibiting student engagement, I designed a course around increasing new media, civic, and academic literacies.

Students in this class use a variety of modes and media to compose and deliver information. Because so much of the writing is of a multimodal nature, I thought it particularly important to select relevant textbooks, books that would provide instruction on alphabetic writing skills (process, research, grammar and mechanics, writing in the modes), as well as digital writing skills. I selected two newly published textbooks, *Writing in Action* by Andrea Lunsford and *Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* by Kristin Arola,

Jennifer Sheppard, and Cheryl Ball. Both of these texts are available as ebooks and have a treasure trove of online examples as supplements to the texts. They are visually rich, multimodal in nature themselves, so they model sound multimodal design as they instruct students on these principles of design and delivery.

In an effort to balance the traditional composition with the multimodal composition, which is essential in the modern college classroom (Wysocki, 2004; Comstock and Hocks, 2006) the course designed for my study begins with a traditional, paper-based essay assignment. The essay serves as a diagnostic, a means to gauge student writing strengths and weaknesses in the formal writing atmosphere. In addition, it is an opportunity for students to explore prospective causes/issues for the civic engagement portion of the course. Finally, the essay serves to prompt students to formulate their own definition of the term “citizenship” as it relates to participation in cultural, community, and civic/political life. As a prompt to the essay, students rank citizen-related activities on a handout titled “How Do You Define Citizenship?” which is based on Nadinne Cruz’s 1996 document “How Do You Define Service?” (see Appendix A).

Students will ultimately arrive at one topic – either an issue or a cause – on which they work to impact or influence change through the remainder of the semester. For the purposes of this class, I define a **cause** as a topic of concern that requires action for the purposes of raising awareness or funds to help find a solution (examples might include, but are not limited to Cystic Fibrosis, Autism, Domestic Violence, Homelessness, etc.). An **issue** is typically something being debated (or that should be) in the political realm. Issue engagement generally surrounds activities such as education, lobbying politicians, and identifying or gaining new supporters (examples might include, but are not limited to Tax Policy Reform, Decriminalization of Drugs, Immigration Reform, etc.). Either could constitute activism, depending on the degree to which a

student chooses to engage and the outcome she is working toward. Whether the goal is to join the conversation in order become more informed and, in turn, educate others, or to enact quantifiable social or political change, all student engagement choices are equally valued in this course. I categorize the work we will do together as entry-level engagement, so the standard of “change” is more appropriately termed “impact” or “influence” in this class. While working toward political change might qualify to some as “activism” in the traditional sense of the word, I operate from the position that work to educate, raise awareness, (re)shape perceptions is work that constitutes change in the level of information that is widely known or accepted.

In keeping with ideas about scaffolding assignments, I’ve designed the coursework so that each assignment will build on the next. Students will continue revisiting previous assignments and applying the previously acquired skills in subsequent assignments. The first assignment is an introduction to using a tool some students already use (Twitter) in a forum many are already actively engaged in (social networking) for a purpose they might not yet have considered (civic engagement). This exercise is meant to be treated as a light introduction to civic engagement, a way for students to establish connections related to their cause, so they don’t feel like they are communicating with a single audience member, their instructor. This is a low-stakes assignment, worth only 15% of the final average in the class. We spend approximately three weeks working on this project.

Building on the skills learned in the Twitter assignment, which introduced students to the concept of microblogging, we work to further develop their new media writing through blogging for this same cause. Students will have read many blogs as part of their Twitter activity. In addition, as a transitional activity between the Twitter and Blogging projects, they are asked to perform a rhetorical analysis of two existing blogs relevant to their own cause or issue. This

activity is meant to ease the transition from writing for Twitter to the medium of blogging. At first, the expectation is that their blogs will be mostly aggregates of other material related to their issue that is already available on the web – many of the same types of things they will have tweeted, actually – but eventually, once they get familiar with the tool, I will ask them to begin composing original posts that take on the form of commentary, analysis, or argument. This writing requires some additional research and further develops students’ positions on the issue. Students use the Twitter handle they developed in the previous assignment as a means to promote their blog and grow their readership.

The blogging assignment is more writing-intensive than the Twitter assignment, which helps to meet the more traditional essay writing objectives of the course, as outlined in the common course outlines (CCOs). It is also a higher-stakes assignment, worth 25% of the final grade in the class. We focus approximately four weeks on this assignment. Much like the microblogging assignment, work on the blog continues for the duration of the semester.

The ability to clearly articulate ideas on the chosen cause or issue is foundational in the successful completion of the third assignment in the sequence. Students ultimately parlay the information they have acquired, as well as their solid views on the issue into an effective “participatory” project that serves to either educate, argue, or inspire others to get involved in the cause they have taken up. Students have the option to choose between a digital medium for this project (a digital advocacy video, for example) or a face-to-face medium that relies on multimodality to some degree (organizing or attending a protest with some piece of visual or sonic rhetoric as part of this “appearance”). Both assignment options require students to demonstrate multimodality in their project “composition,” and both require a reflection essay.

Students are given four-to-six weeks to work on this project. Since much of the research will have already been completed (and possibly some of the writing, which may be pulled from their blogs and included in their scripts), the bulk of the time is spent storyboarding and then producing and editing their video or coordinating their public event. Students use the established Twitter handle and their blog to cross-promote the video or event. Because this assignment is a culmination of the two previous assignments and requires so much investment in writing and repurposing content, as well as tools, technology, and visual rhetoric, it is the highest-stakes assignment of the semester, worth 30% of their final grade. A more detailed plan of the course, including sample assignments and rubrics, can be found in the Appendix, beginning with the course syllabus.

Through the sequence of the three assignments, students learn the importance of becoming civically engaged, begin to adopt a specific cause they can continue to work on beyond this class, and learn how to use new media tools for much more than just interacting socially with their peer group. The hope is that the purposeful component to this work will yield much greater pride and investment on the part of the students and, ultimately, will be more effective at teaching them the most common styles of writing in the 21st century.

College students, those newly entering the “real world” want to know that they are able to make a difference in this world. The design of this particular course seeks to capitalize on that idealism and convert it into a practical skill set through which they can be agents of change.

2 **ACTIVISM IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES: ON CAMPUS, IN ART, IN MEDIA, AND ONLINE**

There is a long history of civic rhetoric in the public forum. Aristotle, Quintilian, Cicero all devoted their lives to development of the art and skill of rhetoric, and all worked toward a civic end. The teacher and rhetor Socrates delivered a defiant speech against an overpowerful government in 399 BC while on trial for corrupting the youth, which his student Plato chronicled in *The Apology*. But it isn't until Hortensia's "Speech to the Triumvirs" in 42 BC, where we can begin to see lines drawn – and simultaneously blurred – between rhetoric and activism, public and counterpublic speech, where true power dynamics are disrupted in a public space, and where dissident actions can lead to change.

In response to a proposed tax against the property of wealthy Roman women (which was ultimately taxation without representation, since women could neither serve as senators nor debate in the Forum), Hortensia marched in protest into the public space where women were forbidden. There, she delivered a very brief but poignant speech, effectively ending the tax for 2/3 of those affected. Hortensia's move emboldened other women more than 150 years later who gathered in the Forum to protest the Oppian Law, which controlled the amount of jewelry women could wear in public.

Dissident behavior such as that of Hortensia and the Oppian Law protestors is often necessary in order for any degree of change to occur, and there is an equally long and fascinating history of dissident efforts in this world. In the age of digital activism, it's important to recognize the parallels between social media and its revolutionary predecessors like dissident presses, street papers, 'zines, or alternative media like that of Situationism or Dadaism. If social media is

examined closely, it becomes clear that the kind of activism conducted digitally encompasses many of the already valued face-to-face forms of activism.

From Hortensia's speech to the Million Mom March of the late 1990s, a movement entirely mobilized through digital efforts, there is no doubt that both individual and collective dissident action can effectively disrupt power dynamics and lead to change. Much of that work has had its origins in art and media and on college campuses throughout the world.

2.1 Free Speech on College Campuses

Because freedom of speech is once again in jeopardy, we should study historical examples of what went wrong on other metropolitan campuses when attempts were made to obstruct speech. In recent years, there have been some oppressive and unconstitutional limitations placed on free speech at colleges around the country, where free expression policies and free speech zones serve more to limit than facilitate free speech of faculty, staff, and students. Such policies outline parameters – including restrictive times and locations (locations deemed “Free Speech Zones”) – under which faculty, staff, and students can assemble and demonstrate on campus. Permit processes require application days in advance, applications that can be denied without grounds.

Since free speech zones are locations identified and controlled entirely by administrators, they exist in complete opposition to “free speech,” and faculty have not had much success fighting them. As a result, the nonprofit, nonpartisan group Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) has taken up legal battles all over the country to squash the Free Speech Zones and policies supporting them. In April of 2014, following a rash of pre-ordained Free Speech Zones on campuses around the country, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe signed a bill – which FIRE supported and testified on behalf of – designating all outdoor areas of college

campuses in the Commonwealth “public forums, where student speech is subject only to reasonable, content- and viewpoint-neutral time, place, and manner restrictions” (“Virginia Bans Unconstitutional Campus ‘Free Speech Zones’”). In this same article, FIRE reports that one in six public colleges in the United States “unjustly restricts student speech with free speech zones.”

The opening statement of one “Free Expression Application Form” (see Appendix C) seems to serve as a disclaimer, noting that the college, “supports free expression as stated in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.” However, it quickly goes on to say, “Use of the Free Expression Area and all publicity material(s) must be approved through the Office of Student Life at least three (3) business days in advance...” and “the first priority for use of the area will be given to student activities, as well as academic and administrative uses. Other uses will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis,” effectively providing an unlimited number of reasons for the faculty and students not to be allowed to assemble and demonstrate. This kind of language provides administrators too much liberty to censor student and faculty expression and deny or obstruct any expression of ideas that are unfriendly to the administrators.

The desire of college officials to have notice when faculty and students are going to demonstrate is understandable. However, for the campus of an institution of higher education – where our primary goal is to help students discover their voices – it is disturbing that we would place so many restrictions on the right to assemble and express ideas freely. Academics should universally support Neil Gaiman’s defense of free speech: “If you accept – and I do – that freedom of speech is important, then you are going to have to defend the indefensible [...] because if you don’t stand up for the stuff you don’t like, when they come for the stuff you do like, you’ve already lost” (“Why Defend Freedom of Icky Speech?”). I think of George Orwell,

who said, “If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear,” and I realize how little real-world freedom of speech is honored in the confines of too many college campuses these days.

2.2 Activism Timeline – Major American Moments and Movements

1920s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dadaism
1930s-40s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zines gain popularity as dissident/independent presses (although some dates take it back to 1812 or post-Civil War) • CCNY Challenges to Free Speech (faculty and students) • Oxford Pledge (Oxford University)
1950s-60s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situationism (at Sorbonne/University of Strausberg, France) • Berkley, anti-war demonstrations • Southern colleges and students on racial issues • Civil Rights Movement – active on college campuses and through media • New Social Movement Theory – Alain Touraine • 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago (protesters clashed with police)
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zines become a way for fans of punk rock music to talk about a genre being ignored in the mainstream. • Feminism (art/media movements related to women’s rights/ERA/LGBT rights)
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zines merge concepts of underground culture and political dissent to take the shape they are known today, a means to give voice to the counterpublics and counter viewpoints to mainstream. • AIDS activism/War on Drugs • Gay Rights (art/media movements related to gay rights)
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet movements (late 90s): Million Mom March (Pole notes email and websites were used to mobilize participants); Jesse Ventura’s successful bid for Minnesota governor as an Independent candidate (used email and websites for fundraising, voter turnout and volunteer efforts) • War on Terror

<p>2000s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) in 2007 organized online via a website to mobilize an anti-Iraq war movement. There was a petition and a call to action: fund-raising, support by purchasing t-shirts and buttons and “shares” to show support digitally (via Myspace and Facebook). – Earl and Kimport 3-4). • During 2000 election, “vote-pairing sites” were developed in states deemed “safe” wins for each party in exchange for third-party votes in other states. These exchanges were eventually shut down by secretaries of state and election offices. • Zeke Spier – protester at the Republican National Convention in 2000 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania who was radicalized by efforts to squelch his speech
<p>2010s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Speech Zones on college campuses • Banksy brings street art as activism into the mainstream through his “Better Out Than In” campaign, which used social media to mobilize viewers to his visual messages. • WeiWeiCam – Ai Wei Wei is a Chinese dissident artist who was surveilled by the government and then detained for 3 months. Once released, he launched an artistic protest of “self-surveillance” where he set up cameras all over his house and runs them on a 24-hour feed on weiweicam.com. • Anonymous, Edward Snowden – digital hacktivists • Digital Activism Research Project and database of digital activist efforts is created • Ferguson and Garner protests (and riots) that came out of high-profile cases of alleged excessive use of force by white police officers against black men

Table 1: Major American Moments in Activism

2.3 Social Movements and Activism

Alain Touraine defines a social movement as “an answer either to a threat or a hope that is directly linked to the control that a social group has over its capacity to make decisions, to control changes and so on” (“The Importance of Social Movements” 89). He argues that essential to a valuable social movement is the fact that participants of the social group seeking change see themselves as “autonomous agents of action” (94), believing that “even in very difficult situations, it is possible to observe a social group develop a certain representation of its

situation and a certain capacity to act” (90). Touraine’s vision of social and cultural movements includes social actors, agents whose work is so important, the “future of democracy, of freedom, of justice” depends on it (95). Kristie Fleckenstein identifies a “symbiotic knot of agency,” which consist of “visual habits, rhetorical habits, and place” (*Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action* 41), with each equally dependent on one another. “The power to see, speak, and act in the world and to influence how others see, speak, and act in the world is tangled in the loops of a symbiotic knot,” she says, from which “agency emerges” (42).

Though I’d like to focus the discussion of activism on American movements of the 20th and 21st centuries, there are a couple of key international events that preceded this time and place that cannot go without mention, as they played a significant role in establishing precedent for activism through the use of visual rhetoric and media.

In the late 1780s, a movement against slavery was brewing in Britain. William Dolben, the British MP representing Oxford University and a staunch advocate for the abolition of slavery, drafted the first piece of legislation that would regulate slavery. The bill placed limits on the number of Africans that slave ships could carry in an effort to reduce loss of life and spread of disease. Prior to the passage of the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788, the slave ship *Brookes* had carried over 600 slaves on board. After the Slave Trade Act of 1788, it was permitted to carry only 454. The Plymouth chapter of *The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade* created a print of the *Brookes* in which they showed the layout of the entire ship with slaves lined up like sardines in a can; this image depicted stowage *after* the Slave Trade Act, effectively showing the passage of the Act had made conditions no more humane (see Fig. 1).

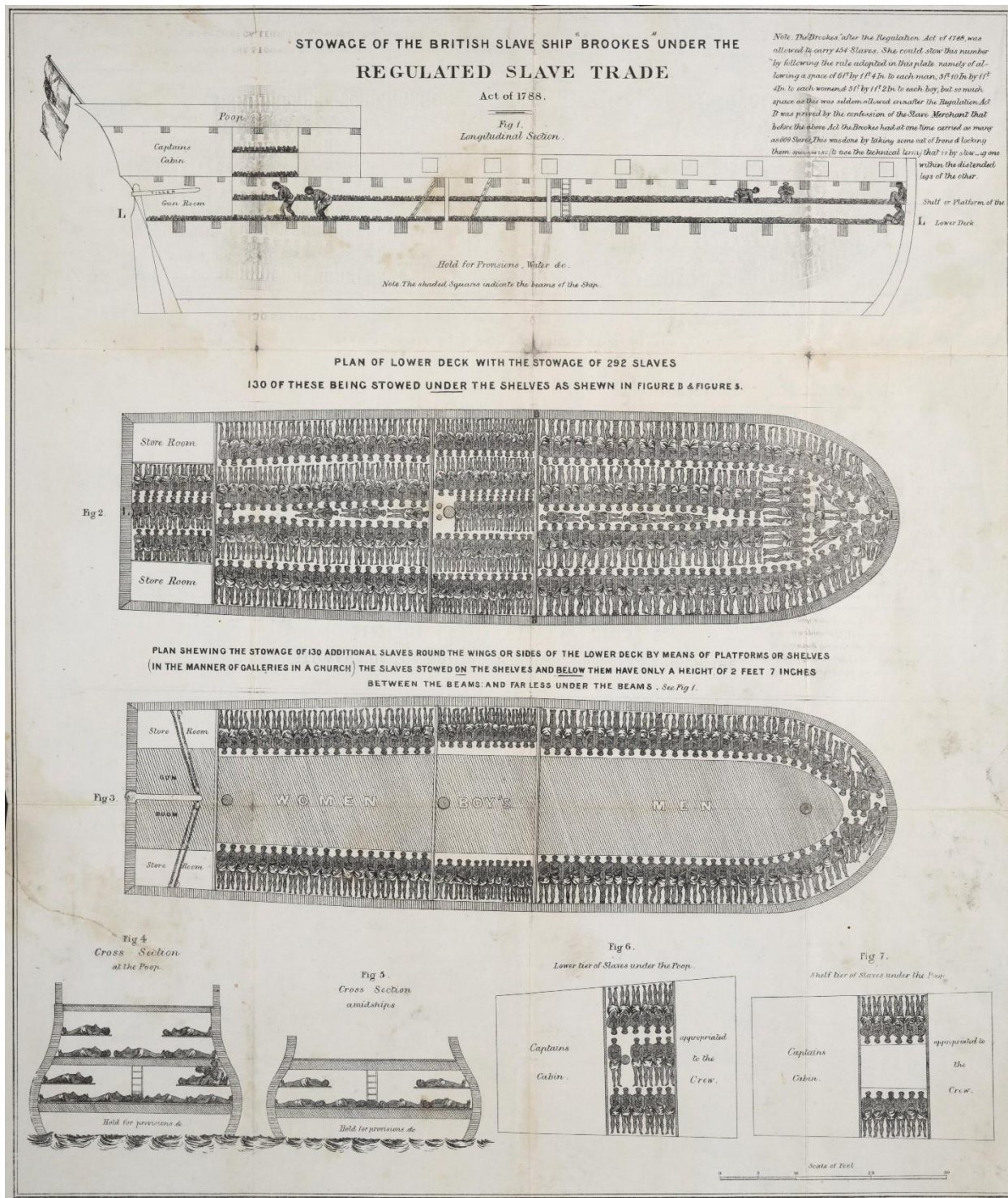


Figure 1: “Stowage of the British Slave Ship under the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788”

“Stowage of the British Slave Ship Under the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788” provided a harrowing visual of the conditions under which slaves were kept for sometimes

months at a time while being transported from Africa. This visual was delivered to the House of Commons in 1789 by Alexander Falconbridge and would not only be considered a key asset in the eventual abolition of slavery, but it would “go down in history as testimony to the power of visual evidence” (Tactical Technology Collective, *Visualising Information for Advocacy*). Indeed, the image of the inhumane treatment of slaves on the ship was a very early example of activist media. Referencing this “Stowage” illustration alongside Josiah Wedgwood’s cameo of a “kneeling slave medallion that [became] the icon for the British Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787,” Kristie Fleckenstein points to “visual rhetoric [taking] advantage of the visual technology of the day to perform social action” (“Teaching with Vision, Teaching Social Action”).

2.4 Dadaism and Situationism

Dadaism (1915) and Situationism (Situation International France in 50s and 60s), in particular, were early movements started in response to “consumer culture, military/colonial powers, and the disabling ideological ‘spectacle’ generated by global systems of mass communication” (Lievrouw 29). Both of these movements criticized dominant political and economic regimes, and both served to act against capitalism, militarism, colonialism; in other words, they had a pro-Marxism bent.

Though it could be argued that dissident presses of the early-to-mid 1800s were the first examples of activist media, the roots of alternative and activist media, according to Leah Lievrouw, are Dadaism and Situationism. Dadaists used “art to disrupt the commonplace and compel new ways of seeing reality” (Lievrouw 32). They created images as visual rhetoric to make an argument against over-machination, dehumanization of society in the early 20th century. Members of the Dada (meaning “absurd”) movement extended their work to include poetry and

essay forms, as well, much of the work of the movement being quite multimodal in nature. They rejected the idea of art for art's sake, arguing instead that life and art cannot be separated, therefore giving art a powerful purpose.

The art of Dadaism was very innovative and technologically advanced, a blend of "high art" (paint, sculpture, theater, and mass-produced typography with new media technology, such as photo and film). Much of the work in the Dada movement was collage, what might today be called "culture jamming," repurposing elements of popular culture as criticism and commentary on mainstream consumerism, capitalism, and commercialism (Lievrouw 22). The Dadaists focused on the appearance of randomness, when in reality, the orchestration of image and word was very purposeful: it was activism.

Though Dadaism was gaining attention in the art world, it didn't go far enough in the minds of some and eventually led to a movement founded by Guy Debord: Situationism. Debord believed that society was experiencing a "downgrading of *being* into *having*" (Lievrouw 34). Debord is widely known for his discussion of *the spectacle*, a passive response to situations and images that "undermines one's ability to act, especially in ways that will beneficially change the world" (Fleckenstein 51). He believed the way to rail against the dominant culture was for people to create their own alternative, "disruptive *situations* in everyday life," (Lievrouw 35) to overturn/upset media versions of culture and politics. Because the Situationists also believe that art and life were inseparable, they believed that "individuals could directly produce their own life, culture, and forms of social interaction"(Best and Keller 133).

Techniques used by Situationists included film and performance but also collage and montage, a mixture of existing cultural images and materials with the goals of inverting or subverting original messages. Some methods used were graffiti, posters, comic book art, improv

costumes, and street theater (Lievrouw 38). It was a very confrontational movement, where even violence was encouraged in these manufactured “situations.”

Understanding today that change comes about through tension, it should come as no surprise that groups seeking change would gravitate toward the notion of crafted tensions or situations as part of action toward change. In an illustration of students longing for engaged and experiential learning and rebelling against the top-down method of learning, in 1966, student radicals in Sorbonne joined the Situationist movement, decrying the university was nothing more than a “machine geared to produce spectators, rather than actors, in society” (Lievrouw 40). Students were upset by policies and conditions they believed to be oppressive, so they began protesting. The protests involved many university students and eventually helped to unseat Charles de Gaulle as head of state (Lievrouw 37).

Though Situationism began more than 60 years ago, its influence on student activism lives on, as does the work of the late 1700s abolitionist movement. In 2007, a group of students (in a project orchestrated by Durham University) decided to recreate the 1788 *Brookes* image as a way to commemorate the bicentennial of the British abolition of slavery. Students gathered in Palace Green on Durham University campus and lined themselves up on a full-size printed copy of one deck of the ship (see Fig. 2). This re-enactment, a form of activist performance art, is just one of hundreds of examples of the way students have embraced the power of their voices and their bodies as agents of change on college campuses.



Figure 2: Brookes Bicentennial Re-Enactment at Durham University

2.5 Back in the U.S.A.

Protest is in our national blood. The United States was ultimately fathered by activists and protesters. “Protesting is not only an American tradition; the exercise of the right to protest is the civic equivalent of lifting weights” (Elin 97), work done to ensure the Constitutional rights we enjoy today do not atrophy. We protest in a wide variety of ways: letters, petitions, rallies, marches, political campaigns, elections, boycotts.

Physical protests, however, can sometimes devolve into riots. The inevitable violence and destruction of property resulting from riots undermine the message of the protesters. Take the looting and rioting in the Rodney King and Ferguson situations as examples. There are other obstacles real and unseen to actual change, and sometimes, it’s the police who are the obstacle. Perhaps in an effort to preserve peace, police officers – who are charged with defending and enforcing the United States Constitution – are often accused of silencing or breaking up even quite peaceful protests. As a result, protesters, individuals who are already vocal and interested in exercising their rights to speech can be radicalized by suppression of such First Amendment rights. Zeke Spier is one such individual. Spier, a Brown University student who was arrested

during a protest at the 2000 Republican National Convention, referenced a protest at Fort Benning, Georgia where the police “lied to us, they misled us, they did things to break us up” (qtd in Elin 102), effectively having the reverse effect of their presumed intent to silence the protesters: “It radicalized me,” Spier admits (Elin 102). Because he felt the local law enforcement and local media were in cahoots to tell one side of the narrative (not his side), Spier turned to indy-media.org for support. Indy media, or independent media, has expanded now to include participant journalism or citizen journalism. As the name implies, this is credential-free reporting of events and stories using free and open forums online.

Sometimes it’s independent newspapers, even student newspapers, that shed light on inequities, violations of civil liberties, or general injustices that don’t gain traction in mainstream politics and media. The powerful generally control the message, and protest is often seen as an effort to disrupt or change power and powerbrokers first and foremost.

2.6 Campus Activism at City College of New York

In the 1930s, 40s, and again in the 60s, students at American colleges and universities used their voices, their bodies, their campus grounds, and newspapers – indeed, rhetoric – to rebel against a dominant power structure: administration and elected officials.

Much like the action that occurred on the campus of University of Strausberg in France, students and faculty members alike protested cultural and political events on the campus of City College of New York beginning in the 1930s. Today, we can take a walk through the eleven year struggle students and faculty on that campus faced by looking at the archived collection “Challenges to Free Speech and Academic Freedom at CCNY, 1931-42.”

The introduction to the CCNY archived collection puts the entire collection into context, while simultaneously articulating a primary concern surrounding the discussion still ongoing about free speech on college campuses:

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks and the passage of the U.S.A. Patriot Act, the actions of the federal government to monitor the activities of university-based faculty and students have raised public concern about academic freedom and free speech on college campuses. Americans are actively debating how best to exercise our cherished civil liberties and rights during a period of national crisis. This exhibit describes a series of events that took place at the City College of New York (the oldest of all CUNY colleges) during the 1930s and early 1940s that posed similar challenges to notions of academic freedom and civil liberties.

The campus activism in the 30s and 40s is significant, because it's considered the first of its kind, effectively mobilizing half a million students annually in anti-war protests (Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young*). While faculty and students were mobilized and motivated to express themselves, the administration moved swiftly to stifle that speech. It is necessary to look at these historical trends to determine whether or not we in higher education are on a similar track.

Studying the CCNY collection is relevant to any research on activism on college campuses, but for the purposes of this study, it is relevant to the discussion of service learning, civic engagement, and social movement media as tools for composition instruction. If we are working to develop activist students – or at the very least, students who are aware of power structures that impinge on their liberty – they must know their liberties are protected on their home campus. While this collection seems to tell the tale of just one public college, the fact that

events at CCNY spurred the statewide investigation of the Rapp-Coudert Committee and ultimately served as the blueprint for the nationwide McCarthyism of the 50s proves that what went on at City College of New York was simply a microcosm of what was going on across the country in higher education.

The collection is primarily anti-war in nature, as both faculty and students were political radicals focused on the impending WWII and how they could prevent U.S. involvement, but nearly all of the faculty members and student organizations featured have a strong socialist or communist leaning. Cohen's book *Student Radicals* is cited often throughout the CCNY collection. In the "Student Rebels" section, for example, there is an excerpt from his book:

The student rebels of the Depression era rank among the most effective radical organizers in the history of American student politics. They built a large and influential student protest movement, organized America's first national strikes, and shaped political discourse on campus for the better part of a decade. No college generation before them and only the New Left insurgents of the 1960s after them ever had as much impact on student politics in twentieth-century America.

In another section of the archive called "CCNY Rebels," several images are depicted that show the nature of activist rhetoric and public sphere debate that was underway on college campuses. Because of the Depression, there was general unrest in the community. The student body at City College was largely working class, the group most significantly impacted by the Great Depression. Add to that reality "the repressive policies of an intolerant campus administration" (Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young*), and it becomes easy to see why faculty might count themselves among the "rebels" at CCNY.

This section features four images: a New York City police surveillance photograph of the CCNY chapter of ASU engaged in a demonstration of some sort, and three illustrations from *Microcosm*, the CCNY yearbook. The illustrations show a place on campus where student activists would congregate and discuss/debate the world's issues. This place, a corner of the basement cafeteria, was called *The Alcoves*, and these three illustrations show the various moods and activities students might engage in while in *The Alcoves*: “War,” where the students are engaged in a violent brawl; “Peace,” where several young male students are sitting around *The Alcoves* in silent study; and “The Kremlin,” where a group of 5-6 male students are standing close together engaged in an animated conversation, presumably about the USSR, the first socialist nation in the world (see Fig. 3).



Illustration from *Microcosm*, 1936 (CCNY Archives)

Figure 3: *The Kremlin*, Illustration from *Microcosm*

In the 30s, students across the nation began to fear another draft as America looked to enter WWII. They took to protesting the war altogether, operating under the apparent assumption that if young men and women refused to fight, the war would not happen. The seven artifacts in this section of the CCNY collection represent the various forms of protest the students engaged

in. The first in the “Protest War” section is a photograph showing two male college students carrying a banner that reads, “We pledge ourselves – We will not support the United States in any War!” The banner is a reference to the Oxford Pledge, which originated at Oxford University in 1933 following Hitler’s accession to power. The Oxford Pledge, “translated into an Americanized version, garnered widespread appeal in the United States, where a poll of more than 22,600 students at 65 colleges and universities in 27 states conducted by Brown University's student newspaper indicated that 39 percent of those polled supported a pacifist position” (Burg, “Oxford Pledge”). Students who were anti-interventionists throughout the country took this pledge swearing that they would not engage or participate in any foreign wars.

There are also two flyers promoting student anti-war demonstrations included in this section. These flyers are not in reference to just any anti-war demonstration, however, but promote the First and Third National Student Strike against War (the latter of which 500,000 students – half the college students in the nation – participated in).

University President Frederick B. Robinson was considered to have only added fuel to the radicalism on campus during his tenure at CCNY. In addition to hosting a fascist Italian group on campus, he suspended student newspapers, silenced student council, and punished students who spoke out against him with harsh disciplinary action, including expulsion. He was not any less harsh on faculty who exercised their free speech in a way that countered his positions. The section of the collection focusing on President Robinson consists of five political cartoons that depict Robinson as a Nazi-sympathizer, an enemy of free speech, and overly friendly to corrupt politicians and the conservative group Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

2.6.1 *Students Fight Back*

As the efforts of the administration to silence and discourage any anti-war, anti-fascist speech escalated, including the dismissal of faculty and arrest of student protestors, both students and faculty found something new to protest: the administration. One of the five artifacts in this section of the collection is an alumni petition from June 1933 protesting the firing of Oakley Johnson, an English instructor who was a known communist-sympathizer, as well as “the banning of progressive student clubs and suspension of two student newspapers.”

Not long after Johnson was fired, another English faculty member, Morris Schappes, was fired for the same communist sympathies. Students responded to this by staging a sit-in that lasted several days and ended up being the largest organized sit-in at an American college to date. There is a photograph in the collection showing two men (one of whom is covering his face with his poster, probably for fear of retribution) demonstrating in response to the firing of Schappes. The posters read, “Schappes IN Robbie OUT” and “Keep Schappes and Free Speech.” Following this protest, students promoted and held a “mock trial” of President Robinson to publicly prove his guilt in violation of free speech of faculty and students.

Though twelve faculty activists were ultimately reinstated as a result of the student protests, the issue gained enough publicity and recognition that the NY state legislature revised tenure rules for those teaching in the city’s public colleges and universities. Ultimately, President Robinson resigned under ongoing pressure from students and alumni, but that did not happen until 1938.

The untenured faculty at CCNY organized a union to help protect their rights, and they simultaneously joined anti-fascist and pro-Communist Party factions on campus. Another section of the collection focuses on the teachers union, which eventually became a local arm of the

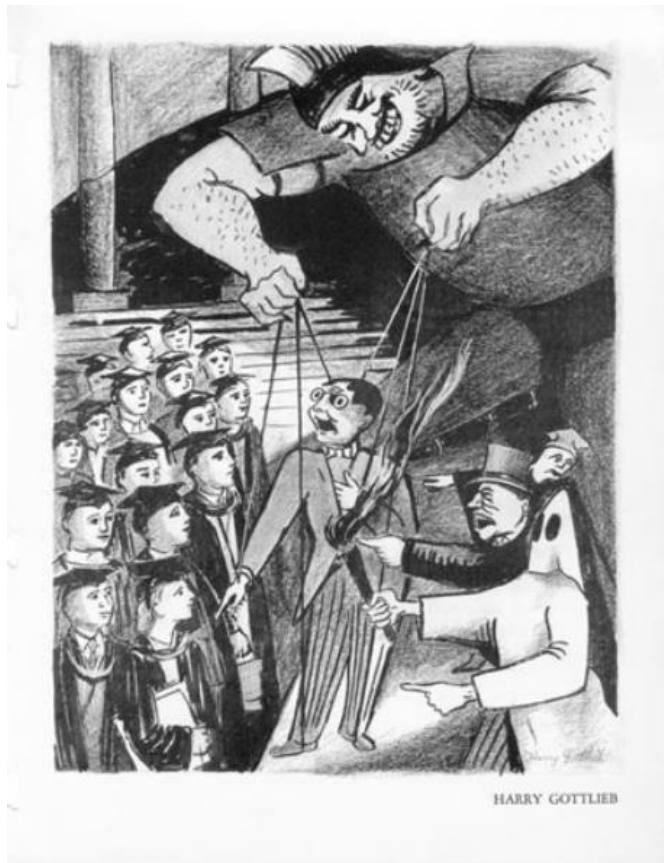
American Federation of College Teachers. The six artifacts in this section focus on the efforts of the teachers union to protect jobs, fight for increases in pay, and outline more favorable promotion practices.

The tie between the faculty activists and the anti-fascism, pro-communism movement continued to be strengthened. The expository in the archive states, “Some of the younger faculty and staff join[ed] the U.S. Communist Party at CCNY or participate[d] in its activities during the 1930s because they [saw] it as the most effective political vehicle to combat fascism, unemployment, and social and racial injustice.” Three items included focus precisely on this teacher activism. This section of the collection is titled after the faculty-created monthly newsletter, *Teacher and Worker*. The newsletter, which was written anonymously in order to protect the faculty involved with it from disciplinary action, printed issues from CCNY campus and all over the country, but was most known for its “biting critiques of the college administration.” One of the artifacts in this section is a page out of *Teacher and Worker* (March 1936) that suggests new lyrics for the college’s alma mater; these printed lyrics lambaste President Robinson, saying, “You purged the school of radicals / by expelling all fanatics / You gave the ‘dirty reds’ their due / and kept our alma mater true” (“New CCNY Song”).

2.6.2 Rapp-Coudert Committee and Rapp-Coudert & CCNY

The college’s abundance of vocal communist sympathizers had caught the attention of the NY Board of Higher Education and the New York legislature, who formed a joint legislative committee (the Rapp-Coudert Committee) that served to investigate the pervasiveness of communism in the public school and college system in the state. Because New York had such a robust immigrant population, it had become the headquarters of the Communist Party USA, which had implications for the many faculty in the state:

The Rapp-Coudert investigations and the subsequent Board of Higher Education trials led to the dismissal, non-reappointment or resignation of over fifty faculty and staff at CCNY – the largest political purge of a faculty in the history of the US. CCNY lost many outstanding teachers; most of whom never worked in academia again. The purge ended when the US enter[ed] World War II as an ally of the Soviet Union in the fight against fascism. (“The Dress Rehearsal for McCarthyism”)



Gottlieb, illustration from Lerman, *Winter Soldiers*, 1941 (CCNY Archives)

Figure 4: *Winter Soldiers*

One of the first actions taken by the Rapp-Coudert Committee was to subpoena member lists from the New York Teachers Union and the College Teachers Union. The link between these faculty unions and communist groups was well-known, so the investigators assumed that

the member list would provide them with a list of communist sympathizers. The stated goal of the committee was to examine the extent of “subversive activities” in the NY public schools and colleges. These two sections of the collection focus on the committee activities (including the actual subpoena that was issued to the College Teachers Union and multiple political cartoons related to the subpoenas and subsequent interrogations) and the specific faculty and administrators involved in the investigation (including newspaper articles and photographs identifying “informers” who testified against faculty activists for being CP members). The most interesting artifact in this section is a fine example of political rhetoric/propaganda. It is a political cartoon (see Fig. 4) depicting one of the informers, history professor William Canning, who named over fifty faculty and staff members as members of the Communist Party. He is shown standing before his colleagues, all of whom are decked out in full regalia, as a puppet. The manipulator of the marionette is an evil giant, and his efforts are being cheered on by a Ku Klux Klan member and wealthy businessmen or bankers.

The techniques pioneered by the Rapp-Coudert Committee – private interrogations, followed by public hearings for those individuals named by the committee's "friendly" witnesses – became the model for the McCarthy investigations of the 1950s” (“Impact of Rapp-Coudert”). This connection is outlined in a later section of the collection entitled “Aftermath”; it has two subsections, “Impact of Rapp-Coudert” and “McCarthyism,” which are described in greater detail at the conclusion of this section.

2.6.3 Imprisoning Schappes

Morris Schappes, the second English instructor to be dismissed from CCNY, became the poster child for anti-communist indoctrination efforts of the New York legislature and the Rapp-Coudert Committee. In the public hearing, he admitted to being a Communist Party member but

refused to give the Rapp-Coudert committee any names of fellow faculty members. He was imprisoned for thirteen months.

This section of the collection features seven artifacts surrounding the arrest, defense, and subsequent imprisonment of Schappes. One of the artifacts is a flyer that was created by the Schappes Defense Committee. It says, “In the case of MORRIS U. SCHAPPES Anti-Fascist Trade Union Leader College Teacher SENTENCED to State’s Prison 1 ½ to 2 Years FOR HIS POLITICAL OPINIONS.” This rhetoric is interesting, since the opposition argued that Schappes was using his role in the classroom to indoctrinate and recruit for the Communist Party.

Another of the artifacts in this collection is a photograph of Professor Schappes, where he is positioned in front of his desk, engaged in the most non-controversial of all faculty tasks: grading papers. In it, he dons a very pleasant smile and looks like a friendly man. It is a rhetorically significant visual, arguing for his “purity” as an educator without any text necessary. However, the quote that accompanies this photograph in the CCNY digital archives is the statement Schappes gave to the press before his public testimony in the Rapp-Coudert hearing on March 6, 1941. He said, “As a teacher, of course, I have never tried to use the classroom as an agency for conversion. I conceive my task rather as that of developing the student, not indoctrinating him, of helping him to stand on his own feet intellectually, to think for himself scientifically and to draw his own conclusions on the basis of his own findings and interests.”

2.6.4 Protests

Considering the nature of this collection, there are obviously many artifacts related to protests. How the archivist selected the six items in the “Protest” section of the collection in particular to highlight is unclear to me. There doesn’t seem to be any organizing characteristic

beyond that all are related to protests. There are three artifacts related to the Rapp-Coudert hearings, including a photograph of march that took place in front of Senator Coudert's home where demonstrators included the suspended faculty of CCNY (see Fig. 5).



Photograph (Reference Center for Marxist Studies)

Figure 5: Photograph of Protest at Coudert's Home

If I had to guess why the “folder” was included at this point in the collection, it would be owed exclusively to the dates. Five of the six artifacts in this section are from 1940-1941. Presumably, though no date is given on the sixth item, it is also from the same years.

The “Aftermath” section of the collection is simply exposition linking the methods of the Rapp-Coudert committee to the McCarthy investigations of the 1950s. This segues nicely into the next section of the archive, “McCarthyism.”

2.6.5 *McCarthyism*

The battle against communist indoctrination on college campuses waged on for the next two decades. The cause was taken up by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 50s, and while it was

expanded beyond the classroom, “the city colleges, as public institutions, were particularly vulnerable” (“McCarthyism at Queens College”).

Many arrests and dismissals came about as a result of what some deemed a witch hunt against professors whom they argued were simply exercising free speech. The passage of the 1949 *New York State Feinberg Law* aimed to prevent members of the Communist Party from teaching in public schools and colleges. This law was eventually overturned, but some say it set a dangerous precedent for faculty and students alike. Many to this day remain conflicted, this writer included, on the extent to which the Rapp-Coudert Committee work and that of McCarthy in the 1950s was justified. While the freedom of speech, association, and assembly is certainly a fundamental part of higher education, it could be argued that treasonous activity is an exception to this “liberty.” After all, if a group of Christian conservative faculty members wanted to revolt and overthrow (or assassinate) a sitting Democratic President of the United States and reorganize our country into a Theocracy, I find it hard to believe that the left wing of the country would not object, protest, and move to stop this activity.

Well-known libertarian author and former radio show host Neal Boortz reminds us that “Free speech is meant to protect unpopular speech. Popular speech, by definition, needs no protection.” The price we pay for freedom of speech might be higher than we realize, but it must be a price we are willing to accept. After all, if speech alone is persuasive enough to turn the capitalist and liberty-loving ideals of this nation on their head, then how valued was what we were trying to protect anyway?

The damage from the Rapp-Coudert Committee hearings and anti-free speech CCNY administration of the 1930s and 40s lasted decades. After many court battles and a generation of time, the reparations and healing finally began. College President Bernard Harleston facilitated

this recovery by hosting a reception to honor those penalized under Rapp-Coudert and their families in 1981, just months before faculty wrongfully dismissed during the McCarthy era were granted retroactive pensions. This section of the collection includes photographs from the reception as well as miscellaneous photographs of the wrongfully dismissed faculty. The notes mention several faculty members who were awarded honorary doctorate degrees in 1982 and 2002 as part of reparations.

2.7 Civil Rights and Counterculture Movements

The 1960s brought about a new wave of activism on college and religious campuses around the nation. Southern Black churches and colleges have been credited for the critical role they played in providing “free spaces” for recruitment, networking, and strategy development and discussion – “sites of tactical innovation, which led to the explosion of sit-ins throughout the 60s” (Morris, qtd. in DeMuth and Pellow’s “Research, Repression, and Resistance” in *Policing the Campus* 124). These sites could be compared to the Alcoves at CCNY. DeMuth and Pellow note that academia *must* remain such a “free space for innovation and liberation” (130). Since the 60s, a haven for free speech advocates and protestors has been University of California at Berkley. The anti-war protests that were part of the Counterculture/Hippie Movement of the 60s really took root on campuses like this one, and the Berkley student newspaper played a rather large role in dissemination of this counter narrative.

Additionally, we can look to this movement of peace and love for examples of effective visual rhetoric; consider the lasting relevance of the peace sign, both the hand gesture and the circular symbol. We might even consider the role of the 60s protests on college campuses in the shift from a largely conservative ideology among administrators and faculty to a predominantly progressive one. Sociologist Neil Gross talks at length about this shift in his book *Why are*

Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care? In it, he points to a “self-reproducing phenomenon” that began in the 60s. Understanding this reality is significant for educators who want our students not to be indoctrinated with any one political ideology but instead to see their college experience as an opportunity to explore and investigate diverse ideologies that will shape and inform their own one day. Thinking back to the role of agency in social action, it becomes clear how destructive it can be to future activist campaigns if we use our classrooms simply to recruit warm bodies on issues *we* care about. We could ultimately create students who are only able to follow and none able to lead or organize movements.

2.8 The Role of Culture in Activism: Dissident Presses and Street ‘Zines

Culture can be defined in many different ways. Sociologist and Social Movement Theorist Alaine Touraine said “culture is the voluntaristic construction of a set of norms and practice [in which] this unity thus enables a central regulating power system to control, limit, and even repress the diversity of interests, of opinions and of representations” (“Culture without Society” 140). Touraine, in this article, references Foucault’s connection between culture and society, which is that humans internalize social controls and through culture, reinforce the mechanisms of control and repression (141), but Touraine himself draws a distinction between culture and society, even going so far as to suggest we should abandon the whole idea of society (149).

Culture must be defined by liberty, and thus by the absence of any principle of integration. It does not lead to a position, essentialised definition of man, woman, Christianity or Islam, but rather to the critical assertion of the individual’s right to free him or herself from all logics of power and domination. To be more specific, culture is the field in which we assert that we can live together, equal yet different. (150)

The *Cultural Resistance Reader* includes a section on the “Politics of Culture,” in which Duncombe shares several definitions of “culture”: that of Marx and Engels (from *The German Ideology*), Matthew Arnold (from *Culture and Anarchy*), and Antonio Gramsci (from *The Prison Notebooks*), all of which are quite fundamental works for activists to study. In the introduction, Duncombe says: “Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, in selections from *The German Ideology*, argue that culture is a reflection of the economic and social, that is material, conditions of a society. Therefore, they argue, the ruling culture of every age expresses the world-view of those who rule. Matthew Arnold asserts much the opposite: that culture – ‘sweetness and light’ – is what allows us to transcend politics, guiding us out of the morass of the material world. The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, writing from a Fascist prison, further complicates our picture. Culture, for Gramsci, is not something “out there” but intimate, internalized into our consciousness and direction – often without our knowledge – our activity” (9).

Culture is in and all around us; it both reflects and shapes perception and reality. Gunther Kress talks about the importance of culturally-valued texts. Fleckenstein builds on this connection in her book *Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom*: “Because modes of perceptions and images contribute to the joint creation of reality, action designed to transform those realities must always be bolstered by the twin dynamic of rhetoric and vision” (2).

In his essay *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold outlines what he sees as the purpose of culture – that is, the pursuit of perfection. He references the philosopher Montesquieu, who said our goal is “[t]o render an intelligent being yet more intelligent” on the value of continued excellence and says “culture, viewed simply, is a fruit of this passion” (qtd in Duncombe *Cultural Resistance Reader* 51). Arnold also says this of the drive toward action:

There is a view in which all the love of our neighbor, the impulses toward action, help, and beneficence, the desire for stopping human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing the sum of human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it – motives eminently such as are called social – come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and pre-eminent part.

Ultimately, Arnold is arguing here that social action is at the root of our culture (the root of our *being*, in fact), thereby making culture a tool to educate, inform, argue our way to a better world. “Culture,” Arnold goes on to say “is then properly described not as having its origin in curiosity, but as having its origin in the love of perfection; it is a *study of perfection* (emphasis in original). It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good” (51). This is why, he points out, religion and culture coincide so often, because both are a reflection of the human search for perfection, the internal condition and desire to reach a perfect state. He argues that the “true value” of culture is to help in the attainment of such a perfect state (53). Related to the subject of community and the desire of man to seek community through culture (social media, art, film, music), Arnold says “...because men are all members of one great whole, and the sympathy which is in human nature will not allow one member to be indifferent to the rest, or to have a perfect welfare independent of the rest, the expansion of our humanity, to suit the idea of perfection which culture forms, must be a *general* expansion. Perfection, as culture conceives it is not possible while the individual remains isolated...” (53-4). He seems to advocate, in his quest for universal sweetness and light and dissolution of classes, that the state has a role in the attainment of perfection (the “social idea” he calls it). This, however, contradicts his ideas about internal motivation toward perfection, because it makes compassion and perfection compulsory,

coerced. The inauthenticity of this piece of Arnold's argument proves its failure is inevitable. Nevertheless, the valuable takeaway is that humans aspire to reach a state of perfection, that is, we have change/evolution in our core, and culture is an effective tool to accomplish change for the good.

Stephen Duncombe (*Cultural Resistance Reader*, 2002; and *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*, 1997 and 2001) writes extensively about culture as a tool for resistance. Specifically, he points to zines, street magazines, or underground newspapers, which are meant to counter consumer capitalism in all regards. Generally representing very radical viewpoints, Duncombe notes zines are "organic" and a form of "vernacular radicalism" (*Notes* 8). He labels these publications a "crack in the impenetrable wall of the system; a culture spawning the next wave of meaningful resistance" (8).

An alternative to direct action and meant "[f]or people who like to write and want to communicate, but find it difficult to do so face to face, zines are a perfect solution: the entry price is facility with the written word, and the compensation is anonymous communication" (*Notes* 22). This is the appeal, also, of social media to many. What motivates folks to produce zines is loneliness, isolation, a need to be heard and to belong. This is not all that different from what motivates and inspires community on the various social media platforms; these forums "foster a community of losers within a society that celebrates winners" (*Notes* 48).

Duncombe talks at length about the struggles between individual and community/shared identity in *Notes* (ch 3). The rebellious and anarchist nature of zinesters is a common thread that runs through most of them. He references de Tocqueville in his discussion of individual goals versus community: "Only by coming together in association do individuals have presence." Duncombe also notes the importance of voluntary associations but warns how these could pull

focus away from what serves “greater social change” (*Notes 77*), causing men to forget they are citizens of a larger society. He criticizes zines to some degree as merely a way for unheard voices to talk with one another, to validate their voices and views as relevant though outside of mainstream. However, I find this conversation to be valuable on multiple fronts. Identification of community – or creation of community – serves tremendous individual and personal value, and that alone can be considered change. We needn’t rely upon the government or majority groups to accept us, but it is a sociological desire we all have to feel like something we value or are interested in is shared somewhere out there. We desire not to feel alone. While forging these connections with other similarly-minded individuals does not result in vast societal change, it can produce small scale change, and it can be the start of grassroots efforts. Duncombe ultimately concludes that politics of culture, underground culture, are virtual politics and if not carried into direct action will never result in any sort of social change (a view I explore in more depth later).

2.9 Art, Visual Politics, and Identity

The role of art and image in social action is undeniable. Consider the impact of the image of the slave ship *Brookes* or, more recently in 1955, the decision of the mother of Emmett Till (a 14-year-old black male who was brutally beaten and murdered by a group of white men) to hold an open casket funeral. Because the Till case was highly publicized, Mrs. Till allowed photographs to be taken of her son’s dead body, and these images – examples of visual politics – were printed and considered “major catalysts of the nascent civil rights movement” (“Images, Power, and Politics” 11).

Images can start a movement or accelerate one. They can reflect the growing tide of people unsatisfied with the status quo. They can challenge us to think beyond our assumptions, to question and challenge existing power dynamics. They can imagine what a future without

change might look like (think dystopian). Or they can reflect the ultimate change the image creator wants to see, the desired end-goal of a movement; in this way, the images would serve as a means to achieve audience acceptance, to show people what the future *could* be like, hopefully arguing effectively that it is a better future, or at the very least, not a worse one. Images, whether activist in nature or purely propagandist, leave lasting impressions on their viewers and therefore are a powerful tool in rhetoric. After all, “[v]isual culture is thus not just a representation of ideologies and power relations but is integral to them” (“Images, Power, and Politics” 23).

Michel Foucault talks about this power and the connection between words and things in his essay *This is Not a Pipe*, which discusses Rene Magritte’s famous painting *The Two Mysteries*. Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure also discuss the concept of signs and language, with Peirce arguing that “meaning resides not in the initial perception of a sign or representation of an object but in the interpretation of the perception and subsequent action based on that perception” (qtd. in “Images, Power, and Politics” 28). These theorists’ ideas about signs and language were popularized in the field of rhetoric by Roland Barthes’s model of semiotics.

Gillian Rose and Divya P. Tolia-Kelly in the Introduction to their edited collection *Visuality/Materiality*, align “visual culture” with theories of Marxism, feminism, postcolonialism, identity and race. Though they argue that visual culture is privileged – echoing aforementioned concerns about power and perception – they make the case for studying visuality and materiality, which is “inevitably critical and constantly reflexive of the power play between representation, text, practice and technologies of production, display and performance” (3). They also argue that the visual and material are shaped by politics and in turn shape politics, that the two work in concert to create meaning.

While activist art of the Dada movement began in Europe as a way to protest the growing military and consumer culture during the two world wars, post-World War II brought about a new series of movements. These movements would serve as commentary on society, culture, politics, and, ultimately, identity. More importantly, for activists and activist scholars, the 50+ years of art movements would begin to show the power of visual rhetoric and media in working toward social change.

2.9.1 Performance Art and Culture Jamming (1960s)

In a move towards increased viewer engagement and a nod towards its Dada and surrealist predecessors, artists of this decade challenged artistic conventions and “anticipated the rebellion and youthful exuberance of the 1960s” (Kleiner and Mamiya 413). In its early stages, performance art was quite subversive in nature. It was often spontaneous, using the materiality of the human body, a medium that invited a new type of engagement and interpretation. It was immediate, requiring presence in order to appreciate the full experience, because the still photos that documented the experience were only two-dimensional in nature. Some of the most extreme performance art, according to Kleiner and Mamiya, centered on “risk-taking activities such as being shot with a gun or crawling over broken glass” (413).

Beginning in the 1960s with Situationist International, artists practiced detournement, a “turning around” of classical art and film and literature, classical and popular culture, and brought them “into juxtaposition to create shocking or comic effects” (Shaw 22). This was largely visible in art of the first and second wave of feminism, and today is more commonly referred to as “culture jamming.” The idea of juxtaposition and performance art would take off over the next several decades, making art much more participatory in nature.

2.9.2 Womanhouse: *First Wave Feminism (Late 1960s/Early 1970s)*

The feminist art movement was one of resistance, protest, commentary on a previously male-dominated field. Women entered the movement and tried to soften the style of the Abstract Expressionists and Minimalists. The softening of art included use of newer color schemes, including jewel-tones and metallics (Smith, “How Do I Look?”). In this period, as a way to assert their femininity, women became centrally focused on female genitalia. An installation that best represents this activist or protest art movement is *Womanhouse* (see Fig. 6), which was co-directed by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro.



Figure 6: *Womanhouse* co-directed by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro.

Womanhouse was a collaborative, consciousness-raising project that began in an abandoned mansion in California. The goal was to design a house so rooms that were traditionally female (or places of domesticity) could be composed in such a way as to make a statement on the identity of women, those who believed they were withering away beneath the weight of domesticity. For example, the installation *Eggs to Breasts* (see Fig. 7) staged in a



Figure 7: *Womanhouse* installation, featuring Robin Weltsch's *Kitchen* and Vicki Hodgetts's *Eggs to Breasts*

kitchen featured rubberized replicas of all different shapes of breasts as well as fried eggs affixed to the walls and ceilings of the room. This play on food commonly prepared in the kitchen (and also part of the female anatomy) speaks to the loss of identity for women who were homemakers, implying they were only vehicles for production (of meals) and reproduction (of children).

All of the works in *Womanhouse* are multimodal, three-dimensional, and of a performance art quality. They use a combination of rhetorical elements that are visual and gestural as a means to engage their audience in the argument. The materiality of these installations is important to their messaging. Nirmal Puwar talks about the materialities of political forums (consider Parliament and justice systems): “Politics is conducted with texture, performance, furniture, cloth, sound, and bodies in space” (“Citizen and Denizen Space: If Walls

Could Speak” 78). If politics are conducted with these materialities, so, too, must rebellion, activism, and art, a reality the artists of the 20th and 21st centuries seemed to recognize.

2.9.3 *Second Generation Feminism (1980s)*

In the second wave of feminism, artists began to shift focus away from biology and toward social and gender interactions and relations. This was owed, in large part, to the burgeoning field of gender psychology. Like the Dada predecessors, second wave feminist artists also participated in culture jamming. Much of the art from this period is multimodal, that is, image with text overlay. The text on image invites us to think; it is commentary. What makes these pieces feminist is that they are active, participatory in nature, filled with opportunity for shared meaning-making, and they give the viewer agency. This empowerment of audience is disruptive of traditional power structure, a key component of feminist theory. Artists in this movement, like their Situationist predecessors, believed in using public space to display their art. Public display of message-laden art is effective as a means of confrontation, making the audience somewhat uncomfortable, hoping the discomfort would move viewers into action.

There is a great deal of ambivalence in many of the images of this period, but the messages are consistently resistant, defiant, and carry themes of identity, confinement, and commercialism throughout. Two key artists in Second Generation Feminism, according to Art Historian and Professor Katherine Smith (“How Do I Look?”) are Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer. Kruger is a conceptual artist whose medium is black and white photography with text overlay usually in some combination of red, black, and white (see Fig. 8).

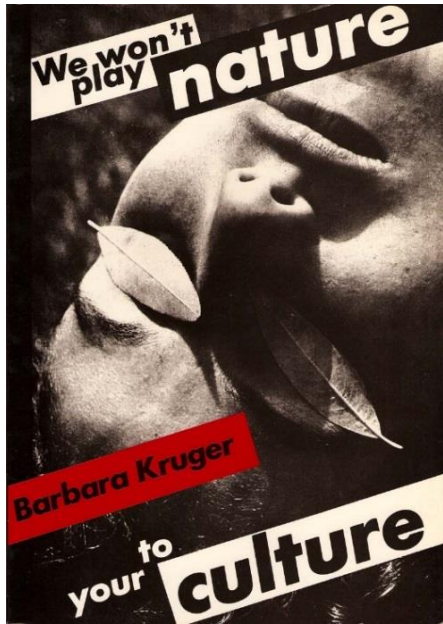


Figure 8: Barbara Kruger *Untitled (We Won't Play Nature to your Culture)*, 1983

Holzer wrote “truisms” and printed and distributed or shared them on digital signs. In her work, she hijacks the position of advertising (billboard placement, for example) and uses this public space to inject a different kind of rhetoric into the community. Some of her messages seem to contradict one another, but they consistently evoke thought. This use of public space for sometimes very private messages is a means to push boundaries, to jar audience members into joining the discourse often times against their will. It’s conflict-centered as opposed to the conflict-avoidant messages of the advertising world, and it seems to serve as another challenge to consumerism, much like the Situationists of the 1950s in France.

2.9.4 *Gender Identity in Art and Politics*

There is a performance quality to much of the art from the 1970s and 80s. Gender statement art began taking on race and sexuality, as well. Around the same time, pro-Equal Rights Amendment activists began to align themselves with others who would benefit from the

ERA. This discovery of collective action based on shared interest was definitely one of strange bedfellows, uniting Black Rights activists and Gay Rights activists for the first time.

Katherine Smith (“How Do I Look?”) points to the work of Japanese artist Yasumasa Morimura as an example of gender identity art. Morimura was homosexual, a student of western art who recreated classical pieces of art in imitation as a means to interrogate assumptions, politics, stereotypes, and hierarchies. While his work has a performance quality to it, the pieces were rendered as photography (Smith, “How Do I Look?”), leaving the audience to analyze his commentary in a two-dimensional format. In a famous piece *Daughter of Art History: (Princess A)*, Morimura imitates Diego Velasquez’s *Infanta Margarita in a Pink Dress* with his own hands and face replacing the only body parts shown in the painting.



Figure 9: Diego Velasquez *Infanta Margarita in a Pink Dress*



Figure 10: Yasumasa Morimura *Daughter of Art History: (Princess A)*

He has several other pieces of appropriation art depicting himself as Frida Khalo and Manet's *Olympia*. As appropriation art, these works become pieces of visual rhetoric, what both Fleckenstein and Kress argue are concepts that belong in composition studies. Changing individual and public perception, increasing exposure to alternative ideas or ways of living, challenging existing assumptions about femaleness, whiteness, Americanness (gender, faith, beauty) all lead to change.

A common approach to art in this time of great social change was to inject art into the public forum: city-spaces became canvases. Keith Haring, AIDS activist and pop artist who created in the style of Andy Warhol, was best known for his spontaneous chalk drawings on the New York subways. Though he was arrested several times for vandalism, he was part of the rebellious graffiti movement meant to buck the system, a movement that actually originated in ancient times and continues on into the 21st century.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, a Cuban gay activist artist, worked with a wide array of materials (paper, cords, and bulbs and candy) and used timelines, billboards, and simple "stacks" of paper covered in text to convey often very complex ideas. Like Jenny Holzer, Gonzalez-Torres used community ad space to juxtapose the personal and public. The best example of this is in his "Untitled" billboard in New York City (see Fig. 11) where he positioned a black and white photo of a bed with indentations on both pillows, signifying an intimate partnership (Smith "How Do I Look?"). He leaves the figures out of the image, however, as a way to show the universality of the couple. The viewer knows it *is* a couple but cannot make any gender, race, or cultural assumptions about either partner, leaving each viewer free to interpret this partnership openly.



Figure 11: Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled Billboard*, 1991.



Figure 12: *Stacks* by Felix Gonzalez-Torres

Interestingly, the Gonzalez-Torres stacks (see Fig. 12) were art in their own right, but they were meant to be consumed – indeed, circulated – not just viewed. Institutions that would purchase the stacks as part of an installation were under contractual obligation to copy and continue to provide the materials for audiences to take with them (Smith, “How Do I Look?”). It was his desire that the viewer would engage, participate in the art, that each viewer would take a

piece of the message with her and circulate it. In this way, Gonzalez-Torres can be seen as a pioneer of the kind of work we would soon be able to accomplish through digital activist media.

Some well-known, contemporary practitioners of art-based activism are street artist Banksy and dissident Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei (see Table 2.1). Their work is the epitome of multimodality: it is performance art in post-internet world, and it engages audiences in real and virtual worlds alike. Beyond Ai Wei Wei's self-surveillance project, he recently completed an installation in Alcatraz, one that explores ideas of imprisonment, and was imagined, orchestrated, and curated from Japan to San Francisco thanks to digital technology.

The influence and presence of activist art has not diminished. In response to years of demonstrations protesting American and British involvement in the Iraq war, the British Parliament passed the 2005 Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA), which restricted demonstration areas in public spaces, much like Free Speech Zones on U.S. college and university campuses. The changes brought about by SOCPA required applications for demonstrations nearly a week in advance and set tremendous limitations on demonstrators – namely in what sort of visual and sonic materials could be used in their demonstration. The Act came about in reaction to one anti-Iraq war protestor, in particular, Brian Haw, who had demonstrated in Parliament Square for years. Upon passage of the Act, Haw's protest materials were destroyed. In protest of the SOCPA limitations on speech and expression, British comedian Mark Thomas recreated the protest materials Haw had used in an exhibition Thomas titled *State Britain*. The recreated materials included “banners, placards, posters, peace flags, newspaper articles, photo displays, messages from supporters, and teddy bears wearing peace slogan t-shirts” (Puwar 80). In addition to altering the materiality by aging and weathering it to make it

appear more authentic, the installation was placed behind a symbolic black line on the floor, a line meant to indicate the “exclusion zone.”

When the 9/11 Memorial museum was opened, it was filled with visuality and materiality that reflected the before and aftermath of the United States’ most tragic terrorist attack. Walls

were littered with thousands of flyers featuring pictures of loved ones and the word “Missing.” Debris from the fallen World Trade Center and even broken plane parts were staged along the walkway of the museum.

The visuals in the museum told many different stories of that day, but all fit into one narrative: America had been attacked by a terrorist entity, and though many lives were lost, we as a nation would survive. What

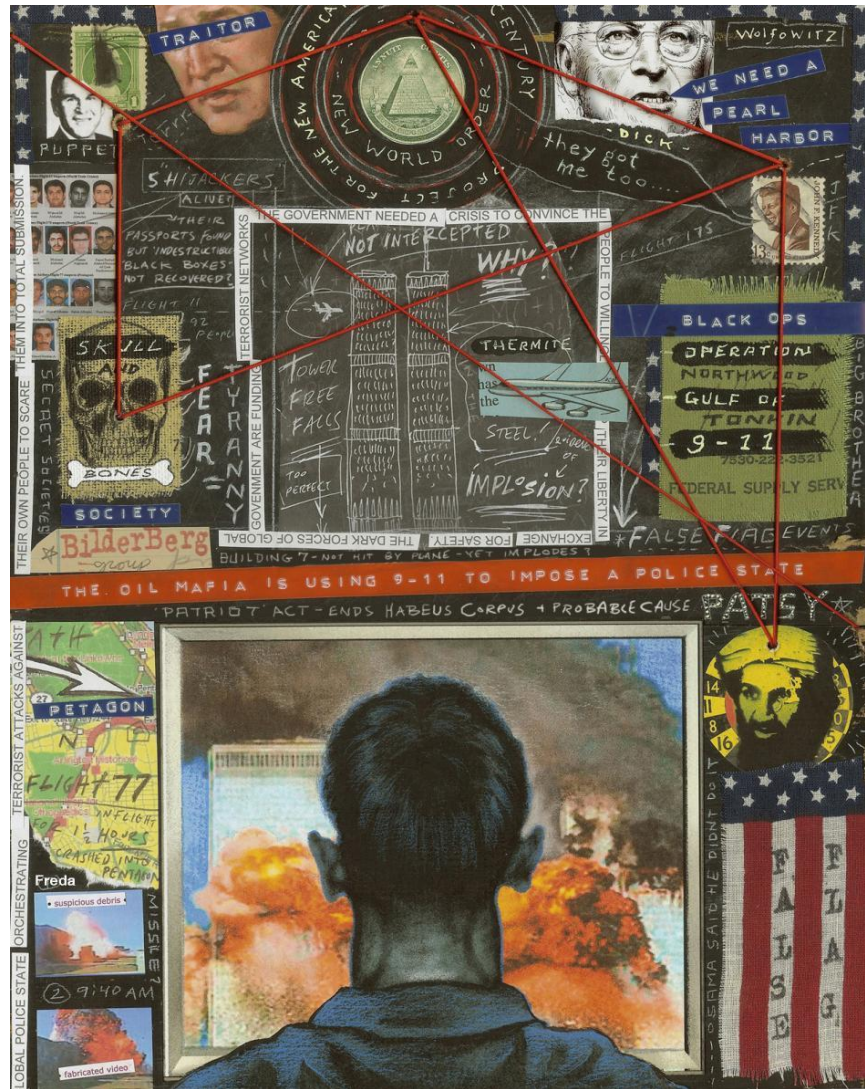


Figure 13: Anthony Freda *Questions* , 2006.

the 9/11 Memorial didn’t acknowledge, however, was the counter narrative, the position of 9/11 detractors, or “9/11 Truthers,” as they have come to be known. In 2014, this changed, and a piece

of art depicting the various arguments of the 9/11 Truther Movement was put on display in the 9/11 museum (see Fig. 13).

Art and activism have both changed alongside technological advancements. Messages are modified based on modality and materiality; consider shifts in medium impacted by identification of new tools from Michelangelo to Matisse to Andy Warhol to Banksy. Today, we might look to the field of technoculture to help understand this better. Debra Benita Shaw defines technoculture as “the interdependence of technology and culture” (“Technology and Social Realities” 176). She references the idea of “spectacular culture,” an argument similar to Situationist Guy Debord’s “spectacle,” which is a “social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (Shaw 21). Debord advocated for the “increasing predominance of media technologies in the dissemination of reality,” an idea shared by artists of the first and second wave feminism and LGBT movements.

The impact of the visual on social action – whether in a drawing, painting, sculpture, photograph, collage, video, or performance – cannot be denied. Shaw highlights this in her book *Technoculture*: “Because television, film, and advertising are concerned with projecting images, the sense of sight is elevated above other senses and becomes the measure of our experiences” (21). Governments and traditional, mainstream media outlets have long controlled access to messages and images, through both propaganda and reporting events from a biased, one-sided, even ethno-centric perspective. This overly controlled narrative has created an environment ripe for citizens, artists, and independent journalists to become dissidents, to find alternative means to share an alternative message.

Whether using art and media to expose or protest actions of an oppressive government or an overindulgent society, technology has definitely become a tool for resistance. From Wei

Wei's self-surveillance project to place-based performance and activist art that uses Web 2.0 to both disseminate messages and mobilize audiences to participate in the messaging, there is little doubt that social media serves the visual rhetorician and activist. Fleckenstein notes that "one outcome of social media has been the renewed emphasis on the visual" which means "we have to consider the phenomenon of looking. We have to remain sensitive to the fact that what we see is inevitably inflected by how we see – and how we see is always poised at the intersection of culture, place, and bodies" ("Teaching with Vision").

2.10 Citizen and Participatory Journalism

Duncombe referred to Zinesters as amateur press or alternative press, the application of their work as alternative journalism, amateur journalism, participatory communication. Today, Internet users can harness technology to raise awareness of community and political issues that are being ignored by the dominant or mainstream media and launch a resistance effort through blogging, tweeting, or running popular YouTube channels. These new ways of reporting stories, close cousins of zines, have been called citizen media, participatory journalism, or citizen journalism and are born out of a desire to "deal with the media juggernaut" (Del Gandio 33).

Jan Schaffer, executive director of J-Lab: The Institute for Interactive Journalism, noted in the early 2000s the grassroots frustration with local newspapers and media outlets failing to cover community news appropriately: "There's a feeling of, If 'Big J' journalists won't cover our communities, we'll do it our way" (Lasica 25). These "community media" sites, the first of which can be traced back to 2000, stemmed from the same frustration with gaps in mainstream news coverage that conservative writers and journalists argued was going on in the late 90s. Dorothy Kidd, in the edited collection *Cyberactivism*, writes about the development of Independent Media Center/Indymedia.org, which began as a way to cover the World Trade

Organization protests in Seattle in 1999. Kidd also notes that following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, few in the mainstream media were critical of policies and actions of President Bush and the United States military, therein providing an opportunity for those at Indymedia.org: “Don’t hate the media – become the media” (47-49).

Andrew Breitbart and Matt Drudge, conservatives who turned to the Internet to investigate and break stories that weren’t getting traction in the oft-cited “liberal” mainstream media, might be considered some of the most well-known individual practitioners of citizen journalism. Though Breitbart and Drudge could hardly be called “amateurs,” both having a background in professional writing (Breitbart initially helped Ariana Huffington develop HuffPost) and already actively engaged in journalistic activities, many of which were based online, they inspired an entire movement of average citizens, laypeople, to engage in journalistic efforts. These citizens took to the streets to capture on camera footage of newsworthy stories that they believed were being ignored, overlooked, or inaccurately editorialized by the mainstream news outlets. This activity is what Lasica refers to as “random acts of journalism” (26).

The trend of citizens reporting the news grew in popularity around the same time as did blogging, making it even easier for average citizens to get their “stories” out to the public. With nearly everyone having a cell phone with picture and video taking capabilities – and little more than Internet access needed to create and post these stories, pictures, and videos to a blog – digital activism took on a new life.

We saw a great deal of spontaneous, amateur journalism throughout the peak of the Occupy Wall Street movement, much of which ended up being referenced in mainstream media sources. Today, citizen journalism has brought international attention to major social and political movements, where citizens understood a crisis was brewing and change was desperately

needed (Hurricane Katrina, 2005; Arab Spring, 2009; Voluntad Popular in Venezuela, 2014; Hong Kong Students for Democracy, 2014).

Perhaps we want to teach, as part of our instruction on evaluating and understanding primary and secondary source material, examples of citizen journalism. Though they've been popularized by late-night comedians, man-on-the-street interviews are a great way to introduce students to the concept of citizen journalism. It seems that rather than try to debate the value of this *or* that (digital activism *or* boots-on-the-ground activism, popular media *or* citizen media), we should recognize that each has an appropriate role in the conversation, a seat at the table. We should be working to decide how to harness the most powerful tools for the right situations and to identify the areas where there is mutual interest and opportunity to collaborate or hybridize efforts. Exposing students to this new and evolving form of journalism is an excellent opportunity for teachers of writing and rhetoric to teach critical reading *and* critical writing skills. As academics and activist teachers, we are keenly aware of the fine balance of power in our world. Checks and balances are essential, and participatory media is perhaps one of the most effective ways for us to demonstrate how what we do in the classroom translates to meaningful writing in the world beyond.

It might be challenging to differentiate the reporting of citizen or independent journalist activities from activism, a point acknowledged on the Indymedia.org website's "Frequently Asked Questions" page:

Are you "activists" or "journalists?"

Some would say "activists," some would say "journalists," some would say both. Each Indymedia reporter/organizer must make this distinction for him/herself. Having a point of view does not preclude Indymedia reporters from delivering truthful, accurate, honest

news. Most, if not all, local IMCs, have explicit policies to strongly deter reporters from participating in direct actions while reporting for Indymedia. In general, on the occasions of political rallies, political activists who associate at all with Indymedia.org always choose non-violent civil disobedience to highlight the absurdities in certain policies of corporations or governments. Therefore, we simultaneously do not approve of war criminals such as members of the Bush Administration or the Al Qaeda regime. We are not a special interest white supremacist group or a terrorist organization. In sum, Indymedia.org intends NOT to harm others (the way Bush Administration, Al-Qaeda or other weird aggressive cults do) and instead we intend to open up friendly public discussion.

It's fairly clear in that response that the IMC has a definite political position (anti-Right), and it's clear that IMC wishes to make their work participatory, as evidenced by the final claim that they "intend to open up friendly public discussion." Like the IMC, The Drudge Report, and Breitbart.com, most of the work in citizen journalism is driven by political ideology. The same can be said for general political blogs.

Antoinette Pole, author of *Blogging the Political: Politics and Participation in a Networked Society* (2009), discusses the increase in blogging activity over the past decade (10). She traces the history and evolution of the blog from the first weblog in 1991 to creation of the site Blogger in 1999, a development that made it easy for non-programmers to join the blog world, to the year 2008, where more than 184 million blogs had been created worldwide.

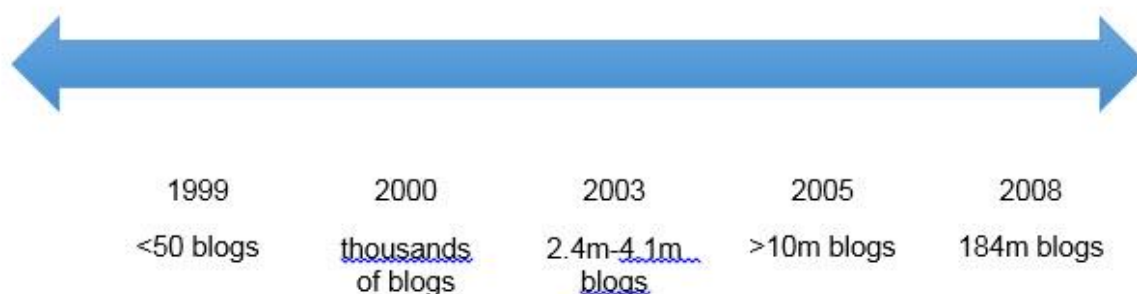


Figure 14: Number of Blogs from 1999-2008

Of the public statistics available, (only Tumblr and Wordpress and Technorati), there were 249m blogs in 2014. This figure, however, doesn't include the most popular of all blogging services, Blogger.com, so it's safe to say that the number is probably well over 300m. While there is no available data about what portion of these are political blogs, there is 2009 data that points to the trust factor of political blogs, with 70% of blog readers finding the blog content equal to or more accurate than traditional news sources (Richard Davis, BYU). Davis noted that while blog readers did get most of their news from traditional media sources, they didn't trust that they would get the whole story there.

Pole also noted that political blogs have helped shape the message that the mainstream media might choose to ignore, either because of its own political bias or because it is beholden to corporate sponsors. She references in her book many successful social media movements that have affected change: unseating Senator Trent Lott, primarying Joe Lieberman out of his Democratic senatorial seat and forcing him to run as an independent, Howard Dean's counter-mainstream media messaging and landmark fundraising efforts on the first campaign blog – *Blog for America*. Also notable is the rise in popularity of the libertarian party that has come about as a result of social media (see Ron Paul's messaging). Pole acknowledged in 2008 that beyond voter turnout numbers, there were signs that participation in the political process was depressed.

She cited Verba, Scholzman, and Brady who noted that the practices of “contacting an elected official or attending a rally had declined” (qtd in Pole 4).

Nevertheless, she takes to task the claim made in Putnam’s 2000 book, *Bowling Alone*, which basically argued that civic engagement is generally in decline. Pole, instead, argues that the engagement style has changed, much of it moving online. She notes that many MSM sources have begun to cite blogs in their own stories, effectively legitimizing the blog as news source.

The comment section of blogs is what gives it the “social” and “participatory” feel. This is what contributes to an individual’s feelings of efficacy, engagement, because they have joined the conversation and are being heard. Whether wooing voters or mobilizing volunteers or enlisting donations, all elements of *change* have been affected by digital activism efforts (blogs and beyond).

2.11 Taking the Movement Online: Digital Activism as a Non-Violent Alternative

In the age of digital activism, it’s also important to recognize the parallels between social media and its revolutionary predecessors like dissident presses, street papers, ‘zines, or alternative media like that of Situationism or Dadaism. Dadaism and other activist art includes “oppositional, radical, underground, or anarchist media, including newspapers and small-press publishing, pirate or underground radio, and public-access video” (Lievrouw 17).

Since the inception of new media and its offspring, social media, individuals and groups with a mind toward political, social, and cultural change have debated the merits of this new digital form of activism. The Internet is changing the way we do business in all areas of our lives. We are shopping, working, socializing, and even finding love interests in the online world. The participatory nature of Web 2.0 has also marked an interesting evolution in engagement and activism. Because of access, convenience, and simplicity of use, the digital realm invites

participation from those who might not otherwise be compelled – or able – to participate in person.

Several recent studies from the Pew Internet and American Life Project (“Social Media and Political Engagement,” October 2012; “Civic Engagement in the Digital Age,” April 2013; and “Who’s Not Online and Why,” September 2013) demonstrated both interest and technological opportunity to engage in cybercitizenship activities. Warnick & Heineman (2012) define "cybercitizen" as one who “uses Internet technologies to participate in traditional civic activities (voting, engaging in public debate, protesting, paying taxes, etc.)” (138).

The Pew surveys on engagement note that social networking service (SNS) users do see social media as a suitable forum for engaging in the public sphere. In fact, these two Pew studies found that 39% of all American adults have already used social media for civic or political purposes. Since 86% of adult Americans use the Internet, 73% of those are SNS users, and 56% of American adults now have a smartphone, it’s apparent that there is opportunity for engagement using these tools that are already so highly integrated into the lives of adults in this country.

Where street papers and ‘zines have long served as a vehicle for expression of ideas and individuals who do not fit neatly into a dominant place in mainstream society, online spaces continue to provide an opening and a medium for the establishment of such “counterpublics” (Hauser, 1998; Asen, 2000; Warner, 2005). Social media certainly fits many of the criteria for “public” outlined by Michael Warner in *Publics and Counterpublics*, which include that a public is 1) self-organized, 2) a relation among strangers, 3) the address of public speech is both personal and impersonal, 4) constituted through mere attention, 5) the social space created by the

reflexive circulation of discourse, 6) a group that acts historically according to the temporality of their circulation, and 7) poetic world making (67-118).

Since social media provides opportunity for those groups that don't necessarily fit the "dominant culture" or are not recognized in mainstream to discourse and message, it has become a purveyor of "counterpublics" (Warner 113). An excellent example of this idea of counterpublic in the social media realm is the subaltern Twitter group GOProud, a politically conservative arm of the Republican Party that is openly gay. They have been all but ignored by the party elites, and were even disinvited from the 2013 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), yet they have benefitted from the tools of the 21st century to unite and work toward a shared common interest. Larry Elin notes that the internet, "[w]hat was designed as a technological marvel [...] has become a cultural marvel in the way that it routes itself around corporate control, censorship, and the authorities." He goes on to point out that "even the *soul* of the Internet would seem to be fit for the counterculture" (105).

In addition to providing opportunity for individuals with shared interests to connect, the digital world provides the means for such individuals to cultivate their ideas and message in a way that might previously have been cost- or politically-prohibitive.

Social media forums – discussion boards, Facebook, Twitter, Volkalize, Blogger and Wordpress – offer community building and networking opportunities, prompt the establishment of new publics. They have become something of a blend between the Habermasian salon (a space where individuals converge to discuss and debate issues of a civic, community, or political nature) and Hauser's public sphere [a "discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest, and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them" (Hauser 21)].

Because of the highly interactive nature of online spaces, digital activism allows for vastly creative forms of rhetoric (visual, sonic) that could not be accomplished simultaneously in print media or underground radio prior to the existence of Web 2.0. Add to this the massive distribution and circulation capabilities of online activism (through “liking” and “sharing” and “retweeting” activist messages), and it becomes clear why this new digitally mediated space is one with tremendous potential for outreach, education, and influence.

Perhaps most valuable is that digital media, unlike its alternative and activist media predecessors, effectively disrupts the existing power dynamics in politics and media, making it an ideal situation for activists to do their work. This shift in dynamic puts the power in the hands of the user as one who transmits and circulates at her will, on her timeframe, and to the extent she desires. It levels the playing field to some degree, and it provides opportunity for voices to be heard that might otherwise be ignored by those holding the reigns in politics and media.

While we might not ever see digital activism replace boots-on-the-ground (BoTG) efforts, any more than we might see online dating replace meeting a romantic prospect in a real public (meat)space, there is no doubt that Internet and mobile technology are changing the face of activism. Whether these tools are harnessed for messaging or mobilization of traditional BoTG activism, the reality is that digital and digitally-enhanced activism are here to stay.

The efforts of digital activists can be linked to traditional nonviolent protests and civil resistance activities. Gene Sharp is a sociologist, political science professor and Nobel Peace Prize winner who has written extensively on nonviolent protest movements, particularly those of an anti-government nature, as a means to affect change. He is the author of the book *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential*, where he discusses the potential of digital technology to further affect change in a nonviolent way. In 2012, researchers

Patrick Meier and Mary Joyce began updating Sharp's *198 Nonviolent Methods* chart (originally created in 1973) to serve the digital activist. Ultimately, Meier and Joyce's crowd-sourced database includes digital and technology-enhanced means of resistance. They recommend digital tools be used in what they call the "Protest and Persuasion" type of resistance, which is the kind of engagement we might ask our own social-media savvy students to participate in as a gateway to civic engagement. Some of the methods of using social media for digital only or digitally-enhanced BoTG activism include mapping incidents of an activity being protested, checking-in as a way to mobilize others, livestreaming activist events, hashtagging social media conversations, and flash mobbing. There are others, of course, but these are some examples of the types of activities Joyce and Meier define in the *Civil Resistance 2.0* database as "New Methods" of nonviolent resistance.

There are a wide variety of tools and strategies (options for engagement) available to activists today that were not previously available. The existence of these new strategies and tools is likely to increase future engagement in activism. Like Sharp, Joyce and Meier, researchers Earl and Kimport (and Tilly, 1977) note that activists rely on a "repertoire of contention" (179), that is tactics that are both available and effective in a particular moment in history. In two non-digital versions of these repertoires, copresence was a distinctly essential characteristic of effective activism. In the digital repertoire, however, this is no longer mandatory. Individuals who are interested in social change can engage on a cause or issue from virtually any place in the world. Technology allows them to coordinate efforts without needing to be physically together. Earl and Kimport called the modified form of activism that comes out of internet technology "theory 2.0" or "theory 2G" because they are a second-generation variation of activism (27).

Some of the methods of using social media for straight digital or digitally-enhanced BoTG activism include:

- **Maps and Maptivism** – Mapping incidences of an activity being protested.
- **QR Codes** – Quantifies the impact by “counting” participants as they scan a posted sign on location at an activist event.
- **Media Hijacking** – Changing or controlling the conversation.
- **Hashtag Trends** – Expanding the conversation and getting users in discourse with one another by having them talk on the same hashtag. Many users follow these trends out of curiosity, so it can be a great tool for increasing awareness and drawing new folks into the conversation.
- **Flash Mobs** – Spontaneous BoTG action that is coordinated covertly through social media networks.
- **Check-Ins** – Power in numbers. Like the use of QR codes, this is a vehicle for tracking participation and level of support for a cause or issue based on how many people “check in” as attending. This is also a recruitment and mobilization tool, as friends often watch each other’s check-ins so they can meet up.
- **Frontload Search Engine Results** – Use of keywords in order to impact position in search engine results.
- **Livestreaming** – Provides “access” and some degree of “participation” to interested parties across the world of direct action efforts through video streamed live of an event. This also serves to record points of conflict that could be misrepresented or avoided altogether in mainstream media sources.

These above methods are also identified in the Civil Resistance 2.0 database as “10 New Methods.” There are other methods of digital or digitally-enhanced engagement beyond those listed above in that they rely on media, rhetoric, or behavior that is exclusive to new media and social media:

- **Trolling** – Interrupting the opposition’s social media “conversations” to correct or clarify or counter points. These “troll” comments are aimed directly at specific users, not to a general conversation. They are often instigatory in nature.
- **Hashtag Hijacking** – Like trolling, this is when opposition interrupts a conversation on social media. However, comments made as part of a hijacking are directed to a general audience (readers of a specific hashtag). The goal is for the opposition to enter the conversation abruptly and take it over, changing the direction of the conversation to suit/fit their position.
- **Internet Talk Radio** – Like blogs and digital advocacy videos, this is a way of circumventing mainstream media voices and messages so that alternative voices and messages can be heard. This is the 2.0 version of underground, amateur, or indie radio.
- **Viral Videos** – Videos that expose abuses of power, wrongdoing, or just have jarring messaging can go “viral” on media hubs like Vimeo and YouTube with widespread “liking” and “sharing” efforts through social media.
- **Meme-ing** – Enhancing phrases or images that are well-known in the public sphere to mock or drive home a particular civic, social, or political message. This is also entertainment messaging, as most meme’d media is quite witty.

Social movement scholars Daniel Bennett and Pam Fielding (1999) talk about flash activism (like flash mobs – can happen quickly and engagement is over in a jiffy – or flash

floods, where the power and impact comes full force and out of nowhere and leaves an impression that cannot be ignored) (Earl and Kimport 73), as another brand of lifestyle engagement. Flash activism is lifestyle-friendly engagement, because participants can come and go, engage to the extent or degree they want to, and engage while simultaneously engaged in other tasks (work, parenting, socializing online), and they can walk away in a split second only to perhaps return later (or not). They can “mobilize rapidly, at a low cost, without a standing membership” (Earl and Kimport 27) in an existing organization. Bennett and Fielding say that in the Internet age, anyone can become an activist...and this is true.

Another subset of 21st century activism is the “five-minute activist.” Bennett and Fielding, Earl and Kimport all use the term “five-minute activist” without hostility or critical aspersion. In reality, they all recognize its effectiveness in particular circumstances, while acknowledging the efficacy is still being evaluated. Ultimately, the activist model is turned on its side a bit thanks to digital and social media: activists/participants in offline activism seek an emotional payoff as a part of their reciprocity of action – the feel-good that comes out of engagement and the feel-strongly that motivates them to act to begin with – but this is not an essential component in online activism. Instead, the low-cost and ease of access seem to trump the emotional piece (Earl and Kimport 75).

2.11.1 Slacktivism (Otherwise Known as Clicktivism)

One of the challenges surrounding digital activism is possibly more closely connected to public perception than fact. It is an issue noted in the first chapter of this text as part of the “problem” surrounding digital civic engagement: that the work is often dismissed as “slacktivist” or “clicktivist” in nature. Slacktivism is a pejorative neologism used to describe actions taken by an individual through digital channels (e.g., liking, sharing, signing e-petitions) as opposed to in

person in order to affect change. It is a blend of the words “slacker” and “activism.” It’s also referred to as clicktivism due to the act of clicking in order to advance a social cause. It is understandable why radical activists might reject on first glance the kinds of engagement conducted online: signing of petitions on Change.org, “liking” or “sharing” cause or issue information, hashtagging or retweeting commentary on Twitter. These activities seem to require little investment on the part of the person clicking to spread the word. It might even seem challenging to identify the reciprocity in such activities. However, when we consider the ways in which social media has furthered recent social and political causes, such as Il Popolo Viola and the Arab Spring or the Students for Democracy in Hong Kong, particularly in countries where the media is controlled by the government, the value of mass electronic dissemination and circulation becomes apparent.

While some activist researchers give digital activism only a lukewarm reception, acknowledging the benefits of it and the positive impact digital technology has on an individual’s likelihood to participate (Boulianne, 2009; Breuer & Farooq, 2012; Joyce, 2012), others are fierce critics. Rustin Klafka (2010) said these clicktivists are simply clicking to make themselves feel better, while not really caring about the cause because they aren’t taking pains to do any real work associated with change (qtd in Breuer & Farooq 4). Sam Biddle (2012), author of the blog post “Twitter Doesn’t Make You Martin Luther King,” went so far as to say most digital activists are “fakers, half-assed retweet activists, who ‘support’ Iranian dissent or ‘raise awareness’ about homophobia with the same zeal that we click Like on a video of two cute cats playing with an alligator” (qtd in Breuer & Farooq 4). Consider also the position of public scholar Malcolm Gladwell, who penned the 2010 piece in *The New Yorker* entitled “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not be Tweeted,” in which he argued that “social media can’t provide what

social change has always required.” These positions are shared by Duncombe and also to some degree Kristie Fleckenstein who argues that “we cannot rely on rhetoric alone to enact social change” (*Vision 2*). We must acknowledge that digital isn’t just rhetoric – it’s mobilization. In fact, all of these folks argue for hybridization.

But there is new research showing online social networks do actually influence political expression and behavior. Anita Breuer & Bilal Farooq (2012) surveyed participants in the Ficha Limpa activist campaign against corruption in Brazil in an effort to better understand online and offline behaviors. Though they found that “low-effort online activities” such as social networking service activities “contribute[d] little to increase political participation” (2), they did acknowledge that “targeted campaigning by e-advocacy groups has the potential to increase the political engagement of individuals with low levels of political interest and can help to produce the switch from online to offline participation among individuals with high levels of political interest” (1). Like the GDADS findings, Breuer & Farooq (2012) noted that digital media effectively supplements the activities of those who are already interested or engaged in politics.

The Boulianne analysis of the impact of the Internet on engagement claims the impact is quite modest. This study must be weighed in context, though. It analyzed activity from 1995-2005, making the data more than a decade old, so it could hardly take into consideration the activity on social media since the advent of Web 2.0. Additionally, because of the speed at which technology is advancing and evolving, information surrounding digital technology is virtually obsolete by the time it’s printed. Users adapt and find ways to do online the same kinds of things they were doing offline before, and this reality is even truer in 2015 than 2005.

In fact, the Boulianne study barely covers the time period of Howard Dean’s *Blog for America* and misses altogether Obama’s *Text Out the Vote* campaign, which are considered some

of the earliest uber-successful political activism campaigns using new media. Since then, there are too many movements/campaigns to count (but over 1,200 notable, according to the Digital Activism Research Project).

A more recent and extensive study on political mobilization through online social networks shows tangible results of an online get-out-the-vote type campaign. Researchers at University of California San Diego (Bond et al., 2012) used the midterm Congressional elections of 2010 to conduct an experiment on Facebook users and political activity. They wanted to understand the degree of influence that online messaging about voting had on a user's "political self-expression, information seeking, and real-world voting behavior" (Bond et al. 295). The experiment involved placing a message on the top of select users' newsfeeds reminding them of Election Day and inviting them to click on an "I Voted" button to share this status with their friends. One group (the "social message" group) was also shown pictures of their own Facebook friends who had also clicked on the "I Voted" button, while the other group received only the informational message.

The members of the social message group were more likely to participate in political self-expression and information seeking (which was measured by their clicking on a link to learn about their designated polling place) activities, but most importantly, *they were more likely to actually vote*. Though the study emphasized that the "social contagion" is most heavily correlated to close Facebook friends, that is, those friendships deemed to be an online reflection of a close face-to-face relationship, the researchers noted that "even weak ties seem to be relevant to its spread" (297). This finding silences one of the primary arguments of critics such as Gladwell: that the "weak ties" of social media are not sufficiently motivating for action or change. Ultimately, the Facebook voting study drew data from 61 million Facebook users and

was matched against public voting records to verify that a vote was indeed cast. The findings illustrate that “online political mobilization works” (Bond et al. 297); in fact, the online influence matches face-to-face influence noted in previous studies, where “each act of voting on average generates an additional three votes as this behavior spreads throughout the [social] network” (Bond et al. 298). A similar study of Facebook users and voting preferences was conducted during the 2014 midterm Congressional elections; however, results were not available for this dissertation project.

The power of social influence on behavior cannot be dismissed, and in social networking sites especially, we need to have a good understanding of how to harness that power and use it to increase participation in both online and offline activities. It is also worth remembering that objections to online engagement activities (denoting them as lazy activism) don’t take into consideration the effort or time required in – or degree of passion underlying – the efforts of the organizer, the creator of the initial image or petition being circulated, or the designer of the Facebook fan page. These are community organizers who have taken up a new, highly participatory form of media to influence or affect change. Because they are doing this work on *their* terms, using *their* unique skill set and incorporating technologies and devices *they* are comfortable with, there is a degree of reciprocity that adds personal value to the activist or advocacy work they are doing. It is this personal investment and value that prompts the activists to enlist support of their friends, both online and offline, and, as we saw in the Bond et al. (2012) study, that type of social influence matters. Additionally, these digital activists are able to see the reach of their efforts in ways that boots-on-the-ground (BoTG) activists might not.

As the variations of direct action begin to encompass new technologies, I would call on critics to reconsider their position on “slacktivism” and perhaps begin to see the value in the

kinds of efforts that are being taken online. Rather than default to the pejorative variation, perhaps we could begin valuing “clicktivism.” If we dismiss the notion of “feel good” passive activism – which is not unique to the digital age, by the way – and embrace the parallel efforts and expanded circulation afforded in the online world, we might be able to direct our focus to the education of Americans, particularly young Americans, on how to do this digital advocacy work effectively.

2.11.2 Hybridized Activism

In their criticism of media- and digital-rich modes of activism, what many actually acknowledge is the need for both digital and direct action. The founder of Clicktivist.org notes that digital activism isn’t a replacement for boots-on-the-ground activism, but a digital alternative, highlighting the “use of digital media for facilitating social change and activism” (“What is Clicktivism?”). Technology changes the face of the activist, no longer requires the large scale organization to support change, but sometimes one or two tech-savvy and politically interested individuals (see vote-pairing sites), what Earl and Kimport call “lone-wolf organizers” (15) can affect small change. There are varying degrees of digital engagement in modern-day activist movements. Many are digitally-enabled or digitally-enhanced, though some “e-movements” unfold entirely online (Earl and Schussman, 2003). E-tactics, as they are called by Earl and Kimport, include the use of online and offline tools and strategies by social movement organizations (SMOs) to affect change (9). They also distinguish between longtime activists and the “five-minute activist”:

Earl and Kimport “Continuum of Online Activism” (Table 1-1, p. 12)

<p>E-mobilizations (e.g., UFPJ’s march and rally in Washington)</p>	<p>E-tactics (e.g., petitions on PetitionOnline)</p>	<p>E-movements (e.g., the strategic voting movement)</p>
<p>In e-mobilizations, the Web is used to facilitate the sharing of information in the service of an offline protest action.</p>	<p>E-tactics may include both off- and online components, although largely are low cost, and do not rely on copresence for participants or organizers</p>	<p>In e-movements, the organization of an participation in the movement occurs entirely online</p>
<p>Low leveraging of the affordances of the Web</p>	<p>Varying leveraging of the affordances of the Web</p>	<p>High leveraging of the affordances of the Web</p>

Table 2: Earl and Kimport's "Continuum of Online Activism"

The frequently noted benefits of digitally-enhanced activism include low cost, ease of access, ease of circulation, and “reduced need of physical togetherness” (Earl and Kimport 177), but the digital action doesn’t (yet – and may not ever) fully replace in-person activist work. Though there are some very clear and effective methods of activism that are exclusively digital, the most common and preferred forms of activism today are a blend of BoTG and digital, a hybridization of activist efforts.

Communications scholar, Joss Hands, describes a progression of engagement: dissent (I disagree with X), resistance (I disagree with X and will stop supporting the practice by taking individual action), and rebellion (I disagree with X, will stop supporting the practice through

individual action, such as boycott, and I will organize others to protest/revolt) (Hands 4-5). The distinction between these various forms of engagement is important, since the term “activist” is undergoing redefinition thanks to the digitally-enhanced possibilities. Hands, and others like him, seek to differentiate between expression of disapproval and *action*, mostly considering digital as useful for mobilization and organization, but boots-on-the-ground essential for the action piece.

Hands talks about the “mobil(e)isation” of activism (124-141), the influence of mobile technology on social action. There are, of course, the SMS/text message campaigns, as well as the many other types of digital or digitally-enhanced activism, but Hands also talks about Howard Rheingold’s concept of the “smart mob” and “swarming” behaviors that come out of mobile technology (125). The smart mob is a classification of young people who are able to establish peer-to-peer networks via mobile technology that provide opportunity for them to engage in ways they might not previously have had liberty to engage (because of limitations or boundaries set by parents or access to transportation).

Swarming (Rheingold, qtd. in Hands 125-127) is the use of mobile technology in the midst of a protest to redirect, disperse, or mislead law enforcement in an effort to prevent police disruption of a protest. Users/activists might, for example, have someone listening in on a known police channel and notify protesters via SMS or text when units are called to a particular protest site. This makes disruption much more difficult for law enforcement, because they are not privy to the movements of the protest group.

Blogs also impact civic engagement, according to Pole. They alter mobilization efforts and in some instances minimize or eliminate ‘the politics of geography’ (15). Civic or political blogging can level the playing field between those physically or financially unable to join larger,

more influential modes of activism. When these cyberactivists join forces with others who have shared interests, a coalition of sorts can be established, and through the sheer numbers (“loud, clear, equal” referenced by Verba, Scholzman, Brady), change can be affected.

Perhaps the most interesting shift in activist efforts since 1990 has been from a dominantly collectivist effort – where action was largely reliant upon synchronous collective action – to a much more individualist one. Rheingold highlights a foundation precept to smart mobs as an “aggregation of individual decisions” (127). Hands compares this to market behavior, noting that market trends are based on “the sum total of all the personal preferences enacted” (127) rather than some “action directed toward mutual understanding” (127). These individuals recognize that their individual desires can be leveraged through the peer-to-peer relationships with others who share the same individual desires without having to become a part of the same group or groupthought, without having to identify collective interests. This idea draws attention back to the role of mutually-beneficial action and reciprocity (tenets of service learning and meaningful civic engagement), where efforts are no longer weighed down by the “free-riders” and instead bolstered by individuals invested to the degree they wish, but invested nonetheless. In this way, hybrid activism can serve both the activist and the movement or effort for change. The ability to offer methods of action that appeal to a broader demographic (and sometimes a finicky one) means increased, highly-customized engagement.

While the Internet and digital and social media have provided tremendous opportunities for more engagement in political and civic affairs, the Balkanization of ideas cannot be ignored. Pole notes that most study respondents who read blogs claim to read those with which they are ideologically aligned, with very few reading counter positions. This is sometimes called cyberbalkanization or the proverbial echo chamber. Cass Sunstein, in his 2001 book

Republic.com, continues the arguments made in Putnam's oft-cited *Bowling Alone*, and discusses the pitfalls of the web: "the Internet is replacing the physical space where citizens are exposed to different points of view with a private place where individuals withdraw into themselves and reinforce deeply held prejudices."

All of these arguments, however, were made before we really understood the power and influence of social media in social and political movements. They both downright ignore the existence or power of online communities, many of which could be credited with helping unique communities of people combat feelings of isolation they experienced in the "real world." Take, for example, the LGBT community in the 1990s. Queer studies scholars, Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes, note that "for many queers, particularly those in rural or isolated areas, the internet has been an important, even vital venue for connecting with others and for establishing a sense of identity and community, particularly in a queer diaspora where notions of community, even identity, must often be constructed through information steadily gleaned, sometimes at great personal and political cost, from places outside one's home of origin" (190, 192). They remind us that even today, "bridging the virtual and real worlds, the internet helps some queers connect with their desires and with one another in the pursuit of pleasure" (190).

Beyond contributing to the acceptance of some countercultural groups, the Internet has also served as a tremendous networking tool for individuals connected to seemingly small or less well-known causes or issues who wanted to join forces for education, fundraising, or even lobbying. Online forums such as *mothering.com* (dubbed "The Home for Natural Family Living") existed in the early 2000s to help mothers connect with others who shared similar parenting and life philosophies. Michelle Ray, blogger and online activist, says *mothering.com* forums were a "saving grace" for her and others like her: "*What to Expect* suddenly became live,

at-the-ready advice and empathy. It was also activism on a grand scale for a group that didn't really have time or help before [...] it helped encourage and create a whole new marketplace: Work At Home Parents. The WAHM community exploded via mothering[.com].”

Even before the world wide web, technology such as BITNET and IRC (Internet Relay Chat) provided interested parties the ability to install a client on their personal computer that would facilitate private message or chat communications as well as file sharing as early as the late 80s. While it was used for a wide variety of purposes, IRC was also used during two prominent international political events [the 1991 August Coup in the Soviet Union (attempt to take control of the Gorbachev government) and the Gulf War of the same year] as a means to circumvent media blackouts and bias.

Though today, the most common digital campaigns are a hybrid form of activism, that is, they use digital media to supplement boots-on-the-ground (BoTG) efforts, or “offline mobilization” (Global Digital Activism Data Set), the increasingly participatory nature of Web 2.0 and the coming Web 3.0 technology should hint at an even greater upsurge of civic participation online. Whether or not BoTG action will ever be replaced remains to be seen, but the notion of the public sphere has been forever altered.

2.12 Carrying the Free Speech Torch into the Future

Having just celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Free Speech Movement at Berkley in October 2014, we can see Free Speech is alive and well and celebrated on some campuses. However, the proliferation of free speech zones illustrate a reality that this battle is not over. The fight for academic freedom and unfettered political speech carries on.

The archived collection “Challenges to Free Speech and Academic Freedom at CCNY, 1931-42” relates to modern-day breaches or violations of free speech through free speech zoning

(see Greg Lukianoff's *Unlearning Liberty*). The lasting effect of the controversy on the City College of New York (or any public college) campus might be impossible to measure, and considering the extreme leftist and elitist ideology that mainstream America seems to attribute to the majority of university campuses, might be difficult to sympathize with. However, like any other pivotal time in history, we must study the past as predictor of future behavior. Considering the extreme measures taken by the CCNY administrators, then the state legislators, and then the federal government in order to silence a radical minority on college campuses, today's students and faculty alike should consider themselves warned.

In a post-Occupy Wall Street environment, where protestors were given free reign over public spaces, cases of campus protests and demonstration in the news might signal that administrators are becoming more than accommodating of student and faculty protests, indeed, more tolerant of free speech. Consider Dartmouth's reaction when the group "Real Talk Dartmouth" crashed a student event earlier this year and used "Occupy-style 'human microphone' chants" demanding the school "address charges of sexual assault, racism, and homophobia on campus." Protestors were not arrested, nor were they asked to leave. Instead, Dartmouth College canceled a day of classes the following day in what administrators called "alternative programming designed to bring students, faculty, and staff together to discuss Dartmouth's commitment to fostering debate that promotes respect for individuals, civil and engaged discourse, and the value of diverse opinions" ("Dartmouth Cancels Classes").

At Cooper Union in New York City this summer, students opposed to ending a "free education" program at the college staged a two-month sit-in, effectively occupying the college president's office. The President never made any attempts to remove the students from his office, instead finding separate workspace for himself over the summer. Only when the Cooper Union

administration agreed to negotiate with the students and continue the free tuition program did the students voluntarily leave his office.

These news stories show college and university administrators submitting to the demands of students without consequence. However, there are stories of faculty speech – when in direct opposition to the views of the institution – that paint a very different picture. Consider the ongoing case of tenured professor John McAdams of Marquette University who criticized university administration and fellow faculty on his blog and faced firing (“Firing a Faculty Blogger”). Take associate professor, Michael S. Adams, a Christian conservative from the University of North Carolina who claims he was denied promotion to full professor as a result of his conservative political punditry, much of which targeted university faculty, staff, and administration (“Court Denies Conservative Pundit”). The court decision in favor of UNC was based upon the 2006 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Garcetti v. Cabellos*, which upheld the right of the district attorney’s office to discipline a deputy DA for questioning his own office’s actions. The judge in the Michael Adams case cited this precedent in holding that “Mr. Adams was not protected under the First Amendment for speech made pursuant to his official duties” (“Court Denies Conservative Pundit”).

The 2010 court case should cause all faculty to be on high alert. If we cannot freely express our personal viewpoints and/or objections to practices within our institutions without fear of reprisal, then our speech is being subverted by our administrators. The American Association of University Professors, along with numerous other groups advocating for free speech, argues that the *Garcetti* ruling should not be applied to university professors. Adams’s own counsel said, “Opinion columns are classic examples of free speech protected by the First Amendment, and mentioning them in a promotion application does not change this fact.”

Consider Teresa Wagner, a conservative political activist, who was passed over for a faculty position in the University of Iowa Law School because of her pro-life activism. She claimed in her lawsuit that the law professor who led the opposition to her candidacy was the former law clerk to Justice Harry Blackmun, coincidentally the Supreme Court Justice who wrote the *Roe v. Wade* decision (“Mistrial Declared in Conservative Hiring Bias Suit”). There are dozens of cases, like the three mentioned above, and countless examples of faculty being fired or denied promotion for speaking out against the liberal/progressive majority, for being too constitutional, too capitalist, too conservative, too Christian. It’s not the same ideological challenge faculty and students faced in the 30s and 40s at CCNY, but it is the same in principle. Limits to speech on campus and in public spaces all over the world further illustrate the value of the online protest forum. We could let our students muddle through the Internet and cross our fingers that they don’t fall down the rabbit hole and get stuck in the abyss. Or we could teach them how to harness the digital realm as a tool for self-change and world change.

Political and social ideology is formed on college campuses. We know that the university campuses of the 30s and 40s were predominantly conservative. The Great Depression and the anti-war movement brought about a change in dynamic on the college campus, with the progressive/communist-leaning left taking form on campuses across the country. This shift in ideology threatened the stability of the establishment (both political and educational). Over the course of the last 80 years, through a series of radical social movements on college campuses, the political ideology of the college campus has become predominantly left-leaning. Sociologist Neil Gross’s study of political ideology on campus revealed that 73% of academics self-identify as “either moderates, liberals, or radical leftists” (Gross, *Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care?*). Even more disconcerting than such an imbalance in ideology is the

confirmation of conservative hiring bias his study revealed. It appears the anti-liberal-establishment faculty of today has assumed the position of disfavor held by the anti-fascist faculty of the 30s and 40s.

Not all recent cases made by faculty and students against suppression of free speech on campuses are made by conservatives, though. Steven Salaita, tenured professor who was terminated by the University of Illinois for sending tweets that were critical of Israeli military action in the Gaza Strip. Though the chancellor ultimately said the decision wasn't a result of the *content* of those tweets but the *tone*, the reality is that Salaita's speech caused him to lose his job.

Whether through firing, demotion, denial of promotion or hire, or simply fear of being shunned by colleagues, the free speech of faculty members is being suppressed. As Donna Shalala, President of the University of Miami, said, "You can't have a university without having free speech, even though at times it makes us terribly uncomfortable. If students are not going to hear controversial ideas on college campuses, they're not going to hear them in America." As we move to incorporate activism into our composition curriculum – through civic engagement and service learning activities – it is imperative that we are mindful of any limitations set upon us regarding our abilities to speak, act, assemble, write, and demonstrate freely.

3 A PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES

3.1 Background

When trying to determine why so many college students today seem civically disengaged, we might be inclined to ask ourselves: Are they apathetic? Are they hyper-focused on professional success? Do they not value public work? Are they cynical? Or are they unsure where to start? There are many reasons for college students to be less engaged in the public

sphere today than the college student activists of the 30s, 60s, or 70s, yet it could just as easily be argued that there are *more* reasons for them to engage now than ever before.

Today, we are a nation at war. Our civil liberties are being threatened by an over-reaching government body. We have witnessed levels of political gridlock and impotence in Congress that make most of us feel our efforts might be futile. We have seen enough corruption, scandal, and dishonesty in elected officials to make anyone cynical. In my own classes, students cite regularly the idea that religion and politics are discussion topics to be avoided.

Understanding the climate in such a way, and recognizing the reluctance of students to speak publicly (even when the “public” is their own dinner table or their Facebook page), how are we to expect engaged citizenry from them?

In his 1994 book *Generation at the Crossroads: Action and Apathy on the American Campus*, public scholar Paul Loeb discussed the widely held assumption in the 80s and 90s that American college students had grown apolitical and largely apathetic about civic issues. Loeb interviewed students at over one hundred campuses, and researched student values and political activity, the findings of which have helped to distinguish some of the reasoning behind student engagement choices.

While he conceded that the majority of students were “politically withdrawn” (7), he pointed out that this group of generation Xers did not represent the totality of college student civic behavior. Loeb labeled two types of students as the “apolitical/adapters” and the “activists,” and he studied their level of engagement during college and in their post-college lives. Though he did not study their non-college peers, he did point to Donna Gaines’s 1992 book, *Teenage Wasteland*, explaining that “their peers who stopped after high school or dropped out in the tenth or eleventh grade share similar rationales for political withdrawal. They have emerged, if

anything, more cynical and politically inactive” partly because of America’s economic decline, which had a greater impact on the non-college youth.

Just six years after Loeb’s study, Robert Putnam’s book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* was published. In it, Putnam cited a decline in membership and team activities, using bowling leagues as a metaphor, as evidence of decline in civic participation. The lack of “social capital” or civic virtue, he argued, was a result of the erosion of social networks and “norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness” (19). In reality, as we look at this argument a decade later, it seems plausible that what Putnam saw as erosion of social networks might have simply signaled a shift in medium.

All three books pre-date Web 2.0 and the inception of social media, which have put the power and possibility of political engagement and activism in the hands of a much broader citizenry. Web 2.0 replaced many traditional activities that sociologists and interested parties such as Putnam consider “social.” In the early 2000s, chat rooms, texting, online discussion boards and listservs, gaming, email and instant messaging programs became a virtual water cooler for both working and after-work life. A new social arena was formed.

In the previous chapter, I cited three Pew studies that point to an increased interest and opportunity to engage in cybercitizenship activities. What we don’t yet know and/or haven’t yet measured is the impact of a blended pedagogy, one that incorporates civic pedagogy and digital pedagogy, on student attitudes and behaviors toward such cybercitizenship activities. I contend that students are ill-equipped with the new media tools for the purposes of engagement (which amounts to a lack of self-efficacy), and I rely on evidence from qualitative studies on youth participation (in real and virtual worlds) to assert they also feel powerless (which amounts to a lack of agency). Beyond media studies and communications, those of us in writing studies who

wish to influence the development of student-citizens can adopt such a blended pedagogy with the express goal of working to increase agency (change in attitude) and increase literacy and self-efficacy (change in behavior). Kristie Fleckenstein argues that “people must be able to imagine and believe themselves as agents before acting as agents” (*Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action* 114), an idea that points to the importance of positively impacting these attitudes and behaviors.

There are many different ways that the term civic engagement can be defined. The term “civic” might be considered a hybrid of “community” and “political” yet not always include social, religious, or cultural. For the purposes of my work, I define civic engagement as meaningful participation in the public sphere for the purposes of addressing an issue or concern, working toward resolution of a community problem, or getting involved in the political process of our representative democracy. In the academic world, civic engagement also relates to the coursework to some degree, so in a composition course, the primary method of engagement would most likely involve writing about/for the designated cause or issue. I draw some of my own definition from Fleckenstein’s definition of “social action” which is outlined in her book *Vision, Rhetoric, and Social Action in the Composition Classroom* as “behavior designed to increase individual and collective human dignity, value, and quality of life” (1).

One measurement of political engagement, a component of civic engagement, has been voter turnout. While voter turnout certainly doesn’t tell the whole story, it is a reasonable gauge of disaffection with politics: the less people feel their vote will “count,” the less incentive they have to show up at the polls. In reality, there are many other factors that can contribute to whether or not voters, particularly those of the 18-25 demographic, will turn out the vote. Higher education is a significant factor. A [recent study](#) (2012) of youth voter turnout by the Tufts University Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)

found that 66% of youth with any college experience voted, while only 35% of youth with no college experience voted. The findings reveal the impact of providing civic opportunities in college classrooms, ultimately claiming that “Not being asked to participate can have detrimental effects on motivation and efficacy” (“That’s Not Democracy”).

As a result, a primary goal of my work in the classroom is to educate students on how to effectively engage with the world around them using the written and verbal skills acquired in college composition and the many available tools through digital and new media.

Several of the findings of the CIRCLE study, though it examined *non-college* youth participation in civic life exclusively, can be applied to the student population at many metropolitan community colleges, as well. The five primary findings were

- Most participants saw concrete barriers to civic engagement. For example, they perceived that institutions did not want their engagement, that their communities provided few positive role models and that they lacked the money and connections to contribute.
- Many participants believed they had skills to make a difference in their communities, but they lacked opportunities to use those skills.
- Nevertheless, many participants served or helped other individuals in their own families and neighborhoods, although they did not think of these forms of helping behavior when asked about community-level change.
- Participants were highly aware of social and political issues, concerned about them, and likely to discuss them critically in their own social networks, even if they did not see how they personally could address such issues.

- A small minority of participants had been recruited into civic organizations, and they generally expressed strong support for these groups. Most other focus group members believed that such institutions were missing in their communities and reported never having been asked to participate. (“That’s Not Democracy”)

In the conclusions of that study, the researchers noted opportunities and interest in providing further instruction on how to engage, noting that “opportunities to move from critical talk (which is common in their circles) to constructive collective actions is the key to transforming both these individuals and their communities.”

Helping our students achieve “transformative” learning experiences and also impact social and community/political change is a goal for many of us in higher education. As a means to that end, instructors have to identify the tools and opportunities our students are already engaged in, as well as the conversations they care about being engaged in, and expand both of these as a part of class activities. bell hooks, advocate of engaged learning, argues that our work “is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants with learning” (11). She is joined by many other scholars, practitioners, and supporters of engaged learning (Dewey, Kolb, Deans, Herzberg, to name a few).

Modern compositionists such as Gee, Trimbur, Rose, and Kress agree that writing is both a social and political act and that it is no longer something that happens in a vacuum. The advancements of technology, namely with regard to digital media, have made this even truer. I have designed a freshman composition course that attempts to unite several notions of effective pedagogy: service learning/civic engagement, new media, and multimodal composition. It is my contention that these are not competing ideas, but that they all work toward the same end: increased student engagement in learning and in life. I assert that they can be harnessed together

to accomplish the shared goal of “writing to save the world” (Ahlschwede 118). As one who is personally engaged both socially and politically – and who writes to that end in a variety of contexts – I see the tremendous value in exposing my students to the world of social movement media.

3.2 Why Civic Engagement and Service Learning in Composition Studies?

Writing teachers today who ascribe to Vygotsky’s Social Constructivist Theory of teaching already recognize the value in civic engagement and service learning. These instructors have an expanded view of audience and purpose, teaching students that the instructor (who will be grading all written work) is not the only audience model, even in the academic setting. Teaching composition through peer and social interactions – writing beyond the classroom – adds value to the skills the students are required to learn. Thomas Deans discusses this very principle in his book *Writing Partnerships: Service Learning in Composition* (2000). In fact, he explains how service learning is the “next logical step” in the “social turn” that began to impact composition instruction in the 90s.

This social turn in composition pedagogy began in the 1980s as a rejection of the current-traditional rhetoric (CTR) method. Compositionists such as James Berlin and Robert Inkster found the CTR method limiting for students and teachers, because it lacked sufficient opportunity for discovery and writer-audience engagement (“Current-Traditional Rhetoric: Paradigm and Practice”). The continuation of the social turn in composition has been the result of the changing world, most likely the increase in digital communication, which vastly expands our students’ need to engage (and write) within their community. Students today are more interactive than those of previous generations, so active learning better suits their personalities, learning preferences, and their daily lives. Deans was certainly not the first to imply that service

had a natural place in the role of education, nor was Dewey, though these are definitely names that have furthered the cause. Early promoters of civic engagement and service learning include Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Thomas Jefferson, Ben Franklin, and Jane Addams, all of whom have essentially advocated for the use of language to improve the democracy.

Outgrowths of the social turn include critical pedagogy and, more recently, following the public turn of the 90s and early 2000s, deliberative pedagogy. Deliberative pedagogy, as described by Joni Doherty in 2012, is a form of integrative learning that blends purposeful civic action with classroom activities that ask students to “engage with others in democratic, inclusive and respectfully discursive practices” (“Deliberative Pedagogy: An Education that Matters” 25). She notes that “deliberative pedagogies don’t represent ‘add-ons’ to already heavily burdened course agendas but instead redefine the mission of higher education as one in which the boundaries between the ‘ivory tower,’ professional life and the body politic are blurred” (26).

She argues that “[t]he primary goal isn’t civic education per se, but for students to develop the commitment, knowledge, and skills necessary for creating and maintaining equitable, diverse, and democratic spaces, whether it be in the local community, the workplace, the nation, or the world” (25). This idea that power dynamics between student-teacher and student-community member are at play as new knowledge is being created challenges our notions of expertise, because “everyone who participates in the project, students and community members alike, possesses some kind of skill or insight essential for the project’s success” (26). This kind of empowerment plays a significant role in efforts to impact student agency and self-efficacy. In this way, I see myself as a practitioner of feminist pedagogy, as well, because I am always interested in recalibrating power imbalances in the class and beyond.

My pedagogy is also informed by Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire doesn't adopt the position of professor as the only source of knowledge in a classroom but recognizes that knowledge is acquired in all different places, so students come to us with knowledge they have "learned in their relations with the world and with other women and men" (63). This experiential knowledge they already have affords them a degree of expertise they might not be aware of until it is acknowledged or validated by others. Learning from one another is a great tool for such validation.

Aside from students being able to learn from their classmates, students in a deliberative classroom are deeply engaged in meaning-making alongside the public, "not *doing for* or *learning about*, but rather are engaged in relationships marked by reciprocity" (26). This reciprocity is a key component to valuable service and engagement experiences. Deans speaks to this repeatedly in his scholarship on service learning, as does Putnam, who says "civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations" (19).

Like deliberative pedagogues, civic engagement scholars see the natural fit between community and classroom, understanding that "the connection between composition, communication and service learning [helps] our students make the crucial transitions from students to writers" (Adler-Kassner, et al, 1997). Mary Mulder argues that the moral development of our composition students is a "legitimate pedagogical concern" and that as writing instructors, we should work towards that goal in all we do in our classroom (2002).

There are numerous ways that composition courses can approach engagement and writing, some of which include activities surrounding public literacy, service-learning, community-based research and writing, and activism. One benefit of inclusion of community-based or civic writing is the expansion of audience. The notion of writing in isolation (Herzberg,

2000; Deans, 2003; Wysocki, 2004) is essentially what a student writer is doing when she writes exclusively for her instructor or even classmates. A goal in our writing classes is to teach audience awareness, and what better way than to introduce the various ways that students can compose and present their ideas in order to impact others outside the classroom environment?

In the introduction to *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service Learning in Composition*, Linda Adler-Kassner argues that service learning should be taught in first-year composition courses, that introducing service learning in this initial interaction with college freshmen helps to “set a tone and pattern for the whole college experience” (1997). This assertion is confirmed in the Tufts University CIRCLE study cited earlier, which identified a correlation between college experience and the likelihood of young Americans to engage in the political process.

Thomas Deans, in his service learning rhetoric, *Writing and Community Action*, asks the question “Why write at all?” He offers the answer that writing “is not simply a collection of rules, but rather a tool for action, a means by which to pursue a variety of personal and social goals” (“Writing as Social Action” 2). We can teach our students to write in a variety of modes, but without teaching them to think through the purpose for communicating their ideas, we have not taught them anything worthwhile. As Deans points out, few of our students will actually write essays beyond college, but they will write in the world for personal, professional, and civic reasons. As such, the goal of incorporating civic engagement activities into our courses serves to produce civically literate students who have the requisite skills to actively engage in their communities through writing. Fleckenstein underscores the importance of teaching toward civic purposes: “the *how* we teach and the *what* we teach implicate the kind of citizens our students may become” (149). She also points out, “if we teach, in James Berlin’s words, a reality as well

as a rhetoric, then the writing classroom constitutes a potential site for inviting a compassionate model of social action that serves compassionate ends” (148).

The concept of agency is important in the discussions of power dynamics, both in the classroom (between teacher and student) and in community (between existing power brokers and the impotent counterpublics). Freire said the oppressed have a choice between “...being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world” (48). His pedagogy must be forged *with* not *for* the oppressed (similar to service learning in theory, at least according to Deans). He sees the world as better when we are no longer oppressor and oppressed, but “human in the process of achieving freedom” (49). This pedagogy is enacted in many ways in the hybrid pedagogy for which I’m advocating.

Deans also explains that “responsible action demands reflection” (“Preparing for Outreach: Respect and Reciprocity” 253). He summarizes Freire’s views that, “action without reflection is activism – that is, unthinking action for its own sake [and] reflection without action is verbalism – empty words” (“Preparing for Outreach” 253). For this reason, I encourage my students to exercise a joint approach to their civic engagement experience as one of action and reflection. In classes where I teach digital civic engagement, I have my students produce a total of five reflective documents: an essay prior to starting any civic engagement work, as a means to reflect on their own experience and formulate a working definition for themselves of “citizenship”; one after each of three projects, to assess their successes and challenges and the value of the work they’re doing; and a process and reflective journal they’ve kept for the

duration of the semester, to help them evaluate learning curves, growth, and behaviors and attitudes toward the work they're doing.

The executive summary of the “That’s Not Democracy” study of CIRCLE articulates a primary benefit to experiential learning programs, that “robust civic engagement not only creates healthy societies; it benefits the individuals who engage, through the development of skills and knowledge, networks and relationships, and feelings of purpose and meaning.” In an earlier report put out by CIRCLE, “Civic Mission of Schools” (2003), the group promoted the value of civic education, noting that it is most effective “when it involves active discussion and debate and makes connections to current issues that affect students’ lives in their communities and at all levels of government, rather than rote study of abstract principles or dry procedures” (23). This statement points to the fact that disciplines of history, political science, and social studies shouldn’t shoulder the burden of civic education exclusively, and this education should be much broader than simply memorizing dates and geography. The *engagement* is what matters, and reflection on that engagement *experience* is where the true civic learning takes shape.

3.3 Entering the *New Public Sphere*

Jürgen Habermas identified the “public sphere” as a space where individuals converge to discuss and debate issues of a civic, community, or political nature. While Habermasian notions of the “intellectual” and the “salon,” as well as what’s appropriate topic for discussion in the public sphere, have been analyzed by many public sphere theorists over the years (Fraser, 1990; Hauser, 1998; Fleming, 2009), he can be credited with starting this important dialogue about place and political discussion.

But the discussion of engaging and using rhetoric in a public forum goes back much farther than Habermas. The purpose of rhetoric for classical orators and rhetoricians was highly

civic (and political) in nature. Some of the earliest rhetors (Cicero, Quintilian, Aristotle) were also teachers. They taught effective speech and writing with the purpose of impacting mostly public life. Not all orators in ancient Greece used their skills to further a dominant or elite position, however. In fact, one of the first known female rhetors, Hortensia, is known for the radical speech she delivered to the Triumvirs protesting taxation without representation. It could be argued that it was here, in the public space of the Roman Forum, that activist speech was born. The tradition of civically motivated speech and writing has taken on different forms throughout the history of rhetoric and composition instruction, but it is a relevant piece of our discipline history from which we should never depart.

Linda Flower, in her book *Community Literacy*, refers to the field of rhetoric and composition as “a sort of poster child for the attempt to make a difference through education,” citing a primary goal of classical rhetoricians as one shared in our field today: a desire to address and affect social issues through our rhetorical skills. However, she seems to diverge from classical rhetoricians in that she finds a different purpose for rhetoric than the forensic, deliberative, or ceremonial. Flower expands the definitions of civic engagement, service learning, and the purpose of rhetoric to include open dialogue and exchange between two entities. She sets up a discussion of public engagement that is appropriate for those new to the practice of civic engagement, as well as those seeking an expanded perspective on it. Ultimately, she makes a case for the value of starting or joining a conversation in the public, *with* the public, as a form of reciprocal civic engagement.

Gerard Hauser also describes a shift from ancient Greek and Roman realms of oratory and rhetoric, where virtue was privately held and publicly celebrated, to the idea of a civil society, where individuality is more recognized and celebrated. He uses Enlightenment theories

and philosophers – and even Adam Smith's principles of economics – to illustrate the value of free exchange of ideas, engagement that is mutually beneficial instead of the kind of the past that privileges certain groups or publics. Interestingly, he notes that a “well-functioning public sphere of this sort recognizes that revolution is unfeasible and therefore embraces a course of action that secures a space of open exchange apart from system imperatives” (*Civil Society* 36).

Though Hauser’s argument that revolution is unlikely might discourage some activist-scholars, there are many reasons for academics to engage in public work and public pedagogy. Cushman argues that we have to break down barriers between the university and the non-university world, which amount to a sort of “ivory tower isolation” (“Rhetorician and Agent of Change” 11). The argument Coogan and Ackerman make in their introduction to *The Space to Work in Public Life* is twofold: disciplinary crisis and community crises are both driving increased participation of the rhetorician in the public sphere. They discuss the need for compositionists and rhetoricians to again make themselves relevant in the university setting and the public eye and that the rise of service learning and civic engagement in higher education is serving that end. Rather than teaching our students in a box and then having them “go public” in their application of those skills, we should be providing opportunities for them to learn in public spaces.

One thread that runs consistent throughout much of the discussion of public pedagogy is the inherent value in facilitating intercultural communication. Flower emphasizes the value of the shared knowledge that arises from discussions held in a community center, while Phyllis Ryder notes this can also be accomplished through the use of new media technology. In her article, “Publics 2.0: Public Formation through Social Networking,” Ryder speaks specifically to how social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter can be used to facilitate community

action and intercultural communication. Using the example of Miriam's Kitchen, a soup kitchen in metro-DC, she highlights many new ways that Web 2.0 users can engage in community action. She first asks readers to abandon the typical scholarship of public action which analyzes effective social action based on an "idealized public sphere," which she says simply doesn't exist. Instead, Ryder suggests we work within the context of the Internet as it exists – or will come to be in Web 3.0 – however flawed it may be, acknowledging the strengths that are available in the existing system.

The discussion of Miriam's Kitchen focuses on the unique ways the facility's director has taken advantage of social networking to 1) educate interested parties on the issue of homelessness, 2) invite donations, and 3) inform others of their services. As a result, Miriam's Kitchen has used these tools to the service of both the facility's public image and the public "image" of the homeless.

Alexis de Tocqueville wrote on Americans' propensity to form associations and community. Putnam's identification of a decline in community, when considered through a de Tocquevillian lens, underscores the fact that people are destined to turn somewhere for these associations to form. Humans need community, and that community is found in the public sphere. In the 21st century, that public sphere is, at least in part, the participatory, interactive forum of social and new media.

This new media forum for civic and political engagement (indeed, a new public sphere) is unique in that it bolsters efforts of those scholars who argue for the importance of work in the public sphere (Cushman, Flower, Hauser, etc.). Public sphere theory, after all, is connected to efforts to level the playing field, upset existing power structures and power dynamics. The participatory nature of Web 2.0 has provided exactly the right forum for that work to take place.

3.4 Valuing Multiliteracies: Multimodality, New Media, and Digital Activism

These ideas about the application of rhetoric and composition in the public sphere point to the study of new literacies (Gee and Street). Street defines social literacies, in particular, as the way in which people use literacy in day-to-day activities in a social context. His definition of new literacies encompasses community, cultural, functional, local, and social. Ultimately, these civic literacies amount to the knowledge of multiple dimensions of life that allow us to best contribute to and operate within that life. Competency in these areas is a necessary prerequisite for meaningful civic engagement. In the composition classroom, particularly for those teaching new media tools, another cluster of literacies becomes important: multimodal literacies.

The persuasive appeal of multimodality, “the integration of multiple modes of communication and expression [that] can enhance or transform the meaning of the work beyond illustration or decoration” (NCTE) is evident. These ideas, which originated in The New London Group’s *Pedagogy of Multiliteracies* (1996) and were reinforced by the NCTE’s 2005 *Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies*, have led to a closer examination of the variety of literacy competencies we must have as both producers and consumers of information. The study of the persuasive value of these various modes has led to comprehensive studies in digital, visual, and sonic rhetoric.

In 2004, Stuart Selber invited compositionists to reimagine literacy in a digital framework, one that included computer, functional, critical, and rhetorical literacy in his pivotal book *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*. That same year, Wysocki called for writing teachers to engage in scholarship that would “bring new media texts and humane and thoughtful attention to materiality, production, and consumption” (“Opening New Media to Writing” 7). Since then, many scholars have responded to the call (Devoss, Cushman, and Grabill, Wysocki, Selfe, Kress,

Shipka, Hawisher, Arola, Gee, Hocks), and the work of these scholars should be consulted when working to design a meaningful, new media-oriented, multimodally-rich civic engagement course. Others whose work is significant include Jeff Rice, Gary Ulmer, and Patricia Sullivan. Rice and Ulmer, however, work in virtual opposition to the notion of “academic literacies,” while nearly all of the former advocate for digital media to supplement (rather than replace) traditional, alphabetical literacies in the composition classroom. Hawisher and Selfe, in “Studying Literacy in Digital Contexts” argue that “digital photographic images and media clips can add additional semiotic information to alphabetic representations of research” but that such representations “*should* be used in tandem with written descriptions” (196-7). This scholarship on using multimodal and alphabetical literacies to complement one another helps validate the combination of digital and traditional writing instruction and also reasserts the critical role of reflection in the composing with new media process.

Linda Adler-Kassner and Susanmarie Harrington in *Basic Writing as a Political Act* assert that “language reflects and perpetuates particular social relations; that ‘literacy’ is a collection of practices whereby individuals and groups interpret symbols in particular ways that signal participation in a particular value system; that composition has traditionally been used as a site where students are introduced to language conventions that form the broad outlines of something loosely called the “academic community” (7).

Toby Coley, author of *Teaching with Digital Media in Writing Studies: An Exploration of Ethical Responsibilities*, builds on Selber’s multiliteracies (functional, critical, and rhetorical) adding ethical literacy to the list. Coley attributes his definition of ethical literacy to the discussion of “ethical frameworks” and “ethical challenge” found in the MacArthur Foundation study “Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st

Century,” which encouraged educators (like the New London Group had done before) to adopt a pedagogy of multiliteracies:

Educators must work together to ensure that every American young person has access to the skills and experiences needed to become a full participant, can articulate their understanding of how media shapes perceptions, and has been socialized into the emerging ethical standards that should shape their practices as media makers [*ethical literacy*] and participants in online communities. (qtd. in Coley 13)

Not only is this perspective important as we work to develop engaged citizens, but because the connections between the social and political, between rhetoric and ethics date all the way back to antiquity. Like the authors noted in the MacArthur Foundation piece, “Our goals should be to encourage youth to develop the skills, knowledge, ethical framework, and self-confidence needed to be full participants in contemporary culture” (Jenkins et al. 8).

A final dimension to multiliteracies that is relevant to digital civic engagement is performative literacy (Austin, 1960; McDonald, 2003; Fishman, 2005). This type of literacy relates to acting or taking action, embodiment (a concept shared with multimodality), and speaks directly to the power of language to cause or effect actions. A powerful example of performative literacy is when Congress votes to declare war: when speech and words lead to definitive action. As academics in the 21st century, we have to value all of these literacies, because they all have a role in students’ degree of engagement and contribute to our students’ success.

Part of what marks successful civic engagement experiences is recognition of influence and impact, an individual’s feeling of being able to make a difference. Participants in the CIRCLE study, for example, pointed to their awareness of social and political issues but noted their feeling of impotence in addressing these issues. This feeling of helplessness is largely a

result of an existing power structure in the media. Robert W. McChesney, author of “Policing the Unthinkable,” says, “such a concentration of media power into so few hands is disastrous for the free marketplace of ideas, the bedrock upon which informed self-government rests” (101). Desire for a free marketplace of ideas has driven the popularity of new media and social media, because it’s highly accessible to all and gives other, smaller, more independent media outlets a voice in the conversation, a chair at the table. McChesney argues that the lack of competition in the media market has led to antiquated and homogenized ideas, noting that “[n]ew digital technologies are so powerful that they will provide a platform for a massive wave of new media competitors who will slay the existing giant corporate media dinosaurs. A golden age of competition is returning” (102). Chris Atton, author of “Reshaping Social Movement Media,” says, “Too often have these media been considered as the political weapons of ‘great men,’ too rarely have they been viewed as the ‘voices of the voiceless’” (5), ultimately highlighting the value of participation in social movement media.

As McChesney and Atton both allude to, those seeking alternative means to communicate or a means to communicate alternative messaging have turned to new and digital media as an outlet for this engagement. In this way, new media has become a tool for those seeking to impact social and political change.

As the Dadaists – and British Abolitionists a century before them – taught us, visual rhetoric is an important component of activist work. These ideas have been studied and argued by such scholars as Kress, Grabill, Fleckenstein, and Wysocki over the years. Visual rhetoric, in particular, should be considered essential to effective social and political action (just look at the amazing work of the Tactical Technology Collective). Likewise, with the vast technologies the Internet has afforded average citizens access to, we are able to construct meaning and argument

through all of the semiotic modes: auditory, gestural, linguistic, spatial, and visual. Though it's been nearly twenty years since the initial argument was made for teaching multiliteracies and multimodality, and we've got a good bit of scholarship under our belts on the value of such pedagogy, we are just now beginning to see how 21st century literacies of new media can impact social change. It is in these two definitions that one can begin to see a melding of pedagogical ideas, a way for this expanded pedagogy of multiliteracies to help shape the academic and life experience of our students.

Leah Lievrouw, author of *Alternative and Activist New Media*, identifies “old media” as receptive-oriented and “new media” as engaged, participatory, noting that it compels consumers to *do* something, which makes it ideal for activism. She references Mark Deuze's (2006) three modes of new media engagement: “participation, remediation, and bricolage.” Deuze says participation makes people “active agents in the process of meaning-making,” (14) a point that doesn't go unnoticed in the civic engagement world either. “Participation,” says Lievrouw, “can also be seen as the point at which an individual's knowledge, or capacity to act, is actually transformed into communicative action” (2001). Like Stephen Duncombe, Lievrouw, Deuze, and the founders of Tactical Technology Collective are clearly advocating for the continued use of media and culture for civic, participatory – even resistance – purposes.

However, there are those who see such digital activism as less effective than direct, boots-on-the-ground activist efforts. They label activities such as signing and distributing e-petitions, liking and sharing content on social media “slacktivism” (see Chapter 2). In reality, these positions demonstrate a lack of awareness of the threads of commonality that exist between “old activism” and “new activism,” nor do they reflect cognizance of the benefits of “new media” over “old media.” Additionally, these positions seem to dismiss the idea that activism

isn't exclusively about revolution (although Freire and Alinsky would surely disagree); often it's about resistance, which plenty of activist minded individuals (Hauser, Sharp, Lievrouw, Meier and Joyce) argue is preferable and more effective in achieving meaningful and lasting change. Remember that Hauser argues that in a civil society, revolution is not even possible.

These criticisms of digital activism ignore the role of education, raising awareness and informing the public on issues and causes (the dominant type of activism in social media) as a valued mode of "activism," yet the distribution of leaflets and petitions qualifies as offline activism to these same critics. In fact, nearly all forms of boots-on-the-ground (BoTG) activism can be replicated in the virtual world. See virtual sit-ins, virtual boycotts, virtual demonstrations (non-violent forms of protest), even hacktivism (a more destructive or "violent" form of virtual activism) as example. New media writing simply requires us to examine the materiality of the texts – that is, the modified form in which they exist (Wysocki, "Opening New Media to Writing").

It's important to recognize the critics of digital activism just as it's important to acknowledge that there are still compositionists who devalue the idea of multimodal composition and refuse to teach beyond the traditional, text-based essays. I contend that these lines are too often as clearly drawn as the borders between campus and community. This ivory tower isolation, intellectual and activist elitism undermines our relevance and is a massive disservice to both our student body and the communities to which they belong.

The goal of using new media for civic purposes in writing studies is to teach students what effective engagement looks like, to teach them how to use the tools that are available, and to teach them to be critical consumers of the information being disseminated in the mainstream media. Without the requisite awareness of digital and activist rhetorics, and the skillset that

encompasses informational, civic, and new media literacies, our students will continue to feel powerless in the world they are making their way into as young adults.

3.5 Agency and Self-Efficacy in an Academic, Civic, and Digital World

Rosemary Winslow and Monica Mische talk about how basic writers feel about writing, noting that some basic writers

have low confidence, some a false confidence: they don't believe they can do college work, or they think they are already well prepared for the work. Most have an inaccurate view of what college study requires... Many have what we call a 'damaged interest' in learning, resulting in low or misdirected motivation, which is a key factor... The majority, though not all, do not see the relevance of academic learning in their lives beyond long-term occupational goals. (qtd on Adler-Kassner and Hamilton 19)

This "relevance" can be achieved by teaching students to write for the world and having audience be more than "solely the writing teacher or similar institutional representative" (22). The lack of confidence in writing certainly affects a broader population than basic writers, so teaching students to compose in meaningful ways helps improve their confidence in multiple ways.

Agency is a concept that is addressed in plenty of composition scholarship, but I argue that agency is as important for academic success as it is for future participation in the world (civic and political) beyond the classroom. Paulo Freire speaks to this in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which he says is "the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation" (53).

He writes of the oppressed and oppressors and how they have become so committed to the structure of domination that they actually have a "fear of freedom" (46) that can keep them

stuck in the oppressive situation. They lack agency. Understanding of existing power structures is essential in any efforts towards social action or change, because most likely change will require a shift in this power dynamic. The Brazilian educator explained that “the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires” (47).

As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement” (69). This “committed involvement” is precisely what I want my students to have.

3.6 The Gap in Scholarship

While there is sufficient scholarship on multimodality and the rationale for it as a tool in writing studies, and there is an abundance of research that proves civic engagement is valuable in retention and student success, there has been very little research done on the impact of these two pedagogical strategies on students’ attitudes and behaviors about civic participation.

Primary schools across the country are beginning to focus instruction time on concepts of digital literacy and digital citizenship (i.e., using proper etiquette and being a responsible user of digital technology). Our students are coming to us with greater awareness of the multimodal, multimedia-rich world in which they live. “Being a citizen today means being aware and engaged in public life,” says Andrew Barry on technological citizenship, but “such a tough morality does not come naturally. Active, responsible and informed citizens have to be made” (163).

These combined pedagogical efforts can work to address some of the findings of the CIRCLE study in a variety of ways. Teaching community, social, cultural literacies will serve to educate students to recognize and value the ways they are already engaging in their communities. Through lessons and activities surrounding these civic and digital literacies, students will be empowered with skills and confidence to address the issues they care most about. Finally, if students cite never having been asked to engage as a reason for disengagement, then we *must* ask for their participation. There is an enormous opportunity to impact both agency and self-efficacy in these pedagogical activities.

Experimental writing theory is also important to consider when trying to craft assignments that surround writing for new media. Digital literacies are shaped by experimental writing, primarily because this is a new and ever-evolving field. Further, assessment of these digital projects can present pedagogical challenges. A pedagogical deficiency exists, as a search for heuristics and rubrics for use of new media for civic engagement purposes in the classroom yields virtually no results.

In addition to a gap in knowledge in the area of assessment, we don't yet know if teaching these new literacies – civic, social, digital, sonic, visual – in conjunction with multimodal composing and then *asking* our students to use these new tools to engage civically and politically will actually have any impact on their behaviors and attitudes toward engagement. Nevermind whether these experiences will foster long term engagement in the civic and political activities of their communities.

If writing is inherently both social and political, then it logically follows that compositionists would recognize the natural marriage of civic, deliberative pedagogy and digital, new media pedagogy. If we are to be the kind of “revolutionary leaders” Freire advocates for, we

must “practice *co-intentional* education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both subject, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators” (69). We can do this in a wide variety of ways, but I recommend we encourage at least entry-level engagement through the multimodality afforded by new and social media.

Fleckenstein argues that “Multimodal composing can encourage visual animation and corporeal rhetoric to coalesce, thus providing an invitation for embodied agency and emphatic social action” (101).

In order to produce an educated and engaged citizenry of college graduates, we must work as educators to increase agency and self-efficacy in our students in whatever areas we can. Through doing so, we can help to narrow disparities that exist in the knowledge and skills our students come to us saddled with. We have opportunity to enlighten them toward greater civic understanding, to introduce them to notions of engagement – both in and out of the class – and embodiment, and to help them discover how the combination of action + words + images can equal change. Teaching digital civic engagement is a fine place for this illumination to begin and a great way to further ensure longevity and success of our representative democracy.

4 MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CIVIC AND DIGITAL LITERACY ON STUDENT AGENCY AND SELF-EFFICACY

4.1 Methodology

In an effort to study student attitudes and behaviors toward civic and political engagement when taught multimodal composition in the new media realm, I conducted teacher-

research in one section of English 1101 in the fall of 2014. I used a feminist methodology comprised of a variety of methods that were participatory, that is, intended to uncover voices of those previously unheard. The course design included elements of historical and archival research (as groundwork for the activism we discussed and evaluated prior to engaging ourselves), but it was primarily an empirical research project. Empirical evidence was gathered through focus groups, which took place near the end of the semester, as well as analysis of student new media projects and reflection essays.

Teacher inquiry grows out of curiosities, a desire to validate the work we think is meaningful (or might be meaningful) in writing instruction (Stenhouse, Bertoff, Fishman and MacCarthy, and Lankshear and Knobel). The method of teacher-research was chosen for this study because, as Ruth Ray says, “knowledge and truth in education are not so found through objective inquiry as socially constructed through collaboration among students, teachers, and researchers” (qtd in Nickoson 103). Ray also asserts that teacher-research is in some cases superior to quantitative research in the field of writing studies because “it stems from ‘within the classroom’ and has increased teaching effectiveness as its goal” (Nickoson 103). In the teacher-researcher model, students become co-researchers and are actively engaged in the process of meaning-making (Ray), particularly in focus group studies, where the participants are collaborating in both reflection of individual and shared epistemological experiences.

The feminist methodology is important because of the participatory nature of the study. Through focus group discussions, the student participants and I worked collaboratively to create knowledge. In some cases, these participants shared information as part of this study that might not have previously been collected from a comparative demographic; in other cases, their

comments mirrored similar comments that have been gathered in prior related studies from other demographics (the aforementioned CIRCLE, Mascheroni, DoSomething.org, and Pew studies).

4.2 Research Questions

I set out to answer the following research questions:

Primary

- How does the acquired civic and new media literacy impact student perceptions of sense of agency in the community?
- Does experience with new media tools (acquisition of new media literacy) influence or impact student attitudes and behaviors toward activism and civic engagement? In what ways?
- Do students choose to supplement their digital activism/civic engagement through new media with boots on the ground engagement/activism? Do students privilege one form of engagement over the other?
- How does this academic experience change or influence their attitudes toward digital activism/civic engagement?

Secondary

- When provided instruction and opportunity, how do students choose to use new media to engage in the public sphere?
- How does this educational experience impact students' likelihood to engage in citizenship-oriented activities (See "Definition of Citizenship" Activity)?

For the most part, I was simply seeking to understand student attitudes toward and behaviors surrounding civic and political engagement when they enter the class and after being exposed to and immersed in instruction on digital literacy and literacy of public engagement. I

wanted to better understand how these attitudes and behaviors are informed by exposure to ideas around new media engagement.

4.3 Method and Rationale

Because of the nature of this study, there was no hypothesis and the only intended outcome was a desire that attitudes toward public engagement will be more positive once students were equipped with the tools to engage.

All of the data collected was analyzed qualitatively. I chose qualitative for this study because I wanted to report on many factors impacting students' attitudes and behaviors related to civic engagement and help illustrate a bigger picture than other forms of quantitative data might show (Creswell 176). The data was gathered in a traditional educational setting, not a contrived or sterile environment; the design was emergent, loosely constructed, which allowed for modifications where necessary; and I approached the purpose and design from a theoretical lens (Creswell).

I elected to gather the concluding information through focus groups rather than surveys or one-on-one structured interviews because participants in focus groups are able to provide historical information to an extent that cannot be gathered using another method (Creswell 179). My purpose was to “uncover factors that influence opinions, behavior or motivation” (Krueger and Casey 19), to understand *why* students feel the way they do about engagement (Harrell and Bradley 82; Krueger and Casey 19), and focus groups “can provide insight into complicated topics when opinions or attitudes are conditional or when the area of concern relates to multifaceted behavior or motivation” (Krueger and Casey 19).

One of the studies that influenced my own study design is the 2012 study out of Tufts University's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement

(CIRCLE), entitled “That’s Not Democracy: How Out-of-School Youth Engage in Civic Life and What Stands in the Way.” The Executive Summary of the CIRCLE study explains its focus group choice, noting that “survey research is not ideal for determining why young people do or do not participate.”

The second study that influenced my own design is Giovanna Mascheroni’s qualitative study of Italian youth political uses of the web, which she discusses in her article “Online Participation: New Forms of Civic and Political Engagement or Just New Opportunities for Networked Individualism.” In both of these studies, researchers conducted semi-structured, mini-focus groups comprised of young people (both college students and non-college young adults) in an effort to discern some of the attitudes and influences surrounding their online civic and political practices. Having read the two studies, I decided focus groups and reflection essays would be the best sources of information. However, in an effort to gauge degree of familiarity and existing attitudes at the start of the semester, I did distribute a short initial survey. The goal was not to analyze in depth the group as a whole, but to very quickly gather snapshots of each student’s existing knowledge and skillset, as well as attitudes and behaviors related to civic engagement at the onset of the semester. The most efficient way to do this was to distribute a 15-minute survey.

I elected to hold focus groups, as opposed to individual interviews, because focus groups present a very natural environment for qualitative data collection, “because participants appear to be influencing and influenced by others – just as they are in real life” (Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman 107). Because conversations are natural in a focus group, the responses will be more authentic, which will “lend a useful degree of authority to the data” (Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman 107). Additionally, in focus groups, the discussions can be rich and dynamic, useful

for a researcher who seeks to gather a depth of information without gauging the degree of emphasis of one point or idea over another (Harrell and Bradley 10).

Neither the CIRCLE nor the Mascheroni study looks at behaviors and attitudes in a way that is directly linked to academic instruction. In this way, my study will contribute new information to the field. First, both studies include participants who are not yet old enough to participate fully in citizenship activities (voting, military service, independent financial decision-making). The CIRCLE study in particular studies age as a primary demographic. It does not study a group of exclusively college students, for example. While age is relevant to the study of a link between teaching civic literacy and increasing civic engagement, my primary focus is on the education piece. As a writing instructor at a two-year college, our students – even our freshmen – are a wide variety of ages. I am interested in studying how their acquired knowledge and skills on civic engagement and new media impacts their attitudes and behaviors towards this type of engagement. I want to understand this because it is important to know if this kind of work is valuable in writing studies, whether it has a lasting impact on student engagement in learning and participation outside of and beyond the classroom.

Additionally, this project involved some historical research on relevant methods of engagement and activism that most closely resemble the kinds of engagement that can be undertaken digitally. It involved study of the history of new media and activist/alternative media, as well as various pedagogical practices in composition studies surrounding new media and multimodal composition. The information gathered through examination of other historical and theoretical practices has led me to establish what I see as some best practices in teaching civic engagement through new media in composition studies (discussed further in Chapter 5).

My research on study design has helped inform my choices to gather information qualitatively through focus groups, but I recognize that method is not without flaw. Following are some of the potential drawbacks I have had to be aware of as I made sense of the findings:

- The researcher's presence may bias participant responses (Creswell 179).
- Not all participants are equally articulate and perceptive (Harrell and Bradley).
- Participants can tend to intellectualize their responses and not tap into emotions sufficiently, and emotions are "key drivers" of behaviors (Krueger and Casey 13).
- The validity and value of the findings can be called into question for a number of reasons: "participants could make up answers," "dominant individuals can influence results," and the groups can "produce trivial results" (Krueger and Casey 14-15).

Ultimately, the best way to overcome these negatives is to use focus group research in concert with other forms of data collection (analysis of student projects, student reflection essays, etc.) and measure the findings against one another, so this is what I have done.

4.4 Human Subjects/IRB

As I worked with human subjects in my freshman composition class, I recognized an ethical requirement to ensure good treatment of those students. As part of this study, I intended to ask students to question their notions of community, to examine their positions on causes and issues that are personally compelling for them, and to choose an important issue or cause to engage in. Having taught something similar to this in the past, I knew that the discussions and reflection exercises that lead to the topic selection for this work of civic engagement often come out of personal experience with a particular issue that has impacted either a loved one or the student individually. While my students are not generally considered a vulnerable population, in the past I have had students work on very emotionally charged issues – same sex marriage rights,

domestic violence, sex trafficking, bullying, teen suicide, gang violence – and I anticipated my study semester would yield similar topic selections. This time, I had students advocate for a cultural renaissance in Libya, positive body image, breast cancer research, and improved relations between police and the black community.

For these reasons, my study received approval from the Institutional Review Board at both institutions: Georgia Perimeter College (home of the student participants) and Georgia State University (where my research is being published as part of this dissertation).

In our initial conversations about the structure and design of the class, I disclosed to them that as students in the class, they would be asked to participate in my research project. I told them about the risks and rewards of participating (Krueger and Casey 30), as well as let them know their participation in the research portion of the class was both voluntary and confidential (Krueger and Casey 30; Creswell 90). They were asked to sign an informed consent document before they engaged in any research. I did my best to make sure there was a degree of reciprocity between the participants and the researcher, that they would also benefit from the research (perhaps seeing the focus group sessions as a form of reflection of their own experiences), and I committed to not coerce them in any way (Creswell 90).

I gave the student participants the option to use pseudonyms as a way to maintain confidentiality. Rather than make this decision on their behalf, Creswell recommends the option be presented to them as part of the informed consent form, since not all participants will wish to remain anonymous (90). I found this to be the case in my own study, where only four students wanted to use a name other than their own. Because student participants were digitally voice recorded, it was important that they offered consent to participate and be quoted in the study. They were given the option of removing that consent at any point during the study.

In our focus group conversations, I anticipated our discussions of existing behaviors and attitudes toward civic and political engagement might also bring up some individual and personal experiences surrounding previous engagement or volunteer events. While my experience in these kinds of group discussions shows that the vast majority of those experiences are positive and those that are not have not been negative as a result of a harmful experience, I recognized that there was potential for a negative research or volunteer experience to come up in our discussions and activities.

I understood the kinds of causes and issues students would choose could be sensitive, though also very important issues for young people to address and engage in. Understanding that conducting research and writing on such sensitive issues could trigger an emotional reaction, I was prepared in the following ways to respond:

1. I discussed early in the semester the potential for emotional reactions while working on a cause they feel personally connected to. I encouraged students to find a balance between the academic nature of the work and the passion they feel about the topic.
2. I shared with students the contact information for the counseling office on campus in the event they needed that support at any point during the project.
3. I was prepared to encourage students who appeared to be having a detrimental negative reaction to their project work to seek counseling. I was willing to allow students in this situation to change topics or complete an alternative assignment at any point in the semester.
4. I assured students I would protect the privacy of the participants in the research report (Creswell 91).

In an effort to avoid any additional ethical issues with collection or dissemination of data as part of this study, I will be forthcoming in my report about my own experiences with civic engagement and new media, any applicable biographical, socioeconomic, gender, and race info that could impact my interpretation of data (Creswell 177).

4.5 Process and Timeline

4.5.1 Instrumentation

Creswell notes that in focus group research, the researcher is the key instrument (175). The research protocol could be considered another part of the instrumentation. The protocol for this study (Appendix) is based on recommendations by Creswell, Krueger and Casey, and Harrell and Bradley.

Beyond that, there are the tools used to collect the data. I was awarded an instructional technology grant at my college to purchase the necessary equipment for the focus group study, including a high-quality digital microphone and recording device. I transcribed the focus group discussions myself so that I could ensure accuracy and also distinguish between the various student voices on the audio recording. The sessions were recorded using three separate devices, in the event that there was a malfunction with one.

I conducted mini-focus groups with up to five students at a time. This was so that the conversations could better include everyone in the group instead of a full class group, which would feature only a couple of the most dominant personalities in the room (Krueger and Casey 6).

The sessions were held in the thirteenth week of class, at a time when all but one of the major projects on civic engagement and new media were completed, and the final video project was well underway. Holding the final focus group session in week thirteen also kept the focus

group session sufficiently distanced from final exam week, which I believed would increase participation. I used class time to hold the focus groups to ensure that there would be no scheduling conflicts. Students in the class who were not involved in the focus group one day of our class meetings watched a documentary on activist artist Banksy during class time.

There were four focus group time slots, with up to five students invited to participate in each. Participation was not mandatory, even for those who had signed the informed consent, and some students elected not to participate in this portion of the study. Students were assigned to one of four groups (Group A, Group B, Group C, and Group D). The focus group meetings were 45-minutes long and were structured according to predetermined interview protocol (see Appendix H). Chairs were organized in around a rectangular table, so all participants would be facing each other in as natural a conversation position as possible. The digital microphone and recording devices were placed at the center of the table, so that they could gather sound equally from all areas of the room.

4.5.2 Piloting the Focus Group

Following the advice of Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman, I piloted the entire focus group the semester prior to the study. They recommend “at the earliest opportunity try your hand at both leading group sessions and working with actual transcription of data” (107). Doing so served many purposes, least of which was the ability to work through glitches with the technology. It was through this pilot that I discovered, for example, that the MacSpeech transcription software I had initially purchased would not actually work the way I wanted it to, so I elected to transcribe the sessions myself. It also helped me to refine my questions and the instructions I would give participants in order to gather the highest quality responses in the focus groups in the official sessions.

It was important to be “ready to use the focus group technique with skill” so I could benefit from this authentic and powerful means to capture student views, because Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman are quick to point out that lack of proper preparation or familiarity with the method can quickly result in “wasting time, or, worse, into erroneous conclusions masquerading as profound insights” (107).

4.6 Researcher’s Role

I mentioned previously that I personally practice the civic and political engagement I teach. In addition to the political engagement, I volunteer with a variety of health-related causes; serve local elementary schools in a wide-range of capacities (from literacy mentor to guest lecturer to media relations chair for the PTA to room mom); and lobby local schools to include civic engagement, service learning, and digital citizenship in their own curricula.

This passion about the subject area contributes to my ethos as a researcher, and it also informed my preference for methodology, which Broad recommends (channeling Haswell): “Research projects we can love are also those on behalf of which we can be the most eloquent and persuasive with our audiences...[w]e are strongest as researchers when we combine our methodological passions and strategies” (207).

As the arbiter of information in this class and throughout this research project, I had a fairly influential role in the development of perspectives. Because I was measuring changes in attitude toward civic engagement using new media and also through the notions of civic engagement period, I have had to be aware of the ways my own views of civic engagement through new media (which are very positive, since this is one of the ways I practice civic engagement myself) might impact or influence my students’ views.

I was the leader of the class, the one who assessed student work, and also the primary figure providing instruction on how to use the tools of new media and social media. For this reason, I had a tremendous responsibility to properly teach these skills and also an influential role in their ultimate success or failure, because if I was not effective in my instruction, I could potentially obstruct or prevent my students' success. This would negatively impact my own success as an instructor and a researcher.

4.7 Course Note: How Subjects Were Recruited

The message that was listed in the student registration system alongside our course offerings for the semester did not point to the study but recruited students who were interested, at least, in working with technology. This is the verbiage used:

This section requires students to participate in "iTeach," a mobile device pilot. Students will receive an iPad from the college for use during the fall semester. You will be required to attend an in-class orientation session to pick up your iPad, receive training, and sign paperwork. Some on-campus training on your own time might be required, as well. If you do not wish to participate in the pilot, please register for another section of ENGL 1101 right away.

It wasn't until the first day of class that I shared with students that they would be invited to participate in a dissertation research project during the semester. At that time, I also shared with them that their decision to participate in the study or not would have no impact on their grade in the class.

4.8 Class Activities that Shaped the Study

In an effort to make the course rich and cohesive from start to finish, a great deal of thought was put into designing activities with the theme and goal in mind. From taking steps to

ensure that all students had equal access to and training on technology to exposing them to a wide variety of social action-oriented film and literature, I wanted to make sure that students were steeped in the digital and civically-engaged world for the fifteen weeks we would spend together.

4.8.1 iTeach Mobile Device Pilot

In an effort to introduce students to some digital technology without any frustrations about not having access at home, we provided all students in the class with an iPad Air for use during the semester. In addition to giving them access to a mobile device, we provided a protective case with stand that had a blue tooth enabled external keyboard, understanding that students would be using this device for their blogging projects, which would be more comfortable if typed on a traditional keyboard. Finally, all student devices were equipped with Twitter, Wordpress, and iMovie, which students did not have to pay for.

As a part of this pilot program, which is called iTeach, students received an orientation at the start of the semester, where they were taught how to use the device, how to set up their email accounts, how to connect to iTunes to download apps, and how to use the camera. Later in the semester, an instructional technologist came to our class for a full period to teach students how to capture and edit film footage in iMovie for use on their digital advocacy video.

4.8.2 Defining Citizenship, Codeswitching, and Learning Multimodality

At the start of the semester students were given the “How Do You Define Citizenship?” handout (See Appendix A), then asked to rank the citizen-related activities on a scale of 1-15. Once students submitted these rankings (anonymously, unless they wanted their handout returned), the results were plotted on a table.

Definition of Citizenship Chart

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Joining the armed forces	IIII	I	V	II		I	I	I	II	I	I			II	I
Helping to start an afterschool program for children whose parents work	I	II	III	I		V	I	I	I	II	I	III	I		
Talking with a friend about a social issue of importance to you	I	V	I	I		I	II		I	II	III	II	I	I	I
Working for a candidate in a local election			III	III	II	II		I	II	I	II		I	I	IIII
Walking a frail person across a busy street	III	II	II	I	II		II	II	I		II	I	II	II	I
Picketing and protesting at a local plant that has laid off a large number of its work force		I		III	I	I	II		III	I	II	I	III	II	I
Giving \$50 to the United Way				II	IIII	III	II	I		III	II		III	II	
Leaving your car at home and biking or walking to work/school every day			I			II	I	II	I	III	II	II		V	III
Tutoring a migrant worker			I	I	I	I	II	IIII	III	I	III	III		I	I
Adopting an eight-year old boy	I	I		II	VII	I	II			II		III		I	II
Providing dinner once a week at a homeless shelter			IIII	I	I	III	I	III	IIII	I			I	I	
Visiting different houses of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.) every week to learn about different religions in the community	I	I	II				I	III	I	II		IIII	III		IIII
Giving blood		II	I	II	II	I	II	III	I	I	II	II	II	I	
Working as a state legislator	I	III	I	II			II			II	I		IIII	II	III
Voting	X	I	I			I	I	I	II	I	I	II		I	

Table 1.1 Responses taken from an adaptation of Nadinne Cruz's quiz "How Do You Define Service?" (February, 1996). Students were asked to rank 15 citizenship-related activities with "1" being the "action that most closely models [their] own idea of good citizenship. These responses were tallied in the above chart, which reflects how many students ranked a particular item in that spot. For example, five students ranked "Adopting an eight-year old boy" as fifth most important action for a good citizen to perform.

Figure 15: Definition of Citizen Chart

We discussed the significance of the choices students seemed to make and how the greatest takeaways were that 1) most seemed to place a high value on the role of voting as an act that defined citizenship and 2) other than voting, most interpretations of citizenship/good citizen behavior were all over the map (see Fig. 15). As a result, I reminded students – some of whom are still asking for their research topics to be assigned to them as freshman composition students – that this is why it is important that they choose their own civic engagement topics and not join a classwide effort that had been selected by the teacher. This activity seemed to have reinforced the value of individual choice over where, when, and how to engage. Students had autonomy in topic selection.

Linda Adler-Kassner and Susanmarie Harrington note the more “social element” that exists for students outside of school (what they call “out-of-school literacy”) and talk about the importance of audience in helping first-year writing students formulate more positive attitudes about the writing they will do in college composition classes. Audience awareness is critical when moving between platforms and forums. While students are clearly adept at codeswitching, that is, understanding differences in style and syntax that are appropriate to different forums, it is necessary to still have conversations about *why* these shifts are both necessary and increase effectiveness in messaging.

As an exercise toward understanding this, I asked my students to complete an activity the first week of class in which I told them to imagine that they had just been fired from their job. Following this dismissal, they were to draft three pieces of correspondence in which they communicated this job loss: one was an email to their mother, one was a status update on Facebook or a tweet on Twitter, and the third was a text message to their best friend. This activity was a great deal of fun for some students (one even invented a creative story for his firing – he had been nabbed as a donut thief and tweeted “Lost my job. I DONUT know what to do now.”) but more importantly, it showed them that they *do* know how to vary their messaging for different audiences, and it initiated for us a productive discussion about why.

We spent several weeks exploring multiple modes of communication, the differences between multimedia and multimodal composition, and we briefly touched on Street’s and Selber’s ideas of multiliteracies. These lessons were supported by textbook material, namely chapters 3, 6, 8, 9, 17, 18 in Andrea Lunsford’s *Writing in Action*. These chapters made the connections between writing and composing for the digital world and the world outside of academia. Two of the chapters, “Writing to the World” and “Writing to Make Something

Happen in the World” specifically address public writing, public literacies, and cultural literacies (though they don’t call them “literacies”). The remaining chapters I’ve highlighted above relate to visual and digital literacies, which are the focus of the entire handbook *Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects*. Since the focus of the course was to teach students to compose using new media and ultimately put into practice the act of public writing or writing toward change, these two textbooks proved extraordinarily useful for our class.

4.8.3 A Memoir of Injustice

As a way to begin consideration and discussion of social issues and introduce students to an organization that works towards social justice, we read the memoir *Picking Cotton* as a class. This book deals with a college co-ed who was raped in the 1990s and went on to select the man she thought was her assailant out of a lineup, a man who was subsequently convicted and served 11 years in prison before being exonerated by DNA technology. Making connections between what we read and learn about and the world in which we live is always significant in order for learning to be meaningful. At the onset of our semester together, there were several high-profile cases in the news that surrounded sexual assault on college campuses: Heisman winning quarterback from Florida State University was being investigated for sexual assault and all activities in fraternities at University of Virginia had been suspended under an accusation that a female student had been sexually assaulted during a party in one of the houses. Both investigations proved to be very muddy, with questionable evidence, conflicting eyewitness testimony, and ultimately he said/she said scenarios. Nevertheless, the real world situations students were seeing nightly on their televisions and reading about in the newspapers and on social media were closely related to the events in the book. In fact, the Florida State University

story involved a white female making an accusation of sexual assault against a black male. Naturally, in a diverse classroom such as ours, this sparked some intense debate.

There were many issues related to social justice addressed during our discussions, so this book laid excellent groundwork for our first, low-stakes research project. As a class, we decided on five topics that most students seemed interested in learning more about as a result of those discussions: eyewitness testimony (reliability and fallibility), DNA evidence, campus sexual assault, female-on-male rape, and the Innocence Project (a nonprofit organization that works to exonerate the wrongfully convicted).

Students learned very basic research skills, worked collaboratively to divide the information they discovered into four or five main ideas that could be presented to the class to educate fellow students on the issues, and delivered a panel presentation, after which they facilitated a classwide Q&A. This was not part of my plan when I set out to have my students read the book; in fact, beyond the book being quite fascinating to me personally, I really only committed to teaching it because it was part of my institution's college-wide book club, and I am a supporter of that initiative. The discussions were quite informal, and the follow-up collaborative research project and panel presentation really developed organically. As we discussed the issues raised in the book, there was clearly so much more my students wanted to know. There seemed to be a drive to know *how* this kind of injustice could have happened, to understand *why* in some ways it doesn't seem to have stopped happening, and to know *what* could be/is being done about it. As you can imagine, the fact that they were asking these types of questions was very encouraging for me, since it wouldn't be long before I was asking them to exercise the same kind of critical thinking about a cause or issue of their own choosing.

The organically inspired, collaborative research project was an exercise rooted in feminist pedagogy. I let my students decide what it was they wanted to know more about, provided guidance on how to go about getting the highest quality information and how best to share it, and they shared their newly acquired knowledge with all of us. This was really the first step in developing their sense of agency and self-efficacy.

Since the book was a part of the college-wide book club, the college invited the co-authors, rape-survivor Jennifer Thompson-Cannino and the exonerated Ronald Cotton, to speak to students at two separate campus events. I attended the event with several students, and we were all quite moved by the experience. As we listened to Mr. Cotton's retelling of his journey, there was a collective sense of gratitude for those who had acted on his behalf, who had worked to right the wrong he experienced.

4.8.4 Researching Other Social Movements: A Collaborative Timeline Project

We moved from *Picking Cotton* into the topic of social movements. We began by discussing various definitions of social movements. I presented students with approximately five definitions, and then I asked them to brainstorm to create a list of components to include in our own definition. Our group brainstorming session generated the following list of things that should be considered in the class definition of a social movement:

- Large group
- Organized
- Common idea/similar goals
- Local/state/national/international impact
- Action/activity
- Efforts toward change (awareness, education, increased funds, policy)
- Leader
- Influence
- Challenges to power
- Social class
- Money

- Moral superiority
- Logic
- Liberty
- Equality/resolve inequities
- Freedom
- People

After creating a list of items, we collaboratively constructed a working definition of a social movement: *A social movement is the efforts of a group or individuals with shared interest to address an existing problem or inequity through organized efforts or action that may result in change.*

Then I introduced the Social Movement Timeline project, where we studied history of other movements before choosing causes and issues for the remainder of the semester work we would do. This project helped students further formulate their own views on social issues, which they cared about or found interesting, as well as introducing them to a wide variety of causes and issues (financial, political, social, environmental, medical). This was a low-stakes, somewhat traditional composition assignment, one that counted only for a participation grade. It was an assignment with a digital component – an entry point into composing for new media.

Students were then presented with a list of approximately 50 social movements from the 20th and 21st century in the United States and asked to choose one to research further. Following are the instructions the students were given:

Instructions: For this assignment, you will choose one of the following social movements (only one movement per student); research its history; and write a one-page summary of the history, goals, major players, and accomplishments of the movement.

This must be in your own words. Only one quote is allowed per page, and it must be short and attributed to the author. You will be required to locate an image that reflects the movement, save the image to your iPad, and plot your movement on a class-wide

timeline. You must make research notes on the chosen movement in your journal, but the one-page summary will need to be typed and submitted both in-class and electronically.

See Appendix D for the list of social movements that were presented to students as options for research.

In addition to being required to write a 1-2 page summary of the movement, students were asked to plot their movement on a digital timeline using the web-based program Dipity. Students were sent an invitation to join the collaborative timeline and plotted their work on the timeline independently. The finished mini-research project was a series of 25 movements plotted on the timeline.

As part of the project, I provided 10 books, which I had checked out from the campus library and already deemed valuable for historical information on social movements (see Appendix D for the Reference list). The list of 50 social movements was pulled from Wikipedia, which I allowed them to also use for general background information gathering. I did not, however, allow them to use any information about the movement that was not also confirmed in a second source, an activity which proved valuable in also teaching students about evaluating sources and how to complete basic citations in MLA from a book.

Here are a few screen shots of the timeline for our class:



Figure 16: 20th and 21st Century Social Movements Timeline on Dipity

You can view the interactive timeline at <http://www.dipity.com/lgoodling/20th-and-21st-Century-Social-Movements-in-the-U-S/>.

The screenshot shows a digital timeline interface. At the top, the title is "20th and 21st Century Social Movements in the U.S." with "133 Views | Topic". Below the title are "Settings" and a "Follow" button. There are also social media sharing options for Google+, Facebook, Digg, and StumbleUpon. The main content area shows a timeline with a vertical axis on the left and a horizontal axis at the top. A video player is open, showing a video titled "Women's Suffrage: Crash Course US History #31". The video player has a play button and a progress bar. To the right of the video player is a description panel with the following text:

The Women's Rights Movement
 Jul 19, 1848

The Women's movement (also known as the women's liberation, or feminism) refers to a series of campaigns for reforms on issues such as voting rights, reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence, all of which fall under the label of feminism. The beginning of this social movement started in the year of 1848. The first ever meeting for women's rights was held on July 19 – 20, 1848, in Seneca Falls, New York.

Link: <http://history.house.gov/Exhib...omens-Rights/>
 Added by: SmithAJS2

Share: [Social media icons]

Figure 17: Women's Rights Entry on 20th and 21st Century Social Movements Timeline

Each entry on the timeline expands to a brief summary of important dates, ideas, individuals, and accomplishments of the particular movement. Some students uploaded images and links to informational websites, while others plotted the movement on a map and others uploaded educational videos on their chosen movement.

The value of this assignment was that it got students thinking about social activists who had come before them and the types of issues they tackled and what kinds of success they had discovered. I really wanted my students thinking about activism as a key part of our nation's history. Additionally, through researching various movements, students were asked to identify key players in the movements, and they were able to make connections between the young people/college student activists engaged on many of the issues and themselves. Tracing social movements from trigger/catalyst events to the passage (or defeat) of related legislation was

useful for them to see the power in social action. We had rich discussions about strange bedfellows and coalition building, what makes a message persuasive, and why change is necessary in order for a society to improve. We talked about freedom and civil liberties and whether or not it is possible to achieve something like a “common good” at all.

Finally, as students embarked on their own movement of sorts, the historical research of prior social movements helped to contextualize their work as change agents. They were able to see themselves as players in a movement that might be plotted on the timeline of today or twenty years from now.

I asked them to make their entry on the timeline rich multimodally. Students were asked to select a still image that reflected the movement as well as a mini-documentary that summarized and educated others on the movement. These exercises served to help develop their analytical lens, which would serve the upcoming assignments that would rely heavily on visual rhetoric skills. While it was more than a month before the digital advocacy video would be assigned, this exercise also exposed students to PSAs (public service announcements) and activist and advocacy videos, so being assigned creation of one later would end up being less intimidating.

The screenshot shows a web interface for a social movements timeline. At the top, it reads "20th and 21st Century Social Movements in the U.S. 133 Views | Topic". Below this are settings for following (8+1) and recommending (8 people). A "Share:" section includes icons for Twitter, Facebook, Digg, and StumbleUpon. The main content area features a "Marriage Equality in Massachusetts" entry with a date of Nov 18, 2003. The entry includes a photograph of a protest with people holding signs such as "Join the MAJORITY: vote for EQUALITY!", "Support ALL Families Marriage Equality for all!", and "Let's get married, already!". To the right of the photo is a description box with tabs for "Description", "Map", and "Comments (0)". The description text reads: "In November 2003, the Supreme Court in Massachusetts was asked to determine whether or not Massachusetts could deny the protections and benefits that marriage confers. They determined Massachusetts could not deny the benefits to same-sex couples. In May of 2004, Massachusetts began issuing Same-Sex Marriage licenses. The first couple to receive on in Cambridge, Massachusetts was Marcia Hams and Susan Shepherd. Since 2003, nineteen states have legalized gay marriage. These states include CA, WA, MA, NJ, NM, OR, PA, DE, IL, MN, CT, IA, HI, NH, NY, RI, VT and DC. The fight to gain marriage equality is a worldwide fight that has no end in sight as of yet."

Figure 18: Marriage Equality Entry on 20th and 21st Century Social Movements Timeline on Dipity

4.8.5 A Cultural Experience to Ignite Activism

Another activity we participated in as a part of the college's visiting artists program was a brief study of poems written by the Iranian activist poet, Sholeh Wolpe. After we read some of her work, we attended her live reading and discussion as a class. We were able to hear her read one piece, in particular, that we had studied: the anti-war poem "See Them Coming" from her collection *Rooftops of Tehran*.

See Them Coming

Here come the octopi of war
tentacles wielding guns, missiles
holy books and colorful flags.

Don't fill your pens with their ink.
write with your fingernails, scratch
light upon these darkened days.

This experience helped students realize the need for activism and the passion underlying efforts throughout the world. Additionally, as it was an English class, this experience felt like it served the literary piece that might ordinarily be missing in a class devoted so heavily to digital work and activism.

4.8.6 *Documentary Films: A Lesson in Visual Rhetoric*

There were several documentary-type films we watched in class – some very short (“The Power of One” was 3 minutes or “Methods of Digital Activism with Mary Joyce” was 10 minutes) while others were full-length features (*Banksy Does New York*). The primary purpose of all of these was to reinforce the role of the individual in activist efforts, as well as the various ways advocacy and activism might be accomplished through digital media. The Banksy film was especially relevant, as it documented a 30-day art activism project conducted by the well-known street artist in October 2013. Not only was the Banksy film timely – having been released weeks before we began work on our own digital advocacy video and just after we discussed visual rhetoric and art as activism – but this particular film chronicled how the artist used a social media platform, Instagram, to engage users – indeed, to mobilize them. As part of his 30-day project, Banksy would post clues each morning on Instagram alerting his followers to where that day’s installation could be found. Those followers of his who were in New York, sometimes known as Banksy chasers, would follow the clues and race to get to the particular works before they were dismantled or stolen. Several students in the class were already familiar with the work of Banksy and aware of the fact that his work is loaded with anti-capitalist, anti-consumerism, social activist messages. What this film initiated, however, was a discussion beyond just social media and activism; we noted how ironic it was that this activist who had such strong anti-

capitalist messages in his work had, in many ways, become beholden to (or, perhaps, victim of) very capitalistic values and tendencies: branding, valuing, and the producer-consumer relationship.

The value of these audio/visual experiences was twofold. The messages contained within them reinforced the messages I had been teaching in class. Rose and Tolia-Kelly, in their discussion of visuality and materiality, point out that “the politics of *doing* the visual are as material as matter is visual and that both are engaged beyond the ocular” (3). They quote Yglesias, who argues that “seeing is more than an optical operation; understanding what is seen is a thoughtful activity” (qtd. in 7). This practice of looking seems to make the case for studying the visual, “reading” the visual, before attempting to create it. For this reason, I felt it was important that we studied visual rhetoric and familiarized ourselves with rhetorical choices that were being made in relation to sounds and images. Additionally, as my goal in the class was to help my students become more adept consumers and producers of digital materials, they were able to watch these videos as students of message creation, to learn by observation what works well in audio/video production and what doesn’t.

4.9 Survey Results

I was able to gather some valuable foundational knowledge about my students’ existing views and prior experiences through the brief survey I conducted. Many of my findings echo those of the CIRCLE, Pew, and Mascheroni studies cited in earlier chapters. All study participants were in the 18-25 age range. Eighty-nine percent of them said their family discussed civic, community, political issues either occasionally or frequently (26% said frequently).

A factor that might have influenced the above statistics include that the campus is located in a suburban and affluent community in metro-Atlanta, and only 11% of these students reported being first generation college students.

While only 21% of students knew for certain that community service had been a requirement for them in high school, 79% said they had already done something they considered volunteering in their communities. When asked about working toward community, civic, political, or social change, 68% said they already had. Sixteen percent of the respondents were unsure if work they had done would qualify as working toward change.

Of the eight students who were eligible to vote in the 2012 election, only three students did. Understanding that most of those students would be 18 or older for the November 2014 midterm Congressional election, which would take place during our semester together, I showed them in class how to go about registering to vote and also locating their designated polling place. While I did not know at that time how many students who had been eligible the previous election cycle had chosen to vote at that time (because my survey results were sealed until the end of the semester), I did recognize that as college freshmen, many would be coming of voting age in their first semester of college, so I wanted to be sure they had the information necessary to exercise this voting privilege if they chose to do so.

When asked about which social media platforms students had experience on, YouTube (95%), Facebook (84%), and Instagram (79%) were cited most often. Sixty-three percent of students said they had some experience with Twitter, and 32% said they had experience as a reader (21%) and/or writer (11%) of blogs.

Though they defined a wide variety of purposes to social media, 95% of them believed it was a legitimate outlet for political, civic, and community activism. Even though the majority of

students had experience using social media and believed in the value of social media activism, only 37% of them said they had ever used social media for advocacy or activism (with 16% unsure). This is in line with the 2012 Pew study on Civic Engagement in the Digital Age, which noted that 39% of all Americans have used social media for civic or political purposes. This 16% unsure was consistent with the 16% who were unsure if the work they had done would qualify as work toward change. This told me that there was an opportunity to teach students about activism, what it was and what might qualify someone as an agent of change, which was the initial part of my teaching plan.

I was surprised to see that 69% of student respondents said they believed digital activism/civic engagement to be about the same or more effective than in-person action as a means to affect change.

Sixty-three percent identified themselves as exclusively consumers/readers of digital content, while 37% noted that they had some degree of experience in producing digital content.

Only 16% of students said they felt “powerless, like their voice and effort would matter very little” while 84% felt the work they would do would have some impact on change. No students answered that they did not feel like the work they did would make a difference, and no students responded that they did not feel qualified to work toward change.

Of those who felt the least likely that their work would affect change (only 3 students), the reasons cited were “I do not know how to get involved” and “I do not have the skills needed to be an effective activist.” When asked how likely they would be to use digital and social media tools to engage in the future to work toward community, civic, or political change if they were taught the tools and skills, 77% of students said likely (44%) or very likely (33%).

In an effort to check the assertions/findings of the previous studies on youth and civic engagement (CIRCLE and the Mascheroni study), I inquired about factors that might influence students' likelihood to engage in community, civic, or political work toward change in the future. Not surprisingly, more than half (54%) cited being asked by a friend or family member to join them. Seventy-two percent said they would need to find a cause or issue they cared personally about. I was pleasantly surprised that 50% of students replied that being required as part of their college experience would influence the likelihood they would engage, and 44% of students noted that being taught how to do such work would influence their future engagement.

4.10 Introduction to Students and Their Projects

While I'll discuss in this chapter the outcomes and information gleaned as a result of the various assignments throughout the semester, I thought it best to first offer a brief overview of several of the students and student project selections that will be most frequently highlighted. As this study was conducted in a first year writing course, all of the students in the class were college freshmen.

Typhani is a 22-year-old female student who chose to advocate for local adoption. She shared very early on that she has always known adoption was a part of her life plan and that she was a member in a foster care organization, but she had never engaged on the issue in the role of informer, advocate, or activist prior to the start of the semester. Typhani is a creative student who works in event planning and promotion and, while quite reluctant to delve into the kind of work I asked them to do, proved to be very resourceful and driven (as evidenced by the existence of her life plan).

While clearly grade-driven – she made numerous comments to me throughout the semester about wanting an A in the class – she seemed to also have an intrinsic drive to make a difference.

I knew Typhani was engaging in boots-on-the-ground efforts related to her cause in addition to the digital work I asked them to do, but I wasn't aware until our focus group discussion just how much she had done. In fact, she identified in her first reflection essay that her “biggest success” was through engagement in her community. Through the course of the semester, she engaged with organizations such as One Simple Wish, Camp Bob, Camp Ever Green, and Hands on Atlanta. She was even invited to attend events as a guest speaker to talk about adoption.

Emily is a 19-year-old female who chose to work against breed bans. An avid dog, specifically pitbull, lover, Emily was very frustrated that there was actually legislation in some states attempting to ban particular breeds of dogs. These breeds had been deemed dangerous, a narrative often amplified by news media that had been recently obsessed with stories of pitbull attacks, when her research actually showed that Golden Retrievers were the breed most likely to attack and cause injury to a human and that most pitbull aggression was rooted in owner mishandling and not breed-specific tendencies.

Emily identified on the first day of class that she was a “hippie,” that she did not own a TV, and that she was very intimidated by the technology she saw ahead of her in my class. I later learned, however, that she had grown up with social movements and activism being part of her ordinary family life. She shared with the class that her grandparents and parents were 60s

activists and that during her childhood, she recalled several human rights, women's rights, and LGBT organization meetings taking place in her own living room.

Despite being surrounded by activism and social change efforts her whole life, Emily had never really engaged in anything on her own, and she didn't consider herself an activist of any kind. By the end of the experience, she acknowledged the value of the digital work, but she had developed as a BoTG activist and was even scheduled to work with a pitbull rescue organization on the other side of the country over the semester break.

Alexandra is an 18-year-old student who chose to inform and educate on the topic of breast cancer. This project was a timely one for Alexandra, as her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer just before the semester began and would undergo chemo as the class progressed. In addition to Alexandra having someone she lived with affected by the disease, she also disclosed that her cousin had been diagnosed with stage four breast cancer while pregnant with her first child. Clearly this was a cause she was already involved and engaged in, as she and her family regularly participated in fund-raising efforts and awareness activities through walks. Alexandra's work, however, took her in a different direction. When she was challenged to do "opposition research" on her issue, she bucked a little. "Who could possibly be opposed to breast cancer research and treatment?" she asked. So, I urged her to look into the recent controversy of the Susan G. Komen-Planned Parenthood connection, a small prompt that ended up redefining the work she would do over the course of the semester, and ultimately, on the cause in general.

In fact, as a result of some of the information she uncovered during the research for the blogging portion of the class, information about alternative treatments and patients who were opposed to chemical treatment altogether, as well as facts about the percentage of raised funds

that actually go toward finding a cure (to research and development), Alexandra was able to open the minds of her family members and urge them to ask more questions. Consequently, her mother has also started a blog, where she works to educate other breast cancer patients on these issues, as well.

Adam is an 18-year-old male student who chose to be an activist on the issue of climate change. It is important to note that his project began advocating against the Keystone Pipeline (another timely topic, since Congress actually voted on this issue during the course of our semester), but evolved into a much bigger and broader issue – climate change – because it is one Adam already felt very strongly about. Adam positioned himself almost immediately as an “aspiring politician” – even listing this in his Twitter bio – and he championed his cause not only as a highly-motivated student who expected perfection from himself, but as a young person looking to make his mark and network his way into opportunity.

At several turns, Adam found tremendous success. I asked the class to work toward 100 followers; Adam gained over 3,000. Already adept at using social media (he had a Twitter account of his own prior to this project), he applied all lessons about trolling, lurking, mining to gain followers, and discovered countless other tricks, which he shared with the class very willingly. We celebrated these many successes in class, and Adam and I shared even more privately in direct message (DM), when he would contact me to tell me that so-and-so retweeted him or was following him. A Democratic supporter, he was especially proud when Georgia senatorial candidate Michelle Nunn began following him on Twitter.

I spoke with Adam during the semester about my own experience as a legislative intern and serving in student government, and by the end of the semester, Adam had been elected

student senator at our college and went on in the following semester to be elected student government president.

Julian is a 19-year-old student who struggled with his topic from the beginning. He wanted to work with the philosophy of Nihilism, which he quickly found out wasn't suitable for microblogging. As a result, he altered his topic to clean light energy for the final 10 days of the Twitter project and returned to the role of informer on the subject of Nihilism for the blogging assignment, which was much more conducive to his goals.

I discovered rather quickly that Julian was a contemplative and bright student. His writing skills were already such that he could have easily passed any traditional freshman composition class; however, had he not been presented with the digital and social media challenge, he would have just been going through the motions that semester. As a result of this course structure, he was pushed outside of his comfort zone in one way (technology and media) and allowed to remain in his comfort zone in another important way (he got to research and compose about a topic near and dear to him).

While Julian struggled with the microblogging assignment and has a lot of careless errors in his blog posts, he really knocked it out of the park with his digital advocacy video. It was apparent in his reflection of that assignment that he knew he did well. He applied lessons in expository writing, multimodal composition, and visual rhetoric successfully to craft a witty video promoting Nihilism.

I would be shocked if Julian ever came to be a digital activist or even took to Twitter to advocate for a cause, but I feel confident that he understands the power of digital and new media

now, and at the very least, he has acquired competency in composing with digital media, which will come in handy at some point in his academic or professional future.

Tierra is a 19-year-old female student who chose to work toward ending racial tensions between the black community and police. In light of the high profile events in the fall of 2014 (the Ferguson/Michael Brown and NYPD/Eric Garner cases), both of which led to nationwide protests (both digital and BoTG), Tierra's topic evolved into one advocating against racially-motivated police brutality.

Tierra was a very quiet student in class, and she worked diligently on her topic all semester, really shining during the blog portion. I could tell she was heavily invested in the topic, but it wasn't until reading her final reflection essay that I realized how much it had changed her day-to-day life. In many ways, I think this was just fortunate timing – with current events feeding her passion and desire to make a difference – but there is no doubt in my mind that Tierra will remain engaged on this social issue for a very long time. In her final reflection essay, she said she wanted to “be there when the change happened”:

When I came into this class I did not understand. I didn't even think about it. I cared about the news in the world but I never cared this much. When I wake up in the morning now, I almost always check my digital advocacy Twitter account because I want to know the news across the globe. I want to know where the protesters are, where they're going, and what I missed last night. Otherwise I miss the entire movement...because movements don't sleep. I think this has happened because of social media.



Figure 19: Wesaal and Sholeh Wolpe at the Poetry Reading

Wesaal is a 20-year-old female student who initially chose the very broad topic of Libya as one she wanted to work with. She came to this class already an activist in the Libyans for Democracy revolution. Because there were two Libyan students assassinated at the start of our semester, and she was quite emotional about the deaths, as she knew one of the young men, I was concerned for her safety should she choose such a charged situation as a topic for a class assignment. This concern was exacerbated by the fact that she still has relatives living in Libya and her father had recently been politically exiled from there.

Wesaal is a student who is keenly aware of and interested in refugees and diversity, and as an admirer of the Humans of New York campaign, she decided to start a Humans of Clarkston spinoff for the Twitter assignment. Clarkston, Georgia is a city with a rather large population of refugee women. She set out to inform others about the rich cultural population and also highlight particular women from the community throughout her project. She did fine on her Twitter project, but her heart was clearly with Libya and Libyan issues, so taking into account my

concerns for her anonymity and safety should she choose to work on democratic activism, she designed a new idea: she would advocate for a cultural renaissance in Libya for the remainder of the semester. She tied very closely the art and music scene in Libya with the desire for democracy. She was intimately connected to the topic, its history (art being destroyed under Gaddafi), and artists in the country currently working to revitalize the art and music world.

Sholeh Wolpe's reading really couldn't have come at a better time for my students and their work as a whole, but particularly for Wesaal. Wolpe spoke to the students at the reading about media and politics not being a reflection of the hearts and minds and desires of citizens, but the literature and art and music as the true reflection of the heart and soul of a people. This really spoke to Wesaal and affirmed the topic she had chosen to advocate for. Additionally, when Wesaal stayed after to speak to Ms. Wolpe (see Fig. 19) about her experience and her work, they realized they had a friend in common, a Libyan poet. It was a truly rewarding experience for the three of us.

Stephanie is a 19-year-old female who chose to raise awareness on the issues of Autism and Asperger's Syndrome for the duration of the semester. Almost immediately, she shared with the class that she had been diagnosed with Asperger's. For this reason, it was personally important to her to dispel myths and increase understanding of the syndrome. Stephanie faced some challenges the first few days of her Twitter project with some Twitter undesirables ("trolls" who operate more as bullies do) who said some unkind things to her about people who live with Autism. Because we had spoken candidly about topic selection and the concepts of trolls, and because Stephanie and I had developed a good rapport at the start of the semester, she shared

these experiences with me almost immediately. In fact, in my normal monitoring of student feeds, I had observed some of the exchanges she was engaged in and saw them begin to escalate.

I didn't intervene because she seemed to publicly have it under control. However, we did discuss some strategies for handling the mean-spirited reactions she was fielding. I coached her privately on what kinds of comments to acknowledge and respond to (constructive ones that provided a forum for discourse) and which to ignore or even block (destructive or belligerent ones). Stephanie was discouraged for a day or two, but then she began to see supportive comments come in from other followers who had witnessed the tense exchanges, and this was precisely the fuel she needed to pick up and keep going.

Ultimately, she faced an obstacle not all that different from the kind an activist might face in a public forum while showing support for a particular cause or issue, and that experience of overcoming and then networking with others who supported her cause proved essential to her expanded sense of agency and confidence and self-efficacy. In the end, Stephanie was one of the biggest raving fans of the idea of civic engagement using new media, and she has continued running both her Twitter feed and blog beyond the class.

4.11 Twitter/Microblogging for Change



Figure 20: Twitter Profiles

In order to understand the role of technology and culture in social change, a discussion of technoculture is necessary. Technoculture and activism scholar Thomas Breideband talks in his recent article “Social Ruptures and Osculative Interpellation: Approaching the Twitterverse through the Prism of Laclau and Althusser” about the “democratizing potential” of Twitter. In this trailblazing piece, he discusses the concept of hashtag rhetoric, as well the ability of Twitter users to function outside of typical community power dynamics, particularly when they are acting as social agents in response to a “social rupture” (a triggering event such as the Boston Marathon Bombings).

On Twitter, Breideband says, the idea of “power as a means to produce identities, is turned upside down. Here, power can be seen as an effect, and not a cause, of communicative reach and vibrancy” (10). Further, he notes that while “extra-textual conditioning forces such as ‘fandom’ influence participation on Twitter, [the] concept of osculative interpellation, first and

foremost, treats the Twitterverse in the way it is programmed: as a digital conversation platform that provides each user the same means to engage and interact with others” (15).

These points speak to the reasons I used Twitter as an entry-point for civic engagement. With students already feeling somewhat powerless to impact change – and unqualified to even enter the conversation – Twitter seemed a safe place for students to start engaging on civic and political issues. It is low-stakes, as they work under an alternative identity, and it is a guided lesson, as they aren’t thrown to the wolves and left to learn *how* to engage effectively on their own. A seasoned user myself, I monitored and coached them along the way.

The Twitter project (see Appendix A for assignment details) was introduced, and we spent two class periods working on the topic selection (small group brainstorming sessions) and account set-up. For the following three class periods, I spent 15 minutes at the start of each class meeting highlighting some of the student accounts that were especially effective at Twitter activism. I called this time “Celebrations and Sharing” and presented little challenges/contests along the way to help students set smaller goals and see accomplishment. I decided these celebrations and acknowledgments were an important part of the development of self-efficacy and in building confidence through positive reinforcement, the drive to continue to work hard and succeed would be strengthened. This class time also served to allow students who were finding success to model that success for other students. Since they were following each other’s Twitter handles, they knew which students seemed to understand how to “do” Twitter, so they were able to watch them throughout the week, as well. One drawback to the in-class acknowledgment of successful students was that a couple of students who were really struggling with the assignment seemed further frustrated by other students’ success. For two students, in particular, I believe the celebrations could have even had a negative impact on self-efficacy.

For the Twitter project, goal setting is very important. It is a project that requires frequent, consistent, and active engagement. Since students were partially assessed on their engagement (number of tweets, interaction with followers, use of hashtags, etc.), it was important that they break these objectives into smaller, weekly goals. I tied incentives to these smaller goals, as an effort to appeal to their competitive nature. My students quickly showed me that I was setting my own goals for them too low, however. For example, the first challenge was “Hit the 50s,” which was essentially a contest for the first student to reach 50 followers. The objective was for students to have 100 followers by the end of the project. However, in two days, one student already had 100 followers. I had to make adjustments to many of my expectations along the way, although fortunately not in the direction I expected. Adam, for example, amassed 3,000+ followers in three weeks! Having taught this project in previous semesters, I believed 100 followers was a fair and attainable goal for a three week long project. In fact, the most followers any student had earned in a previous semester was 150. I can’t say that the goal of 100 was too low, because not all students who worked consistently on their Twitter projects met this goal, but I had 4-5 students who literally blew this goal out of the water: four of them finished the project with more than 750 followers, proving themselves to be highly effective users in basic social media functioning.

The best I can explain this is through the natural evolution of social media usage. Each semester, more and more students come to class with existing experience using Twitter. They also come better prepared to adapt to various social media platforms, and this semester was no exception. The students who found tremendous success with acquiring followers on Twitter had a couple of things in common: they had prior knowledge/experience using Twitter, and they chose nationally-recognized causes to engage on.

I did try to respond quickly to the gap in performance I noticed, where several students were tweeting confidently and gaining hundreds of followers, while some students were tweeting sporadically and stuck with fewer than 50 followers. To combat this, I set up an informal mentorship opportunity and invited successful students to share what was working for them and allow struggling students to ask them for advice and input on their own Twitter activity. This fostered a growing sense of community in my class and reinforced the ideas of feminist theory I hope to see play out in all of my classes, where we realize we are a community that can learn from one another, instead of me being the authority and the only one qualified to impart knowledge on the group.

4.11.1 How They Found Success: Lurking, Mining, Trolling, and Hashtagging

Students were asked to reflect on their experience in a number of ways and present the information that contributed to their success in a final e-portfolio that was ultimately a multimodal, hypertext essay populated with screen shots, actual tweets, hyperlinks to blog posts, and images. These e-portfolios were composed using the web-based program Storify, which allowed students to grab elements from all new and social media platforms they had used throughout the semester and insert narrative between those elements. As part of this reflection, I wanted them to consider and discuss the ways they had gone about finding and gaining new followers. In class, we had discussed concepts of lurking, mining, trolling, and hashtagging as viable means to identify people to follow and to acquire followers.

Emily: People are obsessed with hashtags...I started #bullybreed and then I saw that all over my followers' Twitter feeds. I've learned that you have to use them, though, because when I was searching people to follow, I typed in hashtags (I was like #pitbull #breedban) and then you find all these people you know could you see their... you can

tell so much about a twitter account by the tweets they send comments at the hashtags really helped in that respect.

Typhani: I didn't remember half the time to use them.

Adam: They were key to developing a following.

Typhani: I used a skill, I think you called it "lurking." Or maybe it was "mining."

Emily: I like creeped hard-core.

Typhani: I was creeping all the time, but I would follow 1000 people a day and then when they followed me, I just unfollowed them.

Ms. G: Did you do that manually or did you use Unfollow Me or one of the programs that help you track who follows you?

Typhani: I would start at like large organizations like @adoptuskids and went through their list of followers and just followed all of them.

Emily: Yes that's what I did.

Ms. G: So you went mining.

Soo: I did that too. I followed big organizations and then followed all of their followers.

Emily: And then you post stuff to their pages and you get more followers.

One factor that contributed to students' sense of efficacy in their advocacy and activist efforts but that I hadn't considered prior to this study was the positive impact of direct messages (DMs) and tweets of support students received. These, in addition to what students deemed to be exciting and valuable follows, proved validation and affirmation for the work they were doing. The external influence was much appreciated, as sometimes I feel like the sole motivator in a class assignment, but it energized my students, making them even more excited about their

projects: “I have received many supporting and informative messages that helped me learn more about this topic” (Soo). In addition, it validated their views and made them feel *heard*.

4.11.2 “I’m not really a Social Media Person”

Along with the declaration “I’m not really a social media person,” I heard “I have never been the community service type,” and similar expressions of dismissal from students both before and after the Twitter assignment. One student even categorized herself as a “lousy social networker.” I found it very interesting that students saw these acts as related to a particular type of person and not activities that any type of person could engage in. Stating these qualifications – or lack of – might initially have been interpreted as a swipe at *those people*, the ones who use social media and participate in community service-oriented activities. However, upon further consideration, it seems more likely that the students who made these comments lacked the confidence or experience with either activity so parked those who did use social media and engage in community service in some category beyond their own: the “other” category.

Some of the reasons students cited for not having used Twitter prior to this assignment were that it is “addicting” (Caleb), they didn’t understand *how* to use it (Wesaal), and even viewing “Twitter as the annoying sister of Facebook” (Branden). About half of the class was pretty candid about their lack of excitement about the project when it was first introduced.

4.11.3 Not all Students Found Success

“Success” on this project might be defined as receipt of a passing grade, accomplishment of goals outlined in the rubric, or achievement of the end result of actual, measurable change. Many students found academic success on this project (86% of students scored a C or better). Using either definition, in order to achieve success, students had to invest. A handful of the students who expressed reluctance in the beginning of the Twitter project never really invested or

took ownership of the project, so naturally, they fell short of the requirements that would lead them to a passing grade. Coincidentally, the students who were most forthcoming in their reflection essays about the lack of impact or influence they felt they had were the students who engaged on the project the least. They were the ones who sent the fewest number of tweets, had the least amount of followers, and never really caught on to the concept of tweeting. Having used Twitter for civic and political purposes, and having taught this assignment for three consecutive semesters, I can tell you without a doubt that Twitter is a platform that requires users to get their hands dirty in order to really get good at it. In many ways, it's counter-intuitive and has many idiosyncrasies that can discourage new users. Some of this quirkiness is related to establishment of digital identity, but some of it is sheer understanding of features and functionality. For example, students who did not apply the lessons in lurking, mining, and hashtagging really struggled to identify quality follows and earn followers themselves.

Students who didn't commit themselves to the kind of participation I recommended or weren't willing to engage in some initial trial and error or weren't comfortable adapting their approaches and methods did not end up being successful on this project. I suppose the question is whether their lack of buy-in is directly linked to their lack of success or if other factors (laziness, general lack of motivation, for example) inhibited their success. Not enjoying an assignment isn't the sole reason for not succeeding on the assignment, as teachers of writing studies see regularly when we assign a literary analysis or research paper. Factoring in the percentage of students who will simply not apply themselves to any type of assignment and comparing that to the four who were disengaged on the Twitter project in my class leads me to believe these students might not have applied themselves on a traditional, paper-based writing assignment either. These students could be those with the "damaged interest" in learning that Winslow and

Mische talk about with the basic writer's experience. It is also worth considering that the students who didn't apply themselves and didn't find success with this project might also have used the type of assignment as a justification for their lack of success rather than taking ownership of their lack of investment in the work.

One student, in particular, struggled with making the platform serve the interest he had. Julian wanted to spend the semester promoting the philosophy of Nihilism. We talked at length about the kind of challenges he might face on Twitter with such a topic, but ultimately, I allowed him to forge ahead, since he felt very strongly about his topic selection. About a week and a half into the three-week project, Julian had to change his topic to one that would better suit the Twitter platform because his work was gaining no traction at all. He had told me that his grade was important to him, so we decided together that it would be best to adopt a more Twitter-friendly topic for the final ten days. Julian describes the experience in his reflection essay (full essay can be found in the appendix):

I wasn't conscious of the limitations of the platform and this ignorance led me to make numerous mistakes in picking topics, interacting with others, and curating my profile. It took two weeks and two other Twitter profiles for me to comfortably settle into a topic, and by then it was too late to catch up to the class average. Although detrimental, my failures taught me important facts about Twitter and social media landscape in general [...] Most important to my learning about social media was my second attempt on a philosophical ideology, nihilism, instead of a "social issue." I took it to mean that I could pursue the tenants of my ideology as a person using Twitter. I thought long and hard about how to focus down nihilism and skepticism into something easily vocalized and communicated through Twitter and came to a conclusion. Nihilism, my topic, is the

ultimate form of skepticism, the rejection of moral objectivity and inherent meaning in favor of self-discovery and learning. I asked my classmates specified questions about their selected topic on issues I felt weren't clarified enough or demanded further explanation. What I had done could've been seen as simply contrarian for the sake of a quick response, but I meant for it to lead into a greater discussion. I was mistaken in the second part of my plan, as I had thought that Twitter was a place to foster and encourage debate and questions. I discovered that Twitter is not a place for conversation. Twitter is not a place where most people can eloquently express their opinions and views and expect to have a fulfilling discussion.

Although Twitter actually *is* a "place for conversation" and debate, Julian found Twitter to be an "intellectually limiting soapbox" and ultimately dismissed it as a suitable one for proper discourse because "the small character limit encourages short, reactionary comments and replies, and discourages meaningful conversations about any real issue." His position is shared, in fact, by a whole host of social media skeptics (see Chapter 2 where I discuss slacktivism).

Julian ultimately did find moderate success in his project because he figured out how to adapt: "This failure to flourish in the community gave me great insight into the function of the platform itself along with the expectations and desires of those using it and even though the project itself may be considered a failure, I feel that my revelations about social media and specifically Twitter account as a success of sorts." In his storification of his new media work (we called this the e-portfolio), this is how Julian described his initial foray into Twitter work:

Pretentious even with the first tweet, I thrust blindly into the twittersphere looking for somebody to respond to my baited statement.



In which I poorly try to shoe-horn in my web browsing preferences into my topic. It is fairly obvious at this point that I am struggling to find appropriate content for my cause.

Figure 21: Julian's Notes from Storify, Part I



I think this one was actually pretty clever. I'm responding to a classmates tweet on the rejection of GMO crops. No source was sited and no facts were given. I think this might of been the single appropriate tweet I made early on.

Figure 22: Julian's Notes from Storify, Part II

As a result of his experiences, we *both* learned a valuable lesson about Twitter activism and, well, activism in general. There are some ideas that can't reasonably be put into action, and there is some change we might seek that simply can't be acted on. Promoting a philosophy can only be accomplished through discussion and illustration of ideas, and these types of conversations require forums that are conducive to longer, more in-depth exchanges. For these reasons, I knew Julian would find much greater success on his efforts to educate people on the philosophy of Nihilism in a blog.

4.11.4 Challenges

One of the most commonly cited challenges with Twitter was the time required to build a following, which, of course, is a critical part of influence and impact.

Unfortunately Twitter has been hard upkeep. It is not something that I have much time to put enough effort in to regularly tweeting to keep my followers engaged. I don't understand TweetDeck and other ways of scheduling tweets and most of my tweets are at all times because my schedule as a teen does not match with most of the population.

(Caleb)

My scheduling during this was off, and I completely lost track of the assignment. (Luis)

I have trouble sitting still and using technology. (Emily)

I haven't tweeted as often as I should due to certain circumstances. (Wesal)

I tried to make an adjustment to overcome this complaint of lack of time by offering class time to tweet, yet when I provided class time, students just acted eager to leave. As I reflected on this challenge more, I couldn't help but wonder if this time constraint was a legitimate one or if it was actually a reflection of students' propensity to procrastinate on school projects, the lack of time management skills or commitment to work on projects a little at a time over the course of a

longer period in order to produce the best possible results. In this way, I suppose a project like this microblogging assignment is actually an exercise in teaching students not to procrastinate. With a due date that is three weeks out, students can be very tempted to wait two and a half weeks before even starting the work; however, when teaching students to write in a digital environment, where they are working to build readership and influence, work must be done frequently and consistently.

A rather significant obstacle for at least two of the students was the the lack of reciprocity in the project, that is, they didn't see the experience as valuable because it wasn't a mutually-beneficial one. This is a reality explored in depth in service learning scholarship (see chapter 3), one I was not able to overcome for Caleb and Pete.

4.12 Blogging for Change

Antoinette Pole writes in *Blogging the Political: Politics and Participation in a Networked Society* that “political blogs have become a gateway to civic engagement” (135). Blogs, in general, are a vast repository of advocate and activist and editorial messages, but political blogs serve additional purposes, according to Pole.

- Increase participation – Blogs that aim to “mobilize voters, speak directly to voters”
- Candidate promotion and fundraising – Campaign blogs aim to raise funds or promote a candidate/counter message the MSM. These provide opportunity for immediate response to topics of interest, working much faster than a press release that relies on the MSM newscycle.
- Constituent correspondence – Elected officials’ blogs share updates that are timely and serve to bypass the MSM, allowing the blogger to maintain control of the message.

Beyond political purposes, though, Pole's analysis points to the value of a blog for civic and community purposes, as well. Bloggers can mobilize efforts in a nation- or worldwide way that has never been done before. Through blogging, "networks" are created. Pole cites three types of networks: individual/group identity, topical interests, and ideology. She defines "network" as "associations or affiliations of groups of individuals who have common interests and form a basis for providing mutual assistance" (17). This could be compared to Hauser's "public sphere," which he defines as a "discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest, and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them" ("Civil Society and the Public Sphere" 21).

Pole references Copeland's 2004 study findings and agrees with them that "blog readers tend to be well read, politically active, and cyber-active" (qtd in 11). An additional value of blogging, she says, is that "There are no gatekeepers with political blogs," affording individuals an opportunity to "influence public opinion, shape agendas, and mobilize citizens. Political blogs have revolutionized citizen participation, enabling political bloggers to communicate with the masses" (138). Instead of assuming "Americans are disengaged and apathetic, these data suggest otherwise"... "it appears that the constraints of modern society might have prevented individuals from engaging or expressing their interest. Political blogging provides a new venue for this" (Pole 130).

Understanding and sharing with my students the value of blogging was a necessary precursor to asking them to blog. Additionally, before I could ask my students to design and populate with content an effective blog, I had to have them evaluate others' blogs. We used the questions for discussion in the second chapter of the *Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* textbook. As part of this blog analysis, students were asked to locate two

blogs on their topic and answer questions related to rhetorical situation, audience, purpose, context, authority, and genre. Here is a sampling of some of the questions they were asked to answer/consider in evaluating other blogs:

- Who is the author, and why did s/he compose this text?
- How does this author establish credibility on the subject matter (or does s/he)?
- Why did the author choose this form/genre of writing?
- Who is the primary audience? Secondary?
- What values or positions might the intended audience(s) hold?
- How will readers interact with this text?
- What design choices were made, and how do they serve the purpose of the author?
- How effectively does the blogger use white space and balance of text and image?
- How is contrast used on the page?
- What kind of navigation exists, and how does it impact the user experience?

Completing this analysis exercise helped them to see the impact of their composition and design decisions on their reader(s). As a result, they were able to adopt effective practices in their own design and avoid those they felt to be poor choices. This was mostly useful in the design stage as students selected templates, color schemes, and navigational structures. It also helped them understand the kind of information that would be essential in their bio page and why it might be helpful to create a FAQs page on their blog. As part of these discussions, students began to see that one of their primary roles as bloggers on their chosen cause would be as informers. They had a responsibility to help increase functional literacy among their readers before they could take the steps to advocate or effectively persuade their readers.

Bill Moyer talks about the significance of this in his book *Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements*, where he cites eight stages in the process of social movement success. He highlights the importance of the activist/reformer (whom he says should start out playing the role of citizen, then rebel, then change agent, before becoming reformer) persuading the reader/public that there is a problem. Therein lies the informer piece we're focusing on initially as bloggers. Moyer says, the "public must be convinced three times":

1. That there is a problem
2. To oppose current conditions and policies
3. To want, no longer fear, alternatives (Moyer 44)

He suggests that very early on in a movement, activists should "become experts; do research," and this is exactly what I hoped to accomplish through the blogging assignment; I wanted students to acquire some degree of expertise on their cause or issue, knowing this expertise would contribute to increased agency and sense of efficacy.

As part of the blogging assignment, I required eight posts. Because this was where the bulk of the traditional writing would be accomplished – and curricular and course objectives would be met – I structured the posts in order to match the types of assignments that might be assigned in a more traditional English Composition I course. Though most individual blog posts were geared to the standard 400-word maximum, student blogs as a whole consisted of approximately 3,000-3,500 words each, surpassing the volume of writing in many other first-year writing courses. Additionally, when journals and reflection essays are factored in, the total word count of the course is likely near 6,500-7,500. The following table lists the various assigned posts and the objectives/skills those posts met.

Assigned Blog Post	Course Objectives
An overview of the cause/issue	Expository writing
Current event summary/commentary (four)	Argument, persuasive writing, article summary, analysis, research
Documentary review	Film analysis
<i>Opposing Viewpoint</i> response	Article critique, research, analysis, logical fallacies
Annotated bibliography/Recommended reading list	MLA formatting, research, summary of source, abstract writing
Calls to action	Persuasive writing, rhetorical appeal (ethos, logos, pathos)

Table 3: Chart of Assigned Blog Posts and Course Objectives

I used a narrative style of feedback with screen shots, which is recommended in *Assessing Digital Writing* (and by other scholars of multimodal composition) in order to illustrate places where students found success and where they could have used improvement. In this way, my feedback was a continued pedagogical tool and not exclusively an assessment tool. I provided students with both a rubric and the visually rich feedback.

Additionally, I tried to be very encouraging in my feedback, remaining ever cognizant of the fact that students (nay, humans) trying something new need encouragement, affirmation, guidance. Overly critical commentary would only serve to dissuade and discourage, neither of which a first-year writing teacher should ever set out to do.

In the Appendix of this chapter, you will see two samples of this narrative feedback students received on their blog assignments.

4.13 Digital Advocacy/Activism Video Project

At the conclusion of the semester, once students had worked to become quite well-versed on their topics, they used the iPads and iMovie training to create a three-minute digital advocacy video on their topic. The videos were research-based, scripted and storyboarded, and were the culminating activity for of the civic engagement and new media activities of the previous twelve weeks. I've chosen to discuss two student projects below:

“Climate Change – The Debate is Over” by Adam



Figure 23: Adam's Digital Advocacy Video, Screen Shot 1

In Adam’s video, which he titled “Climate Change – The Debate is Over,” he set a series of existing images and clips of tar sands and oil spills and hurricanes to audio excerpts of Julia Roberts’s monologue “Mother Nature.” At one point, while footage of Hurricane Sandy rolls on screen, Roberts is heard saying “I have fed species greater than you and I have starved species greater than you.”

Adam then makes reference to the 2014 Climate March in the streets of New York City, which occurred just at the start of our Twitter project (and is, in large part, what Adam attributes so much of his success in building a huge Twitter following to).

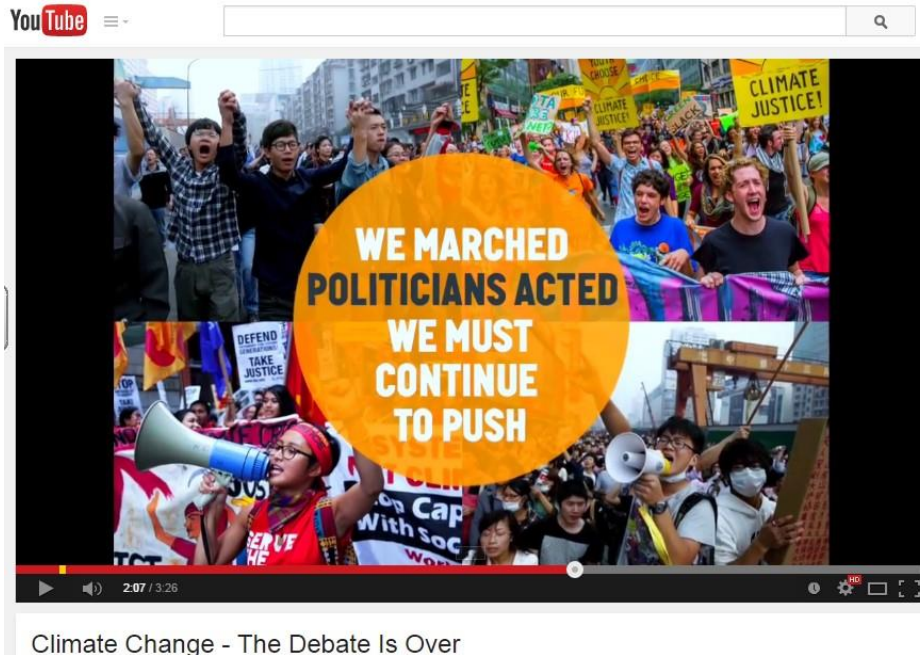


Figure 24: Adam's Digital Advocacy Video, Screen Shot 2

He noted several key events that took place over the course of the semester, namely that Congress voted on a bill that would allow development of the Keystone Pipeline (something environmentalists had been fighting for years). The bill was defeated, as you can see is celebrated in Figure 25.



Figure 25: Adam's Digital Advocacy Video, Screen Shot 3

In an effort to attribute the successful defeat of that bill to digital activist efforts, Adam overlaid the commonly used hashtag on Twitter for those advocating to stop the Keystone Pipeline, #NOKXL. Using the Ken Burns Effect in iMovie, Adam had this very slowly zoom in to focus the viewer on the rectangular red box in the bottom, left-hand corner of the screen, which says “BILL FAILS.”

What made Adam’s video so successful was that he told a story, not just of climate change, but of the people’s effort to fight it. He highlighted President Barack Obama, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and Hillary Clinton as major players in the future of the fight against climate change. He merged footage of former Secretary of State Clinton speaking at the 2013 National Clean Energy Summit where she addressed the exigency of the situation. The final audio heard in the video is Clinton saying, “I’m absolutely confident we can forge the kind of clean energy future that our children and grandchildren deserve...before it’s too late.”

“What Nihilism is Not” by Julian



Figure 26: Julian's Digital Advocacy Video, Screen Shot 1

Julian’s video educating viewers on the primary tenets of the philosophy of Nihilism was incredibly effective, and because he explains his design choices so well in his reflection essay. Julian described his purpose as “more of a quick summary of Nihilism, its history, and what it stands for. I would try to present things as factually and objectively as I could. No lies or doublespeak. I wanted to give a quick narration on the subject matter than random fact over compelling footage. The purpose would be to enlighten people as to the real purpose and beliefs of Nihilism.”

He defended his approach by critiquing other PSA styles:

I tried to make it as different from the preachy PSAs that infest cable-television and the front page of YouTube as possible. A short skit about the dangers of a certain problem (gambling, meth, alcohol, weed, take your pick) followed by a fadeout and sad piano music, or a series of particularly relevant images intercut with random facts about the issue at hand with sad piano or pop music playing over it. I've seen this formulaic method played out dozens of times, and what made me want to stay as far away from that structure as possible wasn't just the fact that I was sick of the repetition, it was the fact that through all of these PSA I never really learned about the issue at hand.

He chose to feature muted footage of YouTuber Joey from "Joey's World Tour," as he says, trying and failing to consume an entire container of Nutella. This video, completely unrelated to my message, does a couple of things that I find important. One, it grounds the entire video in a layer of humor. While the video itself is funny, I also wanted to poke fun at the popular notion that Nihilism means that nothing matters, thus not even the video I was making mattered enough to take completely seriously. Two, it is surprisingly engrossing to watch. I planned on the person watching my video freezing, and being unable to look away from the terrible and confusing sight in front of them, possibly giving me enough time to get their attention with the real message.

Though the Joey video was muted, Julian did choose to include music to accompany his narration. Here is how he describes his sonic design choice:

The music playing over the video is also somewhat of a joke, but nowhere near as in your face as the background video. I chose "The Housewife Song" by Joachim Kuhn to subvert the trope of sad music used to artificially bolster the significance of a cause. I wanted a piece that I found beautiful and uplifting, something to juxtapose both the

background video of a man nearly checking on Nutella, and the preconceived negative attitude held by most of my audience.

Having missed the in-class training on iMovie, Julian elected not to use iMovie or his iPad for the project, opting instead to use his laptop.

Addressing challenges in design and how he chose to address those, he says

One of the major creative choices also stemmed from one of the biggest design problems, which was that I had no idea what I was doing. It was my first time using a video editing tool and I learned most of what I know from hastily watching Windows Movie Maker tutorials on YouTube. I was forced, both from my skill constraints and my own laziness that I wouldn't be able to do much with the actual technical side of the project. Any audio or video was going to have to be tediously and poorly inserted by yours truly, and I wanted to keep that to a minimum. This resulted in cuts being sparse and images or videos playing out for long time before any sort of switch. I wanted to create a compelling video but I knew that to keep everything on a serviceable level without overstepping my boundaries I would need to be conservative with my editing.

Julian's video closes on the image of the gluttonous Joey whose face is covered in Nutella, with Julian's voice saying in narration, "I'm not saying that Nihilism is the philosophy to end all philosophies, just that it be given a closer look than what the general public has awarded it until now." After the struggles he had with the Twitter platform and the relative success he began to see in blogging, this project was a very rewarding one for him. Not only was he able to use his own voice to communicate his best laid arguments for Nihilism – a mode that most closely resembled the in-person dialogue he longed for – he was able to script his thoughts beforehand as part of the storyboarding process, thereby making an informative and beautifully

articulated case for his position. Of all the reflections of the digital video work, Julian's was by far the most surprising example of acquired agency and self-efficacy as a result of the project.

This is how he described the experience in his storification (e-portfolio):



My video. Oh how joyous! I am actually extremely proud of it; after all, it took me a good number of hours and retries to finish. All in all I learned that: I hate twitter, I can write decently, I need better medication, and that my taste in background videos is questionable. An experience I'll never forget, but be hesitant to repeat.

Figure 27: Julian's Notes from Storify, Part III

He found his video to be “a test of [his] technical, linguistic, and social skills,” but saw it as a valuable experience overall:

For the first time I was making something to communicate a message directly to people, a message that wasn't directly of my hand creation but certainly with a twist all my own. I had to consider if it would appeal to others, and change it based on that. A project that may have failed and its academic intentions, but succeeded in my personal ones. Just the mere fact that I was able to complete the video felt like a major milestone to me, and something that, whether I deserve it or not, I felt proud of.

Collectively, the digital advocacy video projects were an enormous success. One student, Wesaal, approached her video from an ethnographic position, where she interviewed her father, a political exile, on his experiences with the destruction of art and culture under Gaddhafi. Another student enlisted 5-6 friends to act in a PSA against domestic abuse. One student created an informative piece on Autism Spectrum Disorder using the popular style of silent filming with messages on a whiteboard held just below a person's face on screen. And one student took footage from a variety of adoption videos and documentaries and crafted a montage of messages that were pro-adoption. All told, the videos were of a fairly high quality, especially considering only one student in the class had any significant audio or video production experience prior to the semester.

4.14 What I Learned from the Class Rebel

A couple of situations challenged me as a teacher-researcher but proved opportunity for me to revert to my philosophy as a teacher: to provide an atmosphere of shared learning. One, in particular, reinforced Freire's contention that the teacher is not the only source of knowledge, can learn from our students' lived experience, and must validate what they've "learned in their relations with the world" (63).

Pete, who came to class regularly and participated, though minimally, in class discussions challenged me in more than one way. His presence was fairly consistent, and he seemed attentive for the most part in class activities and discussions. He even participated -- enthusiastically and substantively -- in the focus group. But Pete denounced the notion of social media/digital activism, so he refused to participate in the Twitter and Wordpress assignments. When I saw that he wasn't participating in the Twitter assignment and counseled him on selecting a topic (he said repeatedly that he struggled with choosing a side on any issue because he wasn't an "expert" on

any side, and he believed it was intellectually dishonest to advocate for something he didn't feel strongly about), I just knew he would end up one of those students who skipped the assignment and eventually dropped the class.

However, on the day the assignment was due to be complete, Pete surprised me by submitting an essay expressing support for BoTG activism over digital activism. He titled the essay "Social Media and the Death of Critical Thinking." In it, he labeled Twitter a forum "pseudo-communication," evidence that "empathy is dying slowly every day because the lack of personal communications."

Two of the points he made in his essay echoed points made in CIRCLE and Mascheroni studies and addressed cyberbalkanization:

Politics are a touchy subject for most. Unfortunately we as a society don't feel comfortable sharing our views with others. However, social media can link you to others who share your specific views, and in a format like Twitter is highly unlikely to convince others to join your side of the debate. Because of the information limitations this particular social media all you're doing is gathering people who already believe and support your ideal without exposing yourself or others to counterarguments.

He even noted a moral opposition to presenting only one side of an issue. I suspect I would have struggled helping Pete identify a topic for a traditional argument/persuasion essay, too, although, in many respects, what he produced in this exercise *was* an argument against social media activism. In his final comments, he addressed the notion of slacktivism:

How can I be inspired and in turn inspire others through a computer screen. For some this is easy it eliminates the realness of a social setting and consequences of what to say are not always taken into consideration. If we continue to communicate through computer

screens and other limiting formats all bravery will subside, social etiquette will fail and worst of all human interactions will no longer feel natural. For all of these reasons I as a citizen cannot bring myself to participate in any form of advocacy that I deem irresponsible towards my fellow man.

While the writing skill in Pete's essay certainly didn't reflect A or B work, the case he was making was a valid one. The stubborn authority figure in me wanted to fail him outright for not having followed directions. But, I argued to myself, the essay was written above a failing level. But this *is* an English composition class. But, as much as we teachers want students to write according to plan, he *did* exercise intellectual independence. He had approached the assignment by thinking outside of the box I had created. His position was a valid one, and he should have been allowed a forum to verbalize it in a traditional format. And ultimately, his essay proved MORE valuable to me as a teacher-researcher than any shoddy, half-assed Twitter project he might've thrown together. He was allowed an opportunity to be true to himself, and in accepting his alternative assignment, I learned from him, allowing me to put my feminist pedagogy into practice yet again. This experience provided me an opportunity to grow as both a teacher and a researcher.

4.15 My Assessment/Evaluation Plan

Proper assessment of this kind of work is critical. If we don't accurately assess our student work, we cannot know whether or not we are doing effective and valuable work in the classroom. With "assessment" being a buzz word in the world of SACS accreditation and higher education today, there is an extra layer of accountability required of all classroom teachers.

The use of rubrics is often debated in higher education, and I myself don't use them in all instances. However, when asking students to tackle a new type of writing or perform outside of

the box, providing rubrics can allay anxiety, which obstructs performance. The goal is to increase agency and self-efficacy in my student writers, so anxiety-laden experiences are antithetical to my goal. Beyond this reality, I see rubrics as effective instructional tools, opportunities to reinforce priorities and concepts we've already discussed in class, in order to help students produce the highest quality projects possible.

Because there isn't much scholarship yet on the blended pedagogy of civic and multimodal/new media practices, I have had to cull together and customize rubrics based on existing heuristics and rubrics in each individual area of scholarship.

The Twitter rubric (see Appendix for all rubrics) is one I designed independently, and I decided to assess my students' performance based on four criteria: identity, activity, impact and influence, and reflection. These criteria are threads of commonality that run through the assessment of the other two projects, as I believe they are the most fundamental criteria that can be used to gauge effective civic engagement and new media work in an academic environment.

To accurately assess the blogging project, I turned to the article "Assessing Civic Engagement: Responding to Online Spaces for Public Deliberation," which was included in the 2012 McKee and DeVoss collection called *Digital Writing: Assessment and Evaluation*. This particular article, written by Zoetewey, Simmons, and Grabill, has served as the most applicable guide for me, as it is related to public and digital pedagogy. Because it mostly discusses student-built websites for non-profit entities, it served as a great model for the blogging portion of my class.

Zoetewey, Simmons, and Grabill suggest that we evaluate for "evidence of useful interactivity in the form of engagement, psychological interactivity, emotional connection, and exploration," noting that "[e]valuating for useful interactivity means looking for features where

the audience is engaged, allowed to explore, encouraged to connect information to their day-to-day lives, and invited to build new knowledge” (“Assessing Civic Engagement”). This point helps support my assignment design as much as the criteria for assessment. I require that my students design their blogs in such a way as to demonstrate multiple types of literacies (visual, technical, civic/social, sonic); doing so fosters user “exploration,” which Zoetewey, et al., believe is critical in gauging influence and impact, because “[e]nabling change in the community can start with allowing users to explore their interests and inquire on their own terms.”

I also invite my students, in all three civic engagement projects, to localize their issues whenever possible. Zoetewey, et. al. argue that such “[e]motional connection and sense of place can be a catalyst for movement and transformation.” They reference a separate article by Simmons and Zoetewey (2012), which found that “audiences are more likely to engage with issues that they believe are relevant to their lives and that including actual images audiences recognize as their neighborhoods improves this relevance” (qtd. in Zeotewey, et. al.).

The rubric for the culminating Digital Advocacy Project was based heavily on the rubric suggested by Erik Ellis in his article “Back to the Future” which was published in *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres* (2012). His “Critique Form and Grading Criteria for Assessing Multimedia Essays” rubric was designed around a DVD project he assigned his students. I chose to use this rubric as a model for my own class project because he covers visual and sonic competencies in his assessment, as well as such criteria as the value of idea, noting that it should “transcend personal narrative” and “provoke viewers to think about the idea” (56), which are important criteria for my class’s digital advocacy projects, as well.

All rubrics were made available when projects were formally introduced, so students knew know from the outset what areas of their project would be weighted most heavily. In

addition, since editing and adding content/features after-the-fact is much more difficult in video production, it is important for students to know which elements they will be required to have as part of their grade prior to setting out to do the video-making. Finally, proper assessment of this student work served as the start of a reflective activity for me, a way to gauge effectiveness of my own lessons.

5 WRITING THAT MAKES THINGS HAPPEN: IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A successful college education should provide an environment that encourages the development of critical thinking skills, the ability to work collaboratively, and the ability to analyze and solve complex problems.

Research, however, indicates that the vast majority of college faculty members do not use pedagogies that would develop these skills, still focusing on lecturing as their primary method of instruction (Thielens, 1987).

5.1 #AmTeaching: Civic, Deliberative, and New Media Pedagogy

There is an ongoing debate about the value of teaching new media in the freshman composition class. This debate is largely a result of the evolving definitions of composition and communication over the past 20 years. Writing studies is a field that has long been influenced by the advent of new technologies: the ballpoint pen, the typewriter, the personal computer, the Internet, smart phones. It is undeniable that these technologies impact the ways we compose our thoughts and present our ideas.

Ten years ago, when Microsoft PowerPoint was a fairly new tool, faculty members began allowing students to design and submit a PPT file in place of a final essay or strictly oral presentation, which previously might have been accompanied only by a paper handout. Today, we encourage students to compose using all sorts of tools and technologies, from the hypertext

essay to video games. The value of teaching software applications and interface and document design concepts in a composition class can clearly be argued, as these are the many ways our graduates will compose in their post-college lives. It can even be argued that teaching code and script-writing (html, for example) in a composition class has merit. Much like the concerns expressed by Shipka and Wysocki, however, we must be careful to have our digital work accompany and not replace traditional, academic literacies. I look to many of the lessons that have been set forth in Madeleine Sorapure's 2003 piece "Screening Moments, Scrolling Lives: Diary Writing on the Web" as technologically engaging composition activities for students, yes, but activities we must be careful not to let take too much time away from teaching how to properly research, write, analyze and argue. Regardless of the approach, however, there is an inherent value in teaching students to communicate in and compose for a digital environment.

We must ask ourselves which concepts are most valuable in composition and general communication. If the answer to that question includes tone, style, audience, attention to detail, voice, coherence and cohesiveness, reflection and revision, then those skills can be taught effectively in a wide variety of ways. In order to keep our students engaged in the learning process – and also teach them real-world skills – it becomes apparent that teaching with new media is essential in 21st century composition pedagogy.

If further support is needed, we might recall the *NCTE Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies* (2005), which noted that "students should be able to both read critically and write functionally, no matter what the medium (William Kist). In personal, civic, and professional discourse, alphabetic, visual, and aural works are not luxuries but essential components of knowing." Additionally relevant is the *CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments* (2004), which says all courses that engage students in

digital writing should “provide students with opportunities to apply digital technologies to solve substantial problems common to the academic, professional, civic, and/or personal realm of their lives.” It is with these two guiding principles in mind that I argue for a composition pedagogy that includes both civic engagement and digital literacy.

Though I initially sought in my study to answer only a handful of questions regarding student engagement in the civic, political, and digital realm (see primary and secondary research questions in Chapter 5), I was able to gain information and understanding in general teaching practice as well as classroom engagement that I hadn’t previously intended.

With only a couple of notable exceptions, the overarching conclusion is that teaching digital and civic literacies positively impacts student interest in civic and political engagement, their attitude towards it, and the feelings of agency and self-efficacy about engaging in digital advocacy and activism.

Jeffrey Grabill referred to our students, those who write with “advanced information communication technologies (ICTs),” as the “civic rhetors of the 21st century” (3). Like Mascheroni (2010), Grabill discussed the notion of “civic culture.” In both cases, the writers seem to be talking about civic and community literacy, awareness of and connectedness to an individual’s civic and community life.

There is tremendous value in studying student attitudes and behaviors surrounding writing and engaging civically and politically. Fishman notes that through “delving into these writers’ lives, a researcher’s stance aligns with critical pedagogy, social constructivism, and social epistemic rhetoric” (174), ultimately underscoring Ruth Ray’s point about students being co-researchers and all stakeholders being invested in shared meaning-making.

Many of us teach our students about the great classical rhetors (Aristotle, Cicero, Hortensia) and some of us have an awareness of Habermas and Hauser's conversations on public sphere. What we need to link for our students is this notion of the new public sphere (online) and how it fits in with activism and activist rhetoric IRL (in real life).

For those of us teachers of writing and rhetoric who count increased digital literacy and/or civic literacy among our mission as compositionists, teaching and learning to value alternative modes of civic engagement should rank high among our academic and curricular objectives. As part of employing this civic and new media pedagogy as a means of increasing digital civic engagement or activism, we must also instruct our students on how to consume digital materials.

Those in the field who currently advocate for a pedagogy that includes multimodality (Arola, Wysocki, Grabill, Shipka, Hocks, Hawisher, Selfe) consider the necessity of teaching the rhetorics of this new, digital literacy. Assignments, instructional units, and entire undergraduate and graduate level courses are being delivered on visual rhetoric, digital rhetoric, and sonic rhetoric. Competency in these skills is necessary in cultivating not only digital citizenship, but effective creative and critical thinking skills. These skills must be sharp in order for our students to engage smartly in the online world (lest they become sheeple, consuming empty messaging without recognizing it as such).

Mascheroni (2010) noted that young people often have widely varying definitions of what constitutes citizenship, and these definitions impact their efficacy and sense of agency when assigning value to their own efforts toward and ideas about engagement (pp. 214-5). The survey I distributed at the start of the semester (see Appendix) confirmed this. My students' definitions of citizenship-oriented activities were all over the map. This reality underscores the

value of encouraging them to engage where they want, where they are comfortable, entry-level engagement, if you will, in order to help build self-efficacy and civic, as well as new media, literacy.

5.2 Best Practices for Teaching Civic Engagement through New Media

Having studied the many ways social media can be used for positive social, political, and community change prior to teaching this material to students, and having learned a great deal more from the teaching experience, I believe I'm closer to having fine-tuned a set of "best practices" now. Activists and community writing and public rhetoric scholars have deemed the work of Miriam's Kitchen quite effective. Using that community-oriented social media campaign, which served to educate/inform, to enlist volunteers and donations and to change public perceptions as a model, I am able to measure my students' work towards education and increased awareness as worthwhile, as well. They, too, focused most of their energies on educating, influencing and (re)shaping public perceptions, and dissemination of information.

While I strongly believe that Twitter is an excellent entry-point social media platform for civic engagement, I realize that not all students come to us with experience and/or understanding of the platform, and this greatly inhibits their chances at success when trying to engage on civic, community, and political issues in that forum. Since my survey showed that there were three platforms students had greater familiarity with than Twitter (Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram), I must consider the chance that it would better serve students to let them choose which "microblogging" platform to use for the initial project. This semester, my guess would be that most students would have chosen Instagram, and I think more of them 1) would have found greater success and 2) would have been likely to remain engaged on their cause or issue beyond the semester had they been able to initiate engagement in an a lifestyle-related manner.

Additionally, the frustration some experienced with Twitter – which is not exactly an intuitive social media platform – might have possibly spilled over into the blogging assignment, which is when I was hoping most students would have hit their stride as multimodal composers working toward change.

A problem I see inherent with Instagram for social action, however, is the limitation of audience and messaging. On Instagram, an image or video *must* accompany a post, and unless text is layered on the image, the actual *message* of information, advocacy, or activism will be buried in the comment thread. Since I teach visual rhetoric and meme-ing of images, this is not overly problematic, but it does seem to greatly limit the potential discourse. Additionally, while it is true that activists are already using Instagram for messaging and mobilization, I think the work being done on Twitter has a broader reach and allows for richer discussion. While hashtags exist on both Instagram and Facebook as a way to link users to existing conversations, they are used somewhat differently than on Twitter. On Twitter, hashtags are primarily used to bridge comments on the same conversation, while on Facebook and Instagram, they are mostly commentary on the substance of the actual post or reply. This, too, seems to be a reason to question impact and influence of these two alternative microblogging platforms. Finally, and perhaps one of my greatest objections to the use of Instagram is the inability to link to outside articles, images, and videos. Yes, videos can be shared in Instagram, but only those six seconds or shorter in duration, and only if the user has access to the original video file. There is no way to link to YouTube or Vimeo, which are currently the largest repositories for video files online.

For these reasons, I'd really have to question a decision to open the initial assignment to a wider variety of platforms and let students choose. I'd also hesitate to make the Twitter project any greater in duration than three weeks, because students can grow bored with a project that

lasts too long. It is true that many really start to find their stride in that third week, but I am inclined to believe that is more a matter of nearing the deadline than some magical formula that makes Twitter make sense after two weeks.

What I do know is that class time to create Twitter handles and to actually get their hands dirty tweeting is essential to the success of this type of project. Not only would doing more of this have helped students get their numbers up (# of followers, # of tweets sent, etc.), it would have helped them gain the critical digital literacies required to be successful on this part of their project.

Outside of our project-oriented social media work, it proved to be very valuable to expose students to ideas of community, civic, and political engagement and social action from multiple angles. Having begun the semester reading and discussing a memoir that recounted a story of injustice and social action, students were immediately thrust into thinking about problems in the world around us and how (and why) we might approach change. The attendance at two author events – both of whom wrote about and discussed a need for social and political change – helped, I hope, to make personal a need for engaging and working toward change. Studying historical (through the Social Movement Timeline project) and ongoing activist efforts (through the Banksy documentary and discussion of Ai Wei Wei), I believe students were shown the continuing relevance of being engaged citizens. Finally, learning the tools of digital action (both through Mary Joyce’s video lecture and hands-on experience), I believe equipped students with the skills needed to be effective at digital civic engagement.

In future iterations of this class, there are only a couple of things I would do differently. I would weigh the blogging portion of the class more heavily than the video, as that is where the bulk of alphabetical and academic literacies were demonstrated. I might explore additional

platforms, as I mentioned earlier, and certainly since new platforms will continue to be developed, but the scaffolding of assignments worked quite well. The textbooks (*Writing in Action* and *Writer/Designer*) were extraordinarily helpful for student composers of multimodal works. I do think some more rooted discussions and lessons on multiple literacies could be had, especially if this material were taught in a 3000 or higher level course. An excellent textbook I've identified for an upper division course emphasizing civic engagement and new media is *Everything's a Text: Readings for Composition* (edited by Dan Melzer and Deborah Cox-Teague). It explains multiliteracies beautifully, focusing one chapter on each of seven literacies (personal, oral, visual, digital, popular culture, academic, and civic) and grounding them in rhetoric and composition scholarship, as well as offering a rich combination of community and student examples.

As a researcher, I see that I duplicated my efforts in the final reflection essay and focus group discussions. Though it might seem like I could have skipped the reflection essays as a data collection piece, since most of the information I gained there was also gathered in the focus groups, I see the reflection essays as a means to validate information gathered in the focus groups. Some of the information that came out of the focus group discussions – the notion of anonymity in public spaces versus online spaces, for example – I would love to have spent more time exploring. I also would have distributed a follow-up survey at the completion of the semester to measure for change in response. Since several students were eligible to vote for the first time during the semester, and we had a major midterm election in Congress, I would have liked to know how many registered to vote and chose to vote (or worked on a campaign) during the semester. It didn't seem right to ask in the focus groups or in general class discussions, as I wanted to be respectful of their privacy, so I missed an opportunity to gather this information.

Capturing information on voting behavior would have been useful in determining whether or not the semester's work influenced this piece of political engagement. I intend to apply for a new IRB in an order to gather voting activity information from the students in this class over the course of the next 24 months as part of a follow-up to this study.

Though I realize the size and duration of my study were both limiting, and even with the vocal objections from two students opposed to doing this kind of work, I can say unequivocally that this experience has solidified my beliefs in teaching a combined pedagogy of civic engagement and digital media.

After all, we need to teach, as Glazier says, "The writing within the writing that makes the work happen." This idea can be applied to all types of writing, but it begins with helping shape our students' identities as writers. Adler-Kassner and Harrington spent time in discussions with basic writers in order to try to determine what they felt defined a "writer." Many were divided between the grammar, punctuation, mechanics that made their work acceptable in academic circles and the production of high quality content that others would want to read. When asked how they intended to develop their writing, nearly all of them spoke to the grammar, spelling, punctuation points. This divide is difficult to escape when we are strictly teaching our students to write for an academic audience (or in isolation – for us, the lone English instructor). However, when we teach them that these are only a small, though important, piece of effective communication for the intended audience of our work, and we teach them how to write to that audience, whomever it is, we've given them a sense of purpose. They are increasingly invested in this work and care more about the overall effectiveness of the writing if it's on a subject they care deeply about. Through civic or community-based writing activities, we can help shape

student identity as both writer and change agent. We give them purpose to the composing they will do.

When Adler-Kassner and Harrington spoke to the same basic writers about their writing process and purpose, one student said, “If [an assignment is] something I like to write about then I can write a lot. If it’s just something I’m not really interested in, I would write the minimum, I can just give you five” (38). In focus group and reflection, for example, Typhani discussed the autonomy she felt in doing this kind of work, particularly choosing a cause she already loved. It empowered her, not just for civic purposes, but academic ones. The underperformance of the disengaged student is what initially led me to do this kind of work in my classes. Students respond very well and the quality of the work is elevated.

5.3 “Social Media Launches a Thousand Ships”: Final Student Reflections

Providing students multiple opportunities for reflection was an important part of my study. Freire believed that reflection was critical, “essential to action” (53) because “reflection – true reflection – leads to action” (66). Those reflections generated some powerful realizations about the power of social media. Tierra said the power of social media amazed her: “I think about it all the time. It makes me think of how 1000 ships launched from the city of Troy for one single girl. That is the impact social media has. Social media can start wars.”

When I asked students for their final essay to reflect on their experience during the semester, I asked them to consider the following questions:

- How confident do you know feel in your understanding of multimodality?
- How confident do you feeling using digital media, new media, social media as a result of activities undertaken in this class? Compare your current state to where you were when you came into the class.

- How do you define change? How do you define activism?
- Can art and media affect social or political change?

I wanted students to gauge their confidence because I recognize the role confidence has in future behaviors. I, of course, wanted to assess my own performance and effectiveness in communicating these new ideas to them, but I also wanted them to reflect on and evaluate how much they had learned. Almost universally, and not at all surprisingly, students responded that they felt a high degree of confidence in their understanding of multimodality. This was no surprise, however, as they would've had to live under a rock *not* to understand multimodal composition after fifteen weeks of studying and practicing it. Their acquired confidence in using new and digital media was articulated, as was acknowledgment of their collective anxiety at the start of the semester:

When I first came to this class and saw the assignments I was nervous. I've never been a strong activist and I've never used social media for activism... with all these lessons and all the reading material and the actual usage of technology I feel a lot more confident than I used to. (Emily)

I think everyone has a negative opinion of social media when they are not using it.

Before this project, I thought blogging was something that suburban moms did when their kids were at school but now I don't see it that way. I specifically like the short, call to action blog posts. I feel like that is more useful than a long article that just rambles on and on. (Adam)

Before this course, I never gave much thought about the online mediums that are commonly used to spread important messages. Through the use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook along with easily readable forums like blog posts, my messages were made known to nearly 1000 people in a short period of time. My original conception of this class was that of writing essays and turning them in with a strict deadline. However, this class managed to be so much more than what I originally expected. Through this Twitter project and blog posts, I was able to realize the strong impact that I can have on others when I decide to take a certain action. I can see how important it is to stand up for what I believe is important so that others can possibly share my views and make grounded decisions for themselves. (Stephanie)

When I first came to English 1101, I was not at all comfortable utilizing any form of online media. After learning ways to utilize it, I definitely feel more comfortable, active and understanding of what it takes to run a successful campaign, advocacy project, or personal project. (Typhani)

Like the ability to define multimodality, it would have been difficult for all 22 students to escape the class without a proper understanding of activism. Nevertheless, they all seemed to place their own value on it, and nearly all discovered how it might fit (or not) into their future roles as citizens.

Activism is evoking power messages through protests, social media, videos, photos, songs, and art to make a social change. Being an activist means you want to change the world or at the very least the way something is in your own backyard. Change is political usually. It is what you're demanding as an activist. You're demanding that people see

that something is wrong. I want people to see that allowing police to kill black men is wrong. I think that is why I'm going to follow this topic because I want to be there when change comes. (Tierra)

The distinction in direct action versus digital action was clear in several responses, but there is even a distinction drawn between advocacy and working towards measurable change, and it was a distinction one student felt particularly strong about: "I do not define change as people becoming more aware of a cause. I define change as implementing policies that will help or hurt the issue. I define activism as fighting for a solution for political and social change" (Adam).

Adam's distinction is addressed in Moyer's book *Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements*, not because awareness is a piece of social action that should be dismissed in its impact on change, however. In fact, Moyer notes that persuading the public that there is a problem, serving as informer (convincing them three times, he suggests) is a critical part of reform. It is a role in a movement, though, and different people fulfill different roles in movements. What Adam's comment disclosed is that he is more the rebel, change agent, reformer – the activist – in a movement.

Nearly universally, students responded that they did believe art and media were powerful enough to influence change. Adam noted that he thought visual rhetoric – at least on social media – was *more* powerful than text: "Using Twitter as an example, my tweets that contained a picture would get more re-tweets than one that did not." Pointing out that art, media, and activism have already proven to effectively work in efforts toward change, two students highlighted benefits of the effectiveness of the visual piece of activism: mobilization. Alexandra

noted that visuals worked in “getting people to come to rallies or even voting differently,” and Dmitri said

I feel that art, media and activism can definitely work together to bring change... the artist many times incorporates the struggles that he or she witnesses within the art. This makes art a way of communicating one situation which could spark activism and the media encourages that activism causing people to work together to change it.

The structure and format of the class – how it fit or altered students’ ideas about what an English composition course would be like – were common points made in the reflection essays, as well. Although I didn’t prompt them to discuss this piece, I imagine the fact that it was the end of the semester and they were being asked to complete course evaluations for the college at the same time led to the drive to address how the structure and format and theme impacted their success in the course. Most found the design and focus a positive:

I feel like I was more successful in this English class and I was in previous English classes. Like most Millennials, I love technology and most teachers and professors don’t want to use it... the projects that you assigned were a good alternative to the “traditional” five paragraph essay. And honestly if all of my other English classes throughout my school career were like this, English probably would have been my favorite class. (Adam)

The material that was covered throughout the semester is of great value to me both personally and academically. Most of the American public, especially those of the younger generation, are looking to social online media for information, opinions, and awareness of the society and world around them. This class successfully prepared me for

this trend as it continues to become a social norm that will inevitably grow. It also allows me to comment in my own way, make a small impact on those who may not be quite as knowledgeable about Autism and the problems it can cause for so many lives on a daily basis. (Stephanie)

Overall coming into this class, I would have to say that I did not expect anything like this. I was expecting writing long essays and research papers. I'm glad that I got a chance to work with social media supporting my activism topic. I learned a lot because these assignments taught me to express my thoughts and feelings in such a short manner. Also, I wasn't an activist in any way until I participated in this class. I will consider using this method in the future. (Soo)

Personally, not every assignment started out great, but the more effort I put into them, the more they blossomed and became more personal, thus enhancing my success. The type of work we completed was definitely unorthodox, and I wish we did a little more essay writing to get used to it; but I will say that the work kept me interested longer than other assignments and other classes have. (Alexandra)

The content in this course made me enjoy it way more. I enjoyed using Twitter and writing about something that I actually care about rather than writing about something I didn't like. I think the fact that I enjoyed what I was doing in this class made me more successful. My overall take away from this class is that there are problems in the world,

that you are not helpless, and one person really can make a difference through activism.

(Dmitri)

But one student went on to vocalize her thoughts that she felt the class was “steered in the wrong direction”:

The work I’ve done this semester has been constant trial and error. I did my best to try and learn the ways of the technology world. The effort was there but because I was so unknowledgeable I was very deterred and lacking of dedication. I feel my success was brought down by these assignments due to the fact that I was at a disadvantage. I didn’t know many of the programs and I have never used them in the way they were required. I feel I had to teach myself some things and I had to keep up with my classmates. It honestly made me want to drop the class because digital activism isn’t English to me. I wanted to read books, and poems, and talk English topics. I feel this class was manipulated and steered in the wrong direction. (Emily)

Beyond the many lessons about digital composition and civic literacy students learned through the course of the semester, the coursework seemed to have an additional, and quite unexpected, benefit for many of the students. It is an implication that nearly all educators aspire to experience when designing and delivering lessons, but it is one we don’t always have the benefit of knowing has actually occurred: that our students come to know themselves better and feel stronger as individuals. Several students noted something along these lines in their reflections, and these were unprompted, unsolicited comments, making them even more valuable.

The project was amazing for me. I think it helped me grow and realize things about myself. I never knew that I would or could really care about a cause like this. Honestly before this I barely watched the news. I just didn't care what was happening in the world because I knew something bad was happening anyway, so I thought *what is the point in caring anyways?* I thought there was nothing I could do to change anything in this world. But people actually cared about what I have to say and liked some of the things that I have had to say. I am a very timid person, even when it came to this project, but when I actually did put my word out, I often got favorites and re-tweets. And when people followed me it was honestly so exciting for me, because before this I just didn't think anyone really cared about my opinion. (Tierra)

The content of this class, which was solely my own content, empowered me. I felt responsible for my education and success in this class which made the class easy, enjoyable and fun. This class is really self-driven which provides me with an amazing educational experience because I got in my learning and didn't learn things that I didn't care about and would never use again in my life. Since I controlled the content in my personal learning, I never felt like I wanted to drop the class or felt that the class was pointless to any extent. My overall take away from this class is that not only are my expectations very high for my next English course but I also have expectations for the teachers I will have the next 3 ½ years to live up to the experience I had in this class. This class gave me the tools and knowledge I needed to reignite the fire inside of me for adoption, foster care and domestic issues within our system. (Typhani)

Although she admits she would have preferred a more “traditional” English course, Emily did say, “I would say that today I feel like if I have an issue I want to pursue I’ll have the knowledge and tools to do so. I also feel that I have grown as an adult because of this lesson.” And Stephanie credited the course with pushing her out of her comfort zone:

Overall, I found this course and the material to be very effective in its purpose. You pushed me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to try something new that I may have not normally done myself. I also had a really fun time creating these projects and blog posts along with seeing what came as a result. The class opened my eyes and allowed me to see some of my own strengths and weaknesses. I feel more confident in the online world and will continue to utilize the concepts of multimodality throughout my daily life. This project will continuously be a reference for any future endeavors and I am satisfied with the abundance of material I was able to take in throughout the entirety of our class time. My willingness to use a new medium of communication has greatly increased and I am much more aware of its importance in today’s society. (Stephanie)

5.4 Focus Group Findings

A great deal of the information gathered in focus group discussions served to echo sentiments shared in final reflection essays, e-portfolios, and even the initial surveys. This was an intentional part of my study design, so I anticipated it. In the following section, I’ll highlight some of those validated pieces of information, but mostly, I’ll share new information that was gathered or thoughts elaborated on in our focus group discussions with students. The prompts for our focus group discussions can be found in the Appendix.

When I asked about likelihood to continue to engage beyond the semester, five students shared that they would definitely continue to engage in both direct and digital action. Three students said they would definitely continue to engage on civic and political issues, but only in direct, BoTG action. Two of those students shared specific plans for that continued work on their causes during our discussions. Typhani, who worked on the adoption project, shared that she had been appointed as a CASA, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (for a one-year term) just one week before our focus groups were held. She described a CASA as “basically the guardian ad litem for a child in foster care,” an individual who would have to “go to court and advocate for them and if they are getting adopted, you have to approve of the adoptive parents before they go through the process.” Emily shared that she was planning to fly out to Texas over winter break and had emailed a Pit Bull organization and arranged to do volunteer work for the two weeks she would be there: “I’m going to do a march with them, and I’m going to go sit in on a hearing for the breed ban.”

Four of the students who participated in the focus groups said they might continue engaging on causes and issues, but they weren’t prepared to commit one way or the other. Not one of those students, however, discredited the worthiness or effectiveness of that digital and direct action. In fact, Alex said one person can really make a difference, especially in the digital realm: “I think that one at a time, and before you know it you have a group, and a bigger group, and it becomes a crowd before you know it. That’s a lot of people. It’s a LOT.OF.PEOPLE. I mean that’s the way everybody feels at some point: ‘What’s one voice going to do?’ But when you put them all together it does make a difference.”

Only one student said that it was unlikely he would continue to engage. Even in his explanation of that response, however, it seemed Caleb might be admitting that the stakes were

high for *not* being engaged: “I mean I’m not opposed to change. I’m not opposed to action, but I’m not going to going out of my way for like a cause, unless of course it gets too bad. Then I would. I guess I just think, what’s one more voice going to do? But I guess everyone thinks that, it’s bad.”

Beyond the issue of time required for projects like these (a complaint I often here about service learning and civic engagement projects in general), which was referenced in previous reflections, two students in particular expressed a clear lack of interest and efficacy in the work.

Caleb: I don’t really have a big influence on anything. I don’t think there’s much I can do unless I really got into it and made it a full-time thing. Not so much that I couldn’t, just that I don’t care to.

Pete: Yeah, I would have to agree with that, because I mean, you definitely painted the pathways and stuff for us, showing us like how things can change and you’ve shown us what to do and I feel like we have a pretty good understanding as a class as to how you would go out and make a change through these methods that we discussed, but I feel like... I just don’t feel strongly enough about anything to put it out there.

I dug a little further, trying to decide whether he was just trying to be cool around his peers or covering for his lack of engagement (i.e., low grade), and we had the following exchange, which proved to offer some really great insight into Caleb’s perceptions of community and civic engagement. Because he had repeatedly made statements privileging BoTG efforts, I inquired about his likelihood to engage if he passed a rally on the Capitol steps for an issue he had already expressed strong support, Second Amendment Rights.

Caleb: ...maybe, I don’t know what there would be in it for me. I don’t see what going to that is going to do. I could just read about it, watch it on the news.

Ms. G: What do you think you could do then, if activism for you doesn't feel...you don't feel empowered by that? It sounds like neither direct action, like boots on the ground, or digital. What do you think you could do to have an impact, to be able to retain the rights in the Constitution that you want to retain?

Caleb: Uhhh, I don't know.

Ms. G: Where is your voice?

Caleb: Not on the Internet. (laugh)

Ms. G: Not on the Internet. Ok. I mean, voting?

Caleb: Yes, there's voting. They have a lot of like voting about that, so...

Ms. G: So you vote to support people who support your views? Is that where you feel like, "Okay, this is what I'm doing to make sure these rights are protected? I'm going to vote for people who are going to protect these rights."

Caleb: And just regular everyday conversations with people, just kinda give them more knowledge about why it's good.

This final comment Caleb made about "everyday conversations with people" reminded me of the CIRCLE study, which showed that some young people are already doing the work just not calling it activism or work towards change. Throughout the discussions, Caleb repeatedly referenced civic and community work he does, while at the same time undermining or acting disinterested in the value of that work. I would characterize Caleb overall as a cynic.

5.4.1 Mobilization on the Information Superhighway

When reflecting on students who practiced and preferred a hybridized version of civic engagement, I think back to Zeke Spier again, the activist who Larry Elin talks about in "The Radicalization of Zeke Spier" as one who relied heavily on the Internet to help him network to

find and connect with other like-minded activists. “Spier’s use of the Internet to become informed, to communicate, and to organize for activities that he then participated in physically seems to be emerging as a formula for civic engagement among a broad range of Americans” (Elin 113). These are “civic dynamos who are energized by the Internet” (Elin 105) leading us to perhaps see cyberactivism as “not only an activity that takes place in virtual space, but also the chronological *process* or *path* that leads activists from the information highway to the streets” (105).

The debate on the merits of direct versus digital action was rich. Soo said social media is the best way to affect change. Emily agreed that the audience is certainly bigger on social media, but argued that her preferred form of action is physical BoTG action. She grew up with parents and grandparents who were activists who marched for their causes, so this is the “norm” for her. Typhani acknowledged the critical role social media plays in activism:

I think you sort of need social media, because I mean you can do a march, but how are you going to tell people about your march? Right? So, you need to have social media or some sort of digital aspect to say, “This is what we’re doing. Come join us.” I don’t think you can do one without the other, but on the other hand, I think if you want to reach a young fresh market, you need to be on social media but then there’s also, I think we can all agree that young people don’t necessarily donate, so you need to be able to reach out to an older crowd that may not necessarily use social media like we do and use print and flyers etc. To reach out to them.

Like critics such as Malcolm Gladwell, Caleb and Pete both questioned the legitimate impact of social media. Pete said,

I feel like it's really impossible to make a true social change solely through social media. Definitely boots on the ground is what gets my attention, because if there is a blurb going around on the Internet, and everyone's like "Oh, get rid of guns," I'm going to be like, "Whatever. You're not doing anything about it." But then if there's a huge rally in DC, I'd be like "This is actually a thing. It's a serious issue now, because people have bothered to go out and do something, rather than sit behind their computer."

Both Caleb and Pete verbalized the need for "reciprocity," which Deans notes is essential in service learning and civic engagement work. Additionally, there was an underlying acknowledgement that neither of them had much agency in the civic and political world. Unfortunately, both of these students left the class experience with no increased sense of agency or self-efficacy in the civic or political world. In fact, I might argue that Caleb became even more cynical about civic engagement following so much focus on the digital variation.

These perceptions of action have been largely shaped by their experiences with media. One of my students, Dominic, mentioned skimming over a great deal of political and social commentary that shows up in his personal Twitter or Instagram feed, mostly because he's not interested in it. However, he did highlight an online petition related to cops wearing cameras (as a response to the Ferguson conflict), which he retweeted with a message saying "Go vote for the cops to wear cameras." Caleb mocked the idea of online petitions: "Isn't online voting like through a website kind of useless in a sense? Because I mean nothing, just you typing in so yeah I vote on that for petition, I mean, isn't that kind of pointless? Anyone could hack in and use a ton of false names?" But his classmates quickly explained that IP addresses are used to track original signatures and that even signees of a traditional, paper petition could sign more than once. Caleb's response indicated a lack of understanding of the technological side of online

petitions, which made me wonder if he had a general aversion to or lack of familiarity with technology (and if that didn't, in fact, negatively impact his attitude and performance on all of the digital work we did in class).

Even though he was not a fan of the digital activism work, Pete admitted that that the social media campaign is fairly important to BoTG methods because "it's definitely opened up all these new lines of communication. You can't just like write it in a paper, 'Oh, we're having a protest.' You know? People may or may not come. Like no one's going to not have Internet at their home."

Students Alex and Dominic concurred, noting that "you can talk to people from across the country and in other countries" (Alex) and "spread the word in seconds" (Dominic).

As I mentioned earlier, some of Caleb's comments show he is both interested and civically engaged already, but he is not qualifying his activities as engagement, or at least not the kind that is meaningful.

Caleb: Sometimes me and my friends just go off on like tangents. We'll talk about politics and then we'll go onto religion and then we'll go onto social views and just keep bouncing around there. Will talk about the things that are going on in the world. Like we don't talk about celebrities. Not so much gossip stuff. Mainly what we talk about what's going on.

Ms. G: That's especially interesting because you said that all you use social media for is sports and Netflix, so in the beginning you kind of set up like you're not really interested in those things, but it sounds like you *are* interested. You just approach it very differently from how we approached it in class.

Caleb: I guess.

Ms. G: You seem to incorporate it in your day-to-day social life, not so much issue specific: *I'm going to march on this issue, tweet on this issue, and blog about this issue.*

Is that accurate?

Caleb: Well, I mean, also what I was thinking through the Twitter assignment is how many of the people who are following me are actual people that are looking through and reading everything because a lot of the times people who would follow me back, I would get a direct message from them that said, "Thanks for the follow. Go to this link." And I'm like, "that's probably not a person."

This exchange made me lean more to the conclusion that Caleb is a little bit skeptic, a little bit cynic about engagement and activism in general. The idea of an autobot or auto-response seemed overly impersonal to Caleb, and he found it off-putting, discouraging to his desire to connect to real people in real, not virtual, spaces. When considering the feedback from Pete and Caleb, it seems relevant that they both failed the course. Pete never even created a Twitter account and wrote an alternative paper for the Twitter assignment without prior permission. Caleb earned a C on the Twitter assignment and only completed about 50% of the blog activity. Neither completed the third and final digital advocacy video, and both failed the course. I suppose what I would like to explore is whether their intense opposition to social media activism is what kept them from engaging in the work we did as a class or if their continued feelings about social media activism are a reflection of not having given the assignment a chance where they could actually see the value of the medium. I regret that neither gave the work a fair shot, as I believe their views might have been impacted by *doing* the work.

It's also worth noting that of the three students who were least open to digital activism, two said they were not avid texters (like most of their generation) and one admitted to not even

owning a television – it’s safe to say that familiarity and prior engagement with technology impacted receptiveness to digital engagement. As teachers who use a lot of technology in class, it’s important to remember that not *all* millennials are tech-obsessed. In a side conversation on what makes millennials unique, one student referenced the James Emery White book *Rise of the Nones* about religiously unaffiliated millennials, applying in a broader context by one student to assert that millennials were sort of a generation of “Nones.” Millennials question everything, Adam explained, and don’t want to be labeled: “We’re so culturally and racially mixed,” he said, and Wessal finished his thought, saying, “We’re the ‘other’.”

This identification with otherness might help explain the draw to indymedia as a news source. The distrust of the mainstream media leads to an increased valuing of social media as an alternative means of hearing an alternative or counter-narrative. This distrust of traditional news outlets has only been exacerbated by the recent revelation that the NBC anchor, Brian Williams, who had been dubbed “the most trusted name in news” fabricated numerous news stories. Of social media, Wesaal said, “It is what connects you to the rest of the world, it’s become something you have to rely on” because what she calls “normal media and news outlets” are overly opinionated.

They have their own agenda or their own way of thinking about things, and they want to portray things in their own way. But then when you go and you “research” using social media you get like citizen journalists putting something on social media that says “I was just there.” Today, there’s a fire going on in Tripoli and you see people automatically saying, “Things are going bad in Tripoli; somebody blew up something,” and then my friend sends me a picture, and he’s standing right there, and he’s like “No, it’s just a

bakery that caught on fire. That's what the whole fire is in the big smoke that's happening." And it's like, it's a way to set the record straight. (Wesaal)

Adam and Wesaal also discussed the distrust of mainstream media, how they misuse/misrepresent photos in order to suit a narrative. Adam said, "It's like with that poet we saw, Wolpe, I liked what she said about how our politicians and the media portray things in a positive light or in a negative light, and that's how we perceive it then. I don't know, I feel like we can be misled very easily."

Students confirmed in their focus group discussions that the allowances for multiple modes of communication (namely the visual) on social media greatly contributed to the effectiveness and persuasiveness of the message being received or communicated.

I was somewhat surprised to hear one student say that an image "sort of makes it real" even though his classmates were quick to point out the existence of tools like Photoshop, which "even a four-year-old could use" (Pete). As a rhetorician, Alex's comment that seeing is believing was difficult to hear, since we spend so much time in our classes teaching students to be critical consumers, skeptics, to some degree, of what they read/hear/see on the internet.

Other, more general lessons they learned include having a bigger filter, being more selective about what they retweet, in particular, because even if something is funny, the thought seemed to be crossing their minds more that "maybe somebody shouldn't see this" (Alex). Even on his personal Twitter, as a result of the work done in my class, Alex seemed to be exercising audience awareness in his social media life: "I've got to watch what I actually put there." I learned a great deal from the focus group discussions, but mostly that learning had occurred and that the experience had definitely impacted attitudes and behaviors.

5.5 Confidence: Agency and Self-Efficacy

Both teaching and learning must occur in order for the accomplishment of agency and self-efficacy to take place. “In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy, to struggle together with resilience to meet the inevitable obstacles and inequities of life” (Bandura).

In the case of this study, successful performance/mastery led to greater sense of personal efficacy, which supports Bandura’s Social Learning Theory. Bandura differentiates between “efficacy expectations” and “outcome expectations” because “individuals can come to believe that a particular course of action will produce certain outcomes, but question whether they can perform those actions” (79). This is reminiscent of the views held by students who deemed their experience as social media/digital advocates as successful yet still do not feel confident in outcome expectancy (“a person’s estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes”).

We must help students “acquire critical and thoughtful agency with the visual” (Wysocki 149) to understand that form is an integral part of content. The goal, as she states, is to help students “see themselves able to compose effectively with the visual elements of different texts for different rhetorical circumstances” but also to “see themselves capable of making change, of composing work that not only fits its circumstance but that also helps its audiences – and its makers – re-vision themselves and try out new and more thoughtful relations between each other” (Wysocki, “The Sticky Embrace of Beauty” 173).

Whether we are asking students to embrace the “shitty first draft” (Anne Lamott) or make an “ugly web page” (Wysocki 193), the goal is the same: to understand the value of starting, sometimes failing, and revising toward success.

In order to do this work, we have to work to find openings, as Wysocki says, entrance points where we can have discussions about writing in the world that we weren’t having 20 years

ago because writing in the digital world can provide openings for learning that didn't previously exist. Consider the studies of digital learning in the 80s that showed students who were quiet in class were more likely to "speak" in online discussions as evidence that the digital communications world (new media, blogs, social media, distance learning) give agency to reluctant voices (Wysocki 7). The best way to give agency through writing and writing for change, even, is to teach that our compositions only work if they are a part of or fall within existing structures and practices (Wysocki 8). Much like arguments made by a segment of activist scholars, Wysocki is arguing that change must come from within.

If our intentions are to teach so that people in our classes learn possible routes to agency through composition, then what these examples indicate is that we can be most effective in teaching when we see, and so can teach about, how our compositions only ever work within and as part of other, already existing, structures and practices. (Wysocki 8)

Why does agency and efficacy matter in activism? The perception of self-efficacy impacts resilience, how long individuals will stick with something, even when it becomes difficult or success seems unlikely. Change takes time. Activists will face obstacles at every turn. For an individual to be an effective agent of change, s/he must have determination and persistence, traits that can really only come out of self-efficacy. Bandura highlights four sources of efficacy:

1. Performance accomplishments
2. Vicarious experience
3. Verbal persuasion
4. Emotional arousal

Throughout the semester, I aimed to increase students' sense of efficacy in all four areas.

The practice of doing the work addressed the "performance accomplishments" piece. Our

classwide sharing sessions, following each other on Twitter and following and sharing each other's blogs, as well as the modeling and mentoring we were able to accomplish through those activities contributed to the "vicarious experience" component. Through coaching, sending encouraging direct messages, even retweeting effective student tweets, I addressed the "verbal persuasion" piece. Here is what Typhani had to say about this in our focus group discussions:

I think to be honest with you, when I came into this class, I wasn't really confident in my writing skills, and then as I've gotten back feedback about the writing, I've been a little more confident. So to know that there's a requirement for a writing skill that I can effectively meet that skill because I'm not bad and I practice the skill daily.

Typhani went on to say, "I think the skills that we've all learned – being able to use WordPress, Twitter [...] it set us up more for a career path and to have options because we know how to use these, so I think it's more so for me an opportunity to learn a new skill to use in a career that wouldn't have been able to always put on my resume. Now I know how to do this, which could set me apart from the next person.

Finally, helping students face their fears and anxieties around social media and activism, in general, helping them overcome the emotions that would obstruct their success, and asking them to reflect on their experience and growth are activities that contributed to students' "emotional arousal" (80-82).

When I first heard about the project, I was really insecure, because I have a lot of opinions about things, I just am not comfortable expressing my opinions because I don't really know how. And so now with all the projects, the Twitter and the blog, I've definitely become more confident. All the research I did, I feel like now I know my topic, and if I now had to go face-to-face with someone, I'd be ready, so it definitely helped

with the confidence level of being politically involved. It can be really intimidating.

(Emily)

Though Emily was very resistant to the tech piece of the work and felt tricked into the work, I can't help but think back to the findings of the CRICLE study on youth engagement, which references students being *asked* to engage and yes, even *required* to as part of a class. When asking students to step outside of their comfort zone – or even a traditional academic experience – it is especially useful to help them set small goals that will lead to their success.

Goal-setting (reasonable and realistic goal setting) is also quite important in the development of feelings of efficacy. Sharing the rubrics, which outlined very specific goals – number of followers, number of tweets sent, number and type of blog posts – ahead of time was my attempt to help with goal setting. I did not want to have any students who felt like they were spinning their wheels, so to speak. Bandura says, “strong effort that produces repeated failure weakens efficacy expectations, thereby reducing motivation to perform the activity” (162). I definitely observed a correlation between weak effort and failure on assignments, but did not observe or experience a single incident of a student putting forth “strong effort” and still failing. I believe this can be attributed to the ongoing feedback, redirection, guidance, and coaching I provided throughout the assignments. I shared my discipline knowledge on technology, but also on activist strategies, visual and sonic rhetoric, and general effective communication strategies.

Establishment of self-efficacy is critical in determining whether or not a change in behavior will occur. Since the goal in doing this kind of work in my classes is to actually impact and influence student attitudes and behaviors surrounding civic engagement and new media, establishing/expanding self-efficacy is a critical component of my success.

Another hurdle we still need to overcome is the objection to such ideas as slacktivism, the undermining of social movement-oriented activism. Jason Del Gandio, in his book *Rhetoric for Radicals* responds to the claim that actions speak louder than words: “But words *are* actions, and they’re usually the first actions we take. Words set commands and demands, and can elevate, lift, love, change, challenge and revolutionize societies” (24). In fact, Del Gandio goes on to argue that “the actions of our words are the backbone of our activism and organizing” (24). Understanding this piece of activism as fundamental, I think it becomes difficult to dismiss new and social media and its role in effective activism in the 21st century and beyond.

A surprising objection/concern students had to doing this kind of work – something none of my prior research pointed to – was students’ reluctance to choose topics and write strong position-oriented blogs/tweets without knowing where I, as their instructor, stood on the issue(s). Emily and Typhani confessed this concern in the focus groups, though no other student mentioned this concern at any point during the semester.

Emily: I was a little worried about my credit first.

Typhani: I was worried about that coming in. I feel like if anybody fails this class, they really had to do nothing. I think I was a little bit nervous about the class because I read the course description, and I was like, well, I need to take it and I wasn’t very excited for it, but then people said you were nice.

Emily: Yeah, you’re really nice.

Ms. G: Thank you.

I asked whether they were most concerned about using the technology or just wondering how they would be assessed on the work.

Emily: It was kind of both. I didn't know, because you (to me) definitely seem like you're more involved with technology than we were, so I was like "What if she doesn't like the way I am supporting my opinion? I can't change that."

Typhani: I think that was the case for me...

Emily: That's why my blog was turned in so late. I deleted like five posts and redid them before I submitted because I was like "Maybe I shouldn't do this."

Ms. G: Because of your opinions? Your views? (I was shocked at this awareness.)

Emily: Because I didn't know what your positions were.

Ms. G: I'm not grading on your views at all.

Emily: Oh okay, good.

Ms. G: No, no, no. That's unethical.

Typhani: I wondered that, too. As I've gotten to know you, I've realized you don't care what we talk about, but I think initially it was a lot like "What if this is opinion-based How are you going to grade us? So I think it might just have been worthwhile to say, "Guys, I don't care what you choose or what your topic is, but just do it." I think initially it was just that I didn't want my topic and your opinion to clash.

Ms. G: And that reflect in your grade.

Typhani: Right.

Ms. G: Of course. So I need to do a better job of communicating that up front.

Emily: You should just tell your class right off the bat, "I am a very clear minded, unbiased person, so whatever your opinion is, it's not going to affect how I grade." You should tell people that.

Ms. G: Thank you.

Regarding the discomfort with being graded on this kind of work, Typhani and Emily elaborated more:

Typhani: Yeah, I was definitely not very excited about it. But I don't know, it was okay after a while, when I started thinking about my grade.

Emily: I thought yeah I guess I'm going to learn this technology for the sake of my grade. (laughter)

5.6 Benefits of Doing this Work

The benefits to the student and teacher of doing this kind of work are numerous. For teachers, who sometimes struggle to effectively teach essential concepts and skills while also engaging students in the learning of those concepts and skills, this blended pedagogy can provide an opening, a new way to accomplish the same goals. Students also benefits from doing this kind of work in composition classes, both in academic and personal ways. A blended civic engagement and new media pedagogy teaches:

- that composing is an iterative process
- how to communicate in the 21st century using multiple modes and media
- crafting of and significance of digital identity
- a healthy skepticism of news, information, even images around them
- how to engage in “real world,” critical thinking, critical consumption of information, strategic planning
- enhanced cybercitizenship awareness
- how to conduct purposeful research
- how to repurpose content (valued in academic scholarship but not always in the classroom)

- why codeswitching matters
- soft skills such as resilience, diligence, maturity, and confidence
- time management
- creative thinking
- marketable technical skills

While it would be difficult to rank these in order of importance or value, it's easy to see that acquisition of some degree of each of the above qualities will play a critical role in the future success – academic and personal – of our students. Beyond these benefits, teaching digital activism empowers students, increases agency, and helps them grasp the value of disrupting existing, outdated, or oppressive power dynamics in effective ways. Finally, it helps develop lifelong learners who are self-motivated.

5.7 Implications for Further Study

I was fortunate to gather data during this study that validated previous studies. I was also able to gather qualitative data related to how this work impacts attitudes and behaviors toward future digital and direct civic engagement. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of additional knowledge and understanding still to be gained. Compositionists who ascribe to engaged, civic, and public pedagogy, as well as digital pedagogy, need to better understand the impact of teaching civic literacy and new media literacy skills simultaneously on writing skills, retention and graduation, student performance. These things can be measured quantitatively and qualitatively, but they really need to be measured as part of broader, longitudinal studies. As Mina Shaughnessy argues, “Writing is a slow-developing skill that should be measured over longer periods of time than a semester” (qtd in Fishman 173). While writing teachers can assess writing skill development in small measure during the course of a semester, we cannot possibly

predict the effectiveness of a particular pedagogical practice on a students' overall collegiate success in such a short span of time. This is why I elected to measure, for this particular study, shifts in attitudes and behaviors.

The results of my study demonstrate a need for further research/scholarship on the topic. Because my ultimate goal is to understand the impact this blended pedagogy has on future civic, community, and political engagement, I intend to continue research on this topic in a longitudinal study where I follow these same students over the course of the next five years to measure their engagement in civic and political issues. A longer term study would be important to gauge not just attitudinal shifts, but lasting shifts in degree of engagement. While I might be able to hypothesize about the effectiveness of the blend of pedagogical practices, the results of this study only call for a longer, more mixed-methods investigation to legitimize those findings. The structure of such a larger study would be tricky, however, which Fishman notes in her discussion of twenty-first century writing, because of the rapidity with which the technology changes (172). Nevertheless, the investigation is worthwhile, and I'd like to see scholarship focus specifically on engaged learning through 21st century literacies that is specific to writing instruction.

I'd also like to see longer-term studies measuring the impact of this type of work on future leadership-oriented behaviors. Watching my student, Adam, blossom from a politically-curious student to an aspiring politician then to president of student government on our campus made me wonder how much influence the work of the class had on this life direction. Del Gandio asserts that "every activist is already a leader. You have taken it upon yourself to change the world. This will involve giving speeches, writing articles, sending out e-mails, creating websites, talking to people, listening to people, challenging society, lying down in the streets and basically putting yourself out there for the world to see" (28). My course design introduces

students to many of these methods of activism and prompts them to put their passions into action in a way that will influence the world, however small scale the influence or impact might seem to an outsider. Whether we want to acknowledge the weight of the responsibility or not, we are training activists, future leaders of this world in everything we do, and if we don't teach them the tools of change, they are likely to continue to be part of a problem instead of a solution.

One issue that came out of the focus group discussions that I'd like to investigate further is the idea of privacy and anonymity in digital versus BoTG activist work. Typhani expressed that she enjoyed her anonymity, that she felt more comfortable being a part of a movement than leading one, and her comments were echoed by another student during the discussions. She also didn't feel like this anonymity was possible online, even though neither her name nor her image is not associated with her Twitter handle or account in any public way. She argues that even though people can physically see her at a BoTG event and document her physical presence with picture or video, she feels more secure in an ability to blend in with a crowd of supporters in a face-to-face engagement. This is fascinating to me, and something I'd like to explore further, as it could present an obstacle to student digital engagement that I haven't previously considered or hasn't previously been researched.

5.8 Conclusion

Neither the CIRCLE nor the Mascheroni study looked at behaviors and attitudes in a way that was directly linked to academic instruction. In this way, my student will contribute new information to the field. It is my hope that my work on this research project will add to the debate on the validity and effectiveness of digital activism. I hope through sharing my classroom experiences, projects, and student reflections, other teachers of writing students will be more interested in teaching this blended pedagogy. I hope that my sample assignments and customized

rubrics will serve to help teachers interested in teaching this work to begin looking at effective ways to assess such work.

I have, in each subsection of this text, advocated for a broader understanding of the kinds of digital or digitally-enhanced activism currently underway. I have presented several opportunities for educators to incorporate these types of digital engagement activities into their own classes as part of digital and visual rhetoric lessons, so our students can be effective consumers and producers of digital information. And I also advocate for a curriculum of civic rhetoric, the kind Jeffrey Grabill (2007) talks about in *Writing for Community Change: Designing Technologies for Civic Action*.

While it is useful to provide a framework for any genre of writing, writing for social change is much broader today than it ever has been before. Del Gandio, speaking to future activists, says, “Improving your communication allows you to become your own media center – you become your own spokesperson, your own writer and your own message board. This self-empowerment can help you change the world” (35).

I now put forth a call to action, inviting teachers of writing and rhetoric to begin teaching this lens, through which our students can see how information is being mediated to them. Remember that we don’t want to produce graduating classes of automatons that could rival citizens of a dystopian novel. We want to produce an educated, civically-conscious class of citizens who consistently challenge the status quo, who value civil liberties, and who rise up against infringements on such liberties. We want to provide them with the tools – both technological and communicative – to help make this possible in the 21st century and beyond. This means we, as college-level writing teachers, have to expand our notions of civic engagement and public writing beyond the letter to the editor. We have to teach our students to

confidently compose dynamic, multimodal texts that adhere to the time-honored standards of rhetoric, texts that are culturally-relevant and meaningful contributions to public discourse. We have to give them the space to expand this rhetoric into action – digital or direct – that is ultimately meaningful to *them*.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Syllabus, Sample Assignments, Rubrics from English 1101

English 1101 Syllabus
Agents of Change: Civic Engagement and New Media

Lauri Goodling, Instructor

Email: Lauri.Goodling@gpc.edu

Phone: 678-212-7532

Office Hours: T/R 9-11am

There is a view in which all the love of our neighbor, the impulses toward action, help, and beneficence, the desire for stopping human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing the sum of human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it – motives eminently such as are called social – come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and pre-eminent part. (Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 1101 focuses on skills required for effective writing in a variety of contexts, with emphasis on exposition, analysis, and argumentation, and also including introductory use of a variety of research skills. Some sections of this course are taught with computer assistance in classrooms equipped with personal computers.

Note: This section of ENGL 1101 incorporates a civic engagement component that surrounds an issue or cause impacting your community. Additionally, this section requires students to participate in "iTeach," a mobile device pilot. Students will receive an iPad2 from the college for use during the spring semester. You will be required to come to an orientation session during a regularly scheduled class period, where you will pick up your iPad, receive training, and sign paperwork. You will also be required to return the iPad2 on the last day of class before finals week. Details on the orientation and end-of-semester return will be posted in iCollege on the first day of class. Some on-campus training on your own time might be required, as well. There are no exceptions to these requirements. If you cannot attend these sessions, or if you do not wish to participate in the iTeach pilot, please register for another section of ENGL 1101 right away. Please email me if you have any questions.

What is Civic Engagement? Civic engagement could be defined as meaningful participation in the community for the purposes of addressing an issue or concern, solving a community problem, or getting involved in the political process of our representative democracy. In the academic world, civic engagement also relates to the coursework to some degree, so in a composition course, the primary method of engagement would most likely involve writing about/for the designated cause or issue.

Why is Civic Engagement Included in this Course? At Georgia Perimeter College, we believe that Engagement Drives GPC Education (E.D.G.E.), so much that we have made this primary in our Quality Enhancement Plan, which is part of our commitment to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to continue to offer excellence in higher education.

How Does Civic Engagement/Service Learning Benefit Students? Student participants in civic engagement and service learning projects generally perform better on class assignments, earn higher marks in the course, and report greater satisfaction with the learning process. They enjoy engaging in their community and find the work that they do – both in the class and out of class – to be very rewarding.

In What Ways Will We Serve? This course will focus on civic engagement through new media and social media. We will engage with causes and issues which are personal and pressing, and which we believe we can impact on some level. We will engage using a variety of digital tools (Twitter, Wordpress, and YouTube among them), with the option to engage in person, at an event in a public space. Projects surrounding this civic work will comprise at least 70% of your course grade, so you must have a high level of commitment to this project in order to be successful in this class. You will take on the roles of informer, inquisitor, researcher, and advocate along the way.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Writing in Action by Andrea Lunsford

Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects by Kristin Arola, Jennifer Sheppard, Cheryl Ball

GPC LEARNING AND TUTORING CENTER (LTC)

The Learning & Tutoring Center [formerly the Online Writing Lab (OWL)] can help enhance your success with both on-campus and distance learning courses, in order to achieve your educational goals. You can send drafts of your written work online for individual review with a tutor. Please allow 24-48 hours for tutors to respond to a submitted assignment. They will not edit your papers for you, but will help you identify the types of errors you need to work on in order to improve your essay and become a better writer. For more information, visit the link above. You can find instructional handouts on just about every writing issue you will face at <http://depts.gpc.edu/~gpcltc/handouts.htm>, so I encourage you to visit often, especially if a particular error or weakness is identified in comments on a graded assignment. This is not a grammar class, so if you struggle with particular grammar issues, you will want to seek additional help from the LTC (either in person or online) to resolve these.

ESSAYS

All work is due prior to the beginning of our class meetings on the date listed on the Course Schedule. Late papers are discouraged, but they will be accepted. One letter grade is deducted for each day the paper is late.

COURSE EVALUATION

10% Definition of Citizenship Essay

15% Project One: Microblogging/Social Networking for a Cause

25% Project Two: Blogging for a Cause

30% Project Three: New Media/Digital Advocacy Project

20% Reflective and Process Journal*

*Your journals will be collected and assessed twice during the semester. Your total grade will be an average of those two scores.

Due dates for the entire semester can be found on the Course Schedule below. Details on each assignment, including rubrics, are located in the **Major Assignments** modules in iCollege.

CONFERENCES

I am available for conferences upon request. I will help as much as needed; just ask, and we will arrange a time. I encourage all students to chat with me at least once during the semester to discuss individual essays, research, and projects.

Course Schedule

In an effort to reduce the use of paper, all documents will be housed in iCollege. This includes lecture notes, handouts, assignment instructions, and supplemental reading assignments. This information is organized into weekly learning modules, so you will know which topics we'll cover, as well as which assignments and tasks are to be completed prior to class. This will allow us to focus class time on instruction, discussion, and hands-on activities. Below is the detailed schedule. Major grades are italicized. All traditional, paper-based assignments will be submitted to turnitin.com prior to the start of class that day.

Date Due	Learning Module	What's Due?
Wednesday, 1/18	Week One: Grammar Review, Thesis Statements, Writing Process	
Wednesday, 1/25	Week Two: Effective Paragraph Development	<i>Citizenship Essay Due</i>
Wednesday, 2/1	Week Three: Revising and Editing, Twitter Introduction, Mini-Focus Group Discussions	
Wednesday, 2/8	Week Four: Twitter, Exposition, Comparison	
Wednesday, 2/15	Week Five: Technology and Twitter	
Wednesday, 2/22	Week Six: Multimodal Composition, Visuals in Writing, Twitter	<i>Microblogging Project Work Due</i>
Wednesday, 2/29	Week Seven: Timed Essays and Essay Exams	<i>Process Journal Due</i>

Wednesday, 3/14	Week Eight: Wordpress, Blogging for a Cause, Reading Critically	
Wednesday, 3/21	Week Nine: Creative and Critical Thinking, Fallacies, Civic Engagement IRL	<i>Blogging Project Work Due</i>
Wednesday, 3/28	Week Ten: iMovie Training, Digital and Visual Rhetoric	
Wednesday, 4/4	Week Eleven: MLA Formatting and Argument Analysis in Video, Sonic Rhetoric	
Wednesday, 4/18	Week Twelve: Videoediting	<i>New Media Project Due</i>
Wednesday, 4/25	Week Thirteen: Mini- Focus Group Discussions	<i>Process Journal Due</i>
Wednesday, 5/2	Week Fourteen and Week Fifteen	Project Showcase

How do you define citizenship?

People define citizenship in many different ways. Represented below are some examples of what people would call “good citizenship.” Place a “1” next to the action that most closely models your own idea of good citizenship. Place a “2” next to the action that is the second closest, etc., up to 15.

- Joining the armed forces
- Helping to start an after-school program for children whose parents work
- Talking with a friend about a social issue of importance to you
- Working for a candidate in a local election
- Walking a frail person across a busy street
- Picketing and protesting at a local plant that has laid off a large number of its work force
- Giving \$50 to the United Way
- Leaving your car at home and biking or walking to work/school every day
- Tutoring a migrant worker
- Adopting an eight-year old boy
- Providing dinner once a week at a homeless shelter
- Visiting different houses of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.) every week to learn about different religions in the community
- Giving blood
- Working as a state legislator
- Voting

(Adapted from Nadinne Cruz, “How Do You Define Service?” [February, 1996])

Project #1: Microblogging/Social Networking for a Cause (15%)
Purpose

Many of you are already active users of social networking sites – [Pinterest](#), [Facebook](#), [MySpace](#), [Instagram](#). You likely use these tools to communicate with your friends and family about the daily happenings in your personal lives.

Today, there are 175 million users on Twitter. In the 2012 presidential election season, users sent [10.3 million tweets](#) during the 90-minute Jim Lehrer debate. This amounted to 160,000 tweets per minute, signaling both extreme *interest* in the political happenings and also enormous *influence*. The purpose of this assignment is to identify ways to harness this power and influence through social networking, so you can use the tool to make a difference on an issue about which you feel strongly.

Much like Facebook, which allows users to post mini updates (microposts), [Twitter](#) is a microblogging forum. Other microblogging forums you might be accustomed to using include text messaging, instant messaging, or email. In order to be effective in your foray into [Twitter](#), you will want to familiarize yourselves with the [lexicon](#).

Instructions

Using the cause you have selected to engage in, you will create a Twitter account and join the conversation. At first, you will be primarily a receiver of information, but through asking questions, sharing valuable information, retweeting other relevant tweets, and engaging with other Twitter users, you will begin to become acquainted with others who are engaged in this issue. That is, you will join the already engaged community surrounding your chosen issue.

Remember, there are differences between *causes* and *issues*:

A **cause** is a topic of concern that requires action for the purposes of helping to raise awareness or funds to help find a solution to a problem.

Examples: Cystic Fibrosis, Autism, Domestic Violence, Homelessness

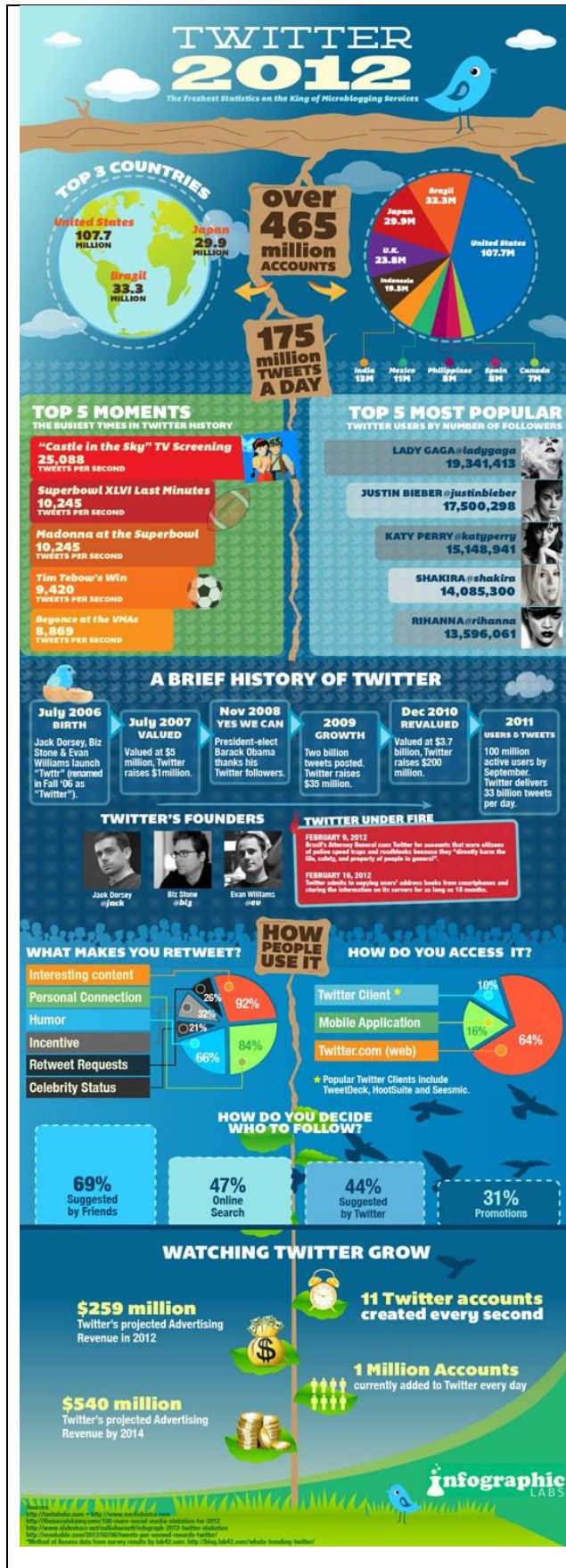
An **issue** is typically something being debated (or that you think should be) in the political realm. Issue engagement generally surrounds activities such as education, lobbying politicians, and recruiting supporters.

Examples: Decriminalization of Drugs, Immigration Reform, Tax Policy Reform

To [get started](#), you will need to create an account. Who to connect with:

- Prominent people already working on behalf of the issue or cause already
- Sources of research/data relating to the issue or cause

- Existing organizations already advocating for the issue or cause
- Congressmen and women and/or leaders in the community who can affect change (perhaps through legislation, funding)
- People in your personal social circle with whom you are willing to share your advocacy and possibly recruit to join the effort.
- Bloggers/pundits/civic leaders from whom you can learn



Required Tasks

- Engage: Create an account (bio, handle, avi)
- Link to a cause
- Download the Twitter for iPad app and use it
- Tweet frequently (at least every other day)
- Make connections: Find people to follow who are connected to your cause (*Tools: WeFollow, Listorious, Twibs*)
- Join the Conversation: Identify 5 related hashtags and use those to engage in the dialogue
- Make an impact: Set a goal to earn 100 new followers during the project period
- Get Active: Share related news stories, videos, statistics
- Reflect on your experience: Write a 2-page reflection essay where you explain why you've chosen the cause you have; discuss your prior knowledge and acquired knowledge (i.e., learning curve); assess the impact you have had on the issue; and evaluate the value of this activity.

Recommended Tasks

- Manage Your Account: Join a dashboard management service that tracks and analyzes activity (*Tools: TweetDeck, HootSuite, ManageFlitter*)
- Measure Your Influence: (*Tools: Klout, PeerIndex, Twitter Grader, TweetLevel, or use a recommended Twitter Analytics tool*)

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate the critical thinking skills involved in exploring, limiting, and focusing the subject.
- Demonstrate writing style that is appropriate for the audience and assignment.
- Demonstrate an ability to communicate a meaningful thought with brevity and precision.
- Demonstrate competency in tools and technologies of new media.

Image source: <http://pelfusion.com/twitter-2012-latest-statistics-infographic/>

Grading Criteria (Rubric)

Rubric for Project #1: Microblogging/Social Networking for a Cause

Student:

Twitter Handle:

Cause/Issue:

Evaluation Criteria	Points Possible	Points Earned
IDENTIFICATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear articulation of purpose and identity accomplished through Twitter name, handle, avi, bio, use of header image, initial tweet/statement of purpose • Use of hashtags to link to existing conversations on your cause or issue 	20	
ACTIVITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to reliable, informative sources (including current news stories and relevant research) • Tweets include a balance of external media (images/memes, videos, graphics/infographics/charts) • Volume and frequency of tweeting demonstrates consistent engagement, awareness of audience and peak times for activity on Twitter [# of substantive tweets (Goal = 100)] • All activity is consistently linked to your identified cause/issue 	40	
INFLUENCE and IMPACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of an earned audience (determined by # of followers, # of RTs, # of Favorites, # of interactions and mentions in other people's timelines) • Tweets include a Call to Action, prompt engagement from your followers, appeal to emotion 	20	
REFLECTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a 2-page reflection essay where you explain why you've chosen the cause you have; discuss your prior knowledge and acquired knowledge (i.e., learning curve); assess the impact you have had on the issue; and evaluate the value of this activity. 	20	
Additional Comments and Screenshots:	Total: 100	Grade:

Project #2: Blogging for a Cause (25%)

Purpose

A blog is “a type of website that is sometimes compared to online journaling. Blogs come in many varieties, but most incorporate an interactive element such as comments and are comprised of posts, rather than static pages” (Wordpress.com Lexicon).

Blogging can be a form of entertainment, reflection, or it can serve the purpose of arguing, persuading, analyzing, commenting on a situation or event. For the purposes of this assignment, we will use our blogs as a vehicle to communicate ideas and motivate others to engage in our efforts.

To see how influential the blogosphere can be on issues that matter, read about

- **Blog for America** – In the 2004 election, candidate [Howard Dean](#) ran the first ever campaign blog. As a result, he experienced phenomenal grassroots fundraising results, but most importantly, he was able to disseminate his message through 3,066 original blog posts, a message the mainstream media was all but ignoring.
- **The “Citizen Journalism Revolution”** – Led by the late [Andrew Breitbart](#), this is a movement whereby amateurs (non-professionals) use videos, images, and mini newspieces to tell angles and dimensions of stories that might not otherwise be covered in the mainstream media. It is also called participatory or public journalism. Incidentally, the citizen journalism movement has been rejected by professional journalists, and ultimately led to the [#JustABlogger](#) resistance.



This background knowledge is relevant, because it shows both the value of blogging and also the controversy that still surrounds the medium. I share this information not to discourage you from

using the tool, but to offer some insight into how politically charged activism on social media can be. You've no doubt run across some of that in your Twitter activity.

Instructions

For this assignment, you will be required to create a blog using Wordpress. To [get started](#), create a free account at [wordpress.com](#). Like you did for the Twitter activity, you'll want to review the Wordpress [lexicon](#), so you can understand the language of the medium you are going to be writing in.

Begin by reading "[What Do Bloggers Do: An Average Day on an Average Political Blog](#)" by Laura McKenna and Antoinette Pole.

Tasks

- Choose a title for your blog that is both catchy and also meaningfully related to your cause – or one that speaks to a general personal motto (composingyourself.wordpress.com, for example, is the title of a blog kept by an English teacher), and create your account.
- Choose a template, one that is functional and stylistically appropriate for your subject matter.
- Once you've created your blog account, be sure to install the Wordpress app on your iPad2. You will be able to create and edit new blogs directly from your device. More complex blog posts (those with embedded links, videos, and images) will need to be done on the computer.
- Create an *About* and *Bio* link. In this, you'll explain a little about you and why you are engaged in this cause/issue.
- Make sure you have *Share* capabilities (Facebook and Twitter at a minimum) and allow commenting on your posts.
- Keep your content fresh, tasteful, and do your best to limit all posts to 400 words or less.
- Blog twice a week (Tuesday and Saturday, for a total of 8 posts).
- Once your blog is published, share it. You will use your previously established Twitter handle to share your posts, invite people to follow your blog, and promote your blog posts using hashtags you've identified as meaningful on the issue/cause.

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate the critical thinking skills involved in exploring, limiting, and focusing the subject in order to produce a thesis statement appropriate for the audience and assignment.
- Demonstrate an ability to communicate a meaningful thought with brevity and precision.
- Demonstrate competency in tools and technologies of new media.
- Demonstrate ability to evaluate and incorporate sources into written work (quotes, paraphrased material, borrowed images, videos, graphs/charts).

Project #2: Wordpress/Blogging for a Cause Rubric

Student:

Blog Title:

Link to Blog:

	Evidence	Indicators	Points Possible	Points Earned
Alternative Use/Call to Action	Report Research Design (plans) Research Memos (results) Project Logs Final Product(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project designed to look for alternative use Data on alternative use Alternative use design specs Alternative use supported in final product(s) <p><i>For example, the blog that includes information that will help users make informed decisions or join the efforts/take action.</i></p>	25	
Technical Literacy for Inquiry	Report Final Product(s) Usability Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on technical literacy in evaluations Technical literacy in design specs Technical literacy visible and supported in final product(s) <p><i>For example, the blog that includes a Frequently Asked Questions section or self-directed.</i></p>	35	
Useful Interactivity	Report Final Product(s) Interactive Features Usability Evaluations Reflective Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentions of "change" in learning, awareness, or activity Engagement of students and/or users Identification with the process and/or products Reflection <p><i>For example, the blog that invites users to DO SOMETHING (like, comment, share, reblog) with the information you've provided.</i></p>	40	

Table 3: Evidence and Indicators of Concepts and Values in Projects

This rubric is based on the "Heuristic for Developing Assignments and Evaluation Tools for Useful Civic Web Sites" in the Zoetewey, Simmons, and Grabill piece in *Digital Writing: Assessment and Evaluation*, "Assessing Civic Engagement: Responding to Online Spaces for Public Deliberation" (2013).

Project #3: New Media Activism/Digital Advocacy Video (30%)

Purpose

As a culmination of all the advocacy work you've already done on your cause/issue, you are going to create a video to wrap up your efforts. This video will appeal to a wide variety of audiences, and it should distinguish you as an agent of change. The purpose of the video is to promote, educate, argue, persuade or recruit. With your advocacy video, you want specifically to engage viewers/pique their interest, so show passion, make your case, and use effective visuals.

Instructions

This project is one of the most exciting benefits of participating in the iTeach pilot. You will receive special training on an application (iMovie) that we have made available for students in this class that will help you with this project. The initial iMovie training will be conducted during class time, but if you need additional training (remedial or advanced), you can schedule your own training on campus with anyone in the MediaSpot offices. Some of this training will be offered online for our class. You must use the iPad2 for this project.

Tasks

- Produce a 3-4 minute video promoting the cause or issue in which you're engaged. In the video, you will
 - identify the cause;
 - incorporate references to the history and current status of the issue, including what interested viewers can do to get involved;
 - include music and a variety of visual effects; and
 - show relevant logo(s), web addresses (including your own Twitter handle and blog address – you are promoting the cause/issue, as well as your own efforts).
- Make sure you do not violate any copyright or fair use policies in creation of your video.
- Extensive planning, scripting, and storyboarding will be done on the front end. In addition, there will be extensive revision and editing in the production phase of the video-making. All editorial decisions must reflect your overall purpose (see purpose above).
- Upload the final product to YouTube.
- Finally, write a 750-word reflection “essay” to accompany your submission. This will explain the process, technological struggles and successes you faced, as well as what you hope to accomplish through the creation and dissemination of this video. Your reflection will be a new blog posting, and in it, you will embed the link to the YouTube video.
- Once the blog has been published, you will 1) promote the blog and 2) promote the video (directly from YouTube) on Twitter.

Final Submission

For official submission, email the link to your blog posting to me inside of an email message. Also include the link to your video on YouTube.com in this email message. You will be given a

rubric in advance to show how you will be graded. The project will also be included in your final e-portfolio (I'll teach you how to do this as an embedded file), which will serve you in your future professional endeavors. Be sure you have a reliable, two-pronged backup system – jump drive AND hard drive on home computer – to avoid losing all of your work. iTunes will also be a good backup system for the video clips as you create them.

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate the critical thinking skills involved in exploring, limiting, and focusing the subject.
- Demonstrate writing style that is appropriate for the audience and assignment.
- Demonstrate an ability to communicate a meaningful thought with brevity and precision.
- Demonstrate competency in tools and technologies of new media.

Grading Criteria (Rubric)

Rubric for Project #3: New Media/Digital Advocacy Video

Student:

Title of Work:

Medium:

Feature of Digital Project	Comments and Suggestions	Points Possible	Points Earned
Video contains all original content.	You will be provided with an iPad2 and the app iMovie for digital video production. The video will be uploaded to YouTube and linked on your blog.	10	
Video promotes an <i>idea</i> , transcending personal narrative for its own sake. The video provokes viewers to think about the idea, not just the writer's experience per se.	Remember the difference between description and analysis/argument. Don't just describe a place, an issue, a series of events. Explain their significance and share your original idea.	10	
Video <i>explores</i> an idea, taking the viewer on a journey that reflects the writer's thinking process. The psychic distance is close.	As in an essay, you will avoid stating a "thesis" upfront. Your idea should unfold in a compelling way rather than be bluntly stated at the beginning.	10	
Video includes compelling and appropriate use(s) of <i>images</i> —e.g., photos, drawings, video clips, typography, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you use photos, make sure they are high-resolution and will not look pixilated in your iMovie. Low-resolution images will look amateurish, especially when you zoom in on them. (Of course, you can use pixilated images for a specific rhetorical purpose.) • When using the Ken Burns effect in iMovie, avoid monotony by varying how long photos stay on the screen and by varying the direction and distance of zooms (e.g., consider "panning" across a photo without zooming at all). 	10	
Video includes compelling and appropriate voiceover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record your voice first, so that you can edit the length of your images to match your words. • The tone and pace of your voice should match the tone and pace of your composition—e.g., don't sound cheerful while talking about a sad or heavy topic, don't read too fast out of nervousness, etc. • Remember the rhetorical power of silence—its power to let an image or sentence resonate. Choose pauses carefully. 	10	

Rubric for Project #3: New Media/Digital Advocacy Video

Video includes compelling and appropriate use(s) of <i>sounds</i> other than your voiceover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep in mind the sound effects available in iMovie. Also, please consider recording original "foley" sound effects. • Always use sound effects and music for good reason. • To edit images to match music (e.g., the beat), import your music first, then edit your images. 	10	
Video's style and pacing are compelling and appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A slower pace can have a more reflective, contemplative quality. To create this quality using photos, let them stay on the screen longer. 	10	
Transitions between images (photos, video clips, etc.) are compelling and appropriate.	Abrupt cuts between photos can look unprofessional unless you want to create a disjointed effect. Also, avoid using every transition available, which can look amateurish.	10	
Ending is compelling and appropriate. The video is five minutes or shorter.	Take the time limit seriously. This restriction is a major rhetorical challenge.	10	
Informs, compels to the point of calling to action.	The exigency of the situation, issue, cause is made clear, and the viewer is called to do something as a response to watching the video...raise or donate funds, join the cause, attend an upcoming event or rally, etc.	10	
	Additional Comments:	Total: 100	

Adapted from Erik Ellis's "Critique Form and Grading Criteria for Assessing Multimedia Essays" in "Back to the Future" from *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres* (2012).

Appendix B

Sample College Free Expression Policy

POLICY:

Student College supports free expression as stated in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The College in no way supports, fails to support, agrees, or disagrees with ideas that may be voiced in the Free Expression Area while providing for the expression of diverse viewpoints in an academic setting.

PROCEDURE:

Each campus shall identify a particular area as the Free Expression Area. The campus Dean of Student Services and the campus Director of Student Life shall be responsible for identifying and for arranging for appropriate signage with required registration information to be posted in the Free Expression Area.

- A. The first priority for use of the Free Expression Area will be given to student activities, as well as to academic and administrative uses.
- B. Individuals and/or groups wishing to use the Free Expression Area must complete a Free Expression Registration form at least three (3) business days in advance. Registration forms may be obtained from the campus Office of Student Life.
- C. Any/all publicity material(s) must be submitted with the completed Free Expression Registration form to the campus Director of Student Life. Copies of the registration form and any/all publicity material(s) shall be distributed by the campus Director of Student Life to the College Director of Public Safety, the campus Public Safety administrator and the campus Dean of Student Services for their review and approval. Once approved, copies of the approved registration form will be shared by the campus Director of Student Life with the Free Expression Area applicant.
- D. The campus Free Expression Area may be used during the following hours when classes are in session:

Monday through Thursday -- 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

E. Friday -- 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

- F. Individuals using the Free Expression Area must have a copy of the approved registration form with them during those times the area is being used.
- G. Persons utilizing the Free Expression Area shall not interfere with the free flow of traffic nor the ingress and egress to buildings on campus.
- H. No interruption of the orderly conduct of college classes or other college activities shall be permitted.
- I. No commercial solicitations, campus sales or fundraising activities shall be undertaken in the Free Expression Area.
- J. The individual filing the Free Expression Registration form shall be responsible for seeing that the area is left clean and in good repair.

- K. The organization/individuals using the area must supply their own tables, chairs, etc. No sound amplification devices may be used at any time.

Appendix C Student College Sample Free Expression Application

Sample College supports free expression as stated in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Each campus has identified a particular area as the Free Expression Area. The campus Office of Student Life will identify this area upon request.

Use of the Free Expression Area and all publicity material(s) must be approved through the Office of Student Life at least three (3) business days in advance. The first priority for use of the area will be given to student activities, as well as academic and administrative uses. Other uses will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Name of individual requesting use of the Free Expression Area (primary contact):

I am a (check one):

- Sample College student
- Sample College faculty/staff (name)
- Other

Name, address, and phone # of the organization you represent:

Date(s) Free Expression Area is requested:

Time(s) Free Expression Area is requested (The area is available 11:00am-1:00pm and 5:30pm-7:30pm, Monday through Thursday and 11:00am-1:00pm Friday, when classes are in session):

All users of the Free Expression Area shall observe the following regulations:

1. No interference with the free flow of traffic nor the ingress and egress to buildings on the campus.
2. No interruption of the orderly conduct of college classes or other college activities.

3. No commercial solicitations, campus sales or fundraising activities shall be undertaken in the Free Expression Area.
4. The individual who makes the application shall be responsible for seeing that the area is left clean and in good repair.
5. The organization/individuals using the area must supply their own tables, chairs, etc. No sound amplification devices may be used at any time.
6. The primary contact in signing this form acknowledges that he/she has read and received the Sample College policy on free expression included with this form.

In establishing this policy, the college in no way supports, fails to supports, agrees nor disagrees with ideas that may be voiced in the Free Expression Area but simply makes provision for a diversity of viewpoints to be expressed in an academic setting.

My signature below acknowledges that I have been made aware of the Free Expression Policy as described in the Sample College Student Guidebook.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Approval/Campus Director of Student Life: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Social Movement Timeline Project Options and References

Class/Financial/Technological Movements

- Anti-Consumerism Movement
- Anti-Globalization Movement
- Free Software/SOPA/Open Source Movement
- Occupy/Occupy Wall Street Movement

Cultural Movements

- Chicano Movement
- Counter-Culture Movement
- Nonviolence Movement*
- Slow Food Movement*
- Just Say No to Drugs/Anti-Drug Movement*

Health-Related Movements

- Neurodiversity Movement
- AIDS/HIV Awareness Movement
- Psychiatric Survivor/Ex-Patient Movement

Human/Animal Rights Movements

- Animal Rights Movement*
- Abolitionist/Anti-Slavery Movement
- Anti-Bullying Movement
- Anti-Rape Movement
- Civil Rights Movement*
- Disability Rights Movement
- The DREAM Act Movement
- Feminist/Women's Liberation Movement*
- Human Rights Movement
- Marriage Equality Movement*
- Men's Rights Movement
- Pro-Choice/Abortion Rights Movement
- Right-to-Life Movement
- Women's Suffrage Movement*
- ERA/Women's Rights Movement*

Non-American Movements (Important Foundational Movements)

- British Abolitionist Movement
- Dadaist Movement
- Situationist International Movement
- Zapatista Movement*

Other

- Anti-Psychiatry Movement
- Conservation Movement
- Effective Altruism Movement
- Farm Worker Movement
- Free Love Movement
- Free Speech Movement
- Hippie Movement*
- Ku Klux Klan or The Klan Movement
- Labor Movement
- LGBT/Gender Equality Movement
- Mad Pride Movement
- Slutwalk Movement
- Straight Edge Movement

Political Movements

- 9/11 Truth Movement*
- Anti-Nuclear Movement
- Anti-War Movement*
- Counter-Terrorism/War on Terror Movement
- Libertarian Movement
- Nazism/Neo-Nazi Movement*
- Students for a Democratic Society Movement
- Tea Party Movement*
- Zeitgeist Movement

Rural/Nature/Environmental Movements

- Environmentalism/Ecology/Environmental Justice Movement*
- Ecofeminism Movement
- Farm-to-Table Movement
- Health at Every Size Movement*
- Naturism/Nudism Movement
- Renewable Energy Movement

Religious Movements

- Brights Movement
- Charismatic Movement
- Conservative Movement
- Prohibition/Temperance Movement

Burg, David F. *Encyclopedia of Student and Youth Movements*. New York: Facts on File, 1998. Print.

Carlisle, Rodney P., and J. Geoffrey Golson, eds. *Turning Points Actual and Alternate Histories: America in Revolt During the 1960s and 1970s*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008. Print.

Del Gandio, Jason. *Rhetoric for Radicals: A handbook for 21st Century Activists*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2008. Print.

Encyclopedia of American Social Movements. Ed. Immanuel Ness. Armonk, NY: Sharpe, 2004. Print.

McCaughey, Martha, and Michael D. Ayers, eds. *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Moyer, Bill. *Doing Democracy: The MAP Model for Organizing Social Movements*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2001. Print.

Nocella, Anthony J., and David Gabbard, eds. *Policing the Campus: Academic Repression, Surveillance, and the Occupy Movement*. New York: Peter Lang, 2013. Print.

Staggenborg, Suzanne. *Social Movements*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.

Appendix E
Georgia State University
Informed Consent

Title: Measuring the Impact of Teaching Civic and Digital Literacy on Student Agency and Self-Efficacy

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ashley Holmes, Associate Professor of English, GSU

Student Principal Investigator: Lauri Goodling, Instructor of English, GPC

I. Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact learning new media and social media skills and using those to work in the area of civic engagement might have on your behaviors and attitudes surrounding civic and political engagement. You are invited to participate because you are over the age of 18 and a student in a college-level English course. A total of 25 participants will be recruited for this study. They will all be recruited from our class. Participation will require approximately one hour of your time over the course of the semester, and it will be conducted during class time, so as not to inconvenience you.

II. Procedures

If you choose to participate, you will read and sign this consent form, complete the survey, then attend the focus group session time you are given. You will complete a fairly detailed survey (18-20 questions); participate in one, 45-minute focus group during the semester, where I will pose a 6-8 questions to the group in an effort to prompt discussion and elicit information about how you feel about civic engagement; and allow me to analyze your confidential reflection essays as a means to measure shifts in attitude and behavior toward civic engagement and new media. The data from this study will be collected during the fall semester of 2014 and analyzed after final grades have been submitted. It will be a part of a dissertation that will be written during 2015. You will not be compensated for participation in this study.

III. Risks

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. Nevertheless, because we will be talking about the types of causes and issues you're choosing to engage in for your civic engagement/activism projects, the attitudes and behaviors that you have regarding civic and political engagement, as well as some reasons you might choose to/not to engage, I recognize the possibility that some sensitive or emotional information might arise. It is my priority to be sensitive to these situations when they arise, and I assure you when or if they do, I will not probe beyond your willingness to share. All information should be offered willingly.

IV. Benefits

Participation in this study may or may not benefit you personally. It is my hope that you find the discussions we have in the focus groups rich and that the prompts help you to reflect on your experiences, both in class and out of class. Overall, I hope to gain

information about attitudes and behaviors surrounding new media, social media, and civic engagement among college students.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. While you do have to complete the course material, you do not have to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time and without any penalty to your grade in this course. You may skip questions in the survey and focus group or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and there will be no impact on your course grade or on my personal opinion of you (it will not hurt my feelings if you elect not to participate). I will not analyze the data collected in the focus groups or reflection essays until after final grades have been submitted. When consent forms are collected in an envelope, you can choose to return your consent form unsigned, effectively withholding your consent/choosing not to participate in the study, and you can do so in confidence (without my knowledge). The envelope containing signed and unsigned consent forms will be sealed and held unopened until the semester is over and final grades have been submitted.

VI. Confidentiality

I will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Lauri Goodling and Dr. Ashley Holmes will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly [GPC Institutional Review Board, Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) and GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)]. We will use your chosen pseudonym in all surveys, transcripts and archives of our focus group conversations, and reflection essays. The survey and focus group data collected as part of this study will be gathered and held digitally. These digital files – audio, video, and text transcripts – will be stored on a password- and firewall-protected computer. Your reflection essays will be held in a sealed envelope by the English Department Chair in a locked filing cabinet in his locked office for the duration of the semester. I will retrieve these envelopes and analyze the essays after final grades have been submitted. All data and consent forms will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when I present this study or publish its results. Some of the findings will be summarized and reported in group form; other findings will be shared as quotes or excerpts from your work. Again, unless you specify that you want these quotes attributed to you using your real first name, you will assign yourself a pseudonym during the initial survey.

VII. Contact Persons

Contact Dr. Ashley Holmes of Georgia State University at AHolmes@gsu.edu or Lauri Goodling at 678-212-7532 or Lauri.Goodling@gpc.edu if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. Contact Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team or if you have questions about your rights as a subject. You can also contact Patricia Gregg at GPC Institutional Review Board, Office of Institutional

Effectiveness (678-891-2570 or Patricia.Gregg@gpc.edu) if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team or if you have questions regarding your rights as a subject. You can talk about questions, concerns, offer input, obtain information, or suggestions about the study.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form

I will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded for transcript purposes, please sign below.

_____	_____
Participant	Date
_____	_____
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix F Survey Questions

1. Which pseudonym (false name) would you like to use for the duration of the study?
2. Which age range do you fit in? (Note: Students under 18 years of age are not permitted to participate in the study.)
 - a. 18-25
 - b. 26-30
 - c. 31-40
 - d. 40+
3. How often did your family discuss community, civic, political issues when you were growing up?
 - a. Frequently
 - b. Occasionally
 - c. Rarely
 - d. Never
4. Are you a first generation college student [i.e., first person in your immediate family (grandparents, parents, aunts/uncles) to attend college]?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not Sure
5. Were you required to complete community service in high school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not Sure
6. Have you served as a volunteer of any sort in your community?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. If you were eligible, did you vote in the most recent national election (November 2012)? (Leave blank if not eligible.)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Have you participated in activities or events in your community that you would consider working toward social, political, or community change?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
9. Which of the following types of social media have you used? Check all that apply.
 - a. Facebook
 - b. Twitter
 - c. Instagram
 - d. Pinterest
 - e. YouTube

- f. Vimeo
 - g. Blogs as a Reader (Wordpress, Blogger, etc.)
 - h. Blogs as a Writer (Wordpress, Blogger, etc.)
 - i. Foursquare
 - j. Tumblr
 - k. Flickr
 - l. LinkedIn
 - m. Google+
 - n. reddit
 - o. Volkalize
 - p. Evite
 - q. MySpace
 - r. Other: fill in the blank
10. When you think of “social media,” what type of activities come to mind? Check all that apply.
- a. Interacting with friends and family
 - b. Entertainment
 - c. Creative expression
 - d. Sharing images and videos
 - e. Informing or educating friends and family about important topics related to the world around me
 - f. Meeting new people
 - g. Discussing topics relevant to my community or nation
 - h. Encouraging others to get involved with a cause or issue
 - i. Working toward political or societal change
11. Have you ever used any of the social media sites listed above for a civic or political purpose?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
12. Do you believe that digital/social media is a legitimate outlet for civic and political work (advocating or activism)?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
13. Do you believe digital activism/civic engagement to be more or less valuable as a means to affect social and political change than in-person activism?
- a. More
 - b. Less
 - c. About the same
14. Describe your experience with digital/new media tools (such as video, audio, image, web articles).
- a. Exclusively reader, user, or consumer of digital content
 - b. Mostly reader, user, or consumer of digital content
 - c. Consumer, but also have a little experience producing/creating digital content
 - d. I am a regular consumer and producer of digital media.

15. How likely do you feel the work you might do to influence cause- or issue-oriented /political/societal change will actually impact change/make a difference?
- Yes, I feel like the work I do will make a difference.
 - I believe the work I do will have a modest impact on change.
 - I feel powerless, like my voice and effort will matter very little.
 - No, I do not feel like the work I do will make a difference.
 - I do not feel qualified to work toward change.
16. If you answered “C,” “D,” or “E” above, which statement best explains why you selected that answer? If you answered “A” or “B” above, leave blank.
- I am not informed enough on the topic/issue.
 - I do not know how to get involved.
 - I do not have skills needed to be an effective activist.
 - I am not confident enough to advocate for change.
17. What factors might influence the likelihood that you will engage in community, civic, or political work toward change in the future? Check all that apply.
- Being asked by a friend or family member to join them.
 - Finding a cause or issue I care personally about.
 - Being required as part of my college experience to work toward change.
 - Being taught *how* to do such work.
18. If you were taught digital and social media tools and skills, how likely would you be to use these tools in the future to work toward community, civic, or political change?
- Very likely
 - Likely
 - Not very likely
 - Not at all

Appendix G Survey Responses

Last Modified: 01/02/2015

1. Which pseudonym (false name) would you like to use for the duration of the study?

Text Response
Julian
Alexandra
Dr. Gawthrop
Patrick
Ford
Adam
Brandon
Dominic
Elise
Wesaal
Dmitry
Student B
Jared
Stephanie
Xavi
Emily
Typhani
Tierra
Soo

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	19

2. Which age range do you fit in? (Note: Students under 18 years of age are not permitted to participate in the study.)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	18-25	19	100%
2	26-30	0	0%
3	31-40	0	0%
4	40+	0	0%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	1
Mean	1.00
Variance	0.00
Standard Deviation	0.00
Total Responses	19

3. How often did your family discuss community, civic, political issues when you were growing up?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Frequently	5	26%
2	Occasionally	12	63%
3	Rarely	2	11%
4	Never	0	0%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.84
Variance	0.36
Standard Deviation	0.60
Total Responses	19

4. Are you a first generation college student [i.e., first person in your immediate family (grandparents, parents, aunts/uncles) to attend college]?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	2	11%
2	No	17	89%
3	Sure	0	0%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.89
Variance	0.10
Standard Deviation	0.32
Total Responses	19

5. Were you required to complete community service in high school?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	4	21%
2	No	14	74%
3	Sure	1	5%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.84
Variance	0.25
Standard Deviation	0.50
Total Responses	19

6. Have you served as a volunteer of any sort in your community?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	15	79%
2	No	4	21%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.21
Variance	0.18
Standard Deviation	0.42
Total Responses	19

7. If you were eligible, did you vote in the most recent national election? (Leave blank if not eligible.)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	3	38%
2	No	5	63%
	Total	8	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.63
Variance	0.27
Standard Deviation	0.52
Total Responses	8

8. Have you participated in activities or events in your community that you would consider working toward social, political, or community change?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	13	68%
2	No	3	16%
3	Not Sure	3	16%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.47
Variance	0.60
Standard Deviation	0.77
Total Responses	19

9. Which of the following types of social media have you used? Check all that apply.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Facebook	16	84%
2	Twitter	12	63%
3	Instagram	15	79%
4	Pinterest	7	37%
5	YouTube	18	95%
6	Vimeo	2	11%
7	Blogs as a Reader (Wordpress, Blogger, etc.)	4	21%
8	Blogs as a Writer (Wordpress, Blogger, etc.)	2	11%
9	Foursquare	1	5%
10	Tumblr	8	42%
11	Flickr	2	11%
12	LinkedIn	2	11%
13	Google+	5	26%
14	reddit	3	16%
15	Vokalize	0	0%
16	Evite	0	0%
17	MySpace	5	26%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	17
Total Responses	19

10. When you think of "social media," what types of activities come to mind? Check all that apply.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Interacting with friends and family	18	95%
2	Entertainment	18	95%
3	Creative expression	12	63%
4	Sharing images and videos	17	89%
5	Informing or educating friends and family about important topics related to the world around me	11	58%
6	Meeting new people	7	37%
7	Discussing topics relevant to my community or nation	6	32%
8	Encouraging others to get involved with a cause or issue	6	32%
9	Working toward political or societal change	4	21%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	9
Total Responses	19

11. Have you ever used any of the social media sites listed above for a civic or political purpose?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	7	37%
2	No	9	47%
3	Not Sure	3	16%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.79
Variance	0.51
Standard Deviation	0.71
Total Responses	19

12. Do you believe that digital/social media is a legitimate outlet for civic and political work (advocating or activism)?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	18	95%
2	No	1	5%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.05
Variance	0.05
Standard Deviation	0.23
Total Responses	19

13. Do you believe digital activism/civic engagement to be more or less valuable as a means to affect social and political change than in-person activism?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	More	3	16%
2	Less	6	32%
3	About the same	10	53%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.37
Variance	0.58
Standard Deviation	0.76
Total Responses	19

14. Describe your experience with digital/new media tools (such as video, audio, image, web articles).

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Exclusively reader, user, or consumer of digital content	4	21%
2	Mostly reader, user, or consumer of digital content	8	42%
3	Consumer, but also have a little experience producing/creating digital content	4	21%
4	I am a regular consumer and producer of digital media.	3	16%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.32
Variance	1.01
Standard Deviation	1.00
Total Responses	19

15. How likely do you feel the work you might do to influence cause- or issue-oriented political/societal change will actually impact change/make a difference?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes, I feel the work I do will make a difference.	3	16%
2	I believe the work I do will have a modest impact on change.	13	68%
3	I feel powerless, like my voice and effort will matter very little.	3	16%
4	No, I do not feel like the work I do will make a difference	0	0%
5	I do not feel qualified to work toward change.	0	0%
	Total	19	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	2.00
Variance	0.33
Standard Deviation	0.58
Total Responses	19

16. If you answered "C," "D," or "E" above, which statement best explains why you selected that answer? If you answered "A" or "B" above, leave blank.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	I am not informed enough on the topic/issue.	0	0%
2	I do not know how to get involved.	1	33%
3	I do not have the skills needed to be an effective activist.	2	67%
4	I am not confident enough to advocate for change.	0	0%
Total		3	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	3
Mean	2.67
Variance	0.33
Standard Deviation	0.58
Total Responses	3

17. What factors might influence the likelihood that you will engage in community, civic, or political work toward change in the future? Check all that apply.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Being asked by a friend or family member to join them.	10	56%
2	Finding a cause or issue I care personally about.	13	72%
3	Being required as part of my college experience to work toward change.	9	50%
4	Being taught how to do such work.	8	44%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Total Responses	18

18. If you were taught digital and social media tools and skills, how likely would you be to use these tools in the future to work toward community, civic, or political change?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very likely	6	33%
2	Likely	8	44%
3	Not very likely	2	11%
4	Not at all	2	11%
	Total	18	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	2.00
Variance	0.94
Standard Deviation	0.97
Total Responses	18

Appendix H

Research Protocol for Focus Group

1. Introduction
2. Rules/Instructions
 - a. Students will enter the room and sit in designated seats. Desks will be arranged around the circle randomly.
 - b. On each desk, there will be a sheet of paper with the statement they are to read identifying themselves for the purpose of transcription. Students will use their chosen pseudonym for identification.
 - c. Participants will be reminded of the process of the focus group, how it will be structured, what the expectations of them are, and how I will facilitate the conversation.
3. Icebreaker
4. Probes for Discussion Starters
 - a. How do you feel about the potential impact you can have on civic or political issues through using new/social media?
 - b. How has what you've learned and experienced during this study affected your skills or qualifications to engage on civic or political issues?
 - c. What kinds of activities during the course of this study have most impacted your current feelings about the influence you can have?
 - d. What kinds of activities during the course of this study have most impacted your understanding of what it means to engage civically or politically?
 - e. How confident do you feel in your skills or level of preparedness to be an effective advocate or activist?
 - f. How have the experiences in this course changed or impacted your likelihood to engage in citizenship-related activities now or in the future?
 - g. In what ways, if any, will you choose to engage civically or politically in the future, beyond this class?
5. Concluding Statement/Thank you
6. Next Steps

Appendix I Feedback on Adam's Blog

The Green Millennial

<http://thegreenmillennial.wordpress.com>

General Design/Template Choices

The template you chose seemed to serve you very well. I dislike that you can't use the "share" or "like" features from the home page, but that seems to be a limitation with most of the templates – you have to open the individual post before you can like or share it. I'm sure that's because the Home page has a URL, so sharing from that page would only lead others to the Home page. If you want to share an individual post, you need to generate a unique URL and share from that post's page.

Navigation

This is clear and provides an appropriate level of information for readers to pick and choose from as they decide how they want to move around in your blog. Because your Twitter feed is so active, it would have been a really nice touch to add a live stream on your blog. I really should have taken time to show you how to add this.

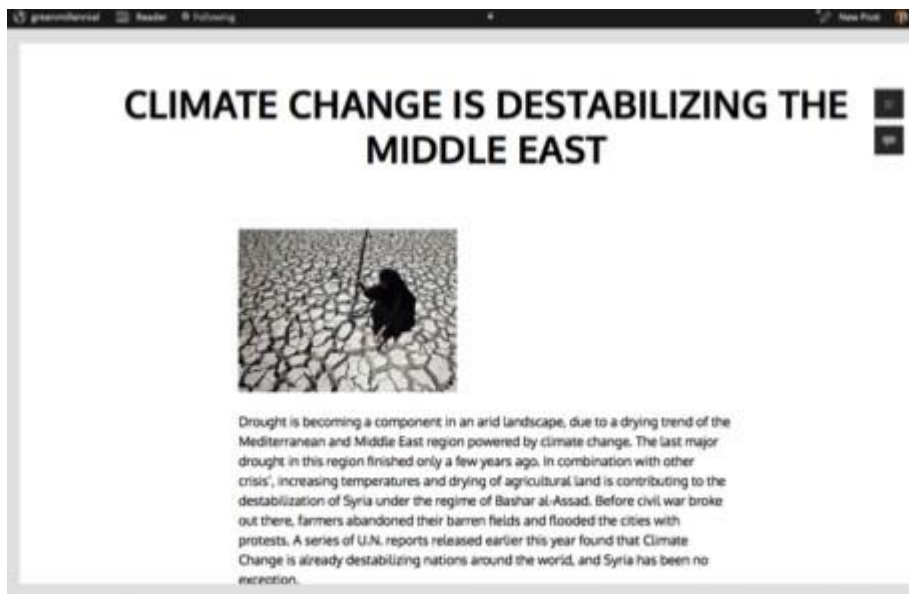


What was strange about the navigation view was it looks like two columns with exactly the same information in them. This was baffling to me.

Content

Your blog is complete and filled with rich, informative, and persuasive information. You've found a good balance between text and image, and your titles for posts are compelling, inviting readers to, well, read. 😊

In some cases, when you used a smaller image, I would have liked to see you wrap the text, in an effort to shake things up a little visually (so every post doesn't look exactly the same) and also to limit the amount of white space. Here's an example of where you could have wrapped the text and eliminated some white space:



To give you an example of the visual difference between lots of white space and text wrapped around an image, check out what Tierra did on her blog:

Wednesday, November 12, 2014

These Streets are Watching: Documentary Review


"These Streets Are Watching" is a documentary from 2009. This documentary takes a look at the actions three communities took and are taking to stop police brutality by copwatching. It basically explains what rights we all have and how to assert them. They review the steps an officer goes through when arresting or trying to find a reason to arrest you and what you should be doing during this time especially if the officer is violating your rights. This is a definite watch if you or people you know have a lot of close encounters with police officers like the ones shown in the three communities overviewed here. This film was very interesting to me. It shows a lot of footage of police officers brutalizing people and also abusing their power as police officers. I learned a ton about the rights that I have that I did not even know I had. I think that this could be important for younger kids as well. I grew up in an area where this was not a huge concern for me but should children who live in areas where this is a concern learn about this? Yes I would think it is a definite yes. All children should learn about this subject matter. In areas where police are "cracking down on crime" it is very important for those children to have an education on their specific rights and how to protect themselves. This is information we should all know. Most people do not know their own rights. Most importantly the video talks about how to observe misconduct. Whenever you see a police officer hurting someone or doing something they are not supposed to do it can be very shocking and there can be a lot of unrest especially if there is a crowd. It is important to remain calm and to just observe everything that is happening. Someone needs to make a record of everything that is happening. If you can get it on video then it is very important that you do. The most important thing to do is to work as a community. Actually go out to the streets and come together to make a plan on how to get reform in motion. Get active and involved because that is the largest way to make a change - getting out there and seeing/doing it for yourself. The video lasts about 30 minutes and is completely packed with valuable information not just for advocates trying to reform police but also for any average Joe or Jane.



You can actually watch the full documentary [here](#)

See how this method uses the space more effectively in order to eliminate scrolling? Now, you've done a very nice job of breaking your text into smaller paragraphs and using white space effectively in that way. Here's an example of where you did that well:

greenmillennial Reader Following New Post Logout



The U.S. Department of Defense released a new report this week that says climate change poses an "immediate risk to national security." U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said on Monday (Oct. 13) that "climate change is a threat multiplier that could intensify challenges such as global instability, hunger, poverty and conflict." The new report, called the 2014 Climate Change Adaptation Road Map (you can read it here: <http://www.acq.osd.mil/ie/download/CCARprint.pdf>) details the military's progress in surveying more than 7,000 bases, installations and other facilities to determine whether they are threatened by extreme weather.

Located in the Hampton road region of Virginia, several United States military sites have had recurrent flooding. Because of the reoccurring floods, The Defense Department is looking at how a projected 1.5 foot (0.5 m) sea level rise could affect the complex over the next 20 to 50 years.

By preparing for climate change now, the Department of Defense may be able to reduce the impact of extreme weather events in the future, experts say.

The Defense Department has released numerous reports about climate change, but this one in particular is the most assertive and strong worded report about climate change, said Joshua Busby, an associate professor of public affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

Link the PDF to the actual title of the document instead of pasting the URL into the copy/text.

It's important to make URLs hyperlinks in a digital document. Readers don't want to copy and paste links, so you'll need to take the extra step to link it. Here's an example in your last post:

At a hearing to discuss how the state could deal with the Environmental Protection Agency's new proposed greenhouse gas regulations for coal plants, Majority Whip Brandon Smith (R) said that carbon emissions from coal plants can't be causing climate change because Mars is also experiencing a global temperature rise and there are no coal plants emitting carbon on Mars.

Watch it here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCF_Yy3oFN0

Instead of pasting in the scrambled URL, add the hyperlink to the word "here" or put the title of the film after the colon and link that. Not only is it more visually appealing, it's also more functional and considerate to your online reader.

Another way you might have used hyperlinks in your posts as a way to engage your readers would have been to link key names and organizations you mention to their websites or to interesting articles about them. Here's an example where I thought you could have linked to multiple other sources:

As a consequence of Tuesday's election, the most aggressive climate change denier in the Senate, Republican James Inhofe of Oklahoma, will be replacing Barbara Boxer of California as chair of the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Some background of Senator Inhofe:

According to OilChange International, Inhofe has received \$1,189,050 in political contributions from the coal and oil industry. One of his top contributors is Koch Industries (\$62,750 since 1999). ExxonMobil has contributed over \$16,000 since 1999.

A quote from Inhofe that describes his view on climate change:

"Genesis 8:22 that I use is that as long as the Earth remains there will be springtime, harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night. My point is, God's still up there, and the arrogance of people who think that we, human beings, would be able to change what he is doing in the climate is to me outrageous."

Congratulations, voters. You just made this climate denier the most powerful Senator on the Environment.

The design you selected allowed you a blank canvas to fill with text and image. You've done a good job striking a balance between the two. You've also tagged your posts effectively in order to stimulate traffic.

Example:

Posted on November 12, 2014 Tagged china, Climate Change, Crime, Crisis, Drought, Environment, Environmentalism, Extinction, Global Warming, Green revolution, Republicans, science, Violence [Leave a comment](#)

Writing Skill

For the most part, the writing on your blog is clean and clear. There are some errors here and there, which you'll want to be aware of so you can look for them in editing in the future (and so you can know what to look for as you get to work polishing your blog now). See the excerpt below, which I grabbed from your documentary review to show you the kinds of errors I saw throughout the blog. I've made corrections in red.

It's an idea that most of us would rather not face — **the idea** that within the next century, **life** as we know it could come to an end. Our civilization could crumble, leaving only traces of modern human existence behind. It seems outlandish, extreme, or even impossible, **but** according to cutting edge scientific research, it is a very real possibility. **Unless** we make drastic changes now, it could very well happen. Experts have a stark warning: ~~that~~ unless we change course, the "perfect storm" of population growth, dwindling resources, and climate change has the potential to converge in the next century with catastrophic results.

First, **2100** is probably one of the scariest documentaries I've seen, **not** because it is filled with blood and guts or some monsters, but because it could be the future we make for **ourselves**.

You do an excellent job of integrating your source material. I was missing parenthetical citations for many of the quotes, which I know seems out of place in a blog, but remember that you still need these, and in an academic environment, especially.

Annotated Bibliography

Your annotated bibliography was very well done. The attached Word document was 99.9% perfect (far better than most dream of). The ONLY thing I saw that needed to be corrected was in the header you will use your last name and page # only, not your first and last name. It should say Smith 2. That's so minor it almost seems silly to mention it, but I think you're a bit of a perfectionist like me, so I want to make sure you're learning. 😊

This post (I presume your bio) had some wonky indentation going on.

WHO IS THE GREENMILLENNIAL?

97% of climate scientist agree that climate change is man-made. 50% of Earth's wildlife has been lost in the last 40 years. 1.4%. That is how many degrees the average global temperature has increased over the last century.

I started this blog so people can see how dangerous and threatening climate change is. In the United States especially, there are a lot of misconceptions about climate change. To me it's sad that one whole political party in America denies the science that supports climate change. Among climate change deniers, the United States is number one at 54%. The GreenMillennial blog's will provide facts, statistics, and stories of climate change survivors throughout the world.

From looking at polls, people actually care about the environment but they think that climate change will not affect on them in their lifetime. Yes the effects of climate change are slow compared to an Ebola outbreak or Isis but it is far more deadlier.

Species extinction is happening 1000 times faster because of humans. According to the UN Environment Program, the Earth is in the midst of a mass extinction of life. The World Wildlife Foundation states that, "Scientists estimate that 150 to 200 species of plant, insect, bird and mammal become extinct every 24 hours. If the low estimate of the number of species out there is true – i.e. that there are around 2 million different species on our planet** – then that means

Suffice it to say, Adam, you did a phenomenal job. I think you learned a lot about writing for the web and writing as an activist/advocate, and I think you've even learned a little about researching public issues. My only advice to you would be to challenge yourself to step outside of your comfort zone and read material from the other side with an open mind. Your tweets and blog posts are so deeply rooted in one side of the issue(s) that I'm afraid you might come to be dismissive of anything the other side has to say (when in reality, there are often valid points made by both sides). Failure to hear or thoughtfully consider both sides is the kind of thinking that has gotten us into the mess we're in now – where everything is politicized, and we align ourselves with one side 99% of the time. If we stop thinking critically about all sides of an issue, we really just become automatons. Continue following your passions, yes, but also challenge your thinking and the thinking of those you admire and support. Finally, because you are charismatic and such a doggone likable guy, you will make an excellent lawmaker or change maker. You will be a leader, no doubt. I look forward to seeing that happen!

Appendix J Feedback on Wesaal's Blog

Resurgence: The Struggle of the Libyan Renaissance
<https://thelibyanrenaissance.files.wordpress.com>

Resurgence

THE STRUGGLE OF THE LIBYAN RENAISSANCE



Nov
13




MY RECENT THOUGHTS

- The People | الشعب
- Freedom of Expression
- Protected: Taking "Selfies" With Explosions
- Things you may want to look up to help get a better picture of Libya
- Libya's Artistic Dawn Continues

ARCHIVES

Nov
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ARCHIVES

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TAGS

Angiolo Vannetti **art** **Art and Culture** **artists** **Change** **explosions** **Freedom** **freedom of expression** **Gazelle** **Gazelle Square** **History** **Hope** **Indifference** **Italian** **artifacts** **Libya** **Libyan History** **Mahmoud Darwish** **paint** **brush painting** **photography** **Poetry** **Selfies** **the**

The People | الشعب

Allow the people to pick up their paint brushes, and they'll expose their minds on canvases. Allow the people to pick up their cameras, and they will show the world what they see through their eyes. Allow the people to pick up their instruments, and they'll play songs that open the doors to their souls. Allow the people to pick up their pens, and they will write their heart out. Allow the people to pick up their spray paint cans, and they will paint their messages on the walls of your streets. Allow the people to pick up their clay, and they will sculpt your history. — Allow the people to express themselves, and they will change a nation.

Tagged *art, artists, Change, Freedom, freedom of expression, Hope, Libya, paint brush, painting, photography, Poetry, the people*

Nov
13

General Comments on Design/Template

Your blog is beautiful and represents the clean, simple, artistic ideas you're promoting. Well done with the visual rhetoric. Your incorporation of images and captions is super. You demonstrate competence in the use of the Wordpress technology and toolkit, and your placement and timing and frequency of visual imagery are all well done.

Navigation

I see you have a list of the five most recent posts, but it might be useful to offer a table of contents of sorts or a link somewhere to previous posts.

Categories of posts help readers move around within the blog and take advantage of all the content you have provided.

Content

The first post I came to, "The People," just stunned me with the ideas. You've very eloquently – and artistically – expressed the desire you have for human beings to be able to express themselves as a part of the inherent liberty we should all have as humans, but also as an effective means toward social change. It really couldn't have been said more succinctly or suitably for the subject at hand.

I noticed you've associated your name with the blog. Is this ok with you, or would you like to make it anonymous (considering the content)?

The post about taking selfies in front of explosions is really compelling. I understand why you have to password protect it, but it's too bad, because I'd love for more people know about this cultural trend. It says so much about the situation and the young people in that culture. I can't help but think of what Sholeh Wolpe said in her reading about knowing the people of a nation not by how they are represented in the news media or by politicians, but by the art they produce. This was so relevant to your work.



Protected: Taking “Selfies” With Explosions

Protected: Taking “Selfies” With Explosions
“There is a philosophy in ‘indifference’; it’s a characteristic of hope.” –
Mahmoud Darwish.

This is what was written, and is written everyday in a city which half of it’s

people have died, and the other half awaits their death. "Indifference" has become the ideal way to live a short life. A life in which we know nothing about its end except for the fact that it's near.

Life is harsh. The children of today have grown up before they turn into youth. They died before they crawl or fall in love. "Indifference" is the last reminisce of cursed hope, a depressed life and an oppressed innocence. The coexistence in the midst of this pain is what has remained, and will remain. It is the only way to happiness and a way of life –at least what remains of this life.

When nature whispers, we have nothing but to listen to and enjoy it with our six sense –even if the whispers were artificial hatred an destruction. What most people (other than Libyans) find to be unique and strange, the people of this city find its truth to be normal and usual.

The "selfie" in front of explosions and what is left behind of "dreams", is a way of expression and an unheard voice saying that hope still exists, despite all the pain..." –Translated from original Arabic text. The writer of the original text has asked to not be named.

My friend could not finish writing this description behind his idea of a "selfie" he once took. Instead, his eyes filled with tears, preventing him from being able to continue.



Two young youth taking a selfie with an explosion. The one on the right is Tawfik Bensaoud, may he rest in peace.

My friend could not finish writing this description behind his idea of a "selfie" he once took. Instead, his eyes filled with tears, preventing him from being able to continue.

One of the closest people to me sent me selfies taken with explosions in the background. Him an his friend, who was recently assassinated not too long ago, took these photographs for a reason. It's their way of artistic social activism. It is a way to show how lives have been affected by the current situation in Libya. People around the world take selfies while they go about their everyday life, capturing their everyday experiences. This was the

everyday life of a Libyan living in a city taken over by militias. The youth tries to be "normal" while taking selfies in a city terrorized by militants.



More youth taking a "selfie" in the street during an ongoing war in Benghazi.

The youth has been affected by the negative atmosphere surrounding them. Instead of attending each other's graduation or weddings, they're attending each others funerals. This has become the reality of Libya's youth. But what is truly amazing about this youth, is that despite all that is happening to them, they still have hope for a better life, and a better Libya.



-taking a selfie in front of an explosion.

I also look at this picture from a western, nay, American, perspective for a moment and wonder how it might be misconstrued. Thinking about what we've discussed on visual rhetoric, how do YOU think it could be re-imagined or wrongly defined?

The article you re-blogged/linked to on the dawning of the Libyan art movement was really great! <http://caledoniyya.com/2012/11/13/libyas-artistic-dawn-continues/> This is such a fascinating topic.

I want to see a follow-up post on the Volunteer Libya event and art competition, ok? Loved the Documentary Analysis write-up. In fact, this is probably your most content-rich, substantive post. While there are a few minor typos and spelling errors here and there (you often misspell its or it's and I think I saw "trys" for "tries"), for the most part, the writing is solid. Because you're putting these fantastic ideas out into the world in your blog, I'd really like for you to edit/proofread with a fine-toothed comb, even though the project period is over now. This is still your work, and you should still take pride in it, so make sure every single word and letter and piece of punctuation are perfect.

The post on the missing gazelle statue is also a good one. I like how you make personal connections to each of the news stories. Very compelling, each entry. Nice job! Linking to additional stories on the topic is also very helpful for your reader.

Annotated Bibliography

Your Annotated Bib is well done. There are a couple of typos in the text, however, that I'd like for you to clean up and repost (edit the post and re-upload the corrected Word document). It looks like you've linked to MY annotated bib, which you need to pull down ASAP, please. Thank you!

Finally, here is another article you might be interested in reading:

<http://mic.com/articles/1683/how-art-reflects-dictatorships-and-revolutions>