

Statement of Teaching Philosophy and Research Interests | Courtney Werner

As a teacher, it is my responsibility to foster students' growth on several levels ranging from their writing abilities to their understanding of their position in particular discourse communities. I come into students' lives at a turning point; as such I help students think critically about the importance of literacy in their lives, both present and futures. In order to foster students' growth, I use a variety of activities and teaching styles in my student-centered, social constructivist pedagogy because I believe that students learn best when teachers are invested in their learning and in their development as thinking beings.

Whether students are taking first-year composition or a course focusing on visual argument, or a course focusing on academic authorship, I attempt to facilitate a broader understanding of literacy. When students write for my classes, they learn about multiliteracies, and they learn how to think broadly about what literacy might mean in their futures and for their careers. However, some students are resistant to embracing broad definitions of literacy, and those students who feel uncomfortable find course activities like analyzing visual arguments or producing podcasts and PSAs push them to redefine literacy. They learn skills they can take with them into careers that increasingly have a high demand for both digital and visual literacies (Selber, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Students draw on home literacies for their work in my classes to craft stronger academic literacies during college and enhance their understanding of literate practices for future contexts.

In my classes, students come to see knowledge as socially constructed through almost daily class workshops. Often, workshops entail group work, collaborative projects, and various forms of in-class writing. One activity I use is a group service-learning project. I start with Shipka's (2006) ideas of activity/task-based writing, link student groups to community partner organizations, and ask them to work together to identify a problem. Students then solve the problem via composing. I've had students revise or create websites, generate social media campaigns, delve into research on marketing software and platforms such as *Constant Contact*, and even create video tutorials for teachers about to embark in New Jersey's new K-12 required LGBT history curriculum. At the end of the project, students understand how they can collaborate effectively, and they have a tangible project to add to their portfolios and resume when seeking internships and professional employment. (Moore & O'Neill, 1992). During class workshop time, as students work individually or in groups, I move from student to student and group to group, review their writing, and pose guiding questions or make suggestions (Nelson, 1991). Out-of-class conferences structured around drafts or papers or projects give students ample time to discuss their writing with me, thus furthering their understanding of the social construction of texts and the impact audience has on rhetorical exigency. Students know I have an open-door policy, and they turn to me when they need me most, allowing me to stay out of the way when their learning momentum takes them far. Through engaging in discussion and collaborative composing projects, my students learn to interact in a discourse community, a skill that transfers to the discourse communities they become part of in their majors and careers after college.

Other transferable skills are learned through the projects and classwork I assign. I vary my teaching techniques from writing workshops to short lectures, using hands-on experiences as well as visual techniques to meet students' needs because not every student learns the same way. Students frequently use computers in and outside of the classroom, and they find supplemental components online through our class LMS (discussion boards, upload sites, blogs, web links). Using a variety of teaching/learning technologies is as important as utilizing different teaching techniques. Incorporate familiar technologies (YouTube, blackboard) to facilitate learning while encouraging new technologies helps students grow and think more critically (Selfe, 2007). For example, instead of having students write reflection papers for homework, they collaborate with classmates to produce podcasts. These podcasts help students understand composing and delivery from various perspectives while giving them a real audience to address. Podcasts give students an opportunity to

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experiment with new modes of communication in a safe environment. The podcast gives students the opportunity to try out the technology and modes of communication with a low stakes assignment because they are not graded on the use of technology. Other projects they work on are multimodal projects examining aspects of writing studies research. Some students have created board games or videogames; others have created comic books and extensive web 2.0 websites. Students compose with the technologies together, helping each other learn the technology and new ways of using them for rhetorical purposes. In an increasingly digital world, equipping my students with a rhetorical understanding of composing technologies is a student-centered practice focusing on their futures (Gee, 2003; Lunsford, 2006; Takayoshi, 2017).

As a hands-on teacher, I am invested in my students learning. I've worked with both traditional and non-traditional students at private colleges, state universities, community college, and for-profit institutions. I've tutored at many of these schools, and I've tutored students at a juvenile detention center and online for a fully digital writing center. I work hard to design curricula and projects that will engage the varied interests and intellectual growth of my students, no matter who they are. I utilize a variety of teaching modes and writing technologies with the intent to reach all of my students. In my classroom, students have a safe yet challenging environment to grow as writers and communicators.

As a scholar, I am intrigued by a variety of research questions which lead me down several avenues of research including historical inquiry, the development of theories that guide informed practice in the field, and the bridging of theories in productive ways. My work is situated in two areas of composition and rhetoric studies: writing technologies studies and writing center studies. Particularly, I am interested in theories of new media for writing, teaching composition through multiple modes of communication, theories of best practice in writing center tutoring, and empirical studies of what actually transpires in writing center work and classroom settings. My research interests overlap with my teaching interests, and my research frequently grows out of my pedagogy, especially notable in my previous publications but also in my current research.

Earlier in my research trajectory, I was interested in the roots of our field and the marginal subfields within it—particularly *computers and writing* and *writing center studies*. Although these two areas still draw my attention as marginalized areas of the field, I am more curious in what these areas can afford our students. Currently, I am undertaking several research studies that are essentially student-centered: I am researching the ideological designs of multimodal resources for students, especially writing center websites; the effect of social media on service-learning projects in first-year composition classrooms; and the position of digital composition within writing programs and writing program scholarship.

I understand my research to be student-focused in that my projects will contribute to pedagogical theory in the field. Working through visual argumentation, multiliteracies, and the ways in which digital technologies disseminate ideologies are integral, critical tools that our students need to be successful in their personal and professional lives. My work examines our current post-truth world (McCormiskey, 2018) and puts it into conversation with the digital technologies that have enabled that post-truth world. By examining how we integrate multimodality into our writing programs, for example, I seek to understand whether we are and how we could better prepare students for critical multiliteracies in their daily lives. By studying how writing center websites disseminate writing center's and institution's ideologies, we can craft better landing pages that are anti-racist and student-focused rather than homepages that reproduce the status quo, marginalizing our most at-risk students. Finally, working to understand how students use social media (Takayoshi, 2019; Green, 2019, Vie, 2018) helps us better meet our students' needs and understand the shifting trends in composing across the world and across generations.