Course Design

Taking it on the Road: Transferring Knowledge about Rhetoric and Writing across Curricula and Campuses

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Course Description

Since Fall 2004, the Undergraduate Catalog at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville has listed a two-part “Communicating through Writing” (WC) requirement, which includes two first-year composition courses and an upper-division course in one of thirty-five majors. Most students fulfill the former by enrolling in English 101 and 102, a two-semester sequence that for many years covered expository writing and a combined introduction to literature and college-level research (19). Starting in 2004-2005, however, we substantially revised both courses. Responding not only to the inauguration of the WC requirement, but also to emerging institutional and disciplinary imperatives, we chose to reorient our curriculum toward transfer. Specifically, we worked to establish courses that promote what D. N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon describe as “high road” transfer or the “deliberate mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context for application in another” (“Teaching” 25). With this in mind, our redesigned FYC sequence focused on knowledge domains and skills that transfer across writing contexts, such as rhetorical knowledge, knowledge of writing processes, and engagement with multiple literacies and diverse research methods.

ENGL 101 - English Composition I (3 Credit Hours)
Intensive instruction in writing, focusing on analysis and argument. Strategies for reading critically, analyzing texts from diverse perspectives, developing substantive arguments through systematic revision, addressing specific audiences, integrating sources, and expressing ideas with clarity and correctness.

ENGL 102 - English Composition II (3 Credit Hours)
Advancing concepts introduced in English 101. Intensive writing instruction focused on inquiry and research. Strategies for formulating and investigating questions, locating and evaluating information, using varied sources and research methods, developing positions on intercultural and interdisciplinary issues from diverse texts (print, digital, and multimedia), and presenting research using appropriate rhetorical conventions.

(Undergraduate Catalog)
Elsewhere, we have offered a detailed account of our collaborative, three-year revision process (see Fishman and Reiff). In this essay, we turn our attention to the courses we designed along with the research and theories that support them, and we reflect on the possibilities for not only students’ knowledge transfer in and beyond FYC, but also our own. In 2004 Jenn was new faculty, and Mary Jo was a newly tenured veteran WPA. In 2010 as we finished writing this essay, we both were leaving UTK, and we found ourselves wondering whether and how our experiences would transfer to new institutions, departments, and FYC programs. Although at this juncture a great deal remains to be seen, we believe that reaching back to reflect on our UTK experiences will provide the distance necessary to facilitate the purpose of the “Course Design”—“to self-critically describe a specific pedagogy that engages in the larger discourse of the field”—and will help us reach forward in new jobs and new locations to address topics of common concern, including the content, scope, and surprisingly strong disciplinarity of transfer-oriented writing instruction.

**Institutional Contexts**

Curricular revisions can be epic undertakings, especially in large programs where dozens of faculty offer hundreds of FYC sections each year. If there is a continuum of revision efforts, a series of exemplars that extends from the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* to modern adventures like *Star Trek* and *National Lampoon’s Vacation*, we locate our experiences closest to Captain Kirk’s enterprise and the Griswald family’s exploits. Unlike the great Greek warriors of antiquity, we did not see ourselves as explicitly embattled or endangered when we set out to revise English 101 and 102, nor was it our ambition to found a new city or create a stand-alone “sophistopolis” for college writing (Russell 11). Instead, we counted ourselves lucky to be part of a well-established, well-supported first-year composition program housed within the UTK English Department. Although nationally many FYC programs are becoming independent or affiliated with university studies, the UTK program remains rooted in English, as does rhetoric and composition, and to-date the arrangement has been both practical and productive. While the English Department has final approval over the FYC budget, staff, and curriculum, Mary Jo has been able to lead the program with day-to-day autonomy, and she has been able to draw fully on the department’s resources, especially in her work with the graduate students and lecturers who compose the majority of the FYC faculty.

In this context, we were surprised by how rigorously our curricular revisions tested and even strained this arrangement. Despite our careful scaffolding (e.g., a custom textbook, special sessions at annual teaching workshops), we found ourselves learning first-hand and repeatedly how transfer, especially when matched with rhetoric and multiplicities, can call to the fore some of the most disciplinary aspects of writing instruction. This claim may seem counterintuitive, since teaching for transfer pushes writ-
ing programs with centrifugal force away from English and toward a broad sampling of the expert discourses that students use both during and after college. At the same time, however, transfer also pulls writing programs centripetally toward a deeper engagement with rhetoric and composition. In our case, not only did we draw more strongly than ever before from rhet-comp scholarship in order to strengthen invisible program infrastructure; we also turned to disciplinary sources for some of the most highly visible components of our new courses.

Notably, and in concert with many—but not all—transfer proponents, we share a strong belief in the tremendous educational potential of first-year writing. We also agree with Anne Beaufort, who argues in *College Writing and Beyond*: if FYC is “taught with an eye toward transfer of learning and with an explicit acknowledgement of the context of [first-year] writing itself as a social practice,” it “can set students on a course of life-long learning so they know how to learn to become better and better writers in a variety of contexts” (7). While Beaufort includes rhetoric among the five knowledge domains associated with writing expertise, we gave rhetoric special priority in our new, transfer-focused curriculum. Informed by ongoing debates about the relationship of rhetorical studies and composition studies (see S. Miller, Farris), we see rhetoric as a tradition of civic-minded literate communication that writing students and teachers alike do well to study (see Hauser; T. Miller; T. Miller and Bowdon); we also understand rhetoric as a set of generalizable practices essential to deliberate and engaged articulation. As scholarship from the past ten years underscores, rhetorical praxis in the twenty-first century involves a tremendous array of discourses, genres, modalities, and media, and we agreed that we would be remiss if we did not also give “multiplicities” precedence.

Accordingly, then, the courses we piloted in 2005-6 and implemented in 2006-7 represented our first efforts to translate new FYC priorities—transfer, rhetoric, and multiplicities—into program goals and course practices. At brown bag lunches and teaching workshops, we talked about the implications of making students’ self-conscious learning about learning how to write a primary pedagogical objective, and we frequently turned the focus to rhetoric in order to discuss the ways in which teaching not only rhetorical terms and related concepts (e.g., the rhetorical canons, the rhetorical appeals) but also rhetorical approaches to the reception, inquiry, and production of different types of texts is related to that overarching goal.

To help instructors visualize the relationship between program goals and course curricula, we depicted the new assignment sequence as an arc that follows the historical progression of mass literacy from an early emphasis on reading to a present-day emphasis on writing (Brandt 174). In the terminology of our program, this trajectory sweeps from rhetorical reception to rhetorical production, and at least in concept it depicts the directionality of our main lessons about transfer. (See Figure 1). Over two semesters, we encourage students first to acquire, become aware of, and deliberately use
writing knowledge as critical audience members and second to expand, refine, and apply that knowledge through a variety of inquiry and production projects. Of course in practice, each semester as well as each assignment engages students in the full complexities of composition, and the new curriculum invites them to explore different aspects of writing and its recursivity, including the continual give and take of reception, inquiry, and production.

At the start of the sequence, English 101 offers an explicit focus on reception, and early assignments ask students to read—and watch and listen—rhetorically. In the first weeks of class, whether teachers assign the university’s annual “Life of the Mind” book, a popular ad, or a film, they begin building a foundation for the first two program-wide writing assignments, rhetorical and contextual analysis. For the former, students examine “how a writer uses language and textual conventions to effectively communicate his/her purpose” to an audience (see Appendix A: Bevill); for the latter they analyze the impact one or more contextual factors has on a particular rhetor and his or her text and audience. The next two assignments maintain the course focus on reception, but they also engage students in more extensive syntheses of texts and ideas, more complex argumentation, and a higher degree of self-reflection. The position-taking assignment asks students to add their opinions, as informed commentators or critics, to an ongoing deliberation; and the final assignment, arguing with sources, asks students to engage directly with other writers’ ideas and voices by composing a multi-source-based argument. Throughout the semester, instructors tailor courses to their own teaching preferences, making choices about assignment genres and media. At the same time, everyone teaches most, if not all major assignments as multi-phase projects, bringing attention to different aspects of the
Building on lessons learned in English 101, English 102 shifts the focus from reception to inquiry and production, giving students the opportunity to practice three general modes of investigation: “hands on” research or fieldwork, historical research, and academic research. Piloting this sequence we encountered a dearth of appropriate textbooks, and as a result we created our own custom publication, *The Rhetoric of Inquiry*. The table of contents follows instructors’ tendency to teach the hands-on unit first, taking students by surprise by taking them out of the classroom and into local or virtual communities, where they conduct research best supported by observations, interviews, and surveys. The historical unit appears next and introduces students to different reasons, methods, and resources for inquiring into the past. It begins with concepts and philosophies of history, and it challenges students to pose inquiry questions that can be answered through oral histories, library archives, and either personal or professional collections of artifacts. Last, students engage in academic inquiry, often making academia itself their focus. In one version of the course, students investigate “some of the more difficult issues that universities face today,” such as access, cheating, and media perceptions (see Appendix B: Caleb). In other sections, students study a particular academic community of practice (e.g., discipline, department, major), learning participants’ ideas and values, research and publication activities, and expectations for students at different stages of education.

Both courses engage multiplicities, starting with reading lists that contain a great deal more than required readings. In English 101 teachers assign a variety of print and screen genres ranging from posters, stories, and ads to film clips, video games, and status updates. In addition, many instructors assign students to visit exhibits, attend real-time events, or discover “found” texts around campus. In English 102, students learn to work with online databases and survey software alongside rare books and museum artifacts, and both courses give students opportunities to produce not only traditional genres (e.g., personal essays, op-ed pieces, literature reviews, cover letters), but also new genres, such as blog posts, digital audio and video essays, and hypertext (see Appendices A and B). Most recently, in Spring 2010, the FYC program sponsored a poster contest, which culminated in a “Writers’ Block Party” and public celebration in the Hodges Library Commons. (See Figures 2 and 3.) The top submissions displayed inquiries into high school students’ reading habits, hidden messages in children’s literature, the efficacy of zero tolerance rules, and contemporary slavery, and they stood out for more than the high quality of research they represented. The winning posters also provided sophisticated examples of how FYC students negotiate twenty-first-century writing realities. As contestants translated their research and arguments across mediums and contexts, they engaged a range of available
visual and verbal resources to transmit the main lessons they had learned, including: “THIS WAY for HOW IT REALLY IS.”

**Theoretical Rationale**

For us, the road to curriculum revision was paved with not only good intentions but also research and scholarship, beginning with the work of Gavriel Salomon and D. N. Perkins. Together, these two educational psychologists published a series of now frequently cited essays in which they define “two distinct transfer mechanisms” or roads. As they explain in their earliest reports, “Transfer occurs by the low road when a performance practiced to near automaticity in one context becomes activated spontaneously by stimulus conditions in another context” (“Programming” 4). For example, “Opening a chemistry book for the first time triggers reading habits acquired elsewhere,” and “trying out a new video game activates reflexes honed on another one” (Perkins and Salomon, “Teaching” 25). By contrast, high road transfer is a more complicated activity, which requires greater cognitive resources. Characterized by “deliberate mindful abstraction [of skills or information] from one context and application to another,” high road transfer requires “[s]elf-conscious efforts to transfer fostered by self-monitoring and
recognition of the need to recruit past experiences” (Salomon and Perkins, “Programming” 4-5).

As Perkins and Salomon acknowledge, the turn to transfer can seem redundant. After all, “transfer is integral to our expectations and aspirations for education,” and, as some of our colleagues were quick to point out, many teachers “already pose questions and organize activities” that promote one or
both types of transfer ("Teaching" 22, 29). Yet transfer can be distinguished from more basic acts of learning, and one of the main messages that Perkins and Salomon's research sends is really a warning: “transfer does not take care of itself.” ("Teaching" 22) Nearly twenty-five years later, David Smit echoes this message in *The Ends of Composition Studies*, where he offers readers a dose of strong, but good medicine. He writes: “The bottom line for writing instruction may be this: We get what we teach for,” and if we want to teach for transfer, then “we must find ways to help novices see the similarities between what they already know and what they might apply from that previously learned knowledge to other writing tasks” (134). Likewise, if we want to organize entire curricula around transfer, we must find programmatic ways to help teachers reconceive what it means to teach writing, and the bottom line for writing program administration may be this: We get what we WPA for, and with that in mind we focused our efforts on determining whether and how scholarly recommendations could translate into practicable and effective program-wide guidelines and goals.

In particular, as we redesigned our curriculum, we worked to translate transfer pedagogies into shared assignments and general course content. According to Salomon and Perkins in “The Rocky Roads to Transfer,” there are two pedagogies teachers can use to create optimal classroom conditions for transfer, hugging and bridging. The former is distinguished by teaching that encourages “the automaticity of mastery” (e.g., modeling, frequent reinforcement), and it promotes low road transfer by requiring students to repeat specific practices “in a variety of somewhat related and expanding contexts” (127, 120). Conversely, bridging encourages high road transfer, which demands both the decontextualization of knowledge and the deliberate abstraction of general principles and protocols for subsequent application in disparate situations (124-5). An active, generally interactive instructional style, bridging “either provokes students to abstract mindfully” from general principles, or it “explicitly provides such principles and assures that students thoroughly understand them in their greater scope” (132). Working to create not lesson plans but curricular analogues, we designed overlapping reception assignments (e.g., reading rhetorically, rhetorical and contextual analysis) in hopes we could engage English 101 students in far-reaching low-road transfer of rhetorical knowledge and knowledge of genre and media in particular. Position taking and arguing with sources come next because the shift from analyzing to utilizing rhetorical strategies can cultivate an “expectation for transfer” (135), and English 102 reinforces this expectation by asking students to travel the high road across multiple modes of inquiry and production.

During the period we formulated and tested this curriculum, our circle of interlocutors expanded exponentially. Indeed, by 2007 when we implemented our new courses, we could read the story of our own experiences between the lines of a host of new disciplinary publications, including Anne Beaufort’s book-length longitudinal study of transfer, *College Writing and*
Beyond and a host of salient essays by Linda S. Bergman and Janet Zepernick, Douglas Downs and Wardle; Susan Jarratt, Katherine Mack, Alexandra Sartor, and Shevaun Watson; Gerald Nelms and Ronda Leathers Dively; Wardle (2007, 2009); and Angela Rounsaville, Rachel Goldberg, and Anis Bawarshi. In the main, this body of scholarship was affirming, and it was gratifying to know we worked to repurpose FYC in such good company. In was also productive to compare others’ research findings with the results of our own small, grant-supported study. “Does it Transfer?” was the second part of a two-year project begun in the FYC classroom, and it collected mainly survey data from a volunteer subset of original participants (Y1 N=197; Y2 N=41). Students’ responses to our questions indicated that at least some FYC knowledge, including rhetorical terminology, stayed with them through the second year of college. Their self-reports also called attention to the role reinforcement plays in transfer (see Jarratt, Mack, Sartor and Watson; Nelms and Dively), suggesting a correlation between students’ recall of FYC practices and vocabulary and their ongoing study of writing in WC and/or rhetoric and composition courses (see Fishman, Reiff, Doyle, and Pigg).¹

Along with the common ground we discovered that we share with colleagues from across the country, we took note of the differences we saw between our courses and our experiences on one hand and the materials we were reading on the other. Perhaps most notably, our decision to place rhetoric at the center of our transfer curriculum stood out to us. Of course, Beaufort follows her student Tim’s rhetorical development in both of his majors (history and engineering); Jarratt and her colleagues draw on concepts of rhetorical memory as a critical frame for their study; and they as well as Bergman and Zepernick take particular note of students’ “potentially powerful—though often inchoate—rhetorical awareness.” As the latter explain, summarizing their interview data, “Students seemed to be completely unaware that the purpose of FYC might be to help them turn their rhetorical ‘street smarts’ into conscious methods of analysis . . . that they could then apply to writing situations in other contexts” (134). Our concern about this problem in our own program, combined with our aforementioned commitment to rhetorical education, motivated us to go beyond the WPA Outcomes in making the transfer of rhetorical knowledge a priority. As Linda Flower has been arguing since her earliest work with student professional writers, “The knowledge that has the most visible effect on student performance is rhetorical problem solving” (20),² and the rhetorical tradition testifies to rhetoric’s ability to generalize across time and cultures as well as disciplines and day-to-day contexts.

For us, the decision to focus on rhetoric also enabled us—and, more importantly, our students—to pursue connections between FYC and expert communities both within and beyond the academy. English 102, for example, invites students to learn about—and deliberately use—inquiry methods practiced by a range of experts, who can be found not only in schools and the workplace but also the locations Anne Ruggles Gere identi-
fies as “composition’s extracurriculum” (79). For Beaufort, this sensibility is fundamental to writing expertise, a proficiency “ultimately concerned with . . . becoming engaged in a particular community of writers who dialogue across texts, argue, and build on each other’s work” (College Writing 18). Of course, today expert writers belong to diverse communities, including many that have (or have had) little to no voice within the academy. We believe FYC can—and should—help students increase their knowledge of how they and their knowledge of writing are culturally and historically situated, and English 102 argues through its curriculum that writing expertise can—and should—include the ability both to recognize and to participate in a multiplicity of knowledge-using (knowledge-producing and knowledge-misusing) communities.

Prioritizing the multiplicities of discourse communities has been as important to us as prioritizing the multiplicities of media in a curriculum that promotes twenty-first century literacies as part of transfer pedagogy. Over a decade ago, the New London Group asserted, “[L]iteracy pedagogy must now account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” (61). We believe the time is still now, and we consider knowledge of media a domain of writing expertise that warrants explicit attention, especially within a transfer curriculum. Notably, some of Perkins and Salomon’s earliest studies investigated knowledge transfer in computer programming instruction, and their work is filled with new media examples (e.g., video games as sites of transfer) and metaphors (e.g., students’ minds as databases). More recently, the WPA Outcomes added a “technology plank,” and we would go so far as to add “media knowledge” as a sixth domain to Anne Beaufort’s model of writing expertise. In doing so, we echo scholarship that recognizes knowledge of media as knowledge that includes both analogue and digital forms, and we argue our own case for the importance of distinguishing the information superhighway from the high road. By routing the latter through an instructional landscape rife with media choices, we worked to create courses that encourage students to use available communicative means with growing sophistication and deliberateness as they travel toward their own destinations and goals.

**Critical Reflection**

Although reflection was a regular part of our journey, leaving UTK has created a new context for looking back at the courses we designed, and we agree the issue with the greatest exigence, particularly for us as past, present, or future WPAs, is better understanding the disciplinary push and pull that teaching for transfer seemed to create. Certainly, in looking back, we see that context matters. For us, unlike colleagues who sought or planned alliances between FYC and WAC or WIM, the push we received from the WC requirement was more of a shove (albeit a shove in the right direction). Since this requirement was created without our consultation, and since UTK does not have a formal WAC or WIM program, our actions were really reactions.
This distinction matters because of a point we could not see in the moment, when we were busy trying to turn top-down institutional mandates into an opportunity for positive pedagogical change. Looking through the lenses of transfer scholarship and pedagogical problems we saw from our own disciplinary perspective, we did not see how our own program’s lack of desire for change would conflict with the changes we began making, and teachers’ initially positive responses to the new curriculum further obscured from view a problem we can now see much more clearly. What teachers immediately appreciated was the creative license our new courses invite them to exercise over not only course materials but also course inquiry topics, which teachers were able to choose and develop. What many teachers increasingly resent is the way the curriculum requires them to become teachers of rhetoric and composition or “writing” in the sense that teaching for transfer, at least in our program, now demands.\textsuperscript{3}

When Downs and Wardle argue for reconceiving first-year composition as an introduction to writing studies, they do so based on their joint research and the sum total of their individual teaching experiences. By contrast, the focus of our efforts was programmatic, even while good pedagogy was always our ultimate end; and though the two of us worked with a sense of shared exigence, it was not an exigence we shared with a majority of the FYC faculty. This diverse group includes lecturers with expertise mainly in literature or creative writing and graduate students with similar interests. As a result, when we asked FYC faculty to engage in the study as well as the practice of teaching for transfer, we asked most of them to step outside the circumference of their training and, especially for lecturers, the parameters of their job descriptions. UTK lecturers teach 4/4 on year-to-year renewable contracts, and neither our application nor annual evaluation process encourages disciplinary expertise in rhetoric and composition. Instead, these processes may actively discourage it by placing primary emphasis on other criteria, such as years of experience, self-reports from teachers and students, and teaching observations made in classes other than FYC. Likewise, graduate students teach English 101 and 102 by default rather than by choice or application, and the Masters’ students seem to experience the resulting disciplinary tug-of-war most acutely. Many of them enter our program enthusiastic, if anxious about teaching, and their anxiety often blossoms into resentment as they discover that learning to teach in our program entails learning—and learning to embody—a body of knowledge that is different from the one they came to UTK to study. None of these issues is unique either to teaching for transfer or to teaching in our program specifically. Instead, our reflections have enabled us to see how teaching for transfer puts new pressure on the perennially weak places in the structure of a program like ours. We see the results, the stressors, not only in graduate pedagogy seminars and annual teacher evaluation meetings, but also in efforts to talk about issues—whether in pedagogy workshops or via our composition instructor listserv—that have little to no shared intellectual ground.
As we walk away, we do not want to turn our backs on our experiences nor do we wish to conclude that our time at UTK was some kind of strange dream, as though _The Wizard of Oz_ were really the best analogy for our journey. Instead, we want to be able to transfer the knowledge we have gained, especially with regard to bridging the gap between FYC and English. While colleagues at other schools have written about turning away from English to build partnerships with other departments, colleges, schools or special programs, partnering with English remains important for FYC both intellectually and institutionally. Certainly for us one of our most important colleagues has been Writing Center Director Kirsten Benson. She was a full partner in our curriculum review, and her ongoing efforts to support teaching for transfer extend from her work with tutors and students in the Writing Center to her current role as Acting Director of FYC. In addition, other departmental colleagues have been more influential than they may realize or have seemed, including our Department Head, the Associate Head, the Director of Graduate Studies, and graduate students’ individual advisors and mentors. Within this group and the department as a whole, the most valuable contributions came from the individuals who took the time and made the effort to become knowledgeable and articulate stakeholders in writing instruction. Their actions have taught us a lesson we thought we already knew: No matter how many times any of us involved in writing instruction is called on to play “sage on the stage” and deliver well-formulated, research-based arguments for writing instruction, we do more when we make our students—and colleagues—work for it. That is to say, we are at our most effective as teacher-administrators when we act as “guides on the side,” encouraging colleagues to recognize and use—in department reports, tenure and promotion reviews, negotiations with upper administration—our disciplinary tools (King 30).

This lesson is as difficult to generalize as it is to apply, not only within English but even within rhetoric and composition. For us, the decision to orient FYC toward transfer went hand in hand with undergraduate and graduate program-building opportunities for RWL that arose at the same time. However, at UTK, FYC is and is not part of RWL, and in turn RWL is and is not a legitimate disciplinary partner in English Studies. These ambiguities along with the complex personal and institutional histories that inform them made it as difficult to convince some RWL colleagues to accept FYC as part of the division as it was to convince some members of the broader department that program research is a legitimate scholarly activity. Among transfer researchers, Downs and Wardle are the most eloquent and persistent advocates for “the deep disciplinary implications of FYC pedagogy,” as well as courses that refuse to “teach from principles that contravene writing studies research” (554, 560). Although we do not engage writing studies or the discipline of rhetoric and composition in quite the same way, we feel the pull of disciplinarity just as strongly, and we as ardently wish to see FYC curricula conceived and carried out in dialogue with undergraduate writing
majors as well as Masters’ and doctoral programs in rhetoric, composition, and related fields. Accomplishing these goals—in whatever local forms they take—requires great focus and clear priorities, realistic incremental goals, strong leadership, and a committed community of practice. With that knowledge in mind, as we light out for new teaching, research, and administrative opportunities, we encourage each other along with our readers to stay the course and always take the high road.

Notes

1. When Nelms and Dively call attention to the role of reinforcement in students’ successful transfer of FYC knowledge, they point to a rift between good research and good pedagogy that should give writing teacher/researchers pause. Analyzing evidence of transfer in several longitudinal studies of writing, Nelms and Dively point out “the possibility that development they chart over time may be a consequence of their own research methods” because the studies in question require “subjects to reflect on what they are doing and on their progress over time,” thereby imposing “a reflexivity that the students might not have developed had they not participated in these longitudinal studies” (216). In our study, “Does it Transfer,” students who engaged in FYC knowledge transfer were generally those students who, in their second year, were similarly prompted to reflect, though not by researchers but by teachers in WC and RWL classes. With respect to the problem of research validity Nelms and Dively address, the lesson we take from this comparison is a clear need for new pedagogies and related institutional structures that mimic the special relationships that develop between longitudinal research participants and longitudinal researchers.


3. For further sample syllabi and assignments, see “Resources for Composition Teachers” on the UTK Webpage for First-Year Composition: http://web.utk.edu/~english/academics/f_teachers.shtml

Works Cited


Appendix A: Syllabus

**ENGLISH 101: Composition I**
Instructor: Scott Bevill

**Required Texts:**

**NOTE:** Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboard. You are expected to read these materials before their assigned class. You may either print these postings or read them directly from your laptop in class.

**Course Description:**
As defined by the English department course description, English 101 stresses “intensive instruction in writing, focusing on analysis and argument.” In this course, you will learn “strategies for reading critically; analyzing texts from diverse perspectives; developing substantive arguments through systematic revision; addressing specific audiences; integrating sources; and expressing ideas with clarity and correctness.” Specifically, English 101 will focus on the art of rhetorical analysis and ask you to examine writers’ choices, including your own, and audience, style, purpose, voice, and genre.

To accomplish these goals, this section will incorporate a number of readings from your textbooks on a wide variety of subjects, many of which will actually be open for the class to determine. At least two of our discussion topics will be centered around copyright in the digital world and the rhetoric of conflict. I would like to add two more topics for our class to engage rhetorically, so begin thinking about some of your own ideas for interesting subjects to explore.

In this section of 101, you will complete a number of assignments, including formal essays, in-class short writings, and blogs. Nearly every form of writing that you do in this class will be developed through a
strong conference component, where you and I will conference multiple
times throughout during the semester, and regular student peer review
workshops in which you will bring drafts to exchange with your peers to
aid in the revision process.

**Course Objectives:**
By the end of English 101, students should be able to:

- read texts critically and analyze the varied situations that
  motivate writers, the choices that writers make, and the effects of
  those choices on readers;
- analyze how writers employ content, structure, style, tone, and
  conventions appropriate to the demands of a particular audience,
  purpose, context, or culture;
- write persuasive arguments that articulate a clear, thoughtful
  position, deploy support and evidence appropriate to audience
  and purpose, and consider counterclaims and multiple points of
  view, including international and intercultural perspectives;
- respond constructively to drafts-in-progress, applying rhetorical
  concepts to revisions of their own and peers’ writing;
- analyze multiple modes of communication and the ways in which
  a wide range of rhetorical elements (both written and visual) and
  cultural elements operate in the act of persuasion;
- evaluate sources and integrate the ideas of others into their own
  writing (through paraphrase, summary, analysis, and evaluation).

**Revision Policy:**
For the first three major assignments, you will be allowed to revise your
work as many times as you wish throughout the semester. Your revisions
may improve your grade, and I will only record the grade on your last
revision. However, your revisions must be significant. When turning in a
revision, you will also turn in a brief written letter to me detailing how
this new draft is a significant improvement on your previous work.

**Grading Policy:**
Rhetorical Analysis Paper 15%
Contextual Analysis Paper 15%
Argument Paper 20%
Research Paper 25%
Multimodal Presentation 10%
Informal Writings (Blogs, etc...) 10%
Class Participation 5%

**Brief Assignment Descriptions and Dates:**
*Rhetorical Analysis Paper* - (1200 words)
An examination of how a writer uses language and textual conventions
to effectively communicate his/her purpose and to communicate with readers. An analysis of how the message is communicated—an examination of what the text's rhetorical strategies (appeals, content, structure, style, tone, diction) tell us about the writer's purposes, their persona, their relationship with audiences, and the effectiveness of their argument or message.

**Contextual Analysis Paper** - (1500 words)
An analysis of how contextual factors—historical, social, cultural—affect a rhetorical response and how the situation surrounding the writing (the larger community, culture, or context that the writing takes place within) affects the writer's purposes, their persona, their relationship with audiences, and the message communicated. An examination of how context shapes communication and how a communicative response, in turn, shapes the context.

**Argument Paper** - (1500 words)
An exploration of an issue about which people disagree and on which it is possible to take several positions (this paper could serve well as a prelude to the final source-based argument that also takes a particular position). The assignment may either ask you to explore a contentious issue and use your exploration to support a certain conclusion, or ask you to enlarge your reader's understanding of all the positions on an issue, while arguing for one particular viewpoint.

**Research Paper** - (2000 words)
A development of a well-supported, focused argument drawing on sources from class texts, from a collection of sources organized by me, or from your own research. The argument may take the form of an evaluative argument, causal argument, rebuttal argument, or proposal argument.

**Multimodal Presentation** - (10 Minutes, collaborative)
An argument presented to the class involving multiple genres and forms of rhetoric (visual, textual, hypertextual, etc...). You will work with a group on a topic that you have each addressed previously, either through one of your formal assignments or blog discussions, and present an argument that explores a contentious issue and takes a position. Be creative, and use this opportunity as a way to show off your accumulated knowledge from this semester.

**Blogs** - **Two posts and Two comments every week.**
(250 word minimum per post and comment.)
An experiment in rhetorical communities. You will each have a personal blog throughout this course. Use it to comment on our various readings, your research, or anything you come across throughout the semester that
you feel has rhetorical value. You will also keep a reading list of your classmate’s blogs and you will be expected to comment on their posts to further the discussion. This may work with a few assigned reading groups, or you may need to simply keep an eye on all of your classmates’ blogs. I will also keep a blog for this class, highlighting various posts and comments each week.

**Course Schedule Outline:**

**Weeks 1-5**
- Principles of Rhetoric
- Content Readings on Copyright, Intellectual Property, and the Digital World
- Major Assignment: Rhetorical Analysis Paper

**Weeks 5-9**
- Contextual Rhetoric
- Content Readings on the Rhetoric of Conflict
- Film: *Children of Men*
- Major Assignment: Contextual Analysis Paper

**Weeks 9-12**
- Writing, Revising, and beginning Research
- Content Readings TBD - Your Choice!
- Major Assignment: Argument Paper

**Weeks 12-15**
- Research
- Content Readings TBD - Your Choice!
- Major Assignment: Research Paper
- Group Assignment: Multimodal Presentation

**Appendix B: Syllabus**

**ENGLISH 102: Composition II—Inquiry into American University Culture**

“There’s a time and a place for everything, and it’s called college.” —Chef, *South Park*

**Instructor:** Dr. Amanda Mordavsky Caleb

**Course Description and Objectives**
Congratulations on making it to English 102! You’ve just finished a semester honing your rhetorical abilities; now we will turn to developing your research skills in order to complete the academic puzzle. In other words, we are going to continue to refine your rhetorical skills; however, by concentrating on your research skills, you will finish the year with the
ability to construct and successfully defend your argument, a skill that will be useful to you throughout your career. In order to develop these skills, you will be exposed to three different types of research: historical, hands-on, and traditional academic. You may find one or more of these approaches more applicable to your major, but it is important to develop all three, as a combination of different research approaches can lead to the most effective argument. Although this course may sound very similar to your English 101 class, there is a significant difference: in this course, we will be focusing our research and discussion on the American university culture. We will begin by looking at the history of the American university experience examining historical evidence—including using the university archive—to develop a clear picture of how university culture has changed over the years. We will then move on to the present day, to consider how students, faculty, and staff engage with university culture on a daily basis. Finally, we will look at some challenges to the university institution, and through traditional academic research, we will investigate these challenges in relation to your intended major.

**Historical Research: Changing University Cultures**

In this unit we will consider how the idea of university has changed in the last two centuries. We will begin by reflecting upon the modern university experience through the required journal that students will keep, and we will compare this to the experience of the previous generation through the readings from the texts and potentially interviews with parents, professors, etc. We will then turn to the University archive at UT to look at documents which provide a glimpse into what the university was like in the late nineteenth- and twentieth centuries. The assignment for this unit will focus on discussing changes to either UT specifically or university cultures generally as a means of understanding how far universities have come and where they might be headed. Potential topics include: women entering university, the integration of minorities, funding higher education, and the expectations of university students.

**Hands-On Research: Understanding University Cultures**

We will begin this course with a look at university cultures that have been stereotyped in some way, and we will try to unravel these stereotypes. For instance, we will reconsider the role of fraternities and sororities on campuses, how athletes are viewed by their peers and the community, and the relationships between students and professors. This unit will focus on ethnographic research, of which students will be exposed to three main types: observing field sites, survey-taking, and conducting interviews. The focus of their ethnographic inquiry will be to understand how university cultures are perceived by actual students and professors and what this tells us about the state of the American university.
Academic Research: Challenges to University Cultures

In this unit we will tackle some of the more difficult issues that universities face today. Topics will include: access to and cost of a university education, dealing with budget cuts, violence on campus, cheating, dealing with stress, and university-afterlife. We will read a number of sources dealing with these issues and look at how the media, politicians, and popular culture deal with these topics. Students will research a current challenge to universities, using traditional academic research sources, as well as historical and ethnographic approaches (if applicable).

Course Objectives:
- Recognize the different research styles used in a professional environment and learn to develop these research styles;
- Learn how and where to gather research information and how to apply it to your argument in a relevant and effective manner;
- Construct effective arguments by using your personal research to strengthen your argument;
- Respond constructively to issues raised in class and in the paper topics;
- Develop your writing skills to produce persuasive, polished papers which demonstrate your understanding of the material;
- Respond constructively and analytically to your fellow students’ papers;
- Demonstrate critical and effective reading of various mediums dealing with American university culture;
- Participate in an academic discourse and within an academic community.

Required Texts and Materials
Oleanna film (available through Blackboard)

Several readings from Blackboard. You will be responsible for ALL readings from Blackboard, which includes bringing them to class (either on a laptop or printed out).

Course Requirements:
- Papers: Students will write three formal papers (approximately...
5-6 pages long) which will be based on the following research skills: historical, hands-on, and academic. More details on each of these assignments will follow. All final drafts are submitted electronically. I am happy to read drafts of papers, so please take advantage of this (hard copies only).

- **Research proposals:** For each paper, students will be asked to submit research proposals, which will help students organize their research and writing.

- **Final poster:** All students are required to create a poster presentation of a research assignment of their choice, which will be presented during the final exam period.

- **Blogs:** Students will be asked to keep an online blog of their college experiences which will be used for paper #1. I will post announcements on Blackboard that will help structure some of the entries. Students are expected to blog twice a week for the first five weeks of class (a total of 10 entries), but are welcome to blog throughout the semester.

- **Fieldwork Journal:** Students will keep a fieldwork journal that will be used for paper #2. This journal will help you organize your research and explore different types of hands-on research.

- **Annotated Bibliography:** Students will submit an annotated bibliography for paper #3, which will demonstrate your research skills, as well as your ability to write concisely.

- **Film review:** Students will watch the film *Oleanna* and will submit a response to it, comparing the play with the film.

- **Class Participation, in-class work, and homework:** Your grade will be based on your preparation for class and your contribution to the discussion. The breakdown for the participation grade is attached to the end of this syllabus.

- **Homework and In-Class Work:** You are expected to do all the assigned reading for each week and come prepared to discuss the material. I will sometimes give you homework which I expect to be handed in at the beginning of class. Equally, I will regularly quiz you on the material or ask you to write short responses to the reading at the beginning of class.

- **Peer Reviews:** On peer review days, you will need to come to class with two copies of your paper, and will be expected to provide feedback on two classmates’ papers. Failure to actively participate in a peer review session (whether through absence, unpreparedness, or poor effort) will result in a 2 point deduction from your final grade (a maximum of 6 points).

- **Conferences:** Students are required to attend two conferences with me over the course of the semester: once before paper #1
and once before paper #3. These conferences must be scheduled in advance via the sign-up sheet on Blackboard. Failure to attend will result in a two point deduction from your final grade. The exception to this rule is if you notify me at least two days in advance that you cannot attend your conference.

**Course Grading:**

- Papers (3 @ 20% each) 60%
- Research proposals (3 @ 2% each) 6%
- Final poster 6%
- Blogs (10 @ .5% each) 5%
- Fieldwork Journal 5%
- Annotated Bibliography 5%
- Film review 3%
- Class Participation 5%
- Homework/in-class work 5%

**English 102 Daily Schedule**

**Unit 1: Investigating Changing University Cultures through Historical Research**

**Week 1:** Introduction to the course; Suggested reading: *Rhetoric*, pp. 10-28; Introduction to research; *Rhetoric*, pp. 29-43, 47-59, 343-44; Suggested reading: *Hodges*, chapter 35 (458-82)

**Week 2:** Introduction to historical research *Rhetoric*, 211-24; *Carolina Voices*, pp. 1-36; Diagnostic paper due on blackboard by 11pm; Introduction to archives *Rhetoric*, pp. 229-249; Library tour: meet in Hodges library room 211; Review *Harbrace* 37a-37d (pp. 511-30); Blogs 1 & 2 completed

**Week 3:** Using electronic archives: *Rhetoric*, 226-27, 252-61; Meet in computer lab, HSS 202

- Library tour homework due in class; Special collections tour: meet in Hodges library room 128; Bring research questions with you to library meeting; Sychronic research *Rhetoric*, box 11.2 (pp. 238-40); *Carolina Voices*, pp. 37-65; Blogs 3 & 4 completed

**Week 4:** Contextualizing history part 1 *Carolina Voices*, pp. 104-43; Contextualization homework due in class for group 1; Contextualizing history part 2 *Carolina Voices*, pp. 144-69; Contextualization homework due; in class for group 2; Blogs 5 & 6 completed

**Week 5:** Comparing past and present *Carolina Voices*, pp. 170-201; Research proposal due by 11 pm; Diachronic research *Rhetoric*, box 11.2 (pp. 238-40); Blackboard reading #1: Virginia Tech Massacre;
Integrating and citing sources/writing workshop *Rhetoric*, pp. 273-75; *Hodges*, chapter 33e-33g (pp. 406-18); Bring your research proposal and a paper outline to class; Blogs 7 & 8 completed

**Unit 2: Understanding University Cultures through Hands-on Research**

**Week 6:** Peer review *Hodges*, chapter 34a-34g (419-52); Bring two copies of your paper to class; Conferences; Blogs 9 & 10 completed

**Week 7:** Introduction to field research *Rhetoric*, pp. 63-68, 361-64; Paper #1 due by 11pm; Linking history with public perception; Blackboard Reading #2: Urban Legends; Introduction to surveys *Rhetoric*, pp. 140-48, 358; Survey questions due in class

**Week 8:** Surveys part 2; Meet in computer lab, HSS 202; Email your revised survey questions to yourself; Introduction to Interviews: listening *Rhetoric*, pp. 69-72, 75-78, 101-105, 129-32; Suggested reading: *Rhetoric*, pp. 106-28; Practicing interviews *Rhetoric*, pp. 84-87, 135-40, 207 8; Interview questions due in class

**Week 9:** Introduction to field sites *Rhetoric*, pp. 21-23; 127-29, 138-40; Research proposal due by 11pm; Analyzing field sites *Rhetoric*, pp. 94-99, 158-59; Field site observations due in class

**Week 10:** Data analysis/coding *Rhetoric*, pp. 149-57; Bring your data to class for coding; Integrating sources/writing workshop *Rhetoric*, 168-79, 201-5; Suggested reading: *Rhetoric*, pp. 182-93; Bring your research proposal and an outline of your paper to class; Peer review; Suggested reading: *Hodges*, chapter 34a-34g (419-52); Bring two copies of your paper to class

**Unit 3: Challenging University Cultures through Academic Research**

**Week 11:** Introduction to academic research *Rhetoric*, pp. 279-308; Paper #2 due by 11pm; Issues in higher education; Blackboard Reading #4: Plagiarism

**Week 12:** Issues in higher education; *Oleanna* (the play); Plagiarism homework due in class; Issues in higher education cont’d *Oleanna* (the film): Watch the film version (available on Blackboard) by today; Film response due by 10am; Database research *Rhetoric*, pp. 389-92; Review *Harbrace* 37a-37d (pp. 511-30); Meet in computer lab, HSS 202

**Week 13:** Library research trip: meet at Starbucks; Research proposal due by 11pm; Annotated bibliography workshop *Rhetoric*, pp. 333-39, 348-50; *Harbrace*, chapter 38 (pp. 535-45); Library homework due in class; Bring one article with you to class (electronic or hard copy); Conferences

**Week 14:** Citations workshop and discipline expectations *Rhetoric*, pp. 318-31; Review *Harbrace* chapters 40-41 (MLA and APA citations);
Annotated Bibliography due by 11pm; Conferences; Integrating sources/writing workshop *Rhetoric*, pp. 310-16, 351-57; Bring your research proposal and an outline of your paper to class

*Week 15*: Peer Review; Suggested reading: *Hodges*, chapter 34a-34g (419-52); Bring 2 copies of paper to class

*Week 16*: Poster workshop Bring poster ideas to class; Paper #3 due by 11pm. You will present your poster during our final exam (instead of a traditional final).