

HELPING STUDENTS GAIN A BETTER
UNDERSTANDING OF WRITING:
WRITING ABOUT WRITING
AT THE TWO-YEAR
COLLEGE

by

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to develop a curriculum for first-year writing that can be taught at the two-year college to help students transfer writing skills to courses taken afterwards. The second chapter aims to define what transfer is and identify a few different approaches to teach for transfer, which led to the discovery of the Writing about Writing pedagogy as developed by Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle. This research was influenced heavily by Anne Beaufort's *College Writing and Beyond* as well. Following this, the third chapter examines the nature of the two-year college that makes it uniquely difficult to teach for longer term transfer of writing skills.

Finally, chapter four features a review of the Writing about Writing pedagogy and textbook, which leads to development of a course sequence for use at a two-year college. This study supports the implementation of an introduction to writing studies course sequence at the two-year college level to aid in the transfer of writing skills.

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I. Introduction

Compositionists have been questioning transfer since the 1980s, but only recently has a select group of scholars attempted to address this phenomena by devising teaching methods for first-year writing that can assist in the transfer of writing skills beyond this introductory general curriculum class. These scholars come from all over the country but have worked together to devise methods for teaching composition with an eye for assisting students in transferring writing skills to other courses in other disciplines.

Extensive research in the fields of composition theory, especially regarding two-year college pedagogy and transfer of writing skills, reveals that, while there have been quite a few studies done at four-year colleges and universities, there has been very little research on transfer at the two-year college. Two-year college instructors have much less time to devote to professional activities such as research since the typical teaching load is five to six courses a semester. Also, two-year colleges vary so greatly across the country that devising methods that could work at a good number of institutions become quite difficult but there needs to be more done at this level to address transfer.

Therefore, this thesis will examine how two-year college writing instructors can employ Elizabeth Wardle and Douglas Downs's "Writing about Writing" approach in teaching first-year composition with the goal of promoting transfer of writing skills. This thesis will also include the materials for a course sequence utilizing the "Writing about Writing" pedagogy and materials from the textbook that Downs and Wardle published to provide instructors with something tangible from which to work when creating their courses.

TEACHING FOR TRANSFER

The debate around transfer of writing skills became more pronounced in the mid-2000s as compositionists began to question first-year writing courses at colleges across the country. Basically, those in the field wonder how to teach writing so that students will internalize writing skills for use in future courses since there has been much debate over the function of first-year writing and its purpose as part of the college core curriculum in general.

Most of the questions regarding transfer stem from struggles with helping students to write outside of composition courses. Since many colleges leave the teaching of writing solely to composition instructors, instructors in other disciplines increasingly expect that students will come to them with a firm grasp of writing skills. Though there have been many suggestions as to how to address transfer, I found that Anne Beaufort's approach was the most intriguing for this study and I will discuss this in depth in the next chapter.

TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Due to my teaching experience at the two-year college, I was especially concerned with how to teach for transfer at this level, since two-year colleges are unique in that they are usually open-enrollment and quite diverse, which makes for a very challenging environment in which to teach writing. This also makes the difficulty of teaching for transfer quite pronounced.

Another roadblock to teaching for transfer is that many students at this level also have to successfully complete developmental reading and/or writing courses before they even take first-year writing, which means that some students become very

discouraged with the courses and their own writing abilities. The diversity of backgrounds and skills makes teaching writing for transfer even more important, which I will examine at length in chapter three.

WRITING ABOUT WRITING

I decided to examine one particular approach more in depth after quickly connecting with the description that Downs and Wardle provide of “introduction to writing studies” in their 2007 article “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies,’” because, much like any other first-year college student, I remembered taking courses such as Introduction to Psychology and Introduction to Women’s Studies, but I definitely don’t remember any class about Introduction to Writing Studies being offered during my time as an undergraduate. Even an internet search of the term yields a few hits that are mostly graduate courses in composition studies programs. I will examine this approach to first-year composition more thoroughly in chapter four.

I really became intrigued by this concept of composition as its own discipline and how that could possibly help students transfer their writing skills to other courses in other disciplines. In all of my years in academia, I’ve rarely heard a student complain about another introductory course as only being a part of the core curriculum and I’ve also never heard a student say that other disciplines aren’t a field of study, though I’ve definitely heard both of these things about composition courses. It made me wonder how composition instructors can make the course more relevant to the college experience as a whole; the first-year writing course should both introduce students to writing at the college level and to writing as a discipline. If we rely on student recognition

of the course as important, this usually leads to disinterest on the students' part and frustration on the instructor's.

CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHING

This thesis will employ constructivist methods to examine how to assist students in developing the connections necessary to promote transfer of writing skills.

Constructivist theory strives to understand how to assist students in creating their own learning out of what is taught in the classroom. It is widely regarded as a "theory of learning or meaning making" that "individuals create their own new understandings on the basis of an interaction between what they already know and believe and ideas and knowledge with which they come into contact" (Resnick qtd. in Richardson 623-624). Simply put, Constructivism is a theory about how people learn. It says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences.

Constructivist theory is especially relevant to the discussion of transfer because students must engage in thinking about their prior learning to build the networks required to retain knowledge about writing. In developing a curriculum to teach writing for transfer, it is essential that the instructors engage students' prior knowledge of writing as a content area to help students in constructing their own knowledge networks. Wardle and Down's work on "Writing about Writing" is grounded in constructivist theory as well. Teaching students about composition studies as a discipline invites students to construct their own knowledge networks about composition which they can then relate to their other coursework. I will be applying this to the two-year college setting and

creating a curriculum outline for first-year writing that engages students at this level in metacognitive activities grounded in their experiences with writing.

Specifically, the "Writing about Writing" pedagogy employs constructivist methods through its use of reading assignments that tie directly to essential questions related to writing as a discipline of its own. By exposing students to writing studies as a discipline through published memoirs and research articles by established authors, the curriculum forces students to synthesize their own relationships with writing as a field of its own. The textbook actually spends some time in the introduction explaining what construct means, both as a noun and a verb, with the latter meaning "bringing personal experiences and understanding to a text" and the former meaning "mental frameworks that people build in order to make sense of the world around them" (Downs and Wardle *Writing about Writing* 5). Downs and Wardle actually provide a very good analogy to the *Matrix* films to get students to understand how concepts about writing are constructed and their textbook is the "red pill" to help [students] see writing constructs as constructs rather than believing that they are inevitably true or real" (*Writing about Writing* 5). This approach to teaching composition is supposed to break down the walls between students and professional writers so that they eventually become one and the same. Downs and Wardle even went so far as to include some of their students' essays in the text to provide some credence to their theories.

In the following chapters, I will explore the foundations of transfer theory, as framed by Anne Beaufort in her book *College Writing and Beyond*, the characteristics that make the two-year college an important setting to teach for transfer of writing skills, and, finally, a description of the "Writing about Writing" pedagogy and the curriculum

that I have envisioned for the use of the pedagogy at the two-year college level, all in regards of how to help students transfer writing skills from first-year composition to other courses taken in their career at the two-year college.

II. Teaching for Transfer of Writing Skills

This chapter examines recent research on transfer of writing skills, which concerns how composition instructors can teach writing so that students will internalize those skills and use them in other disciplines.¹ Transfer is not a new concept in the field of composition, as I mentioned in the introduction, but there are still many questions about how to address transfer of writing skills, especially at the two-year college. There is no all-inclusive solution to the problem of students not understanding how to write in courses outside of composition. Since no single study can include every approach that has been suggested, even though all of the approaches that I read about have merit, I was intrigued by the premise of teaching composition as if it were a gateway course to the larger discipline of writing studies, and thusly I chose to continue my research in this vein.

Though I have only taught two semesters at the two-year college so far, my interest in this field stems from my experience at the middle and high school levels. My last year teaching high school began with teaching freshman English at an underperforming urban high school. I taught them writing as it pertained to the reading of literature and responding to it, which was the curriculum at this school. About two-thirds of the way into the school year, I switched with a long-term substitute in the Special Education department so that I could provide services in Science courses. I still saw a lot of the students that I taught in my English class so I was aware of what and how they were taught to write, but, despite prompting on my part, many of these students simply didn't understand that the writing we had done in English could translate to the writing that they were doing in their Science course.

In relation to this and as mentioned in the introduction, while I was completing graduate work in Education, I was introduced to the constructivist theory which says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. In thinking about my students at the high school who couldn't write coherently in their Science class, I realize that this was partly my fault since I hadn't helped them in constructing their own understanding of writing so that they could build the necessary knowledge networks to facilitate transfer. Even when I was standing right next to them and trying to guide them through writing in their Science class, my former English students struggled because the walls of this particular high school created such strong divisions between not just disciplines but also individual classrooms, such that teachers from different departments rarely even spoke to each other, never mind took the time to plan lessons or write curriculum that could work interdepartmentally to facilitate student mastery of literacy skills.

One thing I have noticed over the past eight years is that students seem to forget a good amount of what they have learned from one year to the next, which is what Rebecca Nowacek describes as her "students' persistent struggles and often failed efforts" to "draw on what they learned in previous classes" (2) as they learn to communicate in new settings; discussions of these struggles are similarly described in much of the research about transfer of writing skills. Nowacek argues that instructors in many institutional settings should make the effort to foster their roles as "handlers" of transfer, primarily by emphasizing the rhetorical exigencies that define transfer as re-contextualization or the ability to take knowledge from one course and apply it in other courses with different content and expectations for learning.

Some first-year writing instruction takes the form of “how to write in college” which is misleading because this teaches students that writing is a simple task that pays no mind to audience, purpose, or structure. Downs and Wardle argue that instructors should instead teach students “about writing...acting as if writing studies is a discipline with content knowledge to which students should be introduced, thereby changing their understandings about writing and thus changing the ways they write” (553). Between this theory and what Beaufort argues in *College Writing and Beyond*, it becomes apparent that a complete overhaul of first-year writing is imminent.

Teaching at the college level forced me to realize that students not transferring literacy skills to other courses isn't unique to high schools and I've struggled over the past year to teach my students how to write rhetorically when the sample syllabi I was given still focus on modes of discourse. Thus, I examined what other people have done to aid students in using their writing skills in other college courses, with a particular focus on how these methods can be used at the two-year college specifically. Since I found Beaufort's research on college writing so profound, this chapter is framed around the areas of knowledge that she describes.

TEACHING FOR TRANSFER

If I had read Anne Beaufort's *College Writing and Beyond* much earlier in my teaching career, then I would have realized that writing courses should be more deliberately attentive to social context, to the transfer of skills across contexts, and to meta-awareness of how genres and discourse communities work. Even though my high school English course was focused on both reading and writing as both sides of the literacy skill set, I should have made more of an effort to broaden my student's

knowledge of the rhetorical strategies that all writers use to engage their readers. When I transitioned to teaching at the college level, I would have immediately focused on teaching rhetorical strategies in my writings courses instead of focusing on the modes of discourse as was proposed to me in the sample syllabus I was given. Reading Beaufort has made me understand that by breaking down the processes of knowledge in first-year composition classes, instructors can engage students' interdisciplinary knowledge and ideally facilitate transfer of writing skills.

Even when students are learning to write in a composition classroom, they are composing for various purposes in other courses, even if it is simply writing answers to questions or writing lab reports. Downs and Wardle propose that “students write for various communities within the university, each of which uses writing in specialized ways that mediate the activities of the people involved” (556). This makes the problem of how to teach first-year writing for transfer even more difficult because no single course can address the specialized ways of writing that can be done in various disciplines. No single composition instructor can address the multitude of ways that students will write in the two year college, and neither should they have to. Even though composition classes have consistently been framed as the place where students should learn to write in academia, no instructor can be an expert in all the different types of writing done in all of the fields done at the college level.

To address common gaps that cause lack of transfer, Beaufort argues that composition instructors must teach students five domains of knowledge in relation to the discipline of writing in order for students to take the ability to write with them after they leave their composition course. Beaufort depicts these domains in a cohesive graphic in

College Writing and Beyond (19):

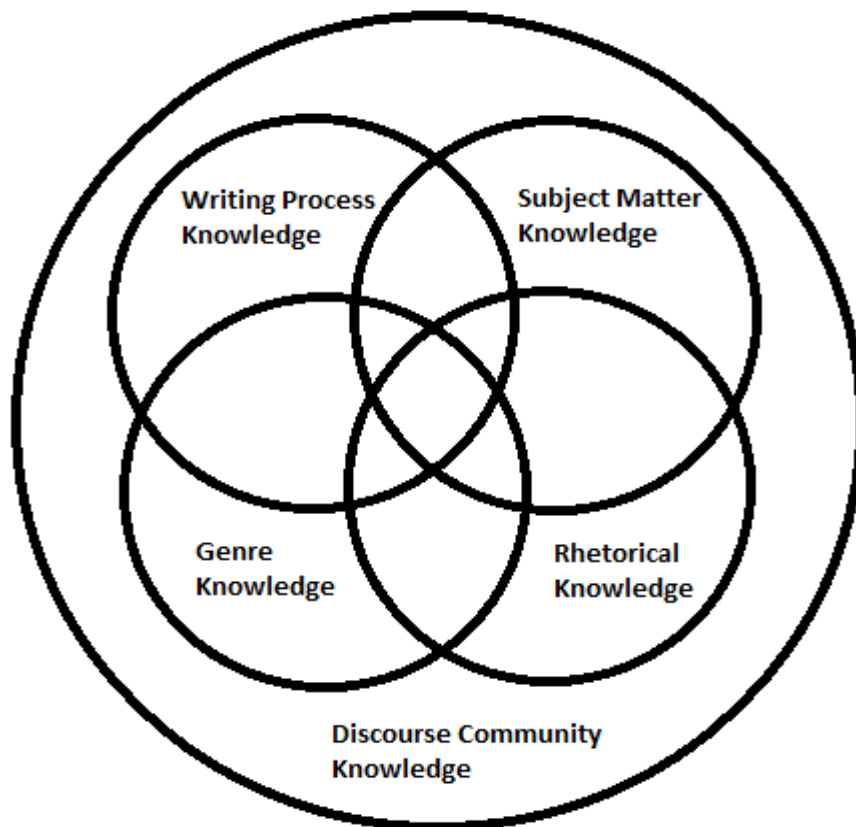


Figure 1: Five Knowledge Domains

This graphic clearly articulates the intersections between the various domains and how they must work together in order to achieve transfer of writing skills. Instructors of writing must clearly identify the actions that students take within these domains so that students will become aware of the function of the writing that they do in their composition courses. Instructors must also make it very clear to students that none of these domains exist separate from the others. As figure 1 suggests, these five domains are embedded in each other in such a way that one cannot easily address one without the rest.

Subject Matter Knowledge

If students gain subject matter knowledge, then Beaufort argues that they should be able to define a variety of writing-related terms as they relate to other disciplines. The ability to relate these terms to the disciplines shows that high-road or long-term transfer has occurred because students are able to own the concepts and translate them for other purposes outside of a composition course.

The main point of subject matter knowledge is that students master the content written about in any piece of writing. If students are able to read and understand the texts so that they can write about them in the appropriate manner, then it is more likely that the students will take the knowledge from composition courses with them into their other coursework. Whether this involves guiding the students through research to learn about new subjects or polling students to find out generalizable topics with which every student is familiar, it is the instructor's job to guide students toward topics about which they can easily compose essays. This could mean presenting students with newspaper articles about the cost of going to college or sexual assault on college campuses, and then having them write evaluations about or responses to the articles.

Writing Process Knowledge

By participating in the social networks and composing habits appropriate to a given task and context, students begin to understand how to use common writing practices such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing in various disciplines, and they understand that these practices must be adapted to the rhetorical situation. This also means that students will use the generative power of writing to increase comprehension and develop ideas while they solicit reader feedback to improve written

work.

It is imperative that students engage in ongoing, critical self-assessment of writing processes and products. This must go beyond just engaging in the steps of the writing process and involve students in becoming an integral part of this process so that they will internalize the steps that they must take for use in other courses. Many students have come to me knowing the names of the steps of the writing process but weren't able to articulate what they would actually do in any particular step. Teaching for transfer means that instructors go beyond just talking the talk and actually help students to walk the walk.

Though the process might not always look the same in every classroom outside of composition courses, it is important that students master the idea that writing, in any form, is a process. Even CEOs of Fortune 500 corporations must engage in a process when they have to write a proposal to present to their board of directors; granted, this process may include a different set of steps that involve market research and usually dictation to an assistant which is why students can't get locked in to a rigid mindset regarding the writing process.

Rhetorical Knowledge

The ability to apply rhetorical concepts--e.g., audience, purpose, stance, ethos, logos, pathos--to writing and reading situations across disciplines is key to the transfer of writing skills. When students have gained rhetorical knowledge, they are able to respond strategically to a given audience. Many writing courses that I have seen over the years haven't paid any real attention to rhetoric, and I have seen students suffer for it. Again, this goes beyond just an understanding of the concepts and terms because

transfer requires a deep understanding of the knowledge so that it can be recalled in later situations.

Rhetorical knowledge requires that students are able to identify the appropriate rhetorical approach on their own, and if students are proficient in this area, then the transfer of writing skills becomes much more apparent. Going back to my high school students who didn't understand how to write in their science course, I can only imagine that this was because the writing that we did in English class was heavily text-based and formulaic. If I had instead taught my students how to read and write rhetorically, then Beaufort argues that transfer would happen.

Again, after students graduate and enter the workforce, the audiences they will have to address will vary greatly.

Genre Knowledge

With support, students should be able to using genres as tools to get the work of writing done, which means that they are able to recognize or infer characteristics of genre such as rhetorical purpose, typical content, structural features, and linguistic features. It is also important that they are able to employ genre features as appropriate in response to a given rhetorical situation.

In composition courses, instructors must be mindful of the features of any given genre and then help students to understand the plan of attack when writing in that genre. Genres cannot solely be content-specific if transfer is to be facilitated; Instructors of composition should introduce students to various genres of academic and professional writing throughout the composition sequence so that students can understand that writing is done in various forms for different audiences, but it is all still

writing. Adler-Kassner and her colleagues defend this idea when they propose that “genres are not just forms of writing” because they “bind academic and disciplinary communities” (n.p.). Students must understand that genres are forms of writing because of the purpose and audience of the particular writing that is being done.

As nurses, my former students will have to write reports or summaries that require them to understand field-specific language about which I know little, but if I make the effort to teach them how to write a research report or summary about a topic related to the composition field, then the chances that they will remember how to write in this genre at a later point are much greater.

Discourse Community Knowledge

Across the curriculum, students should be able to articulate connections between a discourse community’s goals and values, its typical rhetorical situations, its genres and writing processes, and its expectations for “good” or effective writing while they contribute to ongoing written conversations by engaging the ideas and texts of others. Specifically, students should be able to project a sense of the values, habits and conventions of a given organization or community.

This is the point where teaching for transfer becomes tricky because it encompasses all four other knowledge domains while attempting to bridge the gap between writing as a content area and other college-level content areas. To address this, Libby Miles and her colleagues at the University of Rhode Island would argue for “teaching vertically,” wherein teaching for transfer involves scaffolding writing instruction so that students will build on their previous skills until they are able to employ the use of their writing skills automatically through the use of advanced writing courses and writing

in the disciplines courses throughout the university. They imagine first-year composition as the beginning of a much longer student relationship with writing that lasts throughout their college career.

IMPLICATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

As educators, we all hope that students will internalize what we teach them and carry the knowledge along with them throughout their lives. Unfortunately, that isn't the case. I came to this conclusion very quickly when I changed roles in my previous school, but I think I had some idea regarding transfer even when I was a middle and high school student in the mid to late nineties. This idea that students should bridge content areas with their knowledge of basic skills is not something new, but it has become increasingly important in this modern world where what we know about language and communication can seemingly change in an instant given the constant connection that most people have to everyone else. This poses a distinct problem in terms of many of our students' constant immersion in writing via texting, tweeting and other forms of social media. This leads to the need for students to learn how to code switch between the language that they use while conversing with peers and the language that they must use while writing for academic and career purposes.

If instructors continue to teach writing as an isolated act, this could lead to "negative transfer" (Beaufort 10). Beaufort describes negative transfer as the obstruction of or interference with new learning because of previous learning and when students are taught that they can only write a paper to argue a point or to describe a text, they become rigidly focused in their approach to writing and can't easily transfer their writing ability to other contexts. As a constructivist educator, this is integral to my

argument regarding transfer because if our teaching is not helping students to construct their own understanding of concepts so that they can use this knowledge in other settings, then there really is no point to the instruction that we are doing. For example, when instructors teach composition through modes of discourse, instead of teaching students that writing is a complex act in and of itself, they bind students into a rigid framework that isn't easily transferable to other contexts.

Another challenge to teaching for transfer is that many of the textbooks that are marketed for developmental and college writing courses focus primarily on rhetorical modes such as description, narration, illustration and argumentation among many others² which address many ways that don't lead to teaching for transfer. Teaching students these modes doesn't assist with transfer because students learn to write within a very rigid framework that only involves the courses in which they are writing at the time. Instead, instructors should focus on the rhetorical knowledge that is required to write in a variety of subjects and genres or for different audiences and purposes or in various discourse communities.³ Teaching students these highly transferable forms in the context of the rhetorical situations such as purpose, audience, genre and stance will assist students in understanding that writing can be done in any context with any subject.

As evidenced by my experience with my students in their science course, over the past few years, I observed that many students simply don't understand that writing in one course is similar to writing in another course, usually because much of their writing instruction is based on responding to literature or writing essays based on the modes of discourse. Instead of continuing to trap students in very rigid and non-

transferable pedagogy, instructors should instead teach students to address their writing to various audiences for various purposes. Beaufort would suggest that the first-year writing course should abandon its hope to teach a sort of general academic discourse, and instead should systematically teach strategies of responding to contextual elements that impinge on the writing situation. This means that students should be taught rhetorical strategies that can be applied in any course that they might take in college.

Those who seek to reduce first-year writing to a simple course that presents universal ways of writing so that students will know how to understand how to write in college have never spoken to Downs and Wardle who suggest that “writing is neither basic nor universal but content- and context-contingent and irreducibly complex” (558). Continuing to trap students in rigid textual organization only serves to teach them that writing is formulaic and thusly not engaging. The goal of first-year writing courses should be to introduce students to the complexity of writing without frightening them away from engaging in authentic and reflective composing experiences.

After exhaustive reading regarding transfer, I read Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle’s 2007 article “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies’” which argues that one way to encourage transfer is to reframe writing courses at “Introduction to Writing Studies.” The authors argue that “a unified academic discourse does not exist,” which leads instructors of composition to question “what students can and do transfer from one context to another” (552). Thus, teaching students the modes of discourse that they might be exposed to in other courses doesn’t help them to actually understand the types of writing that they will do throughout their college careers.

There are many suggestions for addressing transfer at the college level as evidenced by the multitude of studies that I encountered once I began digging for information. Though they all offer something to the subject of transfer, I found Downs and Wardle's ideas to be the most captivating at this time, which I will discuss at length in chapter three. In response to various other methods of teaching for transfer, Downs and Wardle instead argue that first-year composition courses should be taught as though "writing studies is a discipline with content knowledge to which students should be introduced" (553). By treating first-year composition as a course that has content to present just like any other introductory course in college, instructors can teach students that writing is an important discipline for what it can offer students' college experience as a whole.

As a continuation of Beaufort's work, Downs and Wardle describe the "four major outcomes for writing instruction: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and writing; processes; and knowledge of conventions" that all instructors should address in their teaching of writing (555). These build on the areas that Beaufort describes and specifically adapt them for use with the "Writing about Writing" pedagogy. Not only do students need to be aware of rhetorical strategies, processes and conventions, but they also must engage in critical thinking, reading, and writing so that they will be engaged with writing as its own content area. I will return to this in chapter four.

III. Composition at the Two-year College

This chapter addresses the specific needs of students at the two-year college in terms of transfer of writing skills taught in first-year composition courses. Given the issues with addressing transfer in general, I began to wonder about teaching for transfer at the two-year college specifically, since that is the level of my college teaching experience. Upon reading a few studies, I quickly realized that the current scholarship on learning transfer in writing courses primarily focuses on four-year institutions of higher learning and I needed to figure out the differences between the two institutions for myself before I could really teach for transfer.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, there have been quite a few studies about addressing transfer, but there is a noted lack of research at the two-year college level. Based on the evidence presented in this chapter, I argue that the students and composition courses at the two-year college level are distinctly different from the students and courses at the four-year college and therefore the methods that have been suggested for teaching for transfer can't simply be employed in my composition classroom without some adaptation to meet the needs of my students at the two-year college. As research indicates, students attend the two-year college for much shorter length of time and many students have to take developmental courses before enrolling in first-year writing, the need to teach for transfer is much greater than at a four-year college.

Community or technical colleges, which make up the majority of public, two-year, open-enrollment colleges in this country, “enforce minimal standards of admission, typically requiring only the completion of a high school diploma or GED, or other

evidence of a likelihood of benefiting from the educational services provided by the institution” (Bahr 138). Almost anyone who can prove United States residency and can pay for the courses, either on their own or through financial aid, can enroll at these schools. Since many students enter the two-year college after an absence from academia, this means that there is usually a very wide variance in the skills of the students in any given course.

Many students who opt to attend the two-year college are also seen as non-traditional college students in the sense that they may not transfer to a four-year college because their expectations for college are geared more toward gaining the skills necessary for gainful employment. Since these students are typically “first-generation college students, nonnative speakers of English, nontraditionals, members of the working class, and countless other labels that designate the students as Other,” composition courses in particular should help these students to embrace their general education courses for the skills that they gain by exposing students to the complex process of writing that involves participating in the social networks and composing habits appropriate to a given task and context (Degenaro 129).

INSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS

Before I could figure out how to address transfer at this level, I first needed to fully understand the complexities of the two-year college. Even though I have taught at this level for the past year, I don’t think I really knew from where many of my students were coming in terms of their backgrounds with literacy. Teaching in urban and urban ring middle and high schools for seven years didn’t even prepare me for the range of needs I would encounter in my first semester teaching a Basic Writing course at a two-

year college in Massachusetts. About half of the students were somewhat recent immigrants from countries such as the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the Ivory Coast. These students could speak and read English with some limitations but struggled to express themselves in writing. This becomes a large concern for two-year colleges because a two-year degree program can quickly balloon into a three or four year program because students have to take developmental courses.

Two-year college students are part of the “58 percent” of students as tracked by the National Education Longitudinal Study who “took at least one remedial course” according to data provided by Bailey (120). As I mentioned before, this could be a reading, writing, or mathematics course to apprise students of the basics that they seem to have forgotten from their high school instruction. Further, Bailey presents that “44 percent took between one and three remedial courses and 14 percent took more than three such courses” and this is not unusual. Many of the students in my Basic Writing course which was the first of the developmental sequence at this community college were also enrolled in a Basic Reading course or Basic Mathematics course (also first level developmental courses) and would have to also take Intermediate level courses in each area before progressing to prerequisite courses for class that were part of the general education requirements of the college. With all of these remedial and prerequisite courses, it would take many of these students minimally two and a half years to complete what should be a two year program of study.

Though most two-year colleges do take some steps to place students in the current courses based upon the placement tests that students must take upon enrollment, some students may present quite well on the tests but then experience

difficulties when in the classroom. Last fall, I taught a Basic Writing course in which I experienced this exact issue; since students were placed in my writing course solely using the multiple choice placement exam, about half of the students, who did not speak English as their first language and struggled throughout the semester with particular written conventions of the English language, ended up failing the departmental exam at the end of the course. These students obviously could have benefitted from a course or two in speaking and reading English before they attempted to write longer compositions.

The backgrounds of the students in both my classes my first semester teaching at the community college led me to understand that I “can no longer assume that the students [I] meet in [my] classrooms are experienced readers” especially not when the numbers of students at the two-year college for whom English is not a first language are rising dramatically (Pekins 239). If my students struggle with reading or conversing in English, then teaching them to write in English becomes an even more pronounced problem because both these are skills “for which many are either poorly prepared or not prepared at all” (Pekins 239). Since the college hadn’t employed the use of the writing assessment in the placement testing that all incoming students take when they enroll before the upcoming academic year, many of the students were mistakenly placed in the Basic Writing course instead of one of the more appropriate writing courses for English Language Learners. They were able to speak and read English to a point, but their reading comprehension and written expression in English caused issues throughout the semester and led to many of these students failing the departmental examination at the end of the semester.

As many students attend the two-year college for workforce-driven purposes,

they often gripe about the courses that they have to take for the general curriculum, especially if they are referred to developmental education courses. Bailey and Choo report that “fewer than one half of students who are referred to developmental education complete the recommended sequence,” yet they also note that “many students who do complete their developmental courses do not go on to enroll in the associated college-level courses” (50). When students enroll at the two-year college, most have to take a standardized placement test to determine which courses they could take in their first semester. This typically is restricted to reading, writing, and mathematics courses, which ranges from two to three non-credit courses that must be completed satisfactorily before students can even attempt the general curriculum courses.¹ These courses are remedial in nature, created to address basic skills that students will need in courses that are part of the general curriculum.

Over the past year, I have tried to guide my students through the reading and writing in my courses to help them understand that being in a developmental writing course is not a punishment. I have had a few students drop out after they realize that they just can't handle the independent nature of college coursework, but the majority have stuck through it and made it through the entire semester having gained important skills that they can use in future courses. Hopefully these students will not become part of the nearly 50% who leave during the developmental sequence and never return to college coursework. Many had very concrete goals involving their college degree which I will discuss in a future section.

Though she focuses on the four-year college level in her ethnographic research that was done for *College Writing and Beyond*, we can see that by extending Beaufort's

argument, this becomes increasingly problematic at the two-year college level where many students enter the college and must take remedial courses before they attempt first-year writing courses. Much of the research on teaching composition at the two-year college supports the argument for “providing underprepared and at-risk students with writing courses that engage students in critical reading, writing from sources, and taking a position on complex topics” (Hassel and Giordano). These are the components of the “Writing about Writing” approach to teaching first-year composition that really piqued my interest and could assist students in transferring the necessary writing skills from first-year composition to their other courses.

STUDENT CONCERNS

Based on the desire of the students who attend these institutions to get jobs and better their lives, most two-year colleges have tailored their programs in recent years toward three core missions: “upward transfer, workforce development, and community education” which lead to “remarkable diversity of goals among students and an equally remarkable diversity of pathways through the institution” (Bahr 139). Though a few of my students over the past year have been taking classes just to fulfill general education requirements because they aren’t sure what they want to study in their second or third year of college, most of them have expressed that they have little desire to transfer to a four-year college or university because they are enrolled at the two-year college simply to obtain employment or to advance in their current employment.

Students at the community college level especially have a tendency to view their non-major classes in isolation because they are under the misconception that these courses are just part of the core. The general curriculum at the two-year college is

generally seen by instructors and administrators as a building block for the courses that students will take within their majors either at the two-year or four-year college, but students simply don't understand or care about mastering the basic skills when they only want to obtain a degree to gain employment.

Instructors are often the only link that students have to the two-year college, where students commute to the school for their classes and usually have to leave immediately after for work or family obligations. Therefore, instructors must impress upon students that "their education is more than simply a means to a credential or a stepping stone to a four-year school" in terms of the courses that the students take will provide them with more than just the credentials needed for a particular job or the general education requirements for a four-year college or university (Anderson n.p.). This also means that instructors must educate students "about the broader value of general education that is grounded in the liberal arts" (Anderson n.p.). When it comes to writing instruction, courses should focus on rhetorical strategies that can easily be translated to other disciplines, which lead to my interest in Downs and Wardle's "introduction to writing studies" approach to first-year composition courses. Instead of trapping students in the idea that English is an isolated discipline that only employs the use of literature or textbooks for reading and writing topics, *Writing about Writing* uses high interest nonfiction pieces by published and novice writers about their own experiences with writing.

Due to situations described previously in this chapter, most of my students at the two-year college have told me that they don't understand why they have to take a writing course when they are just going to college to get a degree or a certificate so they

can get a job in nursing, child care or hospitality. These students have no plans to transfer to a four-year college in the near future if at all and they don't believe that they should have to understand how to write. The two year college has become more vocationally-focused over the past few years and this is a "result of the democratizing of postsecondary education" (Pekins 235). Even though the numbers at the two-year college have risen dramatically, most of the students claim they are only attending college so they can gain skills needed for their current or future job. Though this is a good thing that more people are getting a college education, it means that the students who attend the two-year college may enter with a greater variance in their writing skills, which I will address more thoroughly in the next section.

INSTRUCTOR CONCERNS

Throughout my seven years teaching middle and high school English, I struggled with students who simply refused to participate in classroom activities involving any forms of literacy engagement. Being an English teacher, I developed as many engaging lessons as I could so that students could practice basic reading and writing skills prior to writing longer compositions. These students still struggled with the simplest literacy task because they hadn't internalized previously taught reading or writing skills. This extended into their other content area courses, where many students struggled with reading textbooks and answering short answer questions or writing lab reports because they still viewed writing as something that they only had to do in English class.

Many of my former students told me they don't read or write without a hint of embarrassment or remorse, which lead me to adapt my instructional methods to include

a variety of activities to engage students in learning both the skills and the content of my English courses. I came to understand that sometimes this lack of interest in reading and writing can be attributed to lackluster educational experiences in the classroom, so, instead of rote lecture, I have attempted to integrate small group and individual reading and writing activities into my classroom instruction so that students can experience these literacy practices as enjoyable and interactive instead of boring and isolationist.

In response to these lamentations, I began to consider how I could best assist my students in making the connections that they needed to find some relevance in my courses. Since students are only supposed to attend community and technical colleges for two years, there is less time to address transfer because students enter with gaps in knowledge, especially when it comes to reading and writing. Many of these students spend the first-year or so taking developmental reading and writing courses to address these gaps with many of these classes focusing on, yet again, the modes of discourse, as well as grammar and basic sentence structure. This makes it very difficult for the students to fully integrate all of the components that Beaufort describes as being important for transfer of writing skills so that they will be able to write in their other courses. I will explain one way to teach for transfer at the two-year college in the next chapter.

IV. First-year Composition as 'Intro to Writing Studies'

This chapter will explore the use of Downs and Wardle's "Intro to Writing Studies" approach for use in composition courses at the two-year college. I have examined the duo's research articles and textbook to determine possible pedagogical solutions to teach for transfer at a two-year college. Their idea of "introduction to writing studies" has been implemented at universities across the country, but there is no data available for two-year colleges since current scholarship on transfer of learned skills in writing courses primarily focuses on four-year institutions of higher learning.¹ Not only does the "Writing about Writing" methodology aid in transfer of writing skills, but it also "has the added benefit of educating first-year students, adjuncts, and graduate students about the existence and content of the writing studies field" aiding in the validation of writing as its own discipline within the two-year college, very much separate from the humanities (Downs and Wardle "Intro to Writing Studies" 578).

There has been a lack of research about instruction at the two-year college of first-year writing being taught as "introduction to writing studies." Douglas Downs addressed this in his email communication with me in which he stated that he was not aware of any studies that specifically focused on the two-year college composition classroom. He also stated that he only knows of a few two-year colleges that have used the *Writing About Writing* textbook, but isn't sure if the entire program at these colleges is based on the approach. Also, Elizabeth Wardle, in her email communication with me, asserted that she wasn't aware of any research in this specific area. Given the positive feedback from both researchers, this chapter on facilitating transfer of writing skills will

adapt the “Writing about Writing” approach to best serve students who attend two-year colleges and their unique needs.

Instead of focusing on “how to write in college” which has been shown to actually increase the incidence of negative transfer, Downs and Wardle’s scholarship suggests that framing these courses as being an introduction to the field of composition studies will assist students in retaining concepts and skills. They assert that framing first-year writing courses as “how to write in college” leads to a lack of transfer because students don’t internalize any of the writing-specific content in their composition courses. If the classes were reimagined as “Introduction to Writing Studies,” then maybe students would be able to be more engaged with writing as a content area instead of a general education requirement. This article was published as a precursor to the first edition of the *Writing about Writing* textbook and is where Wardle and Downs introduced their ideas regarding how to teaching first-year writing as “Intro to Writing Studies.”

First-year writing as it is currently taught continues to perpetuate long-held misconceptions that don’t assist in transfer. Teaching students how to compare and contrast or identify causes and effects in isolation doesn’t translate very well to the types of writing that they will do in the two-year college beyond first-year writing. To combat this lack of transfer, Downs and Wardle’s research and teaching methodology at the four-year college supposes that

students are taught that writing is conventional and context-specific rather than governed by universal rules—thus they learn that within each new disciplinary course they will need to pay close attention to what counts as appropriate for that discourse community (“Intro to Writing Studies” 559).

Teaching students that writing is always done in a certain format or only done for specific purposes teaches them that writing is formulaic and narrow. Students will then understand that writing is rigid and uncompromising which leads to their inability to transfer writing skills to other courses.

By teaching composition courses as if they can attempt to teach students how to write in any course that they take in college, instructors “silently support the misconceptions that writing is not a real subject, that writing courses do not require expert instructors, and that rhetoric and composition are not genuine research areas or legitimate intellectual pursuits” (Downs and Wardle “Intro to Writing Studies” 553). Over the past eight years, I confess that I taught some of my students how to write simply in terms of how to write in academia. This obviously hasn’t worked, as evidenced by my earlier description of my experience during my last year teaching high school. When I first read Downs and Wardle’s first published article, I began to realize that I had been teaching writing in a way that does not aid in the transfer of writing skills and I needed to reform my teaching methods via this study.

I always struggled with teaching “academic writing” because, as Downs and Wardle suggest in their 2007 article, I questioned “which academic writing—what content, what genre, for what activity, context, and audience?” (556). I finally realized that my discomfort with teaching middle and high school English stemmed from my uneasiness with teaching English as if I could influence how they wrote in all of their other courses without having any background in the literacy practices in the mathematics, history or science fields. Intro to writing studies attempts to address this issue because the purpose of the pedagogy is not to teach academic writing as a one-

size-fits-all genre but instead to teach students about writing as its own disciplines with researchers and scholars and content of its own.

Over the past eight years, I tried to teach reading and writing separately because that was how the curriculum I was given had set up my courses. This means that not only was I teaching literacy that did not encourage transfer, but so has every other teacher with whom I have worked! Most community colleges in New England still teach reading and writing separately, as evidenced by the course descriptions in their catalogs.² This split is rectified with the “Intro to Writing Studies” approach to first-year composition because “writing cannot be taught independent of content” (Downs and Wardle 559). In the courses that I envision, students engage in reading assignments about writing as a discipline that will inform their writing assignments about writing. Teaching students that writing is something that is done after they read and discuss content area information only solidifies their misconception that writing is always done in isolation.

Also, as opposed to focusing on basic skills and modes of discourse, the “Writing about Writing” pedagogy teaches potentially transferable conceptions of the activity of writing rather than “basic” writing skills that are in fact highly specialized and contextualized” (Downs and Wardle “Intro to Writing Studies” 578). No single course can attempt to address the multitude of ways of writing that students might do in all their college courses. In fact, no single person should be expected to be proficient in every single discipline at the two-year college. Though writing instructors have long been tasked with teaching students how to write in college, Downs and Wardle propose that if instructors instead teach students about writing as a field, transfer will ultimately follow.

Thusly, instead of trying to teach students generic academic writing skills, instructors can use *Writing about Writing* to teach students “what [compositionists] have learned about writing as an object of study” (Downs and Wardle “Intro to Writing Studies” 578). This is especially important at the two-year college, since students have so much less time to concern themselves with their core coursework and typically rush through the first-year so that they can begin studying their discipline-specific content. I will explore the background of the pedagogy more in the following section.

“WRITING ABOUT WRITING” PEDAGOGY

Elizabeth Wardle earned her Ph.D. in Rhetoric & Professional Communication from Iowa State University in 2003 and Douglas Downs earned his Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Utah, Salt Lake City in 2004. Both have since been employed at the university level in the field of composition and rhetoric which led to their collaboration on the pedagogy surrounding their conception of first-year composition as “Intro to Writing Studies” and the resulting *Writing about Writing* textbook.

Both Wardle and Downs did research on first-year composition for their doctoral degrees, though neither was exactly related to transfer: Wardle’s focused on first-year composition motives, “Contradiction, Constraint, and Re-mediation: An Activity Analysis of FYC Motives,” while Downs’ focused on public conceptions of writing, “Teaching Our Own Prison: First-year Composition Curricula and Public Conceptions of Writing.” This work on first-year composition began the journey that would lead these two compositionists to each other through their shared interest in making first-year composition better in some way.

Thusly, Wardle and Downs created their approach to teaching for transfer based on their own research and practiced pedagogy in composition studies. They argue that this use of composition and rhetoric to frame the course will “help students understand the nature of writing and to explore their own writing practices” (“Intro to Writing Studies” 560). Again, changing first-year writing to a course that introduces students to writing as a discipline will reframe students’ minds about the field and hopefully lead to their understanding of writing along the same lines as they understand mathematics or biology.

In their 2013 article, “Reflecting Back and Looking Forward,” Downs and Wardle explain that the goal of teaching students about writing studies instead of teaching students how to write in college is to “engage students with the research and ideas of the field, using any means necessary and productive, in order to shift students’ conceptions of writing, building declarative and procedural knowledge of writing with an eye toward transfer” (n.p.). My conception of “introduction to writing studies” at the two-year college will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

WRITING ABOUT WRITING TEXTBOOK

Downs and Wardle’s textbook, which was first published in 2011, with a second edition being released in 2014, is framed around five essential questions regarding students’ experiences with writing: “where do your ideas about reading and writing come from?,” “how do texts mediate activities?,” “how is meaning constructed in context?,” “how are texts composed?,” and “what counts as writing?” (Downs and Wardle *Writing about Writing* vi). Each of these questions has its own separate chapter, in which there are a variety of essays that speak to the topic of the chapter with many

essays bridging multiple topics. These essays were written both by professional writers and students, and almost all have been previously published somewhere.

Like many other conceptions of first-year writing, the course that Downs and Wardle proposed focuses on three main skill sets: “researching, reading, and writing arguments” (“Intro to Writing Studies” 558). However, instead of having students read about modes of discourse or a common reader that is assigned by the college, Downs and Wardle suggest that the content of a first-year writing course should be focused primarily on “reading and writing” by having students focus on the questions “How does writing work? How do people use writing? What are problems related to writing and reading and how can they be solved?” (“Intro to Writing Studies” 558). By engaging students in writing studies as its own discipline with its own concepts and skill sets to be learned, Downs and Wardle suggest that students will learn to treat writing as a discipline of its own and that will aid in the transfer of writing skills across the curriculum. This approach also requires students to read rhetorically, which is another skill that will benefit them in future coursework and careers.

To encourage transfer, *Writing about Writing* engages students in activities designed to expose them to the processes that professional writers go through when writing, such as “[reading] writing research, [conducting] reading and writing auto-ethnographies, [identifying] writing-related problems that interest them, [writing] reviews of the existing literature on their chosen problems, and [conducting] their own primary research, which they report both orally and in writing” (Downs and Wardle “Intro to Writing Studies” 558). Having students emulate published writers and professors of writing forces them out of the simple service function of the writing course while still

having them learn how to write authentically for various purposes and audiences, which is what they will have to do in their other courses.

Downs and Wardle also identified key vocabulary in their textbook that isn't just words chosen from the essays in the chapter but instead focus on the broad concepts in the chapter. This breaks from the usual vocabulary in college writing textbooks which tends to be fill with words from the readings themselves instead of the terms related to the writing that students should be doing. For chapter one of *Writing about Writing*, which focuses on Literacy, the authors have identified that the terms "case study," "literacy/literacies," and "multimodal" (*Writing about Writing* Instructor's Manual 1) are important for students to understand and use in their study of literacy. These terms all relate to the essential question more than the individual readings in the chapter and especially connect with the assignments that are proposed at the end of the chapter.

The *Writing about Writing* textbook features multiple examples of the types of writing that students will do in the course, seeing as they speak to the essential question of that particular chapter. These essays range from first-year student essays from Downs' and Wardle's own classrooms to memoirs and journal articles by respected scholars in the field such as Victor Villanueva and Peter Elbow. By incorporating both novice and professional writing, Downs and Wardle seek to create an atmosphere of professionalism in the classrooms that employ their methods. Treating student writers the same as professionals will help students to view their writing as something more worthwhile that just something they did in a core class in college.

Downs and Wardle were very careful in the selection of the readings they included in the textbook because they wanted to make the reading experience as real

as possible for students in terms of the topics about which they would be writing afterwards. The authors pose that the “material in readings is centered on issues with which students have first-hand experience” because it is important to relate to students that writing problems they face aren’t unique to students, “from conceptual questions of purpose, to procedural questions of drafting and revision, to issues surrounding critical reading” (“Intro to Writing Studies” 560). Exposing students to the real writing process through which all writers must go is important to students’ development as writers and thinkers. Students shouldn’t be taught what to think; instructors should play the role of guide as students learn how to think and express themselves through language, either written or spoken.

As such, I have envisioned my adaptation of Downs and Wardle’s approach to “Intro to Writing Studies” as a two-semester course that engages students in thinking about their own literacy in the first fifteen weeks, then applying their knowledge of literacy to conduct their own research in the second fifteen weeks. The objectives for this course sequence are based on the five knowledge domains that Beaufort discusses in *College Writing and Beyond*. I will explore the intersection between these two educational theories further in the next section.

ADAPTATION OF “INTRO TO WRITING STUDIES” FOR THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE

Due to their work at the university level and the prevalent use of their pedagogy at the four-year college or university, Downs and Wardle only provide suggestions for using their textbook in a one semester course during which students would engage in three to four projects at an accelerated pace, much like the syllabi I have seen for other first-year writing courses at this level. Given the concerns and needs of the students at

the two-year college and the fact that most two-year colleges still require students to take a two-semester sequence to complete the composition requirement, I have envisioned my “Intro to Writing Studies” course as a two-semester sequence. In this course sequence, one semester will focus on student investigation of their literate pasts and writing practices while the second semester will focus on student investigation of rhetoric and the role of writing in communities.

The first semester of this sequence forces students to look within themselves to determine their own relationship with literacy and the processes in which they engage regarding literacy over the course of approximately fifteen weeks, completing many informal writing assignments and two major projects: the Literacy Narrative and the Autoethnography. Then, the second semester has students engage in original research over approximately fifteen weeks to explore rhetorical activities, also writing throughout the semester with two major projects: Rhetorically Analyzing an Activity and Building an Activity Genre Set. These projects teach primarily to the five knowledge domains that Beaufort discusses in *College Writing and Beyond*, in that the objectives that guide the course sequence help students to gain knowledge in each of the areas. I provide an overview of the course schedules in the following sections with discussion of how the particular projects address the objectives.

Semester One: What is literacy and how do our literacies shape our understanding?

The first semester of the course sequence that I have created has students looking with themselves to examine their own experiences with literacy. The two projects that students complete, the Literacy Narrative and the Autoethnography, address Beaufort’s five knowledge domains in that the subject matter of the course is

reading and writing, and that is what both projects study, the genres are clearly stated in both cases, both assignments must adhere to rhetorical situations, students must engage in the writing process for both projects as displayed below, and students are joining a larger discourse community of readers and writers who have discussed their own literacy experiences, a few of which students read during the course of the semester, also shown below.

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | What contributes to my history as a reader and writer? | Read "Introduction to the Conversation" and Brandt "Sponsors of Literacy" Discuss Q1&2 in Brandt Qs for D&J HW: Brandt A&EI Q1 | Though the suggested course sequence that Downs and Wardle include in the instructor's manual includes many of the readings I've chosen for the first semester of my sequence, it is unclear in the manual how much of the reading students are expected to do independently outside of class. In my conception, much of the reading will be done in class so that I can guide students through the process of understanding these complex texts so that they will be able to view the texts both as professional writing and as examples of the types of assignments they must do for the course. The references to questions for Discussion and Journaling or Applying and Exploring Ideas are to questions that are included in the textbook to further students' understanding of the key points in the texts that relate to the essential questions. |
| 4 | What contributes to my history as a reading and writer? | Intro literacy narrative assignment and explain obj. Read Malcolm X "Learning to Read" Discuss Q1,2&3 in Malcolm X Qs for D&J Discuss earliest memories of reading and writing. What process in school frustrated them? HW: Malcom X A&EI Q1 | |
| 5 | How can I explore my literacy history? | Read Alexie "Superman and Me" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Alexie Qs for D&J Have students create a definition of "literate" including 3 ex. of digital media that require them to be literate every day. HW: Alexie A&EI Q1 | |
| 6 | How do I find a focus for my literacy narrative? | Read Lamott "Shitty First Drafts" Discuss how we decipher good writing from bad. Discuss Qs 1,2&5 in Lamott Qs for D&J Write and respond to Meta Moment Qs HW: Lamott A&EI Q1 | |
| 7 | What counts as good writing? | Read Straub "Responding..." Discuss how students analyze their memories and experiences to find a theme for their major WA. Discuss alternative modes to write this narrative. Discuss whether pictures or artifacts would enhance this narrative. Discuss what it means to synthesize sources and include them in the narrative. HW: Literacy Narrative First Draft | |
| 8 | | Small Group Tutorials HW: WA 1 Due | |

Figure 1: Six weeks and first assignment of the first semester of Intro to Writing Studies at the two-year college.

Though some of the classroom activities and assignments in this proposed sequence are drawn from the suggestions that Downs and Wardle provide in the

instructor's manual portion of their textbook, I have adapted the way that these activities and assignments are used so that there is much more scaffolding within the classroom so that students can be guided through the process of learning about writing and investigating their own understanding of the field of composition.

The two projects in this first semester of the sequence, the Literacy Narrative and the Autoethnography, help students to gain a better understanding of the writing process, rhetoric, and genre. Guiding students through the writing process and exposing them to the writing processes of established writers will enable them to understand writing and research as processes requiring planning, incubation, revision, and collaboration. The introduction to the course introduces students to rhetorical situations which are referenced through the course sequence as students work on the writing assignments. Also, students learn how to recognize or infer characteristics of genre and employ genre features as appropriate in response to a given rhetorical situation.

As I have already discussed, the students at the two-year college present a very diverse set of needs in the composition classroom. Due to this, and the fact that the placement test results are not shared with instructors, the first semester of my first-year writing course would begin with two weeks discussing literacy, rhetorical strategies, and the writing process, much like I've already done in my composition courses for the past year. This helps introduce students to the basics of writing that aren't always addressed in the developmental writing courses at two-year college. I also have the students jump right in to reading a literacy narrative, which is a model for the first essay that they will

write in the course. Students will also read an essay to get them thinking about genres of writing.

One of the most notable and somewhat confusing omissions of the *Writing about Writing* textbook is that there is very little scaffolding embedded for the variety of students at the two-year college level who might enroll in my course. Though Downs and Wardle admit that “[their] pedagogy is demanding, confusing to students early on, does not allow for ‘perfect’ student work, and—most obviously—cannot be taught by someone not trained in writing studies,” they don’t address the variety of needs that students may have in the two-year college classroom (“Intro to Writing Studies” 575). Therefore, I have to address this by incorporating more direct instruction about rhetorical strategies and the writing process in particular. Creating this two week introduction to the course in which I introduce students to both *Writing about Writing* and rhetorical situations and the writing process would make a marked difference in how the rest of the class would progress. This also required moving around some of the reading and assignments so that students could read about and discuss genres prior to beginning the first writing assignment.

In my two semester conception of “Intro to Writing Studies,” the students spend the first semester focused on examining their own literacy experiences. Thus, the first writing assignment in my course would include students examining the reading histories of professional writers before spending a few weeks working on drafting and revising their own literacy narratives. Though they were introduced to a literacy narrative in the first week, student will read another example in this unit, as well as some essays about writing and responding in general. As the course moves through the writing of the first

formal essay, I plan to take the time to have small group tutorials so that students can revise and edit their narratives using peer and my responses as a guide.

Despite the reading assignments being great exemplars, the program could benefit from more student-generated models of the writing assignments so that students have something to supplement these essays that they have read about writing. This might include student examples of the big writing assignments as well as the small assignments throughout the course sequence as well as an added effort on the part of the instructor to model writing for the students in class. In my courses, I typically try to write at the same time as my students to compose an example of their assigned essay if I don't already have one from a previously taught course. I find that this is especially helpful in getting my students to understand the specific assignments that they have to do for my class.

After spending an entire semester looking within to examine their own literacy histories, the second semester of my course sequence engages students in conducting their own research. This semester would involve about two weeks during which I would take some time to explain qualitative methods and writing up observation reports so that students can complete their first formal assignment of these second semester using their own descriptions and interpretations of data.

Semester Two: What is research and how can we conduct research about writing?

The second semester of my course sequence tasks students to conduct their own research and consider how to address the literacy needs of a discourse community. The two projects that students complete, Rhetorically Analyzing an Activity and Building an Activity Genre Set, address Beaufort's five knowledge domains in that

the subject matter of the course is still reading and writing, continued from the first semester, and that is what both projects involve, students must understand how to utilize tools for successfully responding to varied conventions and genres in different classes and to analyze the multiple ways that discourse is used in the university, and the textual moves common to many forms of academic discourse. Also, students are required to articulate connections between a discourse community's goals, its typical rhetorical situations, its genres and writing processes, and its expectations for "good" or effective writing and contribute to ongoing written conversations by engaging the ideas and texts of others as they complete the two writing assignments in this semester.

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | How can writing be a negotiation? | Read Covino and Jolliffe "What is Rhetoric?" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Covino&Jolliffe Qs for D&J Discuss the place of rhetoric at the two-year college Discuss how rhetoric can be used to study the purposes of a text Discuss rhetoric as performance art HW: Covino&Jolliffe A&EI Q1 | Downs and Wardle don't include much guidance for instructors who wish to focus on teaching Chapter 4 in the instructor's manual, so much of what is included in this course sequence is based on what I would like students to understand in relation to conducting research and writing reports. Again, the references to questions for Discussion and Journaling or Applying and Exploring Ideas are to questions that are included in the textbook to further students' understanding of the key points in the texts that relate to the essential questions. |
| 4 | How does a reader construct new meaning while reading? | Read Grant-Davie "Rhetorical Situations and their Constituents" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Grant-Davie Qs for D&J Discuss rhetorical situations HW: Grant-Davie A&EI Q1 | |
| 5 | How do we construct meaning out of what we do? | Read Hass and Flower "Rhetorical Reading Strategies and Construction of Meaning" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Hass&Flower Qs for D&J Discuss what texts mean Discuss reading rhetorically Discuss how to construct meaning HW; Hass&Flower A&EI Q1 | |
| 6 | What is rhetoric? | Read Cline "A Rhetoric Primer" Discuss rhetorical theory Discuss reading and responding electronically HW; Cline A&EI Q1 | |
| 7 | How can we use argument in our analysis? | Read Greene "Argument as Conversation" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Greene Qs for D&J Discuss argument and its place in academia Discuss how to address audience and purpose HW; Analysis First Draft | |
| 8 | | Small Group Tutorial HW: WA1 Due | |

Figure 2: Six weeks and first assignment of the second semester of Intro to Writing Studies at the two-year college.

Instead of focusing on students using secondary sources to support their arguments, the writing assignments in this semester engage students in collecting their own data “on issues of interest to both themselves and the field of writing studies” (Downs and Wardle “Intro to Writing Studies” 562). Though this practice is limited to one assignment in a semester-long course in the proposed course schedule, this is a significant change from how I and many other composition instructors have taught first-year writing. Typically when I teach the research project, I have students look for secondary sources that they then analyze to support their argument; in *Writing about Writing*, there are a few different suggestions for having students gather their own data based on observations and interviews, which they have to then discuss in a report as a writing assignment. This may be overwhelming for students at the two-year college, however, which is why I would make time for the students to analyze their data and draft their assignments in class.

One aspect of this pedagogy that does make it much more appealing to the two-year college instructor is that the “data-driven, research-focused readings” are much “more readable and more concrete, making them more accessible and relevant to students” (Downs and Wardle “Intro to Writing Studies” 560). I noticed over the past year that many of my students read significantly below where one would expect at the college level, and therefore, it has been difficult to employ the use of traditional college texts since students have difficulty comprehending the material. Instead, using the engaging and approachable readings in the *Writing about Writing* text will allow students to understand the texts both as readings for discussion and as exemplar texts for their own writing.

Since I have had conversations with many instructors of first-year composition that use portfolio assessment to gauge their students' proficiency in the course objectives, both semesters of my course sequence require students to compile final portfolios showcasing their best work and reflection essays summarizing how they feel they did throughout the semester. By combining some successful methods that I've already used in my composition courses with the readings and pedagogical practices that Downs and Wardle have created throughout their years of research and practice, I feel that I've created a course that both addresses students' needs and assists in transfer of writing skills.

I have noticed over the years that many instructors of writing treat student writing very differently than they do the writing that is read in class. Downs and Wardle framed their conception of first-year composition around the idea that "the course respects students by refusing to create double standards or different rules for student writers than for expert writers" ("Intro to Writing Studies" 560). Instilling in students a sense of professionalism that is otherwise lacking at the two-year college level is essential to the success of any program that is intended as a service program for the rest of the college.

Worthy of note is that Downs and Wardle suggest that "Writing about Writing" also creates a framework for a college composition course that serves as a "truth-telling course" because "it forefronts the field's current labor practices and requires that we ask how FYC students are currently being served by writing instructors who couldn't teach a writing studies pedagogy" ("Intro to Writing Studies" 575). Unfortunately, the composition field's "current labor practices reinforce cultural misconceptions that anyone can teach writing because there is nothing special to know about it" (Downs and

Wardle “Intro to Writing Studies” 575) which is evidenced by the small number of compositionists who teach writing at the two-year college. Though there are many instructors who have come to composition through literature, such as me and my advisor, most do not identify themselves as compositionists. This poses a problem with any widespread implementation of this methodology because there is rarely even one compositionist at the two-year college level, never mind an entire department staffed by them.

It must be cautioned that the *Writing about Writing* textbook is a means to an end and instructors must focus on the students and how the pedagogy meets their needs. Downs and Wardle envisioned their work as a means for composition instructors to assist students in transferring writing skills beyond first-year writing, and never intended for instructors to treat their textbook as the be-all, end-all guide to teaching for transfer. The *Writing about Writing* textbook was intended to be a pretty “general set of outcomes and practices, not a specific curriculum or a specific subset of knowledge” which Downs and Wardle clarified in their 2013 article (n.p.). Instead of focusing on their pedagogical suggestions and their textbook as a very specific curriculum around which to base a first-year writing course, composition instructors are free to approach their courses with the very basic outline that Downs and Wardle provide in their research.

This adaptation of Downs and Wardle’s *Writing about Writing* pedagogy was born out of a desire to address the needs of two-year college composition students in terms of their ability to complete writing tasks appropriately in both college and career settings. The course sequence that I have created using the “*Writing about Writing*” pedagogy will not only teach students about writing as its own discipline but it will also help

students transfer writing skills to courses taken after the first-year writing sequence at the two-year college. Due to the multiple concerns that I explained in chapter three, this sequence has been adapted to create an optimally appropriate environment in which students can learn about writing while learning how to write for various audiences using multiple genres and processes which paying attention to the subject matter and discourse community in which they are writing. In this sense, I have melded the work done by Downs and Wardle with that done by Beaufort to create a new course sequence to teach for transfer at the two-year college.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

As a result of my study, I expect that I will be better able to teach first-year composition at the community college level so that my students will be able to write across the disciplines and in their future careers. As I have discussed at length in this study, teaching for transfer is increasingly important at the two-year college, and the “Writing about Writing” pedagogy, once I am able to implement it, should assist in students’ transfer of writing skills.

This research has opened my eyes to the specific needs and concerns of the two-year college student as well as the needs and concerns of the two-year colleges as a whole. Previously, I was mainly concerned with what I needed to teach for transfer because I was concerned about my students’ ability to write after they leave my classroom, but now I’m better equipped to view the greater problem that affects transfer at the two-year college.

My findings from this study have allowed me to develop a first-year composition course for the community college level that is mindful of student experience and expectations so as to facilitate transfer of writing skills. The next step is to continue investigating approaches to teaching first-year composition for transfer of writing skills by teaching the course as “Intro to Writing Studies” and further craft my own curriculum to assist my students.

With that in mind, I hope to do classroom-based research in the future to measure the effectiveness of my use of the “Writing about Writing” approach at the community college level. This, of course, will require either a full time position at a two-year college or enrollment in a doctoral program in Composition and Rhetoric where I

can complete IRB training and get approval to complete classroom research. I imagine that this research will include both classroom observations and student interviews. The optimal scenario would include following multiple sections of first-year composition as they complete the sequence and then enroll in courses in their majors.

Since I have had experience teaching at the two-year college level, I can anticipate that there will be some opposition to using the Writing about Writing approach at this level. My colleagues may argue against its developmental appropriateness for two-year college students, but since the curriculum of the two-year college is supposed to mirror that of the first two years at a four-year college, even if students do not intend to transfer after their time at the two-year college, therefore, there should be more similarities between the writing courses at these two institutions. Just because students choose to attend college for a shorter length of time doesn't mean that they shouldn't receive a quality education; the coursework should be just as intensive as that at any other institution of higher education, meaning that it would reflect similar standards and outcomes using best practices for composition instruction.

Also, given the lengthy process in which many departments must engage to enact changing the objectives and overall expectations for any course at the two-year college, many of my colleagues may question the use of Writing about Writing since it isn't easily taught by the multitude of contingent instructors employed at this level. Though I believe that the best solution would be to hire faculty who have degrees in composition to teach writing courses, this is not usually the case. Colleges require instructors in other disciplines to have degrees in that particular subject area, yet most instructors of writing courses have degrees in English Literature or Creative Writing. If

every other discipline at any college level has set rigorous standards for the hiring of faculty, then why not also in composition? The lack of respect for the field of composition begins at the administrative level and therefore must be addressed with hiring practices that cease to deprive students of quality writing instruction by those who conduct research in the field.

Another potential challenge of implementing this curriculum would be the over-reliance on textbooks to frame the writing courses at the two-year college. Tied to the abundance of contingent faculty who teach composition and the lack of instructors who conduct research in the field, many English departments at the two-year college define the textbook and overall schedule for many of their courses to attempt that all students are receiving similar instruction. The Writing about Writing approach doesn't rely on a specific textbook to provide the pedagogy and therefore the classwork and reading assignments, and though I have included reading selections from the textbook, I could change my selections based on current research in the field. This, again, could be changed by the employment of instructors who have ties to the field and who read the literature related to composition. Instead of basing the entire writing program on the suggestions of the authors employed by textbook publishers, we could instead build a program based on the current research on composition and rhetoric so that students could be exposed to the greater field of composition.

Notes

Chapter 2

1. See Beaufort, Bergmann and Zepernick, Boone, et al., Clark and Hernandez, Dively and Nelms, Downs and Wardle, Driscoll and Wells, Fishman and Reiff, Hassel and Giordano, Graff, Jarratt, Miles et al., Thaiss and Zawacki.
2. See Fawcett, *Grassroots* and *Evergreen*; Kirsznner&Mandell, *Foundations First*; Anker, *Real Skills, Real Writing, Real Essays*; McWhorter, *Successful College Writing* for examples.
3. See Kennedy, Kennedy, and Muth, *The Bedford Guide for College Writers*; Bullock, *The Norton Field Guides to Writing* for examples.

Chapter 3

1. The developmental English courses at one college in Massachusetts include Basic Reading, Basic Writing, Intermediate Reading, Intermediate Writing and Introduction to Composition. Depending on their placement results, students must complete the required courses before enrolling in Composition I.

Chapter 4

1. See Chapter 2
2. This information is accessible in the individual college catalogs which are available on the college websites.

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Appendix A: COURSE SEQUENCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

By the end of the sequence, the student will be able to

Subject Matter Knowledge

- Utilize tools for successfully responding to varied conventions and genres in different classes
- Analyze the multiple ways that discourse is used in the university, and the textual moves common to many forms of academic discourse

Writing Process Knowledge

- Actively consider their own writing processes and practices and learn to adapt them as necessary so that they are most effective
- Understand writing and research as processes requiring planning, incubation, revision, and collaboration

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Understand how rhetorical situations affect reading and writing

Genre Knowledge

- Recognize or infer characteristics of genre
- Employ genre features as appropriate in response to a given rhetorical situation

Discourse Community Knowledge

- Articulate connections between a discourse community's goals, its typical rhetorical situations, its genres and writing processes, and its expectations for "good" or effective writing
- Contribute to ongoing written conversations by engaging the ideas and texts of others

Appendix B: ENG 101 INTRO TO WRITING STUDIES I

What is literacy and how do our literacies shape our understanding?

| | | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | What are rhetorical situations? | Overview of course Discuss rhetorical strategies and the writing process Discuss how to read, annotate, and takes notes with scholarly articles HW: Get class materials | Though the suggested course sequence that Downs and Wardle include in the instructor's manual includes many of the readings I've chosen for the first semester of my sequence, it is unclear in the manual how much of the reading students are expected to do independently outside of class. In my conception, much of the reading will be done in class so that I can guide students through the process of understanding these complex texts so that they will be able to view the texts both as professional writing and as examples of the types of assignments they must do for the course. The references to questions for Discussion and Journaling or Applying and Exploring Ideas are to questions that are included in the textbook to further students' understanding of the key points in the texts that |
| 2 | What are genres? What is the writing process? | Read Marro "The Genres of Chi Omega" Discuss the reactions of each group to the various genres introduced. Discuss how the class definition of genre changed after completing the reading. Review and discuss writing process. HW: Marro AE&I | |
| 3 | What is literacy? What contributes to my history as a reading and writer? | Read "Introduction to the Conversation" and Brandt "Sponsors of Literacy" Discuss Q1&2 in Brandt Qs for D&J HW: Brandt A&EI Q1 | |
| 4 | What contributes to my history as a reading and writer? | Intro literacy narrative assignment and explain obj. Read Malcolm X "Learning to Read" Discuss Q1,2&3 in Malcolm X Qs for D&J Sm.Grp - discuss earliest memories of reading and writing. What process in school frustrated them? W.Grp share HW: Malcom X A&EI Q1 | |
| 5 | How can I explore my literacy history? | Read Alexie "Superman and Me" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Alexie Qs for D&J Sm.Grp - definition of "literate: including 3 ex. of dig.med. that require them to literate every day. HW: Alexie A&EI Q1 | |
| 6 | How do I find a focus for my literacy narrative? | Read Lamott "Shitty First Drafts" Discuss how we decipher good writing from bad. Discuss Qs 1,2&5 in Lamott Qs for D&J Write and respond to Meta Moment Qs HW: Lamott A&EI Q1 | |
| 7 | What counts as good writing? | Read Straub "Responding..." Discuss how students analyze their memories and experiences to find a theme for their major WA. Discuss alternative modes to write this narrative. Discuss whether pictures or artifacts would enhance this narrative. HW: Literacy Narrative First Draft Discuss what it means to synthesize sources and include them in the narrative. Journal #7 | |
| 8 | | Small Group Tutorials HW: WA 1 Due | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | | | relate to the essential questions. |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|

What is process and how are texts composed?

| | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 9 | What is process? | Read Prior "Tracing Process" Discuss Qs 1,2&5 in Prior Qs for D&J Discuss the importance of engaging in a process HW: Prior A&EI Q1 | |
| 10 | Why do we have to go through multiple drafts? | Read Berkenkotter "Decisions and Revisions" Discuss Qs 1,2&5 in Berkenkotter Qs for D&J Discuss the neverending cycle of writing HW: Berkenkotter A&EI Q1 | |
| 11 | What is ethnographic research? | Read Perl "The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Perl Qs for D&J Discuss ethnographic research HW: Perl A&EI Q1 | |
| 12 | How do we write without feeling stifled? | Read Rose "Rigid Rules, Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Rose Qs for D&J Discuss "stifle" in relation to academic writing HW: Rose A&EI Q1 | |
| 13 | When has writing affected our lives? | Read Mahiri and Sablo "Writing for Their Lives" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Mahiri&Sable Qs for D&J Discuss the effect writing has had on us HW: Autoethnography First Draft | |
| 14 | | Small Group Tutorials HW: WA2 Due | |
| 15 | Class Wrap-up | Portfolio Presentations | |

Appendix C: ENG 102 INTRO TO WRITING STUDIES II

What is research and how can we conduct research about writing?

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | What is research? | Overview of course Discuss research strategies HW: Get class materials | Downs and Wardle don't include much guidance for instructors who wish to focus on teaching Chapter 4 in the instructor's manual, so much of what is included in this course sequence is based on what I would like students to understand in relation to conducting research and writing reports. Again, the references to questions for Discussion and Journaling or Applying and Exploring Ideas are to questions that are included in the textbook to further students' understanding of the key points in the texts that relate to the essential questions. |
| 2 | How do college students approach original research? | Read McCarthy "A Stranger in Strange Lands" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in McCarthy Qs for D&J Discuss how to approach conducting research HW: McCarthy A&EI Q1 | |
| 3 | How can writing be a negotiation? | Read Covino and Jolliffe "What is Rhetoric?" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Covino&Jolliffe Qs for D&J Discuss the place of rhetoric at the two-year college Discuss how rhetoric can be used to study the purposes of a text Discuss rhetoric as performance art HW: Covino&Jolliffe A&EI Q1 | |
| 4 | How does a reader construct new meaning while reading? | Read Grant-Davie "Rhetorical Situations and their Constituents" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Grant-Davie Qs for D&J Discuss rhetorical situations HW: Grant-Davie A&EI Q1 | |
| 5 | How do we construct meaning out of what we do? | Read Hass and Flower "Rhetorical Reading Strategies and Construction of Meaning" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Hass&Flower Qs for D&J Discuss what texts mean Discuss reading rhetorically Discuss how to construct meaning HW: Hass&Flower A&EI Q1 | |
| 6 | What is rhetoric? | Read Cline "A Rhetoric Primer" Discuss rhetorical theory Discuss reading and responding rhetorically HW: Cline A&EI Q1 | |
| 7 | How can we use argument in our analysis? | Read Greene "Argument as Conversation" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Greene Qs for D&J Discuss argument and its place in academia Discuss how to address audience and purpose HW: Analysis First Draft | |
| 8 | | Small Group Tutorials HW: WA1 Due | |

How can we create materials for a discourse community?

| | | | |
|---|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 9 | What are activity systems? How can we | Read Bazerman "Speech Acts, Genres and Activity Systems" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Bazerman Qs for D&J | |
|---|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

| | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| | determine a genre set for an activity system? | Discuss activity systems Discuss genre sets HW: Bazerman A&EI Q1 | |
| 10 | What is a discourse community? | Read Porter "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community" Discuss Qs 1,2&5 in Porter Qs for D&J Discuss discourse communities and their importance in academia and career HW: Porter A&EI Q1 | |
| 11 | How can we use sources to support our arguments? | Read Kantz "Helping Students Use Textual Sources Persuasively" Discuss Qs 1,2&5 in Kantz Qs for D&J Discuss using sources to support arguments HW: Kantz A&EI Q1 | |
| 12 | What does it mean to plagiarize? | Read Martin "Plagiarism" Discuss Qs 1,2&5 in Martin Qs for D&J Discuss plagiarism and original research HW: Martin A&EI Q1 | |
| 13 | How can we translate the writing we've done to the workplace? | Read Wardle "Identity, Authority, and Learning to Write in New Workplaces" Discuss Qs 1,2&3 in Wardle Qs for D&J Discuss the applicability of composition courses to career settings HW: Genre Set First Draft | |
| 14 | | Small Group Tutorials HW: WA2 Due | |
| 15 | Class Wrap-up | Portfolio Presentations | |

Appendix D: *Writing about Writing* Reading Selections

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Appendix E: Writing Assignment 101.1. Literacy Narrative

ENG 101 Composition and Literature I
LITERACY NARRATIVE ESSAY ASSIGNMENT
FIRST DRAFT DUE DAY, MONTH DATE for in-class review
FINAL DRAFT DUE DAY, MONTH DATE

Must be a hard copy in my hands on this day unless you have discussed it with me!

So far this semester, we've been exploring rhetorical situations and the writing process. Over the last two weeks, we've been exploring literacy narratives and how some authors look at their own experiences with reading and writing as they work on crafting their own works.

For Writing Assignment 1, examine your own literacy history, habits, and processes. The purpose of this inquiry is to get to know yourself better as a reader and writer. As Malcolm X argued, awareness gives power and purpose: the more you know about yourself as a reader and writer, the more control you are likely to have over these processes. Invention, Research, and Analysis: Start your literacy narrative by considering your history as a reader and writer. Try to get at what your memories and feelings about writing/reading are and how you actually write/read now. Do not make bland generalizations ("I really love to write"), but go into detail about how you learned to write/read. Mine your memory, thinking carefully about where you've been and where you are as a reader and writer.

You might begin by answering questions such as:

- How did you learn to write and/or read? What kinds of writing/reading have you done in the past?
- How much have you enjoyed the various kinds of writing/reading you've done?
- What are particularly vivid memories that you have of reading, writing, or activities that involved them?
- What is your earliest memory of reading and your earliest memory of writing?
- What sense did you get, as you were learning to read and write, of the value of reading and writing, and where did that sense come from?
- What frustrated you about reading and writing as you were learning and then as you progressed through school? By the same token, what pleased you about them?

Your Literacy Narrative should contain the following:

- A title
- A well-told story
- A strong, vivid recounting of the event you are describing
- A clear statement of the narrative's significance
- An interesting introduction to hook the reader
- A conclusion that leaves readers with a sense of closure
- A purpose for telling this story to this audience
- A sense of your audience, including the level of explanation and detail your audience might need
- Appropriate design, using visuals if you like
- 4- 5 pages of text, written in a tone and style appropriate for your audience

GRADING

This assignment is worth 150 points, which is 15% of your final grade. Please review the attached rubric for specifics about how your essay will be graded.

Appendix F: Writing Assignment 101.2. Autoethnography

ENG 101 Composition and Literature I
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY ESSAY ASSIGNMENT
FIRST DRAFT DUE DAY, MONTH DATE for in-class review
FINAL DRAFT DUE DAY, MONTH DATE

Must be a hard copy in my hands on this day unless you have discussed it with me!

So far this semester, we've been exploring rhetorical situations and the writing process and you've written a literacy narrative about your experiences with reading and writing, both in and out of school. Over the last two weeks, we've been exploring autoethnographies and how some authors write about the processes of writing.

For Writing Assignment 2, you will conduct a study similar to those conducted by Perl and Berkenkotter, but instead of looking at someone else, you will examine yourself and your own writing processes and write an autoethnography in which you describe them. Your method will be to record (preferably with video and audio) your complete writing process as you complete a writing assignment for a class. Your purpose is to try to learn some things about your actual writing practices that you might not be aware of and to reflect on what you learn using the terms and concepts you've read about in this chapter.

Your Autoethnography should contain the following:

- A title
- An introduction that motivates readers to keep going (in other words, hook them in with a reason to keep reading)
- Your topic should be tightly focused.
- Your report should balance direct quotes, summaries, and paraphrases. All information in your report must contain a citation, whether or not you use a direct quote from the source.
- Your report should not be heavy with personal opinion or persuasion.
- Your ethos should be apparent through your careful citations and trustworthy tone.
- Your report should have a consistent voice.
- Papers must be in Standard written English, as appropriate to the audience.
- Your finished product will be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced.
- You should use APA citation style.

GRADING

This assignment is worth 150 points, which is 15% of your final grade. Please review the attached rubric for specifics about how your essay will be graded.

Appendix G: Writing Assignment 102.1. Activity System Analysis

ENG 102 Composition and Literature II
ACTIVITY SYSTEMS ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT
FIRST DRAFT DUE DAY, MONTH DATE for in-class review
FINAL DRAFT DUE DAY, MONTH DATE

Must be a hard copy in my hands on this day unless you have discussed it with me!

So far this semester, we've been exploring rhetorical situations and the writing process and you've written a literacy narrative about your experiences with reading and writing, both in and out of school. Over the last two weeks, we've been exploring activity systems and how systems can influence the literacy habits of readers and writers.

For Writing Assignment 1, you'll create an analysis of an activity system (see Chapter 2, and Bazerman in this chapter) which will be specifically directed at figuring out what users' needs are for a particular text that mediates some aspect of the activity. This kind of analysis is one you would use in the early planning stages of creating a document in a very high-stakes situation. This assignment is designed to let you consider some ways in which readers use a text or document to meet a given need, how the need for a text emerges in a rhetorical situation that constrains the text, and how rhetorical situations come from larger systems of people-doing-things—activity systems—that shape the need for and use of the text and therefore its rhetorical constraints. Given these principles, in this assignment you'll attend to the categories you should consider when you enter new rhetorical situations.

Some examples of genre/activity combinations could include:

- Timed writing exams for high-school learning-outcomes assessment
- Appeals to substitute a course to fulfill a college curriculum requirement
- Grant proposals to fund travel abroad for college students
- Proposal memos to alter policies at your place of employment
- Training documents for volunteers at a nonprofit community organization

Your Activity System Analysis should contain the following:

- A title
- An introduction that motivates readers to keep going (in other words, hook them in with a reason to keep reading)
- A brief and fair-minded summary of the activity system and genre you are analyzing
- A main point containing a clear interpretation of how particular appeals are used in the text: ethos, logos, pathos, repetition of words and images, audience, etc.
- Ample and appropriate support for your main point in the form of specific passages, examples of rhetorical appeals, and other textual evidence, with page numbers
- A conclusion that leaves readers with a sense of closure
- A purpose for presenting your analysis to this audience
- A sense of your audience, including the level of explanation and detail your audience might need
- Appropriate design, using visuals and excerpts if desired
- 4-5 pages of text, written in a tone and style appropriate for your audience

GRADING

This assignment is worth 150 points, which is 15% of your final grade. Please review the attached rubric for specifics about how your essay will be graded.

Appendix H: Writing Assignment 102.2. Building an Activity Genre Set

ENG 102 Composition and Literature II
BUILDING AN ACTIVITY GENRE SET ASSIGNMENT
FIRST DRAFT DUE DAY, MONTH DATE for in-class review
FINAL DRAFT DUE DAY, MONTH DATE

Must be a hard copy in my hands on this day unless you have discussed it with me!

So far this semester, we've been exploring rhetorical situations and the writing process and you've written an activity system analysis to figure out what users' needs are for a particular text that mediates some aspect of the activity. Over the last two weeks, we've been exploring genre sets and how the activities can influence the literacy needs of those in the activity system.

For Writing Assignment 2, you will create a catalog of all the genres that a given participant in a professional or work-related activity system writes and reads. Then write an introduction to the catalog that speaks to other students interested in that profession or job, summarizing the implications your catalog suggests about:

- What the common texts in this profession or job are
- What someone doing this job needs to know in order to read and write these texts and thus do their work
- What the work of this profession seems to be
- What this profession's values and priorities seem to be
- What knowledge, abilities, and skills students should acquire and hone in order to be successful at this profession

Some of the questions you'll need to ask about your data include:

- What are the common characteristics of these texts?
- What work do these texts perform or allow, and how does this work relate to the goals of the overall activities these texts are tools in mediating?
- What do these texts suggest are the values and priorities of the people who use them?

This assignment will address course objective one in that you will compose an original piece of writing characterized by your own ideas and insights, demonstrating organization, correctness of grammar and sentences, and support using outside sources and course objective two in that you will use information from the chapter in the Norton Field Guide on analyzing a text in your essay

Your Activity Genre Set should contain the following:

- You should summarize the interview that you conducted to determine the genre set
- You need to explain the career field enough for audiences to understand the reasoning behind your choices for the genre set.
- Your choices should be backed with convincing evidence, gathered from your interview
- You should also use any other appeals you think are useful for reaching your audience
- Your ethos should be apparent through your careful citations and trustworthy tone
- Papers must be in Standard written English, as appropriate to the audience
- Your finished product will be approximately 8-10 pages long, double-spaced

GRADING

This assignment is worth 150 points, which is 15% of your final grade. Please review the attached rubric for specifics about how your essay will be graded.