

THE REPRODUCTION OF IDEOLOGY AND DISCIPLINARY VALUES IN FYC

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by

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Abstract
of
THE REPRODUCTION OF IDEOLOGY AND DISCIPLINARY VALUES IN FYC

by
Nicole Marie McNeal

In this article, I will trace the ideological history of FYC and the role of composition studies in higher education in order to frame academic literacies as action- and community-based value sets we share with students. Then I will share pedagogical strategies I have used to re-imagine traditional, commonly assigned FYC curriculum to both better reflect the values of the composition studies discipline and counter neoliberal ideology by fostering inclusive spaces for our diverse student populations. These strategies can better support faculty who are committed to approaching composition coursework in a way that cultivates student engagement and literacy in and out of academic contexts and better positions students to act meaningfully in the social environment humans collectively reproduce.

_____, Committee Chair
Angela Clark-Oates, Ph.D.

Date

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Acknowledgements..... vi

Chapter

1. COVER ESSAY..... 1

2. TEACHING PHILOSOPHY.....7

3. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY11

4. PUBLISHABLE DOCUMENT..... 34

Appendix A: Conference Presentation Handout.....67

Works Cited71

Chapter One: Cover Essay

Teaching brings me joy in a way that has changed the person I am and how I engage with the world irrevocably. In this cover essay, I will cover the ways in which I have done the intellectual labor to merit the degree I have worked for—and it is right for me to do so. If I can add any one extra feature to this piece, however, it would be the joy—and the purpose—that the composition program has given me in learning and teaching these three years. I began my graduate study taking a British literature course and 220A, the teaching college composition course that provides the entry point into the discipline, in the evenings after my office job. In this course, I set about learning the concerns and achievements of a discipline hidden in plain sight within the English department where I had done my undergraduate degree a few years previously. I remember well an early dialectical journal entry I wrote, in which I posited that learning to write well meant writing clean, clear, grammatical sentences and that doing so was a mark of good education—after all, it had worked for me, and I used to have to hide in a bathtub to do my homework. Anyone who only knows me now might not believe I would voice such a position. My professor asked me important questions in response that I had little answer for. I could write, “I don’t know” as smoothly as possible, with no sentence-level errors in grammar or punctuation, but it would provide me with nothing approaching “good writing” in that context. It felt good to think and challenge my positions. I then took every composition course I had access to (I even took 220C twice and would have again, had I been able), and when one was not available, I did research

about how to meaningfully develop an independent study program, made a syllabus and reading list, then found a teacher to agree to my plan. I hope to walk any reader through the results of my intellectual growth through writing in the chapters of this project, which, I hope, will show my genuine love for the work of this field.

The documents in this portfolio provide the culmination of my composition study in California State University, Sacramento's Master's program. As a scholar, teacher, and student, I have grown tremendously over the course of my time in the program. My teaching philosophy, found in chapter two, explores my focus on the study of writing and rhetoric as contextualized to both enrich students' learning processes across disciplines as well as inform their navigation of the public sphere. In it, I explore the conditions in which learning is most meaningful: when it is rooted in and applicable to a learner's lived experience. Paulo Freire writes of traditional education as a banking system, void of much but rote learning and the reproduction of an unequal system. Citing the capital of Brazil does not teach one anything about Brazil, he argues (71-72). He questions, and—more importantly, asks his readers to question—what it is that learning is for, what it is meant to do. Drawing upon his intellectual labor, as composition scholars do with and for one another, I began to understand writing a little differently, not as the tool of the exceptionally talented or a marker of civilization (not that it isn't those things), but as a conduit for human endeavor: for community building (and rending), grappling with asymmetrical power structures, for discovery, for clarity, for all the ways in which human beings engage with one another. And because it is those things, its potential merits the pedagogical study compositionists and rhetoricians devote to best practices in sharing its

applicability to everyday citizens. Writing is not just the province of the small percentage of the educated class. If it were, then Freire's work would not have been banned in apartheid South Africa and all the other places the poor and laboring classes smuggled photocopied chapters to and for one another.

I am happy that the practices of approaching reading and writing rhetorically transcend the writing classroom, thereby enriching the other courses students take in their intellectual journeys towards degrees and their promise of financial security; that transfer is not in itself a bad thing, of course. However, it is, as I explore in my teaching philosophy, an effect of situated, sustained practice and learning, not a motivation in its own right, for the teaching of writing and rhetoric. The growth of a writer needs dialogue, action, and reflection. The process of learning informs the writing process, from a writer's entry into a conversation, to developing drafting strategies meaningful for the genre, context, and writer, and often concluding only when a writer runs out of time. I use this philosophy to explain the curriculum I have developed and the means through which I assess it in order to demonstrate the position of our field that writing is not something one memorizes and spills onto a scantron. I write that multimodal reading and writing is a meaningful practice of composition classrooms in order to practice literacy reflective of our social world. I demonstrate the work I have done to develop practices inclusive of L2 learners who have every right in the world to join our classes and enrich their classmates' understanding of who their neighbors are. In all these pedagogical practices and strategies, I attempt to position intellectual growth as enriching and empowering,

something to enjoy. That, above all else, is what helps learners improve. It is hard to learn what one does not want to know.

My annotated bibliography, as well as the works cited page at the end of the project, reveal the depth and breadth of my archival research as well as my strategies for engaging in the scholarship of the field. The former, especially, explores the connections between disciplinary genres and concerns with the social contexts those academic texts consider. We create “the university” through our values, assignments, classroom persona, special arrangements, rules, curriculum, and in myriad other ways. One of my original sites of struggle in this endeavor was choosing curriculum that will help lead students towards using academic achievement generally and writing specifically for creating a more just world. The texts I have read demonstrate a practice I have learned from the discipline: the work of others is neither a model to uncritically replicate nor competition to best, but a resource to draw upon to complicate one’s own ideas, both support and inspiration. In pursuing a train of thought, or a thread of a conversation, I find a text and use its sources to both trace the writer’s trajectory and serve as the impetus for my own. Composition studies creates knowledge through sustained dialogue, action, and reflection, through research, revision, and practice. In Adler-Kassner’s work developing the threshold concepts our field teaches as entry points into the discipline I can ascertain the field’s values, which I explore in my thesis; in texts like Ta Nehesi-Coates’s I develop a framework for the pre-requisites, affective and cultural, that one needs to develop the literacies the threshold concepts articulate. The theories informing my practice are reflexive and shift pursuant to the work of the classroom. I learn from my students how to

teach as much as from the texts of other teachers. Examining how the two twine and play out can be found in my thesis itself, where I foreground that reflexive nature of theory and practice.

My thesis, found in chapter four, chronicles the changes I have made in the theoretical framework I use to teach through intensive, semesters-long self- and classroom study, as well as the changes being in the classroom with first year writing students has wrought on my theoretical study. Drawing upon composition studies epistemologies, I position academic literacies as values we practice and help our students to practice, too. In this chapter, I share both the mistakes I have made in the practice of learning how to be a teacher of writing as well as the ways I have used those mistakes to become a better one. I use our discipline's understanding of learning as a process of which "failure" is a part, a starting point, if it is allowed to be, from which to improve and grow. Failure positions growth rhetorically in a way that doesn't do justice to its transformative quality when learners are provided the time and space to reflect upon what they have done as well as how and why, in order to use those actions to determine what and how to do next time for different results. In framing writing as a process as well as a product, the writing classroom can help students grow through revising ideas as well as drafts. Sharon Crowley argues that, "given its difference from academic business as usual, it is a shame that composition studies is nearly invisible in the academy" (4). I think that the culture of higher education, of education in general, has a lot to learn from our field's sustained study of not just what to teach students but how. Failure in the writing classroom need not be feared, as a draft can be revised, improved upon. This

feature of a student-centered classroom can help students mitigate some of the negative emotions schooling can evoke in order to learn and grow through the writing and learning processes.

When my first year students and I engage in the messy work of learning, reading, and writing, we are engaging in the messy work of living. We discuss which questions to ask, how to arrive at them, and strategies for beginning to answer them; those answers, in turn, should prompt more questions, thus beginning a cycle of learning and growing borne of a love of the process. Writing helps us on this journey. In many ways, I am still answering that question, “what is good writing?” and so is the discipline itself. We, as a field, are neither set in our ways nor certain of immovable, positivistic facts. We challenge, revisit, and revise, using the literate values and practices the discipline has cultivated collaboratively over its time. I explicitly discuss this work with my students, sharing how we act to explain why and how we arrive at the curricular practices we do. Because that was part of the problem I encountered in my 220 A course: I could figure out how to ape the discursive practices of people whom I admired in order to become as they were, educated, safe, and capable, but without the why, I lack the emotional investment in the process, and that is the joy that teaching provides. When I learn with and for students, it is a joy and a purpose, because I am working to create the world I think we should live in, instead of the one others have worked to create. That, I think, is what education is for and can do.

CHAPTER TWO: TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My focus in the classroom and in my curriculum is approaching learning as contextualized and engaging in order to foster a love for learning mirroring the practice of academics. Composition scholars and educators have long argued that authentic learning—not short term memorization—best happens when curriculum is placed in a context of students’ lives and experiences (hooks; Shor). With this in mind, I work with my students to create material designed to help us, as a group and individually, engage in contextualized learning, practicing reading the word and the world in order to more mindfully and critically negotiate it (Freire 120). Academic literacies and approaches can and should inform our interactions outside classrooms; transfer in this sense is just as meaningful as the rhetorical and compositional skills students take to their other courses. Such an approach reflects the nature and purpose of writing: to actively participate, discover, and challenge (Bean; Murray). This approach is also meaningful for students to actively make meaning of the ways in which ideology informs language (Berlin 717). The theoretical framework informing my work is one which requires active student engagement through establishing a learning community focused on discussion, reflection, research, and making connections across texts, concepts, and individual discoveries. I take my students’ intellectual labor seriously and strive to help them do so as well.

To reflect the dynamic and versatile nature of what writing is and does, students and I study and create a variety of texts and genres, ranging from reflective journals and memes to digital portfolios. This practice prepares students to understand and create rhetorically and therefore multimodally in order to provide practice in effective academic and non-academic communication. Moreover, my courses are designed to demonstrate respect for the needs of L2 learners by providing written instructions, welcoming questions, and encouraging collaboration (Matsuda). Indeed, their presence in all classrooms is vital for accurately representing the country and helping students to form connections to their neighbors in constructive environments that will enrich their understanding and negotiation of society.

Using the model of dialogue, action, reflection, my students and I learn through engagement with the central questions: what is this for and what do we do with this information? For example, in my first year composition course, students and I generate themes (Freire; Peterson). We apply academic methods of study toward these themes rooted in understanding, and, after reading, summarizing, analysis, research, group- and class-wide discussion, presentations, and reflection, we decide what we can actively do with our learning. Together, we use critique as impetus for action (McComiskey). For example, we might consider: “now we know that media discourse is often different for white criminals and those of color, what do we do with this knowledge?” Students then brainstorm and plan solutions, alter their perceptions, or engage in more thoughtful relationships with prevailing national narratives; this intellectual practice highlights

student agency and reinforces my argument to them that learning is transformative...and sometimes messy—*and that is okay*.

Through carefully chosen mentor and anchor texts, students have a framework with which to examine their own lives and experiences and those of their classmates, as well as diverse representations of academic practices, genres, and discourse(s). We work with the goal of understanding, not necessarily agreement, as a scholarly approach to gaining new knowledge. We practice and work with intellectual rigor, but we do so in a way that acknowledges and respects students' place in both the academy and the country. We do this through critically examining the cultures and values in which the texts we study are situated. I am ever mindful in the mentor texts I provide and the language I use, as they and I represent the academy; for guidance, I draw upon the antiracist scholarship of Pimentel, Pimentel, and Dean, who argue that the practice of not labeling White European American texts as cultural texts serves to keep them as the unstated cultural norm, the norm to which all other texts can be differentiated from (110). To create a rhetoric of representation, possibility, and inclusivity, it is meaningful to critique and examine all the ways we can be intellectual.

Evaluation

Evaluation, both summative and formative, is intended to provide students with a concrete path to intellectual growth that is accessible and reflective of their abilities and labor. My syllabi include conferences at various stages in the invention and drafting process, written and verbal feedback shared individually and collectively, high priority

placed on revision, and a portfolio system. Doing so creates a class that students can use to better themselves, from wherever they begin intellectually. Grading holistically with student difference in mind is empowering and respectful without being facile and unchallenging.

Transparency is vital to inclusive, democratic classrooms. I practice a pedagogy of student respect through articulating my expectations when we begin work. I also share evaluation rubrics and student samples of successful work. The purpose for these strategies is not to provide a template students can modify complacently, but instead to demonstrate student capability. While we use mentor texts as models for both form and intellectual engagement, the ineffectiveness of decontextualized grammar study informs my holistic and rhetorically-focused approach to lower-order concerns. In addition to the above practices, I intentionally scaffold all work we do in my courses, so that each student has access to the materials and information needed to work proactively and confidently.

CHAPTER THREE: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adler-Kassner, Linda et al. "Assembling Knowledge: The Role of Threshold Concepts in Facilitating Transfer." *Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer*. Edited by Chris M. Anson and Jessie Moore. Colorado UP, 2016, pp 17-47.

In this chapter, Adler-Kassner et al define a term gaining attention in the scholarship on transfer in composition studies, "threshold concepts," which are aspects of writing instruction that are vital for entry into the discipline. The writers suggest these concepts are transformative, in that writers alter their perceptions of and practice in writing because of them. These threshold concepts are: writing as a subject of study rather than as only an activity one does; writing as always contextualized and each context is unique; the importance of embedded reflection for the development of writers; genre awareness; prior knowledge and experience facilitate the development of new writing knowledge and experience. Writing instruction rooted in these concepts prepares students to decode and create writing across contexts and disciplines, or transfer, in other words. These concepts are intended to offer a response to the ubiquitous "process pedagogy" still popular throughout higher education in America, in which students focus on all the different steps in writing assignments. Adler-Kassner et al. suggest such a focus does not transfer to other writing situations as well as our field hopes it does.

Writing as transfer is framed as academic and apolitical in this piece, and yet it does reflect institutional values that form intellectualism as insiders practice it, as a sustained, ever-changing practice of reworking ideas. The values guiding any institution, or to use the term in the chapter, “community of practice,” are not apolitical. That said, the concepts are absolutely the cornerstones to meaningful, lasting writing instruction, and are therefore useful to any pedagogical practice in FYC, regardless of content, of writing instruction. That is valuable. Moreover, the writers here are careful to discuss writing transfer in terms of applying the threshold concepts to any writing context, not just school-based writing, but it is implicit in their work that the latter is what they mostly mean. Doing so sidesteps the composition-as-service-discipline issue: students do indeed have the ability, through these concepts, to apply their understandings across disciplines, but that is through a deeper engagement with writing through intentional instruction rather than because composition courses’ only jobs are to prepare students to write history papers. The writers eschew any kind of imposing model, template, or form-based composition strategy and instead advocate for an interactive pedagogy in the writing classroom. Their inclusion of student attitudes towards their previous writing classes does indicate that a current-traditional model is still practiced. Moreover, because the concepts are common composition course practices, I am a little confused about the expectations of the writers. I suppose I just wonder what the difference is here to learning outcomes, WPA or otherwise, which articulate the same ideas and intentions for the composition classroom. The

only new piece here is the term, which was used in order to mirror language in other disciplines, perhaps, considering their focus on writing in the institution. Beginning to frame a post-process pedagogy, however, is a breath of fresh air. The revision of practice is meaningful for my work because our pedagogy is our ideology, our values, and so we must look closely at what they are. The example of Villanueva's treks to the library to discover his course professors' writing habits in order to mirror them is more than genre awareness, as the text indicates, though. That's an awareness of needing to mimic values and actions, not just genre conventions. His academic literacy is what made his grades possible: he went to the library to see what his various professors wrote, dissected their focus and language, and reproduced it. This is intellectual value reification and academic literacy in one go, and in my work, I am exploring how we can better make this connection explicit and transparent.

Bell, Inge. *This Book Is Not Required*. The Small Press, 1985.

Although this book has many later editions written by others in order to advance the work sociologist Inge Bell did, this first edition written by Bell herself is both a critique of and a guide to the university for incoming students. Its aim is to offer guidance for developing scholarly habits, a love for learning, and explain how and why much of the university's courses and culture inhibit those goals. From examining the obfuscation often typical of academic discourse and its reasons (i.e. funding sources, uncritical higher classes not using the findings of their own work

to transform societal inequalities) to how to discover and pursue intellectual interests and deal with grading systems, this book offers an unflinching look at the academy, for better and worse.

An insider's critique of academia, this text offers guidance for creating pedagogical practices rooted in fostering and cherishing intellectual development as human growth in order to challenge and change university culture and American culture. Bell's inclusion of an impenetrable example of academic writing and another academic's translation of the text offers a concrete example of a conversation still happening in academia today. Because higher education offers tools for deconstructing societal problems, it should be as accessible as possible; Bell's work, specifically the critique of writing example and the uncritical, highly specialized, financially precarious nature of much intellectual labor help me develop a picture of what academia does well and what a richer practice of intellectualism might look like.

Berlin, James. "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*, edited by Victor Villanueva. National Council of Teachers of English, 1997, pp 717-737.

In this essay, Berlin defines ideology, explains its relevance to composition studies, then explores the way three movements in the discipline challenge, address, and/or reify capitalistic ideology. His definition of the term is the implicit

assumptions which shape societal understanding of what is “real, good, and possible” as well as in what ways power is apportioned. With that definition in place, he analyzes cognitive rhetoric, expressionistic rhetoric, and social epistemic rhetoric. The first two do little to invite students to understand, critique, and act with agency through understanding the relationship between language and ideology as determiners of the ways we construct society (if indeed “we” do at all). Social epistemic rhetoric, he argues, while challenging, is an effective classroom practice for enriching student understanding of how what we implicitly consider “good, real, and possible” is reproduced through the structures currently in place.

To develop the argument that ideology is reified in classrooms wittingly and unwittingly, he walks readers through the three aforementioned movements in the discipline. For example, he argues that Expressionistic rhetoric is intended as a challenge to capitalistic ideology, yet its focus on the individual unintentionally reifies the very ideology its progenitors disavow. Through his extended analysis of what ideology is and does, Berlin makes a coherent argument for the value of critical pedagogy as the theoretical framework for composition courses. Our ideology, like our writing—which is our thinking and culture made visible—is revisable. Because rhetoric is “an historically specific social formation that must perforce change over time,” (730) it is revisable, Berlin argues. This historical and theoretical examination was useful for my explanation of my assignments. Our

pedagogies are imbricated in the ideology that constitutes our interactions with one another, ourselves, and the social apparatuses which comprise societies. Writing and language are ideology, and, like ideology, are revisable. This piece provides theoretical and disciplinary support for my argument that our pedagogical choices in the classroom and our curriculum are manifestations of what our culture practices and values, whether we would articulate support for certain values or not. We teach the way we have been taught, by and large but add in our own revisions. With intentional, critical reflection, we can better picture what we reify through our classroom practices. For example, individual presentations occurring in a row, one after another, do enrich understanding but do little to make learning communal; nor do they in isolation enrich our understanding about the ways in which areas of our lives connect, overlap, and inform other areas.

“Boots Riley in Seattle.” YouTube, uploaded by Todd Boyle, 22 August 2015, 56:06-1:16:43. <https://youtu.be/MNUf29xvbSU?t=56m06s>

In this section of the community-focused talk held in a Seattle bookstore, activist and rapper Boots Riley discusses education and the ways in which the economics of capitalism complicate the beloved national narrative of education as the way out of poverty, a rhetorical flourish disconnected from the everyday realities for many. He then offers a critique of the non-profit sector, which, he argues, absorbs college-educated potential agents of change into conservators of the economic

status quo by reproducing competition and revenue worship through a focus on job skills training despite the limited number of jobs and a reliance upon unemployment to make this economic model possible. Instead, he argues, education should be framed and valued as a right and a pleasure, to make oneself a moral, fulfilling person who better understands the world and acts meaningfully within it. Classrooms should be sites of learning, community, and action, especially for those without those things or the financial and social capital to access them. Through such a class analysis, this method of change is a better use of educational spaces with more probability for effecting lasting cultural change. He frames the narrative around a lyric from his song “Strange Arithmetic,” an allusion to Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” but foregrounding the role of education in the subjugation of the black community rather than physical violence: “If a school won’t teach you how to fight for what’s needed, they’re teaching you to go through life and get cheated.”

Boots Riley’s critical examination of the intersections of class, race, and schooling systems is as meaningful as educational theory on the same topic and speaks to what Thelin does with his students in the remedial track using generative theme-based teaching. Through frank dialogue on what we talk about when we talk about education, Boots Riley offers a counterstory (using Martinez’s term, appearing below) to the dominant narrative about education’s role in creating a culture. He both humanizes poor and working classes and

problematizes what education does do and can do. His focus on how schooling systems reproduce an inherently unequal society intentionally and unintentionally bolsters my analysis of how and what educators reproduce in the classroom. Few of us walk into the room every day with the express intent to maintain economic injustice, but when we are uncritical of our own practice, the dominant culture in which that practice operates maintains itself.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. Spiegel & Grau, 2014.

In this long-form, open letter to his son in the wake of his distress over Michael Brown's killer being found not guilty, writer Ta-Nehisi Coates recounts his life as an unsafe black body in a country which endangers and dehumanizes black Americans economically, legally, intellectually, and socially. He then shares the community he found in at Howard University, an historically all-black university, which provided a space to develop intellectually, emotionally, and socially: what he needed for self-actualization. His work is informed by both Richard Wright's poem by the same name and James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, and its raw examination of both the pain of oppression mentally and physically on the oppressed and the oppressor is highly analytical in its examination of the American cultural psyche.

Coates shares what writing, education, and community did for his life in a way that helps him push back against the racist culture in which he lives. His

experience, in this regard, is meaningful for theorizing ways a humanizing, affective pedagogy can transform students, truly creating education as a practice of freedom, as hooks defines it in *Teaching to Transgress*. His section on reading black writers, historians, cultural critics, and other intellectuals reveals the importance of both representation and authentic love for intellectualism, which my I will need to define, as it is a central term to my work. Combining the emotional and intellectual, this narrative is a testament to the importance of finding community, and as such belongs in conversation with affect-focused feminist texts also included in this annotated bibliography. Theirs is the theory, his is the results of such work. The world is a better place with his work in it, and the job of the educator is to carve out spaces for such work to be possible.

Goldfine, Ruth A and Deborah Mixson-Brookshire. "Chapter 6. Influence of the College Composition Classroom on Students' Values and Beliefs." *Writing Pathways to Success*. Edited by Lillian Craton, Renee Love, and Sean Barnette. Colorado UP, 2017, pp 49-58.

In this chapter, Goldfine and Mixon-Brookshire share their research on freshman values in order to understand how students develop their worldviews as well as how the composition classroom and the writing done in it might affect those values. Using a very small sampling of honors FYC students, the researchers found that students often derive their values from family and other authority figures, but through thorough research and the articulation of their positions,

students often alter their values based on doing the intellectual work of acquiring information and writing it all out in order to support their stances.

In sharing students' sources for their values, the researchers reveal that the local ecology in which we live shapes our worldviews; however unsurprising that aspect of the research may be, the anecdotes of students' altering their positions based on the research and writing processes they engage in to articulate their positions is heartening. Research writing is at the fore of academic practice, and helping students practice this threshold concept (Adler-Kassner) both provides experience in academic literacies and values as well as gives students a model for critically reflecting on what their values are and how to approach knowledge-acquisition in all aspects of their lives. The researchers' conclusion that asking students to explain why they think what they do is a meaningful heuristic for value examination is important; however, an important takeaway for my work is the notion that our values are rooted in "what is real, good, and possible" (Berlin), which, for traditional students of this age can be very narrow. The composition classroom, then, can be a meaningful site for critiquing and then improving the guiding principles through which we engage with one another. on the Georgia state flag (50), but it does little to make the university intersectional.

Magnet, Shoshana, Corinne Lysandra Mason, and Kathryn Trevenen. "Feminism, Pedagogy, and the Politics of Kindness." *Feminist Teacher*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1-21.

In this article, Magnet et al. argue that feminist scholars and educators should incorporate a pedagogical practice rooted in kindness as a means for social transformation. The authors do this by examining the history of kindness and its cultural relation to race, class, gender, and imperialism, complicating the term's meaning and application. The authors then analyze the ways in which a pedagogy of kindness can both invigorate student curiosity and interest in intellectual growth as well as challenge the culture of competition, fear, and individualism inherent in universities situated in capitalist culture. Finally, Magnet et al. share strategies for practicing a pedagogy of kindness in the classroom.

This piece outlines the scant scholarship of affective pedagogy, providing me with additional sources to enrich my theorizing on kindness as an academic literacy. Moreover, the authors examine the challenges of articulating and practicing a pedagogy of kindness, noting, for example, that it is a “feminine” emotion and therefore weak and of lesser value. Drawing from these concepts, my work can critique the capitalist, hierarchical culture which assigns such valuations. This scholarship challenges the dominant way of knowing and doing as the only way to do intellectualism in the academy.

MacFarquhar, Larissa. “Building a Prison-to-School Pipeline.” *The New Yorker*, 12 Dec. 2016. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/12/12/the-ex-con-scholars-of-berkeley>. Accessed 21 December 2016.

This article chronicles the experiences of poor Americans caught in our vast prison complex, who tenaciously navigated the foreign and often unwelcoming higher education system, first attending two-year colleges, then transferring to UCs. MacFarquhar provides a clear picture of their lives and the experiences which shaped them, allowing her readers to see that in learning to negotiate the colleges, the prisoners who became students learned that it was not the curriculum that is inaccessible to them, indeed they were more than capable; instead, it was the culture, the people, and the makeup. Instead of absorbing the cultural lessons for their own gain, the prisoners set up a social support system to offer mentoring and acceptance to help facilitate the success of those like them.

Beyond being simultaneously moving and enraging, this piece highlights exactly why it is so vital for colleges to be heterogeneous spaces. One of the men whose story is told here says something extremely important about the problems with only rich, privileged people entering academia, the gatekeeper for the occupations which form our policies and our communities. He says: "People are getting out of high school, going straight to Cal, and then straight to grad school, and these people are creating theories and models about a world they've never lived in." It's not that those of us whose trajectories are as he describes are bad, but that we just cannot adequately meet the challenges to do transformative work about areas of life we know nothing of beyond a documentary or a textbook. In Weisser's examination of the history of composition, he argues that the shift in

demographics of college students (now veterans, retirees, people of color, etc.) necessitated pedagogical change due to their ways of being in the classroom: the questions they asked, for example. Their inclusion made the classes better, more active and rigorous, I argue, based on his work. Their inclusion was good for the universities and colleges. That is the case here. Because the university does work that shapes other areas of life, to do the best job it can intellectually, the university needs a richer base of scholars. The university needs these prisoners, their comrades, and myriad others as much as they need it. That's what I want to argue. It isn't just some SJW agenda to have inclusive universities; it is to do better work, it's in the best interest for us all.

Martinez, Aja Y. "A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory: Stock Story vs. Counterstory Dialogues Concerning Alejandra's 'Fit' in the Academy." *Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication*. Edited by Frankie Condon and Vershawn Ashanti Young, UP Colorado, 2016, pp. 65-85.

In the third chapter of this text, Martinez examines the demographics of Latin@ enrollment in higher education which, despite incremental increases since 2000, are disproportionate to the population at large. These numbers serve to underscore the need for, among other changes, examining the ways in which universities play a role in the exclusion of POC, an important reason for reexamining how we present and keep these spaces. She advances this argument through a

fictitious scenario modeling on real-life experiences of Latin@ in higher education. In this scenario, gatekeepers of varying status in a composition doctoral program, all white, discuss the eligibility of a Latin@ to stay in the program in light of earning one C, not participating vocally or going to office hours, and maintaining a determined focus race and class in her work.

Through this impactful narrative which offers a behind-closed-doors look at both the institutional decision making as it plays out as well as the same for a struggling student, Martinez suggests that instructors committed to ending the implicit exclusionary cultural practices Eurocentric programs perpetuate must consider their role in making students feel unwelcome; because their experiences are so far removed from the students', the professors, even well-meaning ones, do not adequately work with the student, whose capabilities and interest are made demonstrably clear. The demographics Martinez provides at the outset are illuminated through this story: the student is able with a supportive family but the coldness and the cultural norms, for example, make her progress difficult. Only through her individual tenacity can she succeed. This is not a model of an open, diverse university working to create a more educated, just society. To help educators who want to work and be better, she offers an assignment.

Counterstory, Martinez argues, is a viable critical race theory-founded assignment in composition classrooms which can do this work. Hearing one another's counterstories in the classroom is an important component in the comp

assignment Martinez suggests. She quotes Condon, who asserts, “We need to learn to read, to engage with one another’s stories, not as voyeurs but as players, in a dramatic sense, within them, and as actors who may be changed not only by the telling of our own stories but also by the practices of listening, attending, acknowledging, and honoring the stories of our students and colleagues of color as well” (82). This work is meaningful, as with it we do not just consume one another’s words, we use them to shape our actions in and with the world and better understand the actions of others. This sharing of counterstory provides the class opportunities to analyze and generalize how these experiences came to be, rather than hearing them in a cultural vacuum. This is the self-work and work-with-others of the first chapter. Moreover, this models how we can rhetorically listen to one another, as Ratcliffe argues, and helps us to “stand under our discourses,” situating them in a context of privilege and in the inequities it creates.

McComiskey, Bruce. “Ideology and Critique in Composition Studies.” *JAC*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2002, pp. 167–175., www.jstor.org/stable/20866473.

In this article, McComiskey examines Berlin’s “Ideology in the Writing Classroom” and the responses that work received in order to examine the ways composition studies understands and uses the concept of ideology in classrooms and scholarly work. He then shares assignments he has created to help his students engage in identifying and critiquing ideology. His argument, ultimately,

is that critique of ideology should only serve as beginning practice that generates ways to express different values.

McComiskey offers a rich discussion of scholarly attitudes toward ideology. However, his most compelling writing, for my purposes, is in his critique of “critique” and sharing of his classroom work with writing students exploring ideology. His use of critique, as a starting point to facilitate students’ thinking about the ways ideologies and values (his use of these terms seem to be interchangeable) manifest in order to create their own alternatives. Critique as a framework with which to create and act is a meaningful analysis of its function. In my classroom and my analysis of what we do together, I ask for us to consider, “what do we do with this information?” His examples are compelling and functional for facilitating student agency as a practice.

Rowland, Stephen. “Kindness.” *London Review of Education*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2009, pp. 207-210.

In this short article, Rowland contemplates the shift in how kindness is perceived and valued in an increasingly surveilled and product-oriented society. He uses Marcus Aurelius’s meditation on kindness, noting its connection to reason and knowledge. So doing, he argues that kindness is a practice for our professional lives as educators, neither needing to be seen as uncritical and lenient nor the province of comfort-providing women. Such reductive views of kindness, he

argues, do not facilitate social justice or the drive to create a more thoughtful, knowledgeable culture.

Rowland makes the connection between kindness and public good: public values affect how we negotiate the world with and for one another. Using an example of an editor friend who sent a personal feedback text along with the standard rejection letter, Rowland argues that our culture does not hold us to account to be kind to one another, but we must hold ourselves to account, despite its being not without risk. His work here is meaningful for its argument that kindness is not some new-age, neohippie sentimentality, but it is important for societal improvement. This connects to my theoretical framework of radical feminist critical pedagogy, looking at the world and arguing that there are structural inequalities and injustices we must understand, critique, and work together to fix.

Thelin, William H. and Kara Taczak. "Generative Themes and At-Risk Students."

Teaching English at the Two-Year College, vol. 34, no.3, 2007, pp. 295-305.

This piece shares the story of Taczak's writing students, placed into a remedial track in the University of Akron. Tackzak and Thelin helped the students to study their situation as a generative theme. Students interviewed administrators, considered their position in the university, and their relationship to academia and other students. Ultimately, the project was an opportunity for students to use the

academic literacies of the writing classroom to critically consider the structures which determine their trajectories and their positionality therein.

Through sharing students' analyses of their course placements and feelings of frustration about those placements, Thelin and Taczak present a clear example of a classroom using generative themes. Their work is meaningful for mine, as it examines the importance for student consciousness of providing space for honest critique of educational systems students pass through. The ambivalence of the students, their frustration as well as their hope that education will help them find a place in their society helps me explore the intersection of affective concerns and critical engagement. Although the writers do not explicitly analyze their students' emotional responses, they are inextricable from the analysis, discussion, and conclusion which the experience informs. Using the tools academics use to make sense of the world is an approach that highlights the academic way of being that students are implicitly asked to take on, as well.

Varsava, Nina. "A Writer's Complaint: Essays and 'I' in the English Language. *Radical Pedagogy*, vol 9, no. 2, 2008.

http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy.org/A_Writers_Complaint__Essays_and_I_in_the_English_Discipline.html

"A Writer's Complaint" focuses on the value of affect and academic risk in college essay writing. Nina Varsava is a student writer examining her in and out of

class experiences writing and reading about writing to explain both her process of creation as well as her concerns with the fear and stress that so often complement the student experience with objective, argument-focused academic texts.

Varsava's work is an examination of two types of writing texts: one terse, linear, and formal, the other focusing on exploration and development of ideas.

Varsava establishes ethos as a passionate, involved student who approaches writing work holistically and maturely. She serves as a reminder that students possess potential for this level of engagement when given meaningful work and a supportive instructive environment. Her main goal is to critically examine the ways the conventions and values of academic writing inhibit student passion and authentic involvement in their work and academia at large. This student's-eye-view of academic writing both shows student potential as well as offers meaningful advice for engaging assignment construction.

Her critique of what writing instruction does and is for is meaningful for considering the feelings students sit with as they write. Her worry that some cold "audience" is waiting to tear her work apart, for example, is hardly singular to her. The idea of academic audiences being clinical, exacting, and intent on the destruction of the student's ideas mirrors our comparative cultural values of winner and loser. A new spin on our spaces might well be the best way to make students feel less dread about engaging in dialogue about the intellectual work they're doing and of engaging in dialogue with others about anything at all.

Weisser, Christian R. *Moving Beyond Academic Discourse: Composition Studies and the Public Sphere*. Southern Illinois UP, 2002.

In this book, Weisser traces the history of composition studies, placing theoretical camps and notable theorists in conversation with each other. His focus is on the social turn and the ways the writing classroom relates to the culture in which it operates. He examines social cognitivism, expressionism, and social constructivism, for example, and the ways that student demographics shape pedagogical practice. Apart from the field's history, Weisser shows his readers the ways the theorists' work shaped one another's, not through argumentation, but through close reading, intellectual respect, and taking that work forward through identifying what it did not yet explain. The section on service learning, for example, shows the value of this approach, but also the ways it can fail through being uncritically practiced: without texts and discussions about structural issues, the students can use service learning to fulfil the trope of the (white) savior, for example.

The first fifty pages of this text are especially valuable for my theorizing about the composition classroom. Tracing the history of composition, from necessary evil to full bodied discipline helps me understand how the changes reflect just who did the scholarship determining the changes as well as who the students were who drove those changes. For example, as I will focus on in my paper, the social turn happening in the wake of open admissions policies is an important connection that

I'd like to develop. He does not make that argument, but by putting the history of the theory with the history of the policy, I can. Among many eras, his look at the focus on rhetoric in higher education as "academic or personal" (45) in the 1980s may go some way to explain the dark era of public policy of that time, of budding neoliberal individualism as the motive for decision making, the repercussions of which are still being felt in earnest today. One small example of many, this analysis helps me flesh out my argument that how we examine (or don't) the public sphere in which we live has real-world implications for the values of the society in which we all live. The university has to challenge the narrative of business as the lens through which we understand the country, the world. Our country is not a business, and when we allow and elect decision makers to treat it like one, we wind up with Betsy DeVos as the Secretary of Education. We know this, but the case must be made publicly and explicitly. To turn that idea into pedagogical principle is to share with students what, how, and for what purpose our curriculum is used. Sharing the scholarship to lead discussions helps to create the picture of composition studies as a discipline, as well, not just a service series of courses. That debate also shares what academia really looks like, as well.

Wells, Susan. "Rogue Cops and Health Care: What Do We Want from Public Writing?" *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 47, no. 3, 1996, pp. 325–341.
www.jstor.org/stable/358292.

In this article, Wells shares the story of a student writer, unjustly detained by police, who writes a carefully-composed, effective response protesting his treatment, which serves as the impetus for change in the department.

Simultaneously thrilled and horrified, she examines the function of a writer in the public sphere. To make sense of how citizens engage in public spheres, she applies Habermas's analysis of what these spheres are and do to President Clinton's ineffective health care address. Because of the complexity of Habermas's public sphere, Wells argues that assigning "generic" public writing is neither a good use of their writing, as it has no real audience and so no real purpose.

Through examining the student's story, the rhetoric used by presidents (much of which precludes authentic policy discussion), and her use of theory to examine it all, this text is engaging for both its form and its relevance to my work trying to conceptualize composition study that matters. Like so many of the texts I am reading for this project, this one has given me more reading to do. Her mention of Howard University's "broad sympathy" pedagogy might give a theoretical framework to describe more fully or convincingly my analysis of the Ta-Nehisi Coates text mentioned above, as he describes his development as a person in that space. Moreover, sharing her own composition classroom work serves as inspiration to enrich my own curriculum through better scaffolded-in expanded audience work. While I disagree that students using our classrooms to research,

discover, and articulate their intellectual development to their peers is “generic” and without audience—for what are they for one another if not an audience to educate and inform, if the classroom is structured accordingly—but I see how the step I am using as the final step can be perhaps the penultimate one in a more effective course design.

CHAPTER FOUR: PUBLISHABLE DOCUMENT

The Reproduction of Ideology and Disciplinary Values in FYC

First Year Composition (FYC) is taken by virtually every college student, and as such serves as both a representation of and gatekeeper for academia. What we represent and how wide we open the gate, however, varies. Berlin argues that all rhetoric is situated in ideology, whether explicit or implicit and so apolitical classrooms do not exist (717). When FYC, as a gatekeeper of higher education, uncritically reproduces practices of being academic that reflect white middle class ways of creating and sharing knowledge—historically informed by an authoritarian formalism asking students to uncritically internalize dominant forms of discourse—we cannot adequately model critical, inclusive academic strategies for challenging a growing culture of racist, patriarchal ideology, or the “rhetoric of exclusion” (Giroux) which permeates the discourse of much of American culture.

The academic literacies presented and practiced in the FYC classroom can either reinforce deference to authority, individualism, and passive consumption—the neoliberal values influencing behavior in and out of the academy—or challenge them. Because FYC instructors reach all students, FYC curriculum has the potential to provide a space to offer academic values with which to cultivate student investment in intellectual growth, rhetorical agility, and disciplinary knowledge. The academic literacies we, as instructors, cultivate in FYC, framed as values with which to approach social issues and negotiate

social systems, have the potential to enrich public spheres beyond our classrooms. In short, academic literacies offer a means for positively impacting the national discourse through both intentional pedagogical practice and an ideological framework of critical, communal engagement with constructive reading, writing, and dialogue reflecting composition studies epistemologies at its center.

In this article, I will trace the ideological history of FYC and the role of composition studies in higher education in order to frame academic literacies as action- and community-based value sets we share with students; then I will share pedagogical strategies I have used to re-imagine traditional, commonly assigned FYC curriculum to both better reflect the values of the composition studies discipline and counter neoliberal ideology by fostering inclusive spaces for our diverse student populations. These strategies can better support faculty who are committed to approaching composition coursework in a way that cultivates student engagement and literacy in and out of academic contexts and better positions students to act meaningfully in the social environment humans collectively reproduce. Finally, I will ask readers to consider what values they reproduce in their classrooms and to consider strategies for continually improving the accessibility of and pleasure in higher education. Such work helps to cultivate a more compassionate, thoughtful culture, to “build a better, more ethical, more engaged nation” (CCCC Position Statement on Language, Power, and Action).

FYC: From Formalism to Neoliberalism

The role of FYC in higher education is one of the discipline's longest-running conversations. Because the institution of FYC originated and continued its development long before the advent of the composition studies discipline itself, FYC "has been remarkably vulnerable to ideologies and practices that originate elsewhere than in its classrooms" (Crowley 6). The field's oldest pedagogical frame, formalism, is a primary example of how other disciplines and stakeholders in academia have defined the course's values and goals, ensuring that FYC curriculum fixated on students' attention to detail, grammar, and ability to absorb and mimic instruction. If this were a rhetorical situation—and it is—then the purpose of that message cannot be anything approximating the "development of productive writing practices and habits of mind that are critical for success in different contexts, including academic, workplace, and community settings" (CCCC Position Statement on "The Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing"). While many compositionists now view writing as a subject of study (Adler-Kassner 20), as a method of self- and intellectual discovery (Elbow 15; Murray 377), and/or as a means to effect change through its labor (Kahn 1-7), formalists locate its value as a utility, a skill, and evaluate student writing based on its form (Fulkerson 4). Grammatically-focused and rooted in historical Ivy League constructions of who and what universities are for, this camp's notable contributors E.D. Hirsch and Stanley Fish are proponents of reproducing the cultural capital of the educated classes through learning its rules and its preferred English.

Formalism and Composition Studies: an Ideological History

Historically, the university and its composition courses were designed to reproduce the managerial class—white, male, and moneyed—through a formalist pedagogical practice intended to “shape students’ character and conduct by means of repeated practice and correction” (Crowley 10). The formulation of the composition studies discipline, an emerging focus on research, and the demographic shifts in student population from the Civil War onward wrought changes in the purpose and makeup of writing courses (Crowley 54-58). Early 20th century education reformers like John Dewey argued that the focus of education should be a “continuous readjustment of social habits” in order for social life to be more democratic, peaceful, and equal (84-87). As the discipline itself evolved in light of the open-access era of the 1960s, many scholars began to identify “writing classrooms as a part of a wider movement for participatory democracy” (Weisser 30). Despite this social turn, required composition courses (FYC particularly) have maintained their presence in the undergraduate’s general education requirement. The field is now grappling with the specter of formalism paired with neoliberal economics of the early 21st century.

While most compositionists have long since moved on from vocalizing support for formalist pedagogy and elitist depictions of the university, formalist history and principles are residual through the way we teach and learn from one another. The field at

large: students, graduate students, contingent faculty, professors, program staff, and writing program administrators (WPAs) who collectively comprise the discipline's identity also shape its culture. Like Dewey, when compositionists discuss what FYC is for and should do, that discussion is a proxy for one about the role and purpose of higher education itself. If the required courses—the only experience students can be sure to have of our discipline's values and work—do not reflect the theory and research on pedagogy and composition that our field has painstakingly cultivated since its advent, then neither we nor our scholarship remain necessary at all. Perhaps even the requirement itself reflects the formalist argument that students must internalize the forms and practices of the academy. What those forms and practices are, then, and the pedagogical strategies with which they are shared, are factors important for instructors to identify before we continue to participate in their reification. And all courses, by the nature of their content and pedagogical practice, are ideological.

Academic Literacies as Values

Academic culture, despite its many problems and contradictions, does not value individualism and passive consumption in its pursuit of intellectual progress, as evinced through the way its scholars reproduce and share knowledge in its many forms and practices: publications, conference presentations, peer review practices, and mentoring of one another, for example. We both enrich and draw upon the intellectual labor of our colleagues through journals, conferences, listservs, position statements, and all the myriad ways we develop intellectual growth as a value informing cultivating

communities of learning. We exchange ideas and put theories into practice rather than storing what we know into a knowledge bank used to wield authority over others ... most of us, at any rate. We are not passive and uncritical in our esteem for research, nuance, critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, and evidence to determine what we say and do. Instead, we use active and critical literate acts to inform our negotiation of social systems, shaping our decisions, theories, models, and ways of doing and being; these literacies—values—inform our lives outside the academy, helping us decide what to buy, where to go, whom to vote for. If we use classrooms as sites to reproduce the literate acts of academia (asking students to practice peer review, analysis of texts, and present research, for example), then it follows that we do so in order for students to find value in these practices for intellectual growth as methods of doing and being. This is not to say that colleges and universities are Pollyannaish or utopian, but we occupy a cultural space which eschews violence and prioritizes understanding and complexity over decontextualized talking points and opinion, and composition classrooms are developed accordingly to uphold these values. For these reasons and more, neoliberal ideology is utterly incompatible with the fundamentals of academic ideology, despite the creeping corporatization of campus spaces and practices (Braun 137-144; deBoer, “Why We Should Fear University, Inc”).

Due to the volume of publications on and research in best practices for teaching our student populations, composition studies highly values pedagogy as well as content knowledge. This attention to the needs of our students is one of the best qualities of our

discipline. Because “every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology, in a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, and what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed,” (Berlin 735) our focus on how we teach as well as what we teach reveals an investment in student engagement already positioned against authoritarian formalist discursive compliance. Ideology, then, is what we value (what is good) and how we think about and shape those values through our curricular choices as well as our ways of being in the classroom with students (what is real and what is possible). What we strive for in the cultivation of our pedagogies and why, what we can study and create, and what instructors feel we can accomplish reveals the way ideology informs theories and practices of FYC. If we position FYC as a service course designed for students to internalize a top-down discursive practice of the academy in order to navigate general education and degree requirements, for example, we do little to share with students the ways in which language and writing construct our culture or help them find and shape their interests and abilities in using writing to understand and act in that culture. Ira Shor defines culture as constructed through what people say “say and do” (“What is Critical Literacy?”). Ideology, then, informs culture: what we value as “good” is evidenced by what is rewarded, respected, or emulated in our social landscape. What is possible, or what we are able to do and achieve, is often relative to what we have seen done or achieved before. When students of color, for example, rarely see educators of color, it is easier for them to internalize inaccurate perceptions of their own aspirations and abilities. Not only does this complicate our beloved national narrative of meritocracy, it begins to explain our cultural practices on a micro and macro level. However, when we do not

reflect upon the values informing our negotiation of public spheres, the possibility of dissonance between what we say and what we do looms, precipitating multiple cultural problems in the classroom and beyond. FYC can help us and our students grapple with our cultural problems constructively through practicing academic values informed by composition studies designed to “read the word and the world” (Freire 20).

FYC Pedagogies and Curriculum: Composing Against Formalist Neoliberalism

Few composition instructors walk into classrooms with curriculum and attitudes that are intentionally designed to reproduce the neoliberal values of passivity, consumption, and individualism, or its ideological forebear, formalist pedagogy. Unfortunately, many traditional FYC assignments (discrete, isolated research projects and presentations), ways of being in the classroom (using heteronormative, Eurocentric language and a focus on authority-centric rules), and syllabi (a list of pre-scripted commandments from the top down) can inadvertently reproduce a university that is austere, exclusionary, and unyielding. Together, these instances reduce intellectual growth to something students endure in the hopes that it will pay off in the form of a good job, internalizing that image of what higher education looks and feels like. If being educated would make us better citizens and more discerning voters, as Plato hoped, its work should be made as accessible and enjoyable as possible (Kutz and Roskelly 17-32) and should reach as much of the society it possibly can. In short, assignments, classroom practices, and syllabi can also undercut the academic values non-formalists hope to share with our students. Because academics value labor that is communal, action-based, and

critical, actively searching for dissonance between what we say and what we do can help composition scholars and instructors to continue advocating for students in a way that supports students' abilities to situate themselves in academic spaces. In synthesizing Berlin and Shor's scholarship, I provide an ideologically-focused framework for understanding how we create and re-create cultural norms through our practices and curriculum in order to help writing instructors make sense of and improve cultural practices in both our classrooms specifically and our institutions generally. I analyze two aspects of FYC which together form the course: interactions with students and curriculum. First, I share my strategies for creating a culture uninformed by formalist, neoliberal ideology, then I explore what my students and I do, curriculum-wise, with that culture in order to grapple with our social landscape at large using disciplinary knowledge construction.

Our local, departmental, and institutional conditions, workloads, and home lives inform the extent we, as writing instructors, are able to engage in our classroom learning communities and the support we can provide for students, as does the institutional culture where we learned our own practices. With that in mind, below I will share strategies for creating classroom experiences with students which envision a university that is more than a neoliberal marketplace, especially in FYC. Chosen for their malleability to fit the needs of a writing instructor's local context, these are strategies I have cultivated through learning with and from my students to be a better practitioner of my discipline's values, or what Diab, Ferrel, and Goldbee call self-work and work-with-others (37). While

articles and books that research and theorize best practices for assessment and providing written and verbal feedback abound, my focus in this article is on other aspects of FYC which impact a course's makeup in order to imagine ways of being in the classroom positioned explicitly against neoliberal cultural values, or offer an actionable "counterstory" to that mainstream narrative (Martinez).

To first year students, much of campus culture is new. "Culture shock is a general term for describing the problems that people experience in making the transition from a familiar to an unfamiliar setting" (Rose 143). To ensure everyone, regardless of personal background, has the cultural capital needed to negotiate a new setting, I use the first week with freshmen and my syllabi to fully explain as much of the myriad rhetorical situations and systems that comprise the university space as I can, mindful of the needs of my audience. For example, based on my experience with students' confusion, instead of just listing my office hours on the syllabus, I explain what office hours are compared to making specific appointments. To simply list them and assume understanding is to begin from a position which privileges those who possess the background knowledge or social capital to have the information already and if one does not know, it is a personal, individual failing rather than a cultural one. This may seem innocuous, but ideology permeates social settings in such a way that each little instance gels with others to form a cultural structure.

Many of us obtain a writing sample from our students to help us gauge where they are as writers. As a Teaching Associate (TA), I adopted this practice, drawing upon my

own composition instructors' intake questionnaire format which asked us students to recount our skills, goals, and interests. While I meant well in reproducing this assignment, my own students' writing was a litany of assessment buzzwords revealing their negotiation of a testing-focused educational culture: variations of marketable words like "proficiency" and "skill." This practice set a tone that ideologically situated my course in that continuum, hearkening to formalist, bank-learning style "shaping and correction" of students, reifying their previous experience regarding "what is real, good, and possible" in education. I do not do that now. For their first writing assignment, I ask the students to email me so that I can better learn who they are: if they live in the dorms, work, which interests they pursue in free time, how they wish to be addressed, and whatever else they wish to share. This allows me to understand who my students are and lets them know that I want to know these things—that they matter. We cover and practice means and conventions of contacting professors (which we frame rhetorically), and where they can go for which services (I keep a resource sheet that I email out to students). In word and deed, I make it clear that I am interested and invested in helping them land smoothly. This opening to the course sets a tone for the classroom culture I wish for us to create and foregrounds rhetoric and writing as a means of negotiating systems effectively without putting students in the starting position of justifying themselves to an imposing authority, formalist-style. Additionally, I share with students explicitly why it is that I choose to focus on these topics (the office hours, emailing professors); speaking with candor about what I do and why helps support my goal of

revealing the “hidden curriculum” that constitutes academic spaces just as much as the overt (Apple and King 82).

Because we are fortunate enough to teach at a time experiencing demographic representation more proportionate to the American citizenry at large, campuses have higher numbers of first generation college students than they have in the past (Kangas, Budros, Yoshioka). Establishing, through my classroom practice, that it is okay not to know, that asking questions is fine (and often a mark of engagement, even), and that learning need not be about performance ideologically positions academic labor as “the scholarship of discovery” (Boyer 117). A culture of “surveillance and audit” has altered cultural values, deprioritizing some, and “kindness is one such displaced value. A love of knowledge and a concern for social justice are others” (Rowland 207). Educators who do not align themselves with formalist pedagogical practices can better reflect their values, support students, and incorporate these values explicitly into our work through using student contexts—like beginning an intellectual journey—as rhetorical situations they can best navigate through deliberation and reflection, practices academics value.

A pedagogy informed by fostering inquiry and growth rather than individuals consuming a product, in this case education, considers the needs of that community as a prerequisite to intellectual development. If I were to end my practice of getting to know my students at the first week, I would come (accurately) across as insincere. As I step into the classroom on any given day, I carefully attend the climate in the room. Do any/all seem out of sorts? Is there an absence from a consistent student? When applicable, I ask

after students in a way that makes clear the question is rooted in concern for their wellbeing rather than academic “performance.” I can refer back to their introductory emails to remind myself, if necessary, of their situations and reach out to them via email, so they can take the time to decide how/if they wish to respond. Our students are still typically teenagers, many of whom are away from support systems. I do not mean my narrative here to be condescending, as I know these practices are likely obvious to many, but my students are perceptibly heartened when I evince care, and are often quicker to come to office hours, email with questions, or participate in class; practicing teaching in this way best aligns with an ideology rooted in caring, not authority. Barbara Fister’s analysis of a Project Information Literacy report about first year students, “Learning the Ropes,” for Inside Higher Ed revealed that students have internalized many “myths” about education, namely that students should be able to figure out everything on their own and are too shy to ask for help in office hours when they need it as a result. Individualism negatively impacts their ability to develop reflexive strategies for negotiating their courses. We have a “responsibility,” Fister argues, to dispel such values. Because that ideological framework is detrimental to their intellectual growth, composition instructors can rhetorically position ourselves as facilitators. bell hooks explores the ideology which renders such teaching lesser to mainstream, neoliberal culture:

Commitment to teaching well is a commitment to service. Teachers who do the best work are always willing to serve the needs of their students. In an imperialist white-

supremacist capitalist patriarchal culture, service is devalued. Dominator culture pointedly degrades service as a way of maintaining subordination. Those who serve tend to be regarded as unworthy and inferior. No wonder then that there is little positive discussion of the teacher's commitment to serve. (hooks Teaching Community 83)

Inviting a discussion on the notion that kindness is not typically culturally associated with intelligence is a meaningful starting point to grapple with the relationship between ideology and culture in the classroom. Such a focus invites honesty and also helps me to gauge our progress through our material and make changes together accordingly. These practices have made me a more attentive writing instructor, more effective in accomplishing my instructional goals, especially in a way that mitigates dissonance between what I and my discipline value and what I practice in presenting disciplinary values to students.

A non-formalist pedagogy not only facilitates a friendlier climate in the classroom, it is also better positioned to positively influence student intellectual growth as students navigate the class's coursework. Frederik deBoer recently published an online piece looking at the role instructors play in student satisfaction with their undergraduate study. To preface the text, he shares Williams College President Adam Falk's institutional analysis of the connections between learning and contact with professors:

At Williams College, where I work, we've analyzed which educational inputs best predict progress in these deeper aspects of student learning. The answer is unambiguous: By far,

the factor that correlates most highly with gains in these skills is the amount of personal contact a student has with professors... Nothing else—not the details of the curriculum, not the choice of major, not the student’s GPA—predicts self-reported gains in these critical capacities nearly as well as how much time a student spent with professors. (qtd. in deBoer “When it Comes to Student Satisfaction, Faculty Matter Most”)

The data he references was used to critique online learning trends, but its findings are meaningful for establishing the importance of creating personal connections with students as a vital part of an inclusive academic culture, one with explicit cognitive benefits. This is not included to suggest we must take students out for coffee and personal conversations, obviously, but to help non-formalist pedagogues to consider how best to establish a culture which holistically engages students rather than seeks to mold them into a pre-idealized pattern rooted in dominant, neoliberal cultural depictions of success. deBoer augments Falk’s work with data from the newer Purdue-Gallup index, a comprehensive analysis of alumni satisfaction with their undergraduate experience. Their research measured the likelihood of students “strongly agreeing education was worth the cost” and revealed that “students are 1.9 times as likely to say that their college experience was worth the cost if professors cared about the student as a person” (Gallup-Purdue Index, qtd. in deBoer “When it Comes to Student Satisfaction, Faculty Matter Most”; emphasis added). Professors had to demonstrably care about their students, to be clear, as this data is rooted in the student’s perception, meaning what professors said and did had to align for it to make an impact. When that’s compared against the finding that

students are just 1.2 times more likely to feel university is worth it if the student acquired a paid position, we can infer that to students, feeling cared about not only results in “deep learning,” as Falk indicates, but that it is of more value to them than explicit financial benefit. In addition to students highly valuing demonstrable care, this research found that students also value learning positioned as exciting and professors acting as mentors who encouraged them to develop and pursue academic interests (Gallup-Purdue Index, qtd. in deBoer “When it Comes to Student Satisfaction, Faculty Matter Most”). Conversely, when students experience negative emotions such as dislike for professors, it actually adversely impacts knowledge transfer (Driscoll and Rogers). These findings tell us a lot about the type of academic culture conducive for fostering academic values and intellectual growth. It also offers an argument for expanding academic values to encapsulate empathy and kindness as strategies for achieving learning outcomes. Composition instructors in the field who identify knowledge as a social construct must be mindful of the conditions which facilitate that practice. If we say we value research, then we must put it to use. Considering students’ emotional connection to the classroom as a pedagogical priority not only helps composition instructors reject a formalist, austere pedagogy, but it better supports students’ scholastic development.

Writing instructors, Poe argues, must take into account that “language teaching is not merely about the dissemination of technical skills but about the interactions that inform those instructional contexts both in the classroom and the ideologies that pervade those contexts” (89). As educators, we should be mindful of how our language and

examples function to construct our classroom culture. When our language choices are heteronormative, neurotypical, and Eurocentric, for example, we erase many of our students' presences in academic spaces and tell others theirs is the perspective that most matters—which reinforces the racial hierarchy that has haunted our country's history and culture. I have had to ask myself many questions about my practice through being in the classroom with my students. If, in my example sentences, all my hypothetical students are called Anglo names or are in straight relationships, what values do I represent? None I would verbally advocate, but the result is the same.

As individuals whose work and presence creates academic culture, we must continue to be willing to revise those practices by exploring their ideological implications and honestly evaluating how well they represent values that are crucial for a more democratic, representative community of practice. Just as our reading lists reflect what we think matters for students to read, respond to, and write about, so too does our presence in the course materials and classroom. Consider the world we construct with our words.

A teaching journal has helped me to better understand my classroom presence and its implications for the culture of the shared space. I have, through writing about my classroom presence after classes discovered that I have given embedded grammar lessons using only heteronormative examples or Anglicized names, for example. Our students view us as metonymic of the university, and so that matters. It matters especially if we are attempting to offer an alternative to what bell hooks calls the white supremacist,

patriarchal, capitalist mainstream culture of America. In a viral blog post narrating her experience in higher education, Tiffany Martinez writes “[a]s a minority in my classrooms, I continuously hear my peers and professors use language that both covertly and overtly oppresses the communities I belong to” (Martinez). In his study of how gay and lesbian students negotiate the education system, Cris Mayo argues “exclusions in curricula, educational and social resources, continue to be clearly heard, felt, and experienced by students of all sexualities” (263). In the latter example, Mayo found that curricular invisibility negatively impacted students *as much as* the overt bullying of their peers; indeed the former create a climate which facilitated the latter. In both examples, a culture is created through word choice and classroom experience.

When selecting texts and designing lesson plans, I take into consideration the fact that the legitimacy of the academy is a privilege not historically extended to those who do not belong to the white privileged classes. Course requirements we feel are a dedication to diversity may likely appear insincere to all our students without a pedagogy that critiques the social construct which prioritizes some experiences, Englishes, and ways of being and knowing while excluding or othering those who differ. All these separate concepts work together to construct our social environment. Without a critical rhetorical framing, or “the practice of not labeling W[hite] E[uropean] A[merican] texts as cultural texts serves to keep them as the unstated cultural norm, the norm to which all other texts can be differentiated from” (Pimentel 110). Mindfulness about our choices shapes the space we fill and the university culture we create. We do little to curb the cynicism and

suspicion about what higher education does and is when we unintentionally make unwelcome those who are often explicitly unwelcome in dominant culture through bans, “bathroom bills,” and border walls. A love for learning and intellectual growth can be stifled under such conditions.

Prioritizing student input and feedback are effective strategies for non-formalist teaching, and student journaling aids this practice. Whether or not we ask for student input and feedback in classroom business sets a tone for what the university values and the culture those values create through actions if we define FYC as a representation of the university. It is important to provide rhetorical framing for cultivating input and feedback; one strategy I have used to accomplish this is sustained time journaling in order to help students refine what they have to say and why for their input to be constructive. Every class period, my students and I spend time on reflective journaling to precipitate discussion (I share my writing with them, too). This literate act can help students view writing as a means to work out ideas rather than as a tool to record pre-existing ones; in so doing, I model ways to establish the habits of mind, the reflective practice, to sift through the competing mental factors which form an experience or opinion in order to create more nuance in discerning everyday affective-analytical thinking (for the two work together to form our impressions, however much we prefer the idea of the latter) we use to act in the world. In order for journaling to be effective in facilitating reflective, constructive input and feedback, it has to be as reflective of students’ thinking process as possible; therefore, the climate of the classroom cannot be informed by individualistic

notions of acquiring status, as that will influence what students write for me to read, as Valerie Clifford found in her research on the role of journaling in classrooms. She suggests,

[t]he class environment is especially important when writing a journal. The position of the class facilitator in having access to students' journals is a privileged one. The journals contain the failures and the fears of the students and other personal information. The students are giving this information to a person who has the power to fail them. It requires a lot of trust on the part of the student to hand over their journal. It puts the students in a very vulnerable position and staff and students need to be very clear about the purpose of the journals before they enter into this relationship (Clifford 113).

Together, the scholarship our field is producing on the relevance of how students feel in the classroom is hard to ignore. Some institutions' devaluation of the importance of FYC for a first-year student informs the treatment of its instructors, which in turn can negatively impact students. Crowley argues that due to its subaltern status in English departments often yields instructors "temperamentally unsuited to the interactive nature of composition classrooms" (5-6). Students face so many barriers to developing intellectual habits of mind, both material and cultural, that it is no wonder that America fosters a large anti-intellectual culture.

Additionally, I take evaluations seriously and explicitly tell the students so. RateMyProfessor, like any online review forum, typically draws the especially angry and

the especially thrilled—not to mention its contents are less helpful, as we are not the site's audience. In-class evaluations, however, are more revelatory ... with a few caveats, that is. If the evaluations are deposited and/or casually mentioned on the day of, as if they were a perfunctory but unimportant part of the course—the one that explicitly asks how they, the students, feel about their academic growth and experience of the course—then this sets a tone for how valuable their contribution is to the university we represent. Such a framing can seem formalist and insincere. For some, this is the only time a barometer of the student perspective is explicitly sought after in a course. That might be telling in its own right.

How we react when a phone rings may seem like a pedantic inclusion, but it's something that students have complained about with regard to school culture generally. I don't have any kind of here-are-the-rules language in my syllabi (beyond my rationales for forbidding plagiarism, including citation conventions in my curriculum, and asking for treating one another in good faith and with kindness), yet students have not taken the absence of a no-phone rule to mean that having their ringers on or taking calls in a classroom setting are encouraged behaviors. It might happen once or twice a semester or so, and the students will all go kind of wide-eyed, as if an angry outburst is imminent on my part. The students, often anxious in the face of class wide scrutiny, are embarrassed enough, as a rule. Usually, they instantly apologize (or do as soon as all eyes are off them), and I will just say that I know they didn't do it on purpose, and if that's the worst issue we have, then we're all doing just fine. Students are visibly relieved, thrilled not to

be shamed or scolded, and are significantly less likely to view me as a totalitarian (which makes community-building difficult). Anyone who has lived with one of those knows that sharing spaces with them is not conducive to learning, let alone taking joy in it, so we have to consider our goals for the space before choosing how to act. Normalizing authoritarian culture is problematic for many reasons, but for the purposes of this paper, a central issue lies in its reifying expectations that students are to be passively accepting in the face of authority and unnecessary unkindness as a characteristic of classroom culture.

These are just some examples of non-assignment-based pedagogical practices which can establish a culture—what we say and do—in the classroom which values its developing scholars, whose understanding of “what’s real, good, and possible and how power ought to be distributed” in the classroom can be enriched through FYC. For more, draw upon the open-access WAC Clearing House catalog’s current publications on assessment and feedback practices to inform an anti-formalist, class-conscious, antiracist composition course. Such a pedagogical practice leverages FYC’s role as gatekeeper and representation of the university in a way that draws upon research supporting the connection between student emotional investment and intellectual growth. There are few courses as exclusively populated by new students, and of those few, we are likely the only one to certainly explore the role of text creation (in its many iterations) and rhetoric as social and culturally located. This is an opportunity as well as a responsibility. Framing our interactions with students and their work with us as a rhetorical situation in which the purpose is to create a culture of scholars able to tackle our social landscape

both helps develop disciplinary knowledge and its direct applicability to the creation of a more humanizing campus culture.

Composition classrooms should not shy away from disagreement, as polite acquiescence is diametrically opposed to the critical interrogation of any material, let alone being a poor civic model historically. The dialogic, collaborate construction of disciplinary knowledge in the academy need not and should not seem like some sort of sanitized, hand-holding, experience. Insincerity aside, such a classroom practice does little to leverage its status as a space absent from danger and violence in order to model constructive, dialogic ways to disagree in order to construct understanding. Disagreement is inherent when we acknowledge that none of us occupy the same exact space, and I have always attempted to position the academic work of intellectual growth in this way. Without incorporating sustained investigation of the themes over the course of the semester and the focus on students sharing their findings with one another with the intent to make connections and propose action, my attempts were less successful. “Confronting one another across differences means that we must change ideas about how we learn; rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth” (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 113). Students of privilege often retreat into the mainstream, culturally-prominent “this-is-my-opinion” trope in order to end any complex interrogation with an issue. Complex interrogation is how academics construct knowledge and develop theories based on that knowledge; this is important to explicitly explain to students (DiAngelo and Özlem). Reflecting on his teaching experience during

the Jim Crow era, Calvin Logue suggests that middle class manners anesthetized resistance to a culture most academics knew to be immoral: “At times [kindness and civility] also enabled we whites to deny and rationalize the subservient segregated conditions under which African Americans were forced to struggle” (49). This is hard work, there is no avoiding that; it takes practice and the willingness to make mistakes. The point is to try.

Curriculum as Academic Values

Below, I examine the role of curriculum as academic literacies and values we use to construct knowledge. I share how I use disciplinary knowledge to construct curriculum, then share an assignment, the research project, that I have changed the most over my time teaching it. In my FYC courses, I use the WPA learning outcomes along with my institution’s learning goals to identify what practices will best serve my students in their growth as writers and thinkers. Drawing upon the research of the field, we examine the contexts informing how and why writers write; we summarize, practice rhetorical analysis, synthesis, and doing research; and we discuss and develop digital and visual literacies. How we do those things has changed over the semesters, though, and I have lately developed a practice of using generative themes as a means of unifying the content we study across the above work as well as a method to respect and foster student intellectual curiosity. Academics use their curiosity to fuel research, and so assigning research projects wherein students choose a topic has been one of the most popular ways to do that.

In his study of 2,101 writing assignments in classrooms of varying disciplines, Dan Melzer found that one of most frequently assigned writing tasks is the term paper, known more often as the research paper. However, he found that most often, this genre was modified to serve more as a conduit for the curriculum of the course rather than to function as an identifiable genre; he also found that frequently, research-based assignments are “alternative” in nature, focusing on “the creation of new knowledge, exploration, and originality” (Melzer 109). It is telling that the most commonly assigned form of writing is what Larson calls a “non-form” (219). It is not a genre with textual features in common, any recognizable traits across disciplines or even across classrooms within disciplines. What this indicates, then, is that the act of research, developing knowledge one synthesizes through developing ideas and analyzes to form an argument or depict a topic, is what we value. The work of research writing and thinking are values taught and reproduced across the disciplines. The ways of doing and writing vary, depending on the discipline’s epistemologies, but research writing is a clear example of curriculum as value sets.

To use academic literacies to enrich students’ negotiation of the public sphere requires both curricular representation through mentor texts and themes of study which value student experience. For example, when I present mentor texts to enrich student perception of the writing process (discussed below), I ask students to find an interview in which someone they revere discusses their creative/writing process in order to see how the texts together with the “academic” ones explore the invention process. Making

connections between academic literacies and intellectual labor outside our purview helps support the argument that academic literacies are practices and values of benefit beyond undergraduate coursework and that these practices do not reside in the academy alone. Reading students' writing analyzing the creative process of say, Drake, in comparison to Donald Murray provides for engaging grading, as well, which is something any writing instructor can appreciate. Students' experiences, as bell hooks and Ira Shor argue, are meaningful sites for locating composition curriculum in order to make lasting connections (*Teaching to Transgress* 70; *Empowering Education* 147). The juxtaposition of mainstream artists and academy-studied scholars, moreover, challenges whose voices we study in "elite" spaces. The students and I (for I do the same) typically enjoy reading each other's selected artist or writer to see what others are into.

After some semesters with traditional research projects in which students select a topic, perform research, and share it with me and their classmates in the form of a paper and presentation, I have made some changes to this unit in order to present research as a more communal process than the traditional format yielded. Although professional conferences are not unproblematic, the dimension of sharing ideas and workshopping them with like-minded colleagues evinces a communal value. Because I wanted my students to practice this work, their research projects end in presentations. Originally, as noted, each stood up, delivered their presentations (sometimes answered a question or two), then gave way to the next student. Over the semesters, I wanted to develop a practice that helped students value one another's intellectual labor, think about it, find

patterns, and see how the work of others tied in with their own. I began asking students to take notes, ask questions, and reflect on the presentations. While this was better than simply holding the presentations for critical engagement, it was still not as dialogic, as knowledge constructing as I had hoped for.

I have since developed a practice of choosing themes together and then finding their interconnectivity, or what Freire calls “hinged themes” (Freire 120). Modeling and sample assignments turned into co-learning (I even give a presentation alongside the students). One of my most rewarding changes to mitigate the above presentation issues has been grouping like research presentations and building in time for discussion, writing, and more research to ask students to find connections between their topics in order to see cultural practices—how we create reality through what we say and do and through what value set—as interwoven rather than discrete. Often, information is presented in categories unreflective of the complex nature of our societal landscape. Through the adoption of hinged themes, students who study the environment impact of chemical agents used to clean up oil spills, for example, can better see the connection between their study and the work of their colleagues who find that poor and communities of color often experience chemical contamination disproportionate to their white, richer counterparts. The intersection of race, class, and environmental justice can be interrogated when we examine social issues as related to one another rather than separate, isolated issues.

When each student researches a different aspect of the theme, students can construct meaning across their projects to build their understanding of their work, which

Laura Micciche labels “a pedagogy of wonder” and a “tool for doing critical work” (68). One part of this assignment involved students seeking out these conversations in social media outlets they already use. Scholars follow one another’s work outside of strictly academic mediums; we use literacy practices in everyday life, and view knowing and learning as “a right and a pleasure” (Boots Riley). Cultivating and leveraging student interests in the classroom both enriches the curriculum while respecting student experience and offers positive engagement with practicing academic literacies. Students can make deeper meaning across their projects, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of both their specific work and that of their classmates.

Pursuing collectively the above theme, race and policing in America, as well as two others (climate change inaction and gender/sexuality stereotyping), we developed some introductory knowledge based on a few mentor texts I included, then everyone isolated a specific dimension to the theme. Some students focused on the racialized model of mass incarceration; others focused on the ways dominant news media outlets treat white Americans compared with racial and ethnic minorities. Others focused on issues of representation of the above demographics in television and film. Each area of focus is a source for useful cultural study and critical thinking about the dominant ideology informing national values. The dialogic work happens both in groups in which students discuss the issues and their sources and when students present their information with the express goal of making meaning across presentations through reflection and discussion (and some more research), connections can be made that inform a more clear

picture of national issues. Due to the communal nature of theme exploration and shared, interest-based investigation, students made sense of their topics in ways individual topic exploration did not allow. For example, students suggested that media representations (what was real, good, and possible) affect how citizens, including police officers, see racial and ethnic minorities and that the ways Americans across careers do their jobs is informed by these characterizations. Seeing the intersectionality of their work took students beyond a good-bad narrative in which there are absolute concepts and little understanding about the motivations and societal factors all weaving together to construct reality. By building in time between and across presentations to write, think, and discuss the ways their work informed one another's turned a procession of presentations from individualistic to dialogic manifestations of intellectual labor and improved the complexity of their engagement with that work, as well.

Students, however, continue to struggle with actionable solutions based on their critiques and rich understandings of our themes. Composition scholar Bruce McComiskey has done meaningful work in exploring ideology in writing classrooms. He argues that critique, a common practice, should be rooted in action and should not serve as the final step in examining a text or idea. Combing through FYC assignments, he observes that often "students critique ads in order to understand their manipulative powers, but they do not compose ethical representations of their own; students critique television shows to understand their elitist social values, but they do not compose egalitarian representations of their own" (McComiskey 172). Understood this way,

critique functions as a heuristic for action, for generating better manifestations of values. His students do not just critique, they also create based on their critiques, to offer alternative models. Similarly, I asked my students to, once we explored and presented our themes, to offer solutions to the problems and issues that emerged from their work. This was undoubtedly the most difficult aspect of their assignment, they reported. Okay, this film is whitewashed, and whitewashing both erases people of color and contributes to our media problems of representation, and that's bad, they found. What now? It took more reading, writing, and discussion to share ideas. The difficulty of coming up with solutions is reflective of the consumption-based ideology permeating our culture. Their difficulty does not, of course, mean that students cannot do this work, but that "students are trained to be authority-dependent, waiting to be told what things mean and what to do, a position that encourages passive-aggressive submission and sabotage" (Shor, "What is Critical Literacy" 293). Positioning struggle ideologically, the importance of not consuming only, but using learning to act, to revise our practices. The intellectual connection students were able to make in connecting their work to the work of others, though, helped ameliorate this setback some, resulting in, if not actionable steps, a cogent analysis of the cultural landscape they undertook to study.

Across themes, students were also able to find meaning. Students questioning why climate denial was trotted around media outlets despite the scientific community's consensus was a problem we considered in light of, and more critically because of, our media critique. The students argued that a media that foregrounds the very worst of

others and the best of its target demographic negatively impacts our abilities to effectively work with and for one another. In locating media discourse in an ideology which prioritizes financial gain and its resultant power, we were better able to make sense of its rhetorical positioning of self and other; its motivating value is making money (like the corporations who fund climate change denial), ensnaring consumers who tune in and see positive affirmation via the moral degeneracy of the other, which means that the viewer is, implicitly, better. Such work makes collaboration across difference and the trust inherent in community building difficult. That, in turn, makes governing difficult especially when paired, my students' argued, with the media's fixation on performative rhetoric of winners and losers rather than problem solving. The media discourse's narrative of the other, then, is rooted in a need for money and status above else—historically located within the group for whom the country's systems, educational and otherwise, benefits, the white elite. These are complex issues which can be traced back through the founding of the country itself and students worked together to make sense of it all maturely and analytically.

bell hooks argues that “progressive professors do not need to indoctrinate students and teach them that they should oppose domination. Students [come] to these positions via their own capacity to think critically and assess the world they live in” (*Teaching Community* 8). I have struggled, in past courses, with students who felt that white privilege was not an issue or that critique is un-American. However, because theme-based courses ask a lot of students: identifying, exploring, explaining, and

connecting their work on a problem, the students worked with one another on this issue negating the need for any top-down commandments from me. While I shared strategies for synthesis, in the presentation of ideas, students advanced in writing, then in dialogue, the connections they made.

If we can accomplish the work our research tells us facilitates writing development and acquiring disciplinary knowledge while using the social context under which we reside, why don't we? Ask yourself. The answer just might be a formalist, neoliberal one that has snuck its way into your pedagogical practice, as it did mine. That awareness is a good place to start. We most of us neither benefit from nor ideologically align with the corporate neoliberal fixation on the deification of money, of the disdain for facts, the spectacle of status and consumption. There's a reason every authoritarian government silences its intellectuals. Our culture does not remove them from the public's access violently; instead, dominant American neoliberal ideology, for which corporate media is a mouthpiece, simply discredits them, preferring our silence on the political and social matters that we study so comprehensively. Academic findings often contradict quarterly report-driven decisions, but it does not matter what we say if no one is listening.

One of the problems with formalist ideology is its authoritarian nature. Its default position is that what is good, real, and possible have been fixed, and those of us who wish to succeed socially and economically must adopt this manner of speaking, writing, and thinking. In focusing on the reproduction of a class-based, unquestionably unequal culture defined by its economic injustices experienced by vast swaths of the population,

its champions are, of course, those primed to directly benefit by its perpetuation. What I am not saying is that Stanley Fish and his ilk are terrible people bent on dehumanizing their students in order to form their actions and discursive practices into carbon copies of their own. I am saying, however, that like Cris Mayo's argument that the exclusion of non-heteronormative existence in academic spaces is as emotionally damaging as overt bullying, the result is the same. In *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer argues,

Without the vigorous pursuit of free and open inquiry this country simply will not have the intellectual capacity it needs to resolve the huge, almost intractable social, economic, and ecological problems, both national and global. Nor will the academy itself remain vital if it fails to enlarge its own store of human knowledge. (117)

Our country cannot safely and humanely be run as a business in which we value only the economically beneficial, and whatever the top do must be striven for. Neither should our students be customers paying for a service (a hope for an economically-stable future). I have framed my examination of FYC with my own pedagogical errors, attempts, and goals in order to offer "a critique that acknowledges complicity" (Sharp-Hoskins and Robillard 306). Each of us should determine our own sphere of influence and act accordingly. If we want an educated, kind society, then we must, in both what we say and what we do, create the possibility for one to exist.

APPENDIX: CONFERENCE PRESENTATION HANDOUT

Academic Literacies as Values in First Year Composition Courses:

Examining dissonance in what we say and what we do

If what defines our discipline can be partially determined by its “institutional practices that configure the universal requirement—textbooks, standardized syllabi and assignments, grading scales, and the like” (Crowley 216), then these documents can help us **articulate our values** as a discipline and as instructors of composition.

When creating curriculum, selecting readings, and crafting lesson plans, consider what values that work reveals explicitly and implicitly. For example, despite my devotion to critical pedagogical practices, much of my early curriculum design—inspired by resources meant to augment my inexperience—did not reflect critical learning strategies and values. Using Ira Shor’s definition of culture, what we say and do, my uncritical reproduction of the materials I accessed created a dissonance between what I say I value and what I embody through what I do.

In-class inclusivity in order to take our representation of the university seriously

If I *say* I want an inclusive classroom, my curriculum and pedagogical practice should *do* that. For example, if, in a classroom discussion, I use names or sentences as examples, they won’t all be Eurocentric names or references rooted in my positionality: Suzie and

Johnny get a lot of air time in classrooms. Cris Mayo argues that the erasure of non-heterosexual ways of being in academic spaces is as harmful as overt bullying (267). That analysis can apply beyond rejecting heteronormativity.

Academic values as literate acts: mitigating dissonance between what I say and what I do to create an active, critical classroom culture

Compare these two summary prompt beginnings:

Why Are Summaries Important?

Writing a Summary (200-250 words), adapted for Engl 5

Audience and Purpose

Writing summaries is a standard practice in the academy. Online indexes, for example, often include abstracts (a kind of summary writing) of the articles listed. Each article in many academic journals also begins with an abstract. Readers use these abstracts to determine if they want to read an entire article or to remind themselves of the content of an article they read some time ago. Summary writing also serves as a useful heuristic for students. For instance, writing a summary of one's own work can help a student determine if an essay is complete and coherent. Writing a summary of another person's work can help a student determine the main points of an essay to analyze or evaluate.

During class, we will discuss and practice summarizing "Shitty First Drafts." For this assignment, you are to write a formal summary that should be 200 to 250 words. Check SacCT for documents and extra help.

Remember: A summary of someone else's work fairly describes the thesis and main points of the essay without judging the essay's merit. Most of the summary should be a paraphrase of the essay, and quotations should be accurate and correctly punctuated.

Writing the Summary

Planning the summary: First, read the essay; now reread it carefully. Underline important words and annotate the margins to mark key points. Next, look at the summary you have already written. Does it accurately identify the thesis of the essay and the central points that

This assignment prompt, my first ever, asks students to learn to practice crafting summaries because they are a dominant genre in the academy. That is irrefutably true, of course, but that is not *why* students should learn it because that's not *why* scholars create summaries.

If I interrogate my practice here with an ideologically-focused framework: how our values manifest in our culture—in this case, academic culture—then what I am providing my students is formalism: Mimic this genre because we said so, whoever “we” are. Do what we do to fit in.

I would articulate resistance to formalist pedagogical practices, yet I unintentionally reproduce them. Stanley Fish and Co. are not the only sources of formalism, just the most explicit.

A summary prompt rooted in articulating academic values of community and knowledge acquisition as sources for text creation and dissemination—without formalist undertones might look like:

Why Are Summaries Important?

Writing a Summary (200-250 words), adapted for Engl 5

Audience and Purpose

Academic writing is dialogic and values informed participants: to develop knowledge in a given area, scholars share and discuss their intellectual labor. In order to do so, there must be baseline knowledge from which to begin a conversation. Crafting a summary of a text (of any genre) involves learning what has been said in order to continue the conversation. Think of Bean’s examination of Burke’s parlor metaphor in “Reading Rhetorically.” Summaries of others’ work appear in online indexes, which often include abstracts (a kind of summary writing) of the articles listed. Articles in many academic journals also begins with an abstract. Readers use these abstracts to determine if they want to read an entire article or to remind themselves of the content of an article they read some time ago. Summary writing also serves as a useful heuristic for students. For instance, writing a summary of one’s own work can help a student determine if an essay is complete and coherent.

During class, we will discuss and practice summarizing “Shitty First Drafts” in order to deepen our understanding of how writers write and join the conversation. For this assignment, write a formal summary that should be 200 to 250 words. Check SacCT for documents and extra help.

Remember: A summary of someone else’s work fairly describes the thesis and main points of the essay without judging the essay’s merit. Most of the summary should be a paraphrase of

While the genre assigned is the same, the academic literacy of understanding a text's argument and goals before commenting on it are foregrounded. Teaching students that academics value not agreement or uncritical copying of form but learning what is being said before joining in offers ideology that invigorates their navigation of content and creation in and out of academic spaces.

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